

to—in order to do our duty, in order for me to do mine as the Commander in Chief, if we see a threat, we'll take action of some kind. Obviously, the military option is the last option, not the first.

But I want to remind you that I saw a threat. I looked at the intelligence and saw a threat in Iraq. The United States Congress looked at the very same intelligence, and it saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat as well. We went back to the United Nations and said, "Look, this guy is a problem. He's a threat. He used gas on his own people. He used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. He's a—we've got to take it seriously. September the 11th taught us a lesson." So we came together and said, "Look, get rid of your weapons, Mr. Saddam Hussein." He said, "No." So I was faced with a choice: Do I trust the word of a madman, or do I do my duty to defend America? And given that choice, I will defend our country every time.

We're living in historic times. It's a different kind of war, and all of us are called to do our part. And I want to thank you. I came by to thank—they said there's some people who are on the frontlines of helping us secure the country. I said, "I want to come by." I don't care about your politics. What I do care about is the fact that you're serving, and I wanted to come by and thank you for that. I want to thank you for doing everything you can to help somebody, to prepare our country. I just want you to know, I'm going to do my part too.

It's a fantastic country we have. It's a—it's been such an amazing experience to see the character of this Nation, a nation which refuses to buckle under to the threat of terrorism, a nation which showed incredible resolve, a nation in which firefighters were willing to rush into burning buildings to save their fellow citizens, a nation also which has got an incredible amount of compassion. You know what I'm talking about when I talk about people who are willing to love their neighbor just like they love themselves in the community in which you live. To me, that's the courage of the country which defines us, but it's also the heart of the country which defines us as well.

So thanks for letting me come by to say hi. I'm keeping office hours now, so I've got to head back—[laughter]—head back over yonder, as they say in Texas. [Laughter] But I, again, want to thank you for your service.

May God bless your work. May God bless your families, and may God continue to bless our great country. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:39 p.m. at the Radisson Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Ed Gleason, administrator, Wisconsin Emergency Management; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks Announcing That National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice Will Provide Public Testimony to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States

March 30, 2004

Today I have informed the Commission on Terrorist Attacks Against the United States that my National Security Adviser, Dr. Condoleezza Rice, will provide public testimony. I've also advised Chairman Kean and Vice Chairman Hamilton that Vice President Cheney and I will jointly meet with all members of the Commission in a private session.

This Commission has been charged with a crucial task. To prevent future attacks, we must understand the methods of our enemies. The terrorist threat being examined by the Commission is still present, still urgent, and still demands our full attention.

From the day the panel was created, I have directed executive branch agencies and members of my staff to cooperate with the Commission. Recognizing the exceptional nature of this inquiry, we have given Commission members access to relevant Presidential daily briefings, to my communications with foreign leaders, and to internal White House communications.

More than 800 members of the administration have been interviewed. More than 20 White House officials have met with the Commission or soon will do so. Dr. Rice herself has already met privately with the Commission for 4 hours. I've ordered this level of cooperation, because I consider it necessary to gaining a complete picture of the

months and years that preceded the murder of our fellow citizens on September the 11th, 2001.

As the Commission has done its work, I've also been concerned, as has Dr. Rice, that an important principle be upheld: A President and his advisers, including his Adviser for National Security Affairs, must be able to communicate freely and privately without being compelled to reveal those communications to the legislative branch. This principle of the separation of powers is protected by the Constitution, is recognized by the courts, and has been defended by Presidents of both political parties. We have observed this principle while also seeking ways for Dr. Rice to testify, so that the public record is full and accurate.

Now the Commission and leaders of the United States Congress have given written assurances that the appearance of the National Security Adviser will not be used as precedent in the conduct of future inquiries. The leaders of Congress and the Commission agree—they agree with me that the circumstances of this case are unique, because the events of September the 11th, 2001, were unique. At my direction, Judge Gonzales has informed the Commission that Dr. Rice will participate in an open public hearing.

Our Nation must never forget the loss or the lessons of September the 11th, and we must not assume that the danger has passed. The United States will confront gathering dangers to our freedom and security. The Commission knows its responsibility to collect vital information and to present it to the American people. And I know my responsibility as well to act against the continuing threat and to protect the American people. I have made that pledge to my fellow citizens, and I will keep it.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:46 p.m. in the James S. Brady Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Thomas H. Kean, Chairman, and Lee H. Hamilton, Vice Chairman, National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission); and Counsel to the President Alberto R. Gonzales.

Remarks Honoring Members of the Baseball Hall of Fame

March 31, 2004

Thank you all for coming. Laura and I are honored and thrilled that you're here. We have a fair amount of lunches and dinners here, and I've got a confession to make. This is my favorite one. *[Laughter]* It's kind of like having your baseball card collection spread out in real life. *[Laughter]*

Some of you were here the last time we invited the Hall of Famers here. It was one of the first lunches we had. It's when I discovered that one of the best parts about living in the White House is that when you invite somebody for lunch, they generally come. *[Laughter]*

We're glad you're back. Vice President Cheney is with us. Mr. Vice President, thank you for coming. Secretary of Energy Spence Abraham is with us. He's a Tiger fan, I believe, if I'm not mistaken.

We've got a great Hall—lot of Hall of Famers. One that I work with on a regular basis, of course, is Senator Jim Bunning. Mr. Senator, thank you for being with us today.

I want to thank Jane Forbes Clark, the chairman of the Hall of Fame, appreciate you being here, Jane. Dale Petroskey, thank you for being here, Dale, as well. He is the president of the Hall of Fame.

All the Hall of Famers, we're glad you're here. And thanks for bringing family members too. You're welcome to the people's house.

I appreciate the ESPN Baseball Tonight folks who are here, Joe, Tim, and Peter. That's where I get my news. *[Laughter]* They do a great job of making—bringing baseball into our homes.

My Chief of Staff is here, by the way, Andy Card. He is a long-suffering Red Sox fan. I'm glad you're here. George Will is here as well—long-suffering Cubs fan. But welcome, everybody.

I particularly want to congratulate Paul Molitor and Dennis Eckersley, who will be the newest members of the Hall of Fame. Thank you all for coming. We're honored you're here, and congratulations. And Ozzie Smith and Gary Carter and Eddie Murray took your rightful place amongst some of the