

of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

### **Remarks on Arrival From Camp David, Maryland**

*March 19, 2006*

#### ***Progress in Iraq***

This morning I had a phone call with our Ambassador to Iraq, and the Ambassador informed me of the progress that the Iraqis are making toward forming a unity government. I encouraged the Iraqi leaders to continue to work hard to get this Government up and running. The Iraqi people voted for democracy last December; 75 percent of the eligible citizens went to the polls to vote. And now the Iraqi leaders are working together to enact a Government that reflects the will of the people. And so I'm encouraged by the progress; the Ambassador was encouraged by it.

Today, as well, marks the third anniversary of the beginning of the liberation of Iraq, and it's a time to reflect. And this morning my reflections were upon the sacrifices of the men and women who wear our uniform. Ours is an amazing nation where thousands have volunteered to serve our country. They volunteered to—many volunteered after 9/11, knowing full well that their time in the military could put them in harm's way. So on this third anniversary of the beginning of the liberation of Iraq, I think all Americans should offer thanks to the men and women who wear the uniform and their families who support them.

We are implementing a strategy that will lead to victory in Iraq. And a victory in Iraq will make this country more secure and will help lay the foundation of peace for generations to come.

May God continue to bless our troops in harm's way. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:56 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

### **Remarks Following Discussions With Secretary General Jakob Gijbert “Jaap” de Hoop Scheffer of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization**

*March 20, 2006*

**President Bush.** Fine-looking crowd we've attracted here, fine-looking crowd.

Mr. Secretary General, thanks for coming. We've just had a wide-ranging discussion on a variety of issues, which is what you'd expect when allies and friends come together. We discussed Iraq, and I want to thank NATO for its involvement in helping train Iraqi security forces so they can end up protecting the Iraqi people from the—from those who want to kill innocent life in order to affect the outcome of that democracy.

I want to thank you very much for your strong involvement in Afghanistan. A NATO presence in Afghanistan is really important. I learned that firsthand when I went to Afghanistan and talked to the—President Karzai and his Government. They were very supportive of the mission—and thankful for the mission. NATO is effective, and that's one of the things that's really important for our citizens to understand, that our relationship with NATO is an important part of helping us to win the war on terror.

We also talked about Darfur in the Sudan. I'd called the Secretary General earlier this year. I talked to him about a strategy that would enable NATO to take the lead in Darfur. However, some things have to happen prior to that happening. And the first thing is that the African Union must request from the United Nations a U.N. mission to convert the AU mission to a U.N. mission, at which point if that's done, the—NATO can move in with United States help—inside of NATO—to make it clear to the Sudanese Government that we're intent upon providing security for the people there, and intent upon helping work toward a lasting peace agreement.

And so I appreciate your understanding of that. The first time I made the phone call to the Secretary General, he fully understood the challenge, fully understood the need, and it was great to work with a friend in peace to devise a strategy on how to move forward.