

Lessons Learned in the War on Terror

Q. Mr. President, you spoke about missteps and mistakes in Iraq. Could I ask both of you which missteps and mistakes of your own you most regret?

President Bush. Sounds like kind of a familiar refrain here—saying “bring it on,” kind of tough talk, you know, that sent the wrong signal to people. I learned some lessons about expressing myself maybe in a little more sophisticated manner—you know, “wanted dead or alive,” that kind of talk. I think in certain parts of the world it was misinterpreted, and so I learned from that. And I think the biggest mistake that’s happened so far, at least from our country’s involvement in Iraq, is Abu Ghraib. We’ve been paying for that for a long period of time. And it’s—unlike Iraq, however, under Saddam, the people who committed those acts were brought to justice. They’ve been given a fair trial and tried and convicted.

Prime Minister Blair. I think inevitably, some of the things that we thought were going to be the biggest challenge proved not to be, and some of the things we didn’t expect to be challenges at all proved to be immense. I think that probably in retrospect—though at the time it was very difficult to argue this—we could have done the de-Baathification in a more differentiated way than we did.

I think that the most difficult thing, however, has been the determination of people to move against the democratic process in Iraq in a way that, I think—as I was saying a moment or two ago—indicates our opponents’ very clear view from a very early stage that they have to stop the democratic process working. And I think it’s easy to go back over mistakes that we may have made, but the biggest reason why Iraq has been difficult is the determination of our opponents to defeat us. And I don’t think we should be surprised at that.

Maybe in retrospect, when we look back, it should have been very obvious to us, and is obvious still in Afghanistan, that for them, it is very clear. You know, they can’t afford to have these countries turned round, and I think that probably, there was a whole series of things in Iraq that were bound to come out once you got Al Qaida and other

groups operating in there to cause maximum destruction and damage. And therefore, I’m afraid in the end, we’re always going to have to be prepared for the fall of Saddam not to be the rise of democratic Iraq; that it was going to be a more difficult process.

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, can I buy you dinner?

Prime Minister Blair. Certainly.

NOTE: The President’s news conference began at 7:31 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, former President Saddam Hussein, President Jalal Talabani, and Speaker of the Council of Representatives Mahmoud al-Mashhadani of Iraq; Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran; and senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. Prime Minister Blair referred to Lt. Gen. Sir Robert Fry, the Royal Marines, deputy commander, Multi-National Force—Iraq. A reporter referred to Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations.

Memorandum on Assignment of Certain Functions Relating to the Global War on Terror

May 25, 2006

Memorandum for the Secretary of State and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget

Subject: Assignment of Certain Functions Relating to the Global War on Terror

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and laws of the United States, including section 301 of title 3, United States Code, the functions of the President under the heading “Peacekeeping Operations” in chapter 2 of title II in Division A of the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Tsunami Relief, 2005 (Public Law 109–13) are assigned to the Secretary of State. The Secretary should consult the Director of the Office of Management and Budget as appropriate in the performance of such functions.

The Secretary of State is authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 26. An original was not available for verification of the content of this memorandum.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Michael V. Hayden To Be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency

May 26, 2006

I commend the Senate for confirming Michael Hayden as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency by a bipartisan majority. Winning the war on terror requires that America have the best intelligence possible, and his strong leadership will ensure that we do. General Hayden is a patriot and a dedicated public servant whose broad experience, dedication, and expertise make him the right person to lead the CIA at this critical time. I look forward to working with Ambassador Negroponte, General Hayden, and the other leaders of our intelligence community as we continue to address the challenges and threats we face in the 21st century. I congratulate General Hayden and his family on his confirmation and thank him for his continued service to our Nation.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Brett M. Kavanaugh To Be a United States Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia

May 26, 2006

I applaud the Senate's vote to confirm Brett Kavanaugh to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. Brett Kavanaugh is superbly qualified for the Court of Appeals and will be a brilliant, thoughtful, and fair-minded judge. I appreciate his distinguished service in the executive branch for the last 5 years, as Associate Counsel and then Senior Associate Counsel to the President, and since July 2003 in the vital role of Staff Secretary. I congratulate

Brett and his family on today's confirmation and thank him for his continued service to the law and our Nation.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Dirk Kempthorne To Be the Secretary of the Interior

May 26, 2006

I applaud the Senate for confirming Dirk Kempthorne as Secretary of the Interior. Dirk has an abiding love of nature and the outdoors and is dedicated to conserving our natural resources. He will continue my administration's efforts to effectively manage our national parks, support historic and cultural sites through our Preserve America Initiative, and pursue environmentally responsible energy development on Federal lands and waters. He will also work to maintain good relations with Native American tribes and will play a leadership role in my cooperative conservation approach to environmental stewardship. I congratulate Dirk and his family on today's confirmation and thank him for his continued service to our Nation.

Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom

May 26, 2006

The United States has no closer ally than the United Kingdom. U.S. and U.K. forces are fighting terror in Afghanistan, Iraq, and around the globe. The Prime Minister and the President discussed ways to strengthen defense cooperation.

The two leaders are pleased to announce that the United States and United Kingdom recently signed an agreement that allows appropriately cleared British and U.S. personnel to use the same computer network to access military and intelligence information and other planning tools to support joint military operations in the defense of freedom.

Additionally, the leaders recognize that as American and British soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines are right now standing together in harm's way, we must plan for the