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Bush's Vow:

We'll Stop At Nothing

Demands all nations choose sides in war on terror

By Ken Fireman
WASHINGTON BUREAU

Washington — Declaring that "freedom and fear are at war," President George W. Bush last night challenged the nation to use every available weapon to defeat international terrorism and flatly demanded that each government around the world choose sides in the coming conflict.

In a speech to a joint session of Congress, the president announced creation of a cabinet-level office of homeland security to coordinate the government's counter-terrorism effort and named an old political ally, Gov. Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania, to head it.

And as a host of New Yorkers ranging from Gov. George Pataki and Mayor Rudolph Giuliani to rank-and-file police and fire personnel looked down from the VIP box, Bush declared: "We will rebuild New York City."

Speaking as U.S. warships, aircraft and soldiers headed toward the Middle East, a steely-eyed Bush called on the American military to "be ready" and vowed to bring to heel the perpetrators of last week's terror attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C.

"Tonight we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom," he said. "Our grief has turned to anger, and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done."

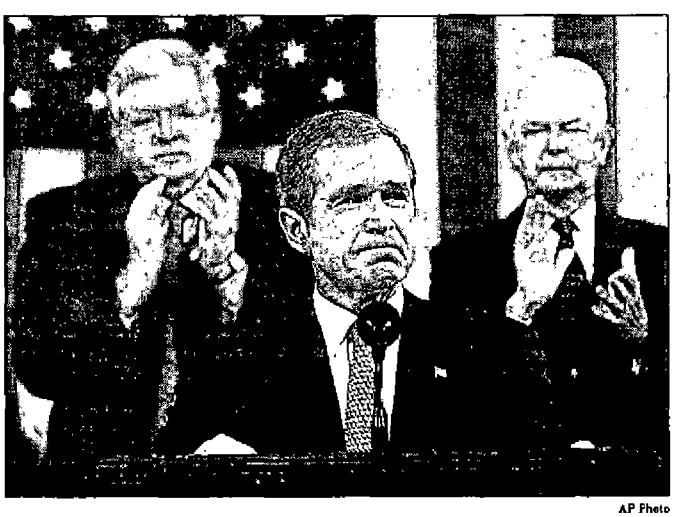
Reiterating the accusation — while offering no specific proof — that Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaida network were responsible for the terror attacks, Bush set forth a series of tough demands on the Afghan Taliban regime that harbors bin Laden. And he made it clear that the consequences of refusal would be dire.

Bush's demands amounted to an ultimatum that the Taliban open its country to U.S. forces. It must, he said, deliver to the United States all al-Qaida leaders who are sheltered there, hand over every terrorist and supporter in the country to "appropriate authorities," close every terrorist training camp in Afghanistan and give the United States full access to those camps so their closure can be ascertained.

"These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion," Bush said. "The Taliban must act and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate."

Even as he voiced his determination to mete out justice to bin Laden and his network, Bush declared that he would not be satisfied with the goal. "Our war on terror begins with al-Qaida, but it does not end there," he said. "It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated."

Bush also sought to define an overarching purpose to the campaign, linking it to America's great global struggles against Nazism and communism. The Islamic radicals and their supporters, he said, were the ideological inheritors of those defeated adversaries, and would suffer their fate in the end.



AP Photo

Speaker Dennis Hastert, left, and Sen. Robert Byrd applaud Bush. "The Taliban must act and act immediately," Bush told Congress, the nation and the world.

"We have seen their kind before," Bush said. "They are the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions — by abandoning every value except the will to power — they follow in the path of Fascism and Nazism and totalitarianism. And they will follow that path all the way to where it ends: In history's unmarked grave of discarded lies."

But Bush also sought to assure the Islamic and Arab worlds that the campaign was not aimed at them. Millions of U.S. citizens freely and peacefully practice the Muslim faith, Bush noted, and Islam hardly countenances the kind of violence visited upon innocent civilians by the terrorists.

"Its teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah," he said. "The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying in effect to hijack Islam itself."

Nonetheless, Bush drew a line that went well beyond what American leaders had articulated in previous conflicts. "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make," he said. "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime."

While warning the military to prepare for action, Bush also urged the nation to be patient and to anticipate a struggle that will range across many fronts, many of them unconventional.

"We will direct every resource at our command — every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence and every necessary weapon of war — to the disruption and defeat of the global terror network," he said.

The VIP box in the House chamber teemed with New Yorkers, reflecting the city's central role in the tragic terror attacks. They including Giuliani, Pataki, and New York City's Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik, Fire Commissioner Thomas Van Essen and Archbishop Edward Cardinal Egan.

Also in the box were Police Officer William Fischer, who while off-duty at the time of the attacks rushed to the World Trade Center and spent the next 17 hours trying to free victims; Fire Battalion Chief John Jonas, who was one of the first to respond to the attack and was trapped in debris for three hours after the north tower collapse; and Port Authority Police Officer Padraig Carroll, who helped rescue victims.

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AP Photos

Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Laura Bush applaud Giuliani and Pataki during Bush's speech.

Bush Makes Demands

SPEECH from A3

Bush said he would carry, as his permanent memory of Sept. 11, the shield of a New York police officer named George Howard, of Hicksville, who died at the World Trade Center on that day. The shield, which he said was given him by Howard's mother, would be "my reminder of the lives that ended — and a task that does not end."

Another box seat was occupied by British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who visited the scene of the collapsed towers earlier in the day and then met with Bush at the White House to demonstrate British support.

Both the mayor and governor praised the speech afterward. "It defined where America is and where America has to go. It was the best explanation I've heard of terrorism," Giuliani said. Pataki said the speech "outlined the steps to eradicate this threat. It was an effective way to reach out to countries around the world."

The 35-minute speech was interrupted by standing ovations 23 times and by applause another six, though members of Congress appeared serious and determined as they stood, refraining from the hoots and whistles that usually greet presidential speeches. The loudest and longest ovation came when Bush introduced Giuliani and Pataki.

"It was not like any type of political speech I've been to," said Rep. Peter King (R-Seaford). The absence of partisanship was accentuated after the speech when King received a big kiss from Democrat Juanita Millender-McDonald (D-Calif.).

"He's been great to New York," said Sen. Charles Schumer, "even though we were one of the 'blue' states that were not with him [in the election]." Bush, leaving the House chamber after his speech, hugged Schumer around the neck, called him "Ellis" — Schumer's middle name — and said, "we're with you all the way."

The extraordinarily tight security for the address was symbolized by the absence of Vice President Dick Cheney, who normally sits just behind the president and next to the speaker of the House during such presidential speeches to Congress.

Instead, Cheney was kept away from the scene as a security precaution to avoid having all top government leaders in the same place and watched the speech from an undisclosed "secure location." His spot on the dais was occupied by the Senate's president pro tem, Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.V.).

Similarly, one member of the congressional leadership, House Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-Tex.) was also asked to stay away from the House chamber. By long tradition, one member of the cabinet also stayed away.

In an indication of the unusual bipartisan unity created by the terror attacks, Democrats eschewed the traditional party response to a presidential address that is usually broadcast immediately afterward. Instead, Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) and Minority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) jointly appeared after Bush's speech to express support for the president.

Tom Frank and Emily Tjelmeland of Newsday's Washington bureau contributed to this story.

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