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President Bush Addresses the Nation

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By The NorthStar News Staff

Declares that the U.S. and Allies Have Prevailed In Iraq

Stealing a page from Ronald Reagan, President Bush used high drama to address sailors on the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln to declare, *"In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed."* The president had arrived earlier in the evening in a military aircraft aboard the aircraft carrier that was en route to its port in San Diego. With the open sea and a setting sun serving as a backdrop, George W. Bush strode triumphantly to the podium to the strains of "Hail to the Chief" and the cheers of the assembled troops. The orchestrated setting was meant to convey a sense of triumph in a war that continues to divide the American public, and draw the suspicion of the international community.

President Bush carefully chose his words in addressing the national audience. Perhaps the most noticeable aspect of his speech (Remarks of President Bush) was his reference to the war as a "battle." The president seemed intent on not using the word "war" to describe the military invasion of Iraq. By doing so, he painted a picture of a rolling campaign against "terror" and not a singular event with a beginning or end. It was a subtle massaging of words that were employed to convince the American public of the correctness of the *Bush Doctrine*, the engagement of the military against perceived threats for the purpose of "regime change."

The most glaring omission in the president's address was any direct reference to "weapons of mass destruction" in Iraq. President Bush made a passing remark in the context of fighting terror but did not respond to growing criticism over the failure of the U.S. to uncover chemical and biological agents. The case for war was built upon the claim by the White House that it had irrefutable evidence that Sadaam Hussein was harboring deadly weapons that posed a threat to the security of the United States and its allies. To bolster that argument, President Bush had, on multiple occasions, made statements, as fact, that there was a link between the Hussein regime and Al Qaeda terrorists responsible for the September 11, 2001 attacks. This line of reasoning was also put forth by Secretary of State Colin Powell when he was attempting to convince the United Nations Security Council to declare Iraq in violation of Resolution 1441 and authorize the use of military force to disarm Hussein.

The president referenced September 11 to suggest that the basis of the war was the government's campaign to fight global terrorism. It was clear that the theme of the evening was "High Noon" as President Bush sought to send a message of "zero tolerance" to would-be dictators and terrorists. He also made certain not to declare the war over but to suggest that our interests had been served. At one point in the speech the president proclaimed that Arabs, among others, would have a permanent friend in the United States if they choose to align themselves with our interests.

Against this picture of triumph Iraqi citizens in Fullujah continue to protest the U.S. occupation. The shooting and killing of civilians by U.S. forces has increased tensions at a time when many Iraqis are beginning to assert self-determination rights. In his speech the president praised the humanity the U.S. forces showed Iraqi citizens and remarked on the warm reception showered upon soldiers. While there have certainly been televised reports of cheering Iraqis standing in streets greeting arriving troops, the mood in recent days has swung as more and more civilians seek to determine their own destiny, free of U.S. influence. Compounding matters are signs that the Shiite community sees the current impasse as an opportunity to build support for an Islamic government. Not only is this a potential cause for internal strife, it runs counter to the intent of the Bush administration; as was evident in Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld's reaction earlier in the week when queried about the possibility of an Islamic state in post-war Iraq.

If this is Victory, Where are Sadaam and the Weapons?

Strangely reminiscent of the Persian Gulf War, a President Bush claimed success though the primary target of the military offensive – Iraqi President Sadaam Hussein- remains at-large and the primary objective – eliminating weapons of mass

destruction – remains unfulfilled. The irony of the president's speech is that it was given at a time when the fate of Sadaam Hussein is the subject of much speculation. Videotapes that have surfaced in recent weeks suggest that the Iraqi leader was able to elude U.S. forces and could be safely out of the country. Though many of the Iraqi leader's key lieutenants have been located and taken into custody, it appears that none have offered any solid evidence to the whereabouts of Hussein. So long as he is unaccounted for, and popular perception keeps him alive, the legitimacy of the Iraq war will be tainted.

Similarly, with each passing day, the failure to locate any weapons of mass destruction will raise eyebrows among segments of the American public already skeptical of Bush's motives, and the international community that did not agree with the president's assessment of a threat. A significant amount of political capital was spent making the case that our foray into Iraq was justified because Hussein's possession of chemical and biological weapons made the Iraqi leader a permanent menace. What was rarely discussed was whether, even if he did indeed have a weapons arsenal, he had an effective delivery system. Given the swift collapse of the Iraqi army, particularly the vaunted Republican Guard, it is difficult to imagine that Hussein ever had the capability to inflict much beyond rhetoric. Given that U.S. and allied troops encountered little organized resistance, and no germ warfare during battle, the weapons of mass destruction claim is beginning to look like a red herring.

What makes this situation intriguing is that at some point this contradiction may come back to haunt the president in the same manner that the failure to advance on Hussein doomed his father, President George H. Bush.

Battle Over Economic Stimulus Package Looms

Mirroring his father's administration, President Bush is now faced with an economy that has been paralyzed since the events of September 11, 2001. As each day passes, good news is hard to find amid reports of downsizing, corporate wrongdoing, and chronic unemployment. The president's proposal for a massive tax cut has drawn opposition within his own party, ranging from an absolute no from Arizona **Senator John McCain** to an alternative proposal for a smaller cut being offered by **Senator Olympia Snowe** of Maine and Ohio **Senator George Voinivich**. The fact that the president cannot galvanize his party around his economic agenda, despite polling suggesting he has benefited from the war, only serves to reinforce the perception that he lacks a domestic vision. Federal Reserve Chairman Allen Greenspan, whose re-appointment was recently supported by President Bush, threw more cold water on the president's plan when he publicly suggested that a tax cut is not necessary to stimulate the economy.

The president's economic package is of critical importance to Black Americans. Throughout the country states are faced with massive budget deficits that are resulting in the elimination of critical services and layoffs, in both the public and private sectors. U.S. Department of Labor statistics over the last two months indicate that Blacks have been particularly devastated by the economic downturn, with Black men taking a big hit. Meanwhile, the earnings gap between college-educated whites and Blacks persist despite some gains in middle-income families. If this downturn persists, many Black families that have been treading water will be most at-risk. These include municipal and state employees and individuals in middle managemen in the private sector. Whatever gains realized by the boom of the 1990's will be quickly lost as Blacks, and Latinos, will once again bear the brunt of the economy.