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President Bush

Current
Policy
No. 1295

Iraq Responsible For US Hostages

United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs
Washington, DC

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- The immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait;
- The restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government;
- The security and stability of Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf; and,
- The protection of American citizens abroad.

Our actions to achieve these objectives have been equally clear. Within hours of the assault, the United States moved to freeze Iraq's assets in this country and to protect those of Kuwait. I asked Dick Cheney—Secretary [of Defense] Cheney—to go to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Morocco to arrange for military cooperation between us in

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key Arab states. And I asked Jim Baker—Secretary [of State] Baker—to go to Turkey and to Brussels to rally the support of our NATO allies. Both of these missions were extraordinarily successful. The world response to Iraq was a near unanimous chorus of condemnation.

With great speed, the UN Security Council passed five resolutions. These resolutions condemned Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, demanded Iraq's immediate and unconditional withdrawal, and rejected Iraq's annexation of Kuwait. The United Nations has also mandated sanctions against Iraq, those Chapter VII sanctions, and endorsed all measures that may be necessary to enforce these sanctions. And the United Nations has demanded that Iraq release all foreign nationals being held against their will without delay.

The UN sanctions are in effect and have been working remarkably well, even on a voluntary basis. Iraqi oil no longer flows through pipelines to ports in Turkey and Saudi Arabia. And again, I want to thank both the Saudis and the Turks for their lead role in all of this. And today, reports indicate that traffic through Aqaba [Jordan] has come virtually to a halt.

US military forces stand shoulder to shoulder with forces of many Arab and European states to deter and, if need be, defend Saudi Arabia against attack. And US naval forces sail with the navies of many other states to make the sanctions as watertight as possible. This is not, as Saddam Hussein claims, the United States against Iraq. It is truly Iraq against the majority in the Arab world; Iraq against the rest of the world.

And so the basic elements of our strategy are now in place. And where do we want to go? Well, our intention, and indeed the intention of almost every country in the world, is to persuade Iraq to withdraw; that it cannot benefit from this illegal occupation; that it will pay a stiff price by trying to hold on and an even stiffer price by widening the conflict. And, of course, we seek to achieve these goals without further violence.

The United States supports the UN Secretary General and other leaders working to promote a peaceful resolution of this crisis on the basis of Security Council Resolution 660.

I also remain deeply concerned about the American and other foreign nationals held hostage by Iraq. As I have said before, when it comes to the safety and well-being of American citizens held against their will, I will hold Baghdad responsible. ■

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