

**Remarks of Edward M. Kennedy, Member, United States Senate (D-MA) Washington, D.C.,
January 14, 2004**

Une réponse cinglante au discours du Président des Etats-Unis sur l' ETAT de l'UNION

Thank you General Nash for that generous introduction. General Nash had an impressive career in the U.S. Army. His experience and expertise in conflict prevention and post-war reconstruction from his leadership in the Balkans has greatly assisted the debate on post-war Iraq. I'm grateful to him for his impressive public service, and for joining us today. I'd also like to thank Brian and Alma Hart and Sergeant Peter Damon for coming today. The Hart's son, John, was killed in Iraq this fall on patrol in an unarmored Humvee. Sergeant Damon lost both his arms serving in Iraq. We honor their service and their sacrifice.

The enduring accomplishments of our nation's leaders are those that are grounded in the fundamental values that gave birth to this great country.

Our Founders so eloquently stated in the preamble to our Constitution, this nation was founded by "We the People... in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity." Over the course of two centuries, these ideals inspired and enabled thirteen tiny quarreling colonies to transform themselves-not just into the most powerful nation on earth, but also into the "last, best hope of earth."

These ideals have been uniquely honored by history and advanced by each new generation of Americans, often through great sacrifice. In these uncertain times, it is imperative that our leaders hold true to those founding ideals and protect the fundamental trust between the government and the people. Nowhere is this trust more important than between the people and the President of the United States. As the leader of our country and the voice of America to the world, our President has the obligation to lead and speak with truth and integrity if this nation is to continue to reap the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity.

The citizens of our democracy have a fundamental right to debate and even doubt the wisdom of a president's policies. And the citizens of our democracy have a sacred obligation to sound the alarm and shed light on the policies of an Administration that is leading this country to a perilous place. I believe that this Administration is indeed leading this country to a perilous place. It has broken faith with the American people, aided and abetted by a Congressional majority willing to pursue ideology at any price, even the price of distorting the truth. On issue after issue, they have moved brazenly to impose their agenda on America and on the world. They have pursued their goals at the expense of urgent national and human needs and at the expense of the truth. America deserves better.

The Administration and the majority in Congress have put the state of our union at risk, and they do not deserve another term in the White House or in control of Congress. I do not make these statements lightly. I make them as an American deeply concerned about the future of the Republic if the extremist policies of this Administration continue.

By far the most extreme and most dire example of this Administration's reckless pursuit of its single-minded ideology is in foreign policy. In its arrogant disrespect for the United Nations and for other peoples in other lands, this Administration and this Congress have squandered the immense goodwill that other nations extended to our country after the terrorist attacks of September 11.

And in the process, they made America a lesser **And in the process, they made America a lesser and a less respected land. Nowhere is the danger to our country and to our founding ideals more evident than in the decision to go to war in Iraq.**

Secretary of Treasury, Paul O' Neill has now revealed what many of us have long suspected. Despite protestations to the contrary, the President and his senior aides began the march to war in Iraq in the earliest days of the Administration, long before the terrorists struck this nation on 9/11. The examination of the public record and of the statements of President Bush and his aides reveals that the debate about overthrowing Saddam began long before the beginning of this Administration. Its roots began thirteen years ago, during the first Gulf War, when the first President Bush decided not to push on to Baghdad and oust Saddam. President Bush and his National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft explained the reason for that decision in their 1997 book, *A World Transformed*. They wrote the following: "Trying to eliminate Saddam, extending the ground war into an occupation of Iraq, would have violated our guideline about not changing objectives in midstream... and would have incurred incalculable human and political costs... We would have been forced to occupy Baghdad and, in effect, rule Iraq. The coalition would instantly have collapsed, the Arabs deserting it in anger and other allies pulling out as well. Under those circumstances, there was no viable exit strategy we could see, violating another of our principles... Had we gone the invasion route, the United States could conceivably still be an occupying power in a bitterly hostile land." Those words are eerily descriptive of our current situation in Iraq.

During the first Gulf War, Paul Wolfowitz was a top adviser to then Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, and he disagreed strongly with the decision by the first President Bush to stop the war after driving Saddam out of Kuwait. After that war ended, Wolfowitz convened a Pentagon working group to make the case that regime change in Iraq could easily be achieved by military force. The Wolfowitz group concluded that "U.S. forces could win unilaterally or with the aid of a small group of a coalition of forces within 54 days of mid to very high intensity combat." Saddam's attempted assassination of President Bush during a visit to Kuwait in 1993 added fuel to the debate. After his tenure at the Pentagon, Wolfowitz became Dean of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and continued to criticize the decision not to end the reign of Saddam. In 1994 he wrote, "With hindsight, it does seem like a mistake to have announced, even before the war was over, that we would not go to Baghdad..." Wolfowitz's resolve to oust Saddam was unwavering. In 1997, he wrote, "We will have to confront him sooner or later-and sooner would be better... unfortunately, at this point, only the substantial use of military force could prove that the U.S. is serious and reverse the slow collapse of the international coalition."

The following year, Wolfowitz, Donald Rumsfeld and 16 others - 10 of whom are now serving in or officially advising the current Bush Administration - wrote President Clinton, urging him to use military force to remove Saddam. They said, "The only acceptable strategy is one that eliminates the possibility that Iraq will be able to use or threaten to use weapons of mass destruction. In the near term, this means a willingness to undertake military action, as diplomacy is clearly failing. In the long term, it means removing Saddam Hussein and his regime from power. That now needs to become the aim of American foreign policy." That was 1998. President Clinton was in office, and regime change in Iraq did become the policy of the Clinton Administration - but not by war. As soon as the current President Bush took office in 2001, he brought a group of conservatives with him, including Wolfowitz, Rumsfeld, and others, who had been outspoken advocates for most of the previous decade for the forcible removal of Saddam Hussein. At first, President Bush was publicly silent on the issue. But as Paul O'Neill has told us, the debate was alive and well. I happen to know Paul O'Neill, and I have great respect for him. I worked with him on key issues of job safety and health care when he was at ALCOA in the 1990s. He's a person of great integrity, intelligence, and vision, and he had impressive ideas for improving the quality of health care in the Pittsburgh area. It is easy to understand why he was so concerned by what he heard about Iraq in the Bush Administration. In his "60 Minutes" interview last Sunday, O'Neill said that overthrowing Saddam was on the agenda from day one of the new Administration.

O'Neill said, "From the very beginning there was a conviction that Saddam Hussein was a bad person and that he needed to go... It was all about finding a way to do it. That was the tone of it. The President was saying, "Go find me a way to do this." The agenda was clear: find a rationale to end Saddam's regime. But there was resistance to military intervention by those who felt that the existing sanctions on Iraq should be strengthened. Saddam had been contained and his military capabilities had been degraded by the Gulf War and years of U.N. sanctions and inspections. At a press conference a month after the inauguration, Secretary of State Colin Powell said, "We have kept him contained, kept him in his box." The next day, Secretary Powell very clearly stated that Saddam "has not developed any significant capability with respect to weapons of mass

destruction..."Then, on September 11, 2001, terrorists attacked us and everything changed. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld immediately began to link Saddam Hussein to Al Qaeda and the attacks. According to notes taken by an aide to Rumsfeld on September 11, the very day of the attacks, the Secretary ordered the military to prepare a response to the attacks. The notes quote Rumsfeld as saying that he wanted the best information fast, to judge whether the information was good enough to hit Saddam and not just Osama bin Laden. "Go massive," the notes quote him as saying. "Sweep it all up. Things related and not."The advocates of war in Iraq desperately sought to make the case that Saddam was linked to 9/11 and Al Qaeda, and that he was on the verge of acquiring a nuclear capability. They created an Office of Special Projects in the Pentagon to analyze the intelligence for war. They bypassed the traditional screening process and put pressure on intelligence officers to produce the desired intelligence and analysis.As the world now knows, Saddam's connection to 9/11 was false. Saddam was an evil dictator. But he was never close to having a nuclear capability.

The Administration has found no arsenals of chemical or biological weapons. It has found no persuasive connection to al-Qaeda. All this should have been clear. The Administration should not have looked at the facts with ideological blinders and with a mindless dedication to the results they wanted. A recent report by the Carnegie Endowment concluded that Administration officials systematically misrepresented the threat from Iraq's nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons programs. They also concluded that the intelligence community was unduly influenced by the policymakers' views and intimidating actions, such as Vice President Cheney's repeated visits to CIA headquarters and demands by officials for access to the raw intelligence from which the analysts were working. The report also noted the unusual speed with which the National Intelligence Estimate was written and the high number of dissents in what is designed to be a consensus document.In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, President Bush himself made clear that his highest priority was finding Osama bin Laden. At a press conference on September 17, 2001, he said that he wanted bin Laden "dead or alive." Three days later, in an address to a Joint Session of Congress, President Bush demanded of the Taliban: "Deliver to the United States authorities all the leaders of al-Qaeda who hide in your land." And Congress cheered.

On November 8, the President told the country, "I have called our military into action to hunt down the members of the al-Qaeda organization who murdered innocent Americans." In doing that, he had the full support of Congress and the nation-and rightly so. Soon after the war began in Afghanistan, however, the President started laying the groundwork in public to shift attention to Iraq. In the Rose Garden on November 26, he said: "Afghanistan is still just the beginning." Three days later, even before Hamid Karzai had been approved as interim Afghan President, Vice President Cheney publicly began to send signals about attacking Iraq. On November 29, he said "I don't think it takes a genius to figure out that this guy [Saddam Hussein] is clearly... a significant potential problem for the region, for the United States, for everybody with interests in the area."On December 12, the Vice President elaborated further: "If I were Saddam Hussein, I'd be thinking very carefully about the future, and I'd be looking very closely to see what happened to the Taliban in Afghanistan."Prior to the terrorist attacks on September 11, President Bush's approval rating was only 50%. But with his necessary and swift action in Afghanistan against the Taliban for harboring bin Laden and al-Qaeda, his approval soared to 86%.Soon, Karl Rove joined the public debate, and war with Iraq became all but certain. At a meeting of the Republican National Committee in Los Angeles on January 19, 2002, Rove made clear that the war on terrorism could be used politically, and that Republicans, as he put it, could "go to the country on this issue."Ten days later, the deal was all but sealed. In his State of the Union Address, President Bush broadened his policy on Afghanistan to other terrorist regimes. He unveiled the "Axis of Evil" - Iraq, Iran, and North Korea.

Those three words forged the lock-step linkage between the Bush Administration's top political advisers and the Big Three of Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz. We lost our previous clear focus on the most imminent threat to our national security-Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda terrorist network.What did President Bush say about bin Laden in the State of the Union Address that day? Nothing. What did he say about the Taliban? Nothing.Nothing about bin Laden. One fleeting reference about Al Qaeda. Nothing about the Taliban in that State of the Union Address.Barely four months had passed since the worst terrorist atrocity in American history. Five bin Laden videotapes had been broadcast since September 11, including one that was aired after bin Laden escaped at the battle of Tora Bora. President Bush devoted 12 paragraphs in his State of the Union Address to Afghanistan, and 29 paragraphs to the global war on terrorism. But he had nothing to say about Bin Laden or al-Qaeda.Why not? Because of an extraordinary policy coup.

Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz-the Axis of War-had prevailed. The President was changing the subject to Iraq. In the months that followed, Administration officials began to draw up the war plan and develop a plausible rationale for the war. Richard Haass, Director of Policy Planning at the Department State during this period, said recently that "the agenda was not whether Iraq, but how." Haass said the actual decision to go to war had been made in July 2002. He had questioned the wisdom of war with Iraq at that time, but National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice told him, "Essentially...that decision's been made. Don't waste your breath." It was Vice President Cheney who outlined to the country the case against Iraq that he had undoubtedly been making to President Bush all along. On August 26, 2002, in an address to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Vice President argued against UN inspections in Iraq and announced that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction, meaning chemical and biological weapons.

He also said: "We now know that Saddam has resumed his efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. Among other sources, we've gotten this from the firsthand testimony of defectors, including Saddam's own son-in-law, who was subsequently murdered at Saddam's direction. Many of us are convinced that Saddam will acquire nuclear weapons fairly soon." Those were Cheney's words. It is now plain what was happening: The drumbeat for war was sounding, and it drowned out those who believed that Iraq posed no imminent threat. On August 29, just two days after Cheney's speech, President Bush signed off on the war plan. On September 12, the President addressed the United Nations and said: "Iraq likely maintains stockpiles of VX, mustard, and other chemical agents and has made several attempts to buy high-strength aluminum tubes used to enrich uranium for a nuclear weapon." He told the United Nations that Iraq would be able to build a nuclear weapon "within a year," if Saddam acquired nuclear material. President Bush was focusing on Iraq and Saddam, even though one year after the attack on our country, bin Laden was still nowhere to be found. A sixth bin Laden tape had been aired, and news reports of the time revealed new military threats in Afghanistan. U.S. and Afghan military and intelligence officials were quoted as saying that al-Qaeda had established two main bases inside Pakistan. An Afghan military intelligence chief said: "al-Qaeda has regrouped, together with the Taliban, Kashmiri militants, and other radical Islamic parties, and they are just waiting for the command to start operations." Despite the obvious al-Qaeda threat in Afghanistan, the White House had now made Iraq our highest national security priority. The steamroller of war was moving into high gear.

The politics of the timing is obvious. September 2002. The hotly contested 2002 election campaigns were entering the home stretch. Control of Congress was clearly at stake.

Republicans were still furious over the conversion of Senator Jim Jeffords that had cost them control of the Senate in 2001. Election politics prevailed, but they should not have prevailed over foreign policy and national security. The decision on Iraq could have been announced earlier. Why time it for September? As White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card explained on September 7, "From a marketing point of view, you don't introduce new products in August." That was the bottom line. War in Iraq was a war of choice, not a war of necessity. It was a product they were methodically rolling out. There was no imminent threat, no immediate national security imperative, and no compelling reason for war. In public, the Administration continued to deny that the President had made the decision to actually go to war. But the election timetable was clearly driving the marketing of the product. The Administration insisted that Congress vote to authorize the war before it adjourned for the November elections. Why? Because the debate in Congress would distract attention from the troubled economy and the troubled effort to capture bin Laden. The strategy was to focus on Iraq, and do so in a way that would divide the Congress. And it worked.

To keep the pressure on, President Bush spoke in Cincinnati on Iraq's nuclear weapons program, just three days before the Congressional vote. He emphasized the ties between Iraq and al-Qaeda. He emphasized Saddam's access to weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons. He said, "If the Iraqi regime is able to produce or steal an amount of highly enriched uranium a little larger than a single softball, it could have a nuclear weapon in less than a year. And if we allow that to happen, a terrible line would be crossed... Saddam Hussein would be in a position to pass nuclear technology to terrorists." The scare tactics worked. Congress voted to authorize the use of force in October 2002. Republicans voted almost unanimously for war, and kept control of the House in the election in November. Democrats were deeply divided and lost their majority in the Senate. The Iraq card had been played successfully. The White House now had control of both houses of Congress as well. As 2003 began, many in the military and foreign policy communities urged against a rush to war. United Nations weapons inspectors were in Iraq, searching for weapons of mass destruction. Saddam appeared to be contained. There was no evidence that Iraq

had been involved in the attacks on September 11. Many insisted that bin Laden and Al Qaeda and North Korea were greater threats, but their concerns were dismissed out of hand. Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz insisted that Iraq was the issue and that war against Iraq was the only option, with or without international support. They convinced the President that the war would be brief, that American forces would be welcomed as liberators, not occupiers, and that ample intelligence was available to justify going to war.

The gross abuse of intelligence was on full display in the President's State of Union address last January, when he spoke the now infamous 16 words, "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa." The President did not say that U.S. intelligence agencies agreed with this assessment. He simply and deviously said, "the British government has learned." As we all now know, that allegation was false. It had already been debunked a year earlier by the U.S. intelligence community. Yet it was included in the President's State of the Union Address. Has any other State of the Union Address ever been so disgraced by such blatant falsehood? In March 2003, on the basis, of a grossly exaggerated threat and grossly inadequate post-war planning, and with little international support, the United States invaded Iraq when we clearly should not have done so.

Major combat operations ended five weeks later. Dressed in a flight suit, the President flew out to an aircraft carrier and proclaimed "Mission Accomplished." It was a nice image for the 2004 campaign, until the facts intruded. The mission was far from accomplished. As the war dragged on and casualties mounted, the image on the aircraft carrier was ridiculed. The Administration replaced it with a new image-the President in Baghdad with cheering troops on Thanksgiving Day. Again, the image-makers stumbled. This time, the image was of the President holding his policy on Iraq-a turkey. On a recent visit to Iraq, the writer, Lucian Truscott, a 1969 graduate of West Point, spoke with an Army colonel in Baghdad. In an op-ed article in the New York Times last month, he wrote that Army officers spoke of feeling that "every order they receive is delivered with next November's election in mind, so there is little doubt at and near the top about who is really being used for what over here." There is little doubt as well that the Administration's plan to transfer sovereignty to the Iraqi people by this summer - and the pressure to hold elections in Afghanistan at that time - are intended to build momentum for the November elections in this country as well. Our troubles in foreign policy today are as clear as they are self-made. America cannot force its vision of democracy on the Iraqi people on our terms and on our election timetable. We cannot simply walk away from the wreckage of a war we never should have fought, so that President Bush can wage a political campaign based on dubious boasts of success.

Our overarching interest now is in the creation of a new Iraqi government that has legitimacy in the eyes of its own citizens, so that in the years ahead, the process of constructing democratic institutions and creating a stable peace can be completed. The date of Iraq's transition must not be determined by the date of U.S. elections. We all agree that the Iraqi people are safer with Saddam behind bars. They no longer fear that he will ever return to power. But the war in Iraq itself has not made America safer. Saddam's evil regime was not an adequate justification for war, and the Administration did not seriously try to make it one until long after the war began and all the other plausible justifications had proven false. The threat he posed was not imminent. The war has made America more hated in the world, especially in the Islamic world. And it has made our people more vulnerable to attacks both here and overseas. By far the most serious consequence of the unjustified and unnecessary war in Iraq is that it made the war on terrorism harder to win. We knocked al-Qaeda down in the war in Afghanistan, but we let it regroup by going to war in Iraq. For nearly three weeks, our nation was recently on higher terrorist alert again. And certain places will continue to be on high alert for the foreseeable future. As Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge said so ominously in announcing the recent alert: "al-Qaeda's continued desire to carry out attacks against our homeland are perhaps greater now than at any point since September 11." Eleven times in the two years since 9/11, al-Qaeda attacked Americans in other parts of the world and other innocent civilians. War with Iraq has given al-Qaeda a new recruiting program for terrorists. For each new group of terrorist recruits, the pool is growing of others ready to support them and encourage them. As another dangerous consequence of the war, our Army is over-stretched, over-stressed, and over-extended. Nearly 3,500 of our servicemen and women have been killed or wounded. By the end of 2004, eight of our ten active Army divisions will have been deployed for at least a year in the Middle East in support of Afghanistan or Iraq.

The Army is offering re-enlistment bonuses of \$10,000 to soldiers in Iraq, but many are turning the money down and turning a new tour of duty down. Members of the National Guard and Reserve

are being kept on active duty and away from their families, jobs, and communities for over a year. Al-Qaeda and the Taliban fighters who support them are stepping up their terrorist campaign in Afghanistan, launching more and more attacks against military personnel and civilians alike. The warlords are jeopardizing the stability of the country. They make their money from the drug trade, which is now booming again. International humanitarian assistance workers, once considered immune from violence, are now targets of a new Afghan insurgency. In all these ways, we are reaping the poison fruit of our misguided and arrogant foreign policy. The Administration capitalized on the fear created by 9/11 and put a spin on the intelligence and a spin on the truth to justify a war that could well become one of the worst blunders in more than two centuries of American foreign policy. We did not have to go to war. Alternatives were working. War must be a last resort. And this war never should have happened. We all care deeply about national security. We all care deeply about national defense. We take immense pride in the ability and dedication of the men and women in our armed forces and in the Reserves and the National Guard. The President should never have sent them in harm's way in Iraq for ideological reasons and on a timetable based on the marketing of a political product. We know the high price we have also had to pay-in our credibility with the international community-in the loss of life-in the individual tragedies of loved ones left behind in communities here at home-in the billions of dollars that should have been spent on jobs and housing and health care and education and civil rights and the environment and a dozen other clear priorities, and should not have been spent on a misguided war in Iraq. The Administration is breathtakingly arrogant. Its leaders are convinced they know what is in America's interest, but they refuse to debate it honestly. After repeatedly linking Saddam Hussein to Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden in his justification for war, the President now admits there was no such link. Paul Wolfowitz admitted in an interview that the Administration settled for "bureaucratic reasons" on weapons of mass destruction because it was "the one reason everyone could agree on." The Administration is vindictive and mean-spirited. When Ambassador Joseph Wilson publicly challenged the Administration for wrongly claiming that Iraq had purchased uranium from Niger for its nuclear weapons program, the Administration retaliated against his wife, potentially endangering her life and her career. President Bush and his advisers should have presented their case honestly, so that Congress and the American people could have engaged in the debate our democracy is owed, above all, on the issue of war and peace.

That is what democracy means, and it is the great strength of the checks and balances under the Constitution that has served us so well for so long. President Bush said it all when a television reporter asked him whether Saddam actually had weapons of mass destruction, or whether there was only the possibility that he might acquire them. President Bush answered, "So what's the difference?" The difference, Mr. President, is whether you go to war or not. No President of the United States should employ misguided ideology and distortion of the truth to take the nation to war. In doing so, the President broke the basic bond of trust between government and the people. If Congress and the American people knew the whole truth, America would never have gone to war.

To remain silent when we feel so strongly would be irresponsible. It would betray the fundamental ideals for which our troops are sacrificing their lives on battlefields half a world away. No President who does that to this land we love deserves to be re-elected.

At our best, America is a great and generous country, ever looking forward, ever seeking a better nation for our people and a better world for peoples everywhere. I'm optimistic that these high ideals will be respected and reaffirmed by the American people in November. The election cannot come too soon.

Thank you very much.

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