

Well, first of all, the leader in Iraq has publicly proclaimed his hatred for our country and what we stand for.

The Iraqi regime has a record—a record of torturing their own people, a brutal record, and a record of reckless aggression against those in their neighborhood.

The Iraqi regime has used weapons of mass destruction. They not only had weapons of mass destruction; they used weapons of mass destruction. They used weapons of mass destruction on people in other countries; they have used weapons of mass destruction on their own people. That's why I say Iraq is a threat, a real threat.

Four years ago, U.N. inspectors concluded that Iraq had failed to amount—account for large stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons, weapons capable of killing millions. In last month's declaration, Iraq again failed to account for those weapons.

The Iraqi dictator did not even attempt to submit a credible declaration. We can now be certain that he holds the United Nations and the U.N. Security Council and its resolutions in contempt. He really doesn't care about the opinion of mankind. Saddam Hussein was given a path to peace. Thus far, he has chosen the path of defiance.

The fate of the Iraqi regime is being determined by its own decisions. Saddam Hussein knows precisely what he can and must do to avoid conflict. We have made that clear. The world has spoken with one voice.

And even now, he could end his defiance and dramatically change directions. He has that choice to make. We certainly prefer voluntary compliance by Iraq. You see, the use of military force is this Nation's last option, its last choice.

Yet, if force becomes necessary to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and enforce the will of the United Nations, if force becomes necessary to secure our country and to keep the peace, America will act deliberately, America will act deci-

sively, and America will prevail because we've got the finest military in the world.

*Audience members.* Hooah!

*The President.* We are ready. We're prepared. And should the United States be compelled to act, our troops will be acting in the finest traditions of America—should we be forced to act. Should Saddam Hussein seals his fate by refusing to disarm, by ignoring the opinion of the world, you will be fighting not to conquer anybody but to liberate people.

See, we believe in freedom. No matter what their oppressors may say, the people of Iraq have no love for tyranny. Like all human beings, they desire and they deserve to live in liberty and to live in dignity. America seeks more than the defeat of terror. We seek the advance of human freedom in a world at peace. That is the charge history has given us, and that is the charge we will keep.

In crucial hours, the success of our cause will depend upon you. As members of our military, you serve this Nation's ideals, and you demonstrate those ideals in your code and in your character. As Commander in Chief, I have come to know the men and women who wear America's uniform. I have seen your love of country and your devotion to a cause larger than yourself. I have seen your discipline, your idealism, and your sense of honor. I know that every order I give can bring a cost. I also know without a doubt that every order I give will be carried out with skill and unselfish courage.

Some crucial hours may lie ahead. We know the challenges and the dangers we face. If this generation of Americans is ready, we accept the burden of leadership. We act in the cause of peace and freedom, and in that cause, we will prevail.

Thank you for your service. May God bless you. May God bless your families, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:55 a.m. at the Abrams Physical Fitness Center. In his