

beyond the gate

The State of the Union Address

by Ashley Craig

President George W. Bush gave his annual State of the Union Address on February 1, 2006. The speech outlined what the president's plans are for the United States in the upcoming years. He spoke of everything including new educational ideas, the American economy and the War on Terror. In his speech President Bush called for harmony between the political parties and support from all American citizens.

Concerning education, President Bush announced his new plan called American Competitiveness Initiative. This three step plan involves giving more money to physical sciences, making a tax break for research and development in technology permanent, and bringing around 30,000 math and science professionals into classrooms to help kids who are struggling in those areas. President Bush said "...to keep America

competitive, one commitment is necessary above all: We must continue to lead the world in human talent and creativity. Our greatest advantage in the world has always been our educated, hard-working, ambitious people - and we are going to keep that edge."

President Bush spoke with a positive attitude towards America's economy saying that even with all the obstacles, we have created around 4.6 million jobs in the last two and half years. This is more than Japan and the European Union combined. He also expressed his wishes that Congress will make his recent tax breaks permanent. One of the President's goals is to make America more competitive. He plans to do this by cutting programs that are not working. He says there are



too many special interest projects and by reforming these projects he could save taxpayers \$14 billion next year.

A large portion of the speech concentrated on the War on Terror. He declared his support for the war and his disdain for retreat: "In a time of testing, we cannot find security by abandoning our commitments and retreating within our borders. If

we were to leave these vicious attackers alone, they would not leave us alone. They would simply move the battlefield to our own shores. There is no peace in retreat. And there is no honor in retreat. By allowing radical Islam to work its will — by leaving an assaulted world to fend for itself - we would signal to all that

we no longer believe in our own ideals, or even in our own courage. But our enemies and our friends can be certain: The United States will not retreat from the world, and we will never surrender to evil."

President Bush read a letter from Marine Staff Sergeant Dan Clay, who was killed in Fallujah. In Sergeant Clay's last letter to his wife and children he wrote, "I know what honor is. It has been an honor

to protect and serve all of you. I faced death with the secure knowledge that you would not have to.... Never falter! Don't hesitate to honor and support those of us who have the honor of protecting that which is worth protecting."

Those are the President's main goals for America. Will he be able to accomplish these optimistic and drastic changes? President Bush ended his speech with: "Before history is written down in books, it is written in courage. Like Americans before us, we will show that courage and we will finish well. We will lead freedom's advance. We will compete and excel in the global economy. We will renew the defining moral commitments of this land. And so we move forward - optimistic about our country, faithful to its cause, and confident of victories to come. Thank you, God bless you, and may God bless America."

Baghdad Blasts Kill at Least 35

BBC News Press Release

At least 35 people have been killed and scores injured by four bomb blasts in Baghdad, a day after a curfew to stop escalating violence was lifted.

In the bloodiest attack, 24 people were killed when a suicide bomber blew himself up next to a petrol station in a Shia district of the city. US President George W Bush denounced the recent violence, saying Iraqis had to choose between "chaos or unity". As the carnage continued, Saddam Hussein's trial resumed in Baghdad. The former president and seven co-defendants are charged with killing 148 people in the town of Dujail after a failed assassination attempt against him.

In other developments:

- The bodies of nine Iraqis, including a Sunni Arab tribal leader, are found, riddled with bullets, in Tarfaya, south of the city of Baquba

- Two British soldiers are killed and another is injured by a roadside bomb on the outskirts of Amara, in southern Iraq

- A US soldier is killed by small-arms fire in the west of

Baghdad

- A bomb damages a mosque erected by Saddam Hussein over his father's grave in his hometown of Tikrit.

The BBC's Jim Muir in Baghdad says the latest attacks were an apparently co-ordinated onslaught aimed at killing and injuring as many people as possible. They come amid growing fears of a slide towards sectarian strife that has gathered momentum sharply since last week's attack on the Shia shrine in Samarra, he adds. Decrying the upsurge in violence, President Bush said the perpetrators wanted to "destroy in order to create chaos". "The people of Iraq and their leaders must make a choice. The choice is chaos or unity. The choice is a free society or a society dictated by evil people who will kill innocents," he said.

Twin blasts

The first car bomb exploded near a market and the Timimi mosque in the mainly Shia area of Karrada. The market would have been fairly busy at the time, police said. The capital was rocked by two simultaneous explosions



Courtesy of BBC News

minutes afterwards. A car bomb exploded near the main post office in a busy street, while the suicide bomber, who had strapped explosives to his body, blew himself up among a queue of people waiting for petrol nearby. "If the government cannot do anything, let it step back. We have suffered enough,"

Firas Hassan Illiwi, who witnessed the attack, told the Reuters news agency. "Why does all this happen to us? Is it because we are Shias? Our crime is being Shias."

The five defence ministry workers died when their convoy was hit by a roadside bomb in eastern Baghdad. On Tuesday, the Iraqi

government said 379 people had been killed and 458 injured in violence since the bombing of the Shia shrine in Samarra on 22 February. It denied figures reported in the Washington Post newspaper that put the death toll at 1,300.