

Bush: U.S. Strong, Terrorists Bad

From President Bush's State of the Union address: Tax cuts and security are good. Terrorists are bad. And the Democrats are getting itchy for a fight over the budget. By Brad King.



PRESIDENT GEORGE W. Bush reiterated his intention to increase defense spending and expand the war on terrorism while offering a plan to rebuild nations around the world in Tuesday night's State of the Union address.

Bush pushed his domestic policies as part of the war on terrorism. He offered few specifics on his budget, which will be delivered to Congress next week, but named North Korea, Iran and Iraq as "axis-of-evil" rogue states harboring terrorist training camps.

"Our war on terror is well begun, but it is only begun," Bush said during his speech.

"The campaign may not be finished on our watch, yet it must be and it will be waged on our watch. We can't stop short. If we stopped now -- leaving terror camps intact and terror states unchecked -- our sense of security would be false and temporary."

The White House will ask Congress to approve the largest defense spending increase in 20 years to build a modern-day arsenal of "smart" weapons and technologically advanced airplanes.

Bush said he would increase spending for airport policing, tougher border enforcement and bio-terrorism research. Part of the homeland security initiative

would use technology to track visitors coming to the United States.

While the military continues to pursue terrorists and domestic security increases, Bush said the nation would reach out to other nations through the Peace Corps. The president promised to double the number of volunteers to allow the organization to begin new operations throughout the Islamic world.

The new program is part of an overall message Bush delivered to Islamic citizens, many of whom are skeptical about America's ties with Israel and the military's presence throughout the Middle East.

"What we see often is that these American values are promoted, but are promoted only in certain circumstances," said Ibrahim Hooper, a spokesman for the Washington's Council on American-Islamic relations. "We just hope that the things that he mentions will be applied across the board, not just in selected cases."

Speaking to a packed auditorium at the University of California at Berkeley hours before Bush's address, former President Bill Clinton said the current administration needed to embrace the idea of rebuilding economically troubled nations. The global economic boom created a gap between rich and poor nations that allowed terrorists to proliferate and thrive, Clinton said. He urged Bush to continue debt relief for poor countries struggling to build education infrastructures, increase small business loan programs in foreign countries and make disease prevention spending a priority.

"A law enforcement and military solution alone isn't the answer," said Clinton. "I don't want you to substitute the walls we've torn down with barbed wire."

Bush shied away from directly addressing the Enron controversy, saying only that retirement funds should be protected and corporations be held accountable for accounting discrepancies. The administration has taken political heat since Vice President Dick Cheney said he wouldn't divulge who was a part of his energy task force.

The 48-minute speech was well received by both parties, who interrupted the president several times with applause. But Democratic leaders quickly went on the

offensive against Bush's economic stimulus package, which includes tax cuts and returns the country to deficit spending.

"Long after we defeat the terrorists, we will have to live with the consequences of this budget," said Rep. John Spratt (D-South Carolina), ranking Democrat on the House Budget Committee.

While offering full support for the war on terrorism, Richard Gephardt (D-Missouri), the House minority leader, said hammering out the details of the proposed tax cuts would take some work.

"Our values call for tax cuts that promote growth and prosperity for all America," Gephardt said. "Our values call for helping the unemployed -- not just large corporations and the most fortunate."

Reuters contributed to this report.

MORE FROM WIRED

US Lawmakers Want to Use a Powerful Spy Tool on Immigrants and Their Families

Legislation set to be introduced in Congress this week would extend Section 702 surveillance of people applying for green cards, asylum, and some visas—subjecting loved ones to similar intrusions.

DELL CAMERON

A Controversial US Surveillance Program May Get Slipped Into a ‘Must-Pass’ Defense Bill

Congressional leaders are discussing ways to reauthorize Section 702 surveillance, including by attaching it to the National Defense Authorization Act, Capitol Hill sources tell WIRED.

DELL CAMERON

A Civil Rights Firestorm Erupts Around a Looming Surveillance Power Grab

Dozens of advocacy groups are pressuring the US Congress to abandon plans to ram through the renewal of a controversial surveillance program that they say poses an “alarming threat to civil rights.”

DELL CAMERON

The CDC's Gun Violence Research Is in Danger

In a year pocked with fights over US government funding, Republicans are quietly trying to strip the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of its ability to research gun violence.

MATT LASLO

US Congress Report Calls for Privacy Reforms After FBI Surveillance ‘Abuses’

A new report by an oversight committee in the US House of Representatives says the FBI has routinely violated rules governing FISA’s Section 702 surveillance program and must be reined in.

DELL CAMERON

Congress Clashes Over the Future of America's Global Spy Program

Competing bills moving through the House of Representatives both reauthorize Section 702 surveillance—but they pave very different paths forward for Americans' privacy and civil liberties.

DELL CAMERON

Anduril's New Drone Killer Is Locked on to AI-Powered Warfare

Autonomous drones are rapidly changing combat. Anduril's new one aims to gain an edge with jet power and AI.

WILL KNIGHT

The Startup That Transformed the Hack-for-Hire Industry

Plus: The FBI's baffling inaction on a ransomware group, a massive breach of Danish electric utilities, and more.

ANDY GREENBERG