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 <u>during his speech</u>.

"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."

<u>The White House</u> 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 <u>Council on American–Islamic relations</u>. "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 <u>University of California at Berkeley</u> hours before Bush's address, former President <u>Bill Clinton</u> 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 <u>Enron</u> 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 <u>Rep. John Spratt</u> (D-South Carolina), ranking Democrat on the House Budget Committee.

While offering full support for the war on terrorism, <u>Richard Gephardt</u> (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.

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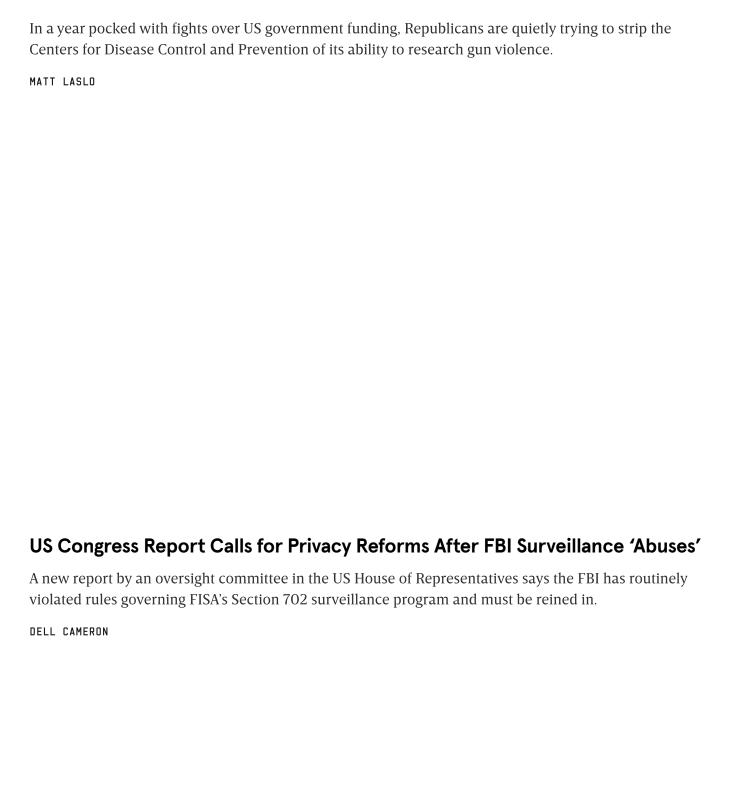
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