My fellow citizens, events in Iraq have now

reached the final days of decision. For more

than a decade, the United States and other

nations have pursued patient and honorable

efforts to disarm the Iraqi regime without

war. That regime pledged to reveal and destroy

all its weapons of mass destruction as

a condition for ending the Persian Gulf war

in 1991.

Since then, the world has engaged in 12

years of diplomacy. We have passed more

than a dozen resolutions in the United Nations

Security Council. We have sent hundreds

of weapons inspectors to oversee the

disarmament of Iraq. Our good faith has not

been returned.

The Iraqi regime has used diplomacy as

a ploy to gain time and advantage. It has uniformly

defied Security Council resolutions

demanding full disarmament. Over the years,

U.N. weapon inspectors have been threatened

by Iraqi officials, electronically bugged,

and systematically deceived. Peaceful efforts

to disarm the Iraqi regime have failed again

and again because we are not dealing with

peaceful men.

Intelligence gathered by this and other

governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq

regime continues to possess and conceal

some of the most lethal weapons ever devised.

This regime has already used weapons

of mass destruction against Iraq’s neighbors

and against Iraq’s people.

The regime has a history of reckless aggression

in the Middle East. It has a deep

hatred of America and our friends. And it

has aided, trained, and harbored terrorists,

including operatives of Al Qaida.

The danger is clear: Using chemical, biological

or, one day, nuclear weapons obtained

with the help of Iraq, the terrorists could fulfill

their stated ambitions and kill thousands

or hundreds of thousands of innocent people

in our country or any other.

The United States and other nations did

nothing to deserve or invite this threat. But

we will do everything to defeat it. Instead

of drifting along toward tragedy, we will set

a course toward safety. Before the day of horror

can come, before it is too late to act, this

danger will be removed.

The United States of America has the sovereign

authority to use force in assuring its

own national security. That duty falls to me

as Commander in Chief, by the oath I have

sworn, by the oath I will keep.

Recognizing the threat to our country, the

United States Congress voted overwhelmingly

last year to support the use of force

against Iraq. America tried to work with the

United Nations to address this threat because

we wanted to resolve the issue peacefully.

We believe in the mission of the United Nations.

One reason the U.N. was founded after

the Second World War was to confront aggressive

dictators actively and early, before

they can attack the innocent and destroy the

peace.

In the case of Iraq, the Security Council

did act in the early 1990s. Under Resolutions

678 and 687, both still in effect, the United

States and our allies are authorized to use

force in ridding Iraq of weapons of mass destruction.

This is not a question of authority.

It is a question of will.

Last September, I went to the U.N. General

Assembly and urged the nations of the

world to unite and bring an end to this danger.

On November 8th, the Security Council

unanimously passed Resolution 1441, finding

Iraq in material breach of its obligations and

vowing serious consequences if Iraq did not

fully and immediately disarm.

Today, no nation can possibly claim that

Iraq has disarmed, and it will not disarm so

long as Saddam Hussein holds power. For

the last 41⁄2 months, the United States and

our allies have worked within the Security

Council to enforce that Council’s longstanding

demands. Yet, some permanent

members of the Security Council have publicly

announced they will veto any resolution

that compels the disarmament of Iraq. These

governments share our assessment of the

danger but not our resolve to meet it.

Many nations, however, do have the resolve

and fortitude to act against this threat

to peace, and a broad coalition is now gathering

to enforce the just demands of the

world. The United Nations Security Council

has not lived up to its responsibilities, so we

will rise to ours.

In recent days, some governments in the

Middle East have been doing their part. They

have delivered public and private messages

urging the dictator to leave Iraq, so that disarmament

can proceed peacefully. He has

thus far refused.

All the decades of deceit and cruelty have

now reached an end. Saddam Hussein and

his sons must leave Iraq within 48 hours.

Their refusal to do so will result in military

conflict, commenced at a time of our choosing.

For their own safety, all foreign nationals,

including journalists and inspectors,

should leave Iraq immediately.

Many Iraqis can hear me tonight in a translated

radio broadcast, and I have a message

for them: If we must begin a military campaign,

it will be directed against the lawless

men who rule your country and not against

you. As our coalition takes away their power,

we will deliver the food and medicine you

need. We will tear down the apparatus of

terror, and we will help you to build a new

Iraq that is prosperous and free. In a free

Iraq, there will be no more wars of aggression

against your neighbors, no more poison factories,

no more executions of dissidents, no

more torture chambers and rape rooms. The

tyrant will soon be gone. The day of your

liberation is near.

It is too late for Saddam Hussein to remain

in power. It is not too late for the Iraqi military

to act with honor and protect your country

by permitting the peaceful entry of coalition

forces to eliminate weapons of mass destruction.

Our forces will give Iraqi military

units clear instructions on actions they can

take to avoid being attacked and destroyed.

I urge every member of the Iraqi military

and intelligence services: If war comes, do

not fight for a dying regime that is not worth

your own life.

And all Iraqi military and civilian personnel

should listen carefully to this warning:

In any conflict, your fate will depend on your

actions. Do not destroy oil wells, a source

of wealth that belongs to the Iraqi people.

Do not obey any command to use weapons

of mass destruction against anyone, including

the Iraqi people. War crimes will be prosecuted.

War criminals will be punished. And

it will be no defense to say, ‘‘I was just following

orders.’’

Should Saddam Hussein choose confrontation,

the American people can know that

every measure has been taken to avoid war

and every measure will be taken to win it.

Americans understand the costs of conflict

because we have paid them in the past. War

has no certainty, except the certainty of sacrifice.

Yet, the only way to reduce the harm

and duration of war is to apply the full force

and might of our military, and we are prepared

to do so.

If Saddam Hussein attempts to cling to

power, he will remain a deadly foe until the

end. In desperation, he and terrorists groups

might try to conduct terrorist operations

against the American people and our friends.

These attacks are not inevitable. They are,

however, possible. And this very fact underscores

the reason we cannot live under the

threat of blackmail. The terrorist threat to

America and the world will be diminished

the moment that Saddam Hussein is disarmed.

Our Government is on heightened watch

against these dangers. Just as we are preparing

to ensure victory in Iraq, we are taking

further actions to protect our homeland. In

recent days, American authorities have expelled

from the country certain individuals

with ties to Iraqi intelligence services. Among

other measures, I have directed additional

security of our airports and increased Coast

Guard patrols of major seaports. The Department

of Homeland Security is working closely

with the Nation’s Governors to increase

armed security at critical facilities across

America.

Should enemies strike our country, they

would be attempting to shift our attention

with panic and weaken our morale with fear.

In this, they would fail. No act of theirs can

alter the course or shake the resolve of this

country. We are a peaceful people. Yet we’re

not a fragile people, and we will not be intimidated

by thugs and killers. If our enemies

dare to strike us, they and all who have aided

them will face fearful consequences.

We are now acting because the risks of

inaction would be far greater. In 1 year, or

5 years, the power of Iraq to inflict harm

on all free nations would be multiplied many

times over. With these capabilities, Saddam

Hussein and his terrorist allies could choose

the moment of deadly conflict when they are

strongest. We choose to meet that threat

now, where it arises, before it can appear

suddenly in our skies and cities.

The cause of peace requires all free nations

to recognize new and undeniable realities.

In the 20th century, some chose to appease

murderous dictators, whose threats

were allowed to grow into genocide and global

war. In this century, when evil men plot

chemical, biological, and nuclear terror, a

policy of appeasement could bring destruction

of a kind never before seen on this

Earth.

Terrorists and terror states do not reveal

these threats with fair notice, in formal declarations,

and responding to such enemies

only after they have struck first is not self defense;

it is suicide. The security of the

world requires disarming Saddam Hussein

now.

As we enforce the just demands of the

world, we will also honor the deepest commitments

of our country. Unlike Saddam

Hussein, we believe the Iraqi people are deserving

and capable of human liberty. And

when the dictator has departed, they can set

an example to all the Middle East of a vital

and peaceful and self-governing nation.

The United States, with other countries,

will work to advance liberty and peace in that

region. Our goal will not be achieved overnight,

but it can come over time. The power

and appeal of human liberty is felt in every

life and every land. And the greatest power

of freedom is to overcome hatred and violence

and turn the creative gifts of men and

women to the pursuits of peace.

That is the future we choose. Free nations

have a duty to defend our people by uniting

against the violent. And tonight, as we have

done before, America and our allies accept

that responsibility.

Good night, and may God continue to

bless America.