Good morning. Last night

Iraq agreed to meet the demands of the

international community to cooperate fully

with the United Nations weapons inspectors.

Iraq committed to unconditional compliance.

It rescinded its decisions of August and October

to end cooperation with the inspectors.

It withdrew its objectionable conditions. In

short, Iraq accepted its obligation to permit

all activities of the weapons inspectors,

UNSCOM and the IAEA, to resume in accordance

with the relevant resolutions of the

U.N. Security Council.

The United States, together with Great

Britain, and with the support of our friends

and allies around the world, was poised to

act militarily if Iraq had not reversed course.

Our willingness to strike, together with the

overwhelming weight of world opinion, produced

the outcome we preferred: Saddam

Hussein reversing course, letting the inspectors

go back to work without restrictions or

conditions.

As I have said since this crisis began, the

return of the inspectors, if they can operate

in an unfettered way, is the best outcome

because they have been, and they remain,

the most effective tool to uncover, destroy,

and prevent Iraq from rebuilding its weapons

of mass destruction and the missiles to deliver

them.

Now, let me be clear: Iraq has backed

down, but that is not enough. Now Iraq must

live up to its obligations.

Iraq has committed to unconditionally resume

cooperation with the weapons inspectors.

What does that mean? First, Iraq must

resolve all outstanding issues raised by

UNSCOM and the IAEA. Second, it must

give inspectors unfettered access to inspect

and to monitor all sites they choose with no

restrictions or qualifications, consistent with

the memorandum of understanding Iraq

itself signed with Secretary-General Annan

in February. Third, it must turn over all relevant

documents. Fourth, it must accept all

weapons of mass destruction-related resolutions.

Fifth, it must not interfere with the

independence or the professional expertise

of the weapons inspectors.

Last night, again, I confirmed with the

U.N. Security-General, Kofi Annan, that he

shares these understandings of Iraq’s obligations.

In bringing on this crisis, Iraq isolated

itself from world opinion and opinion in the

region more than at any time since the Gulf

war. The United Nations Security Council

voted 15–0 to demand that Saddam Hussein

reverse course. Eight Arab nations—Egypt,

Syria, Saudi Arabia, five other Gulf states—

warned Saddam that Iraq alone would bear

responsibility for the consequences of defying

the United Nations. The world spoke

with one voice: Iraq must accept once and

for all that the only path forward is complete

compliance with its obligations to the world.

Until we see complete compliance, we will

remain vigilant; we will keep up the pressure;

we will be ready to act.

This crisis also demonstrates, unfortunately,

once again, that Saddam Hussein remains

an impediment to the well-being of

his people and a threat to the peace of his

region and the security of the world. We will

continue to contain the threat that he poses

by working for the elimination of Iraq’s

weapons of mass destruction capability under

UNSCOM, enforcing the sanctions and the

no-fly zone, responding firmly to any Iraqi

provocations.

However, over the long term, the best way

to address that threat is through a Government

in Baghdad—a new Government—that

is committed to represent and respect its

people, not repress them, that is committed

to peace in the region. Over the past year

we have deepened our engagement with the

forces of change in Iraq, reconciling the two

largest Kurdish opposition groups, beginning

broadcasts of a Radio Free Iraq throughout

the country. We will intensify that effort,

working with Congress to implement the

Iraq Liberation Act, which was recently

passed, strengthening our political support to

make sure the opposition—or to do what we

can to make the opposition a more effective

voice for the aspirations of the Iraqi people.

Let me say again, what we want and what

we will work for is a Government in Iraq

that represents and respects its people, not

represses them, and one committed to live

in peace with its neighbors.

In the century we are leaving, America has

often made the difference between tyranny

and freedom, between chaos and community,

between fear and hope. In this case,

as so often in the past, the reason America

can make this difference is the patriotism and

professionalism of our military. Once again,

its strength, its readiness, its capacity is advancing

America’s interest and the cause of

world peace. We must remain vigilant,

strong, and ready, here and wherever our interests

and values are at stake. Thanks to our

military, we will be able to do so.

That’s right, and look what

they did after we said that. That’s right—

look what’s happened since they said that.

We decided to delay the attack when we

were informed that Iraq was going to make

a—offer us a statement—the world, committing

to complete compliance. And you will

recall, when that statement came in, there

were members of the international community

and members of the Security Council

who said that they thought that the statement

was sufficient to avoid a military conflict and

to get UNSCOM back in. We did not agree,

and the British did not agree. Mr. Berger

and Prime Minister Blair both went out and

made statements to that effect.

After that occurred, we received three

subsequent letters from the Government of

Iraq, going to the President of the Security

Council, dealing with the three big holes we

saw in the original Iraqi letter.

First of all, it became clear, and they made

it clear, that the attachment to the letter was

in no way a condition of their compliance,

that their compliance was not conditional.

Secondly, they explicitly revoked the decisions

they made in August and October to

suspend cooperation with UNSCOM. And

thirdly, they made it clear that they would

not just let the inspectors back in to wander

around in a very large country but that their

cooperation with them would be unconditional

and complete.

Those were the things which occurred

after Mr. Berger spoke and after Prime Minister

Blair spoke. Those were the things

which have caused us to conclude that with

world opinion unanimous and with the ability

to actually—the prospect, at least—of getting

this inspection system going until we can

complete the work that we have been working

on now since the end of the Gulf war—

it was those three things that made us believe

we should go forward. That is the difference

between where we are now and where we

were yesterday when the United States and

Great Britain made its statements.

Well, I think there are

four things that I would say about it, with

the beginning that no one can be sure. We’re

not—this is not a question of faith; this is

a question of action. Let me remind you, the

most important sentence in the statement I

just read you was, ‘‘Iraq has backed down,

but that’s not enough. Now Iraq must live

up to its obligations.’’

Now, let me just point out four things.

Number one, we have an unprecedented

consensus here. I do not believe that anyone

can doubt that there was an unprecedented

consensus condemning what Saddam Hussein

had done in not cooperating with

UNSCOM. Number two, we had a very credible

threat of overwhelming force, which was

imminent had we not received word that Iraq

was prepared to make the commitments we

had been asking for. Number three, the set

of commitments we received, in the end,

after making our position clear yesterday in

refusing to negotiate or water down our position,

is clear and unambiguous. And number

four, we remained ready to act. So we don’t

have to rely on our feelings here, or whether

we believe anything. The question is, have

we made the proper judgment to suspend

any military action in order to give Iraq a

chance to fulfill its commitments, even

though it has failed to do so, so many times

in the past.

These four things are what you have to

keep in mind. I believe—let me just say

this—I believe we have made the right decision

for a very specific reason, and I think

it’s very important that we keep hammering

this home. If we take military action, we can

significantly degrade the capability of Saddam

Hussein to develop weapons of mass destruction

and to deliver them, but that would

also mark the end of UNSCOM. So we would

delay it, but we would then have no oversight,

no insight, no involvement in what is

going on within Iraq.

If we can keep UNSCOM in there working

and one more time give him a chance to become

honorably reconciled by simply observing

United Nations resolutions, we see that

results can be obtained.

Look, what has happened this year? We

had the VX testing, and this summer—I can’t

remember exactly when it was; I’m sure that

when my team comes up here to answer the

questions, they can—we uncovered a very

important document giving us—giving the

world community information about the

quantity and nature of weapons stocks that

had not been available before.

So I have to tell you, you have to understand

where I’m coming from here. I really

believe that if you have a professional

UNSCOM, free and unfettered, able to do

its job, it can do what it is supposed to do

in Iraq. And given the fact that I believe that

over the next 10 to 20 years, this whole issue

of chemical and biological weaponry will be

one of the major threats facing the world,

having the experience, the record, and the

success—if we can do it—of having a United

Nations inspection regime in Iraq can have

grave positive implications for the future—

profound positive implications, if it works—

and grave implications in a negative way if

it doesn’t.

So I believe we made the right decision,

and I believe that the factors that I cited to

you make it the right decision. Now, what

I——

Wait. Wait. Wait. What I’d

like to do now—you, naturally enough, want

to get into a lot of the specific questions here

that I believe that Secretary Cohen and General

Shelton and Mr. Berger can do a good

job of answering. And none of us have had

a great deal of sleep, but I think it would

be appropriate for me to let them answer

the rest of the questions.

Thank you.