Thank you all. Please be seated. Good

morning. Welcome to the White House. I

want to thank the members of my Cabinet

who have joined us. I want to thank the

Members of Congress who are here on the

stage. I want to thank the Members of Congress

who are here in the audience. I’m honored

to have you here.

The resolution I’m about to sign symbolizes

the united purpose of our Nation, expresses

the considered judgment of the Congress,

and marks an important event in the

life of America. The 107th Congress is one

of the few called by history to authorize military

action to defend our country and the

cause of peace.

This is among the most serious and difficult

decisions a legislator can face. Members

of both Houses, both political parties,

have deliberated with care, and they have

spoken with clarity on behalf of the American

people. We will face our dangers squarely,

and we will face them unafraid.

With this resolution, Congress has now authorized

the use of force. I have not ordered

the use of force. I hope the use of force will

not become necessary. Yet, confronting the

threat posed by Iraq is necessary, by whatever

means that requires. Either the Iraqi

regime will give up its weapons of mass destruction,

or for the sake of peace, the United

States will lead a global coalition to disarm

that regime. If any doubt our Nation’s resolve,

our determination, they would be unwise

to test it.

The Iraqi regime is a serious and growing

threat to peace. On the commands of a dictator,

the regime is armed with biological and

chemical weapons, possesses ballistic missiles,

promotes international terror, and seeks

nuclear weapons. The same dictator has a

history of mass murder, of striking other nations

without warning, of intense hatred for

America, and of contempt for the demands

of the civilized world.

If Iraq gains even greater destructive

power, nations in the Middle East would face

blackmail, intimidation, or attack. Chaos in

that region would be felt in Europe and beyond.

And Iraq’s combination of weapons of

mass destruction and ties to terrorist groups

and ballistic missiles would threaten the

peace and security of many nations. Those

who choose to live in denial may eventually

be forced to live in fear.

Every nation that shares in the benefits

of peace also shares in the duty of defending

the peace. The time has arrived once again

for the United Nations to live up to the purposes

of its founding to protect our common

security. The time has arrived once again for

free nations to face up to our global responsibilities

and confront a gathering danger.

In 1991, Iraq was given 15 days to fully

disclose all weapons of mass destruction. The

dictator has successfully defied that obligation

for 4,199 days. The dictator has—and

during this 11-year period of his dictatorship,

the regime has become highly skilled in the

techniques of deception. It has blocked effective

inspections of so-called Presidential

sites—actually 12 square miles with hundreds

of structures where sensitive materials

could be hidden. The regime has forged documents,

disabled surveillance cameras, and

developed mobile weapons facilities to keep

ahead of any inspector.

The Iraqi regime has frustrated the work

of international inspectors by firing warning

shots, by tapping their telephones, confiscating

their documents, blocking aerial inspection

flights, and barring access to sites

for hours while evidence is carried away. At

one location, inspectors actually witnessed

Iraqi guards moving files, burning documents,

and then dumping the ashes in a river.

Aboard U.N. helicopters, Iraqi escorts have

physically struggled with inspectors to keep

them from approaching certain areas.

For Iraq, the old weapons inspection process

was little more than a game in which

cheating was never punished. And that game

is over. The ploys and promises of the Iraqi

regime no longer matter. The regime is free

to continue saying whatever it chooses. Its

fate depends entirely on what it actually does.

Our goal is not merely to limit Iraq’s violations

of Security Council resolutions or to

slow down its weapons program. Our goal

is to fully and finally remove a real threat

to world peace and to America. Hopefully,

this can be done peacefully. Hopefully, we

can do this without any military action. Yet,

if Iraq is to avoid military action by the international

community, it has the obligation to

prove compliance with all the world’s demands.

It’s the obligation of Iraq.

Compliance will begin with a accurate and

full and complete accounting for all chemical,

biological, and nuclear weapons materials,

as well as missiles and other means of

delivery anywhere in Iraq. Failure to make

such an accounting would be a further indication

of the regime’s bad faith and aggressive

intent. Inspectors must have access to

any site in Iraq at any time, without

preclearance, without delay, without exceptions.

Inspectors must be permitted to operate

under new, effective rules. And the Iraqi

regime must accept those rules without qualification

or negotiation.

To ensure that we learn the truth, the regime

must allow witnesses to its illegal activities

to be interviewed outside of the country.

These witnesses must be free to bring their

entire families with them, so they’re beyond

the reach of Saddam Hussein’s terror, Saddam

Hussein’s torture, Saddam Hussein’s

murder.

In addition to declaring and destroying all

of its weapons of mass destruction, Iraq, in

accordance with U.N. Security Council demands,

must end its support for terrorism.

As the U.N. demands, Iraq must cease the

persecution of its civilian population. As the

U.N. demands, Iraq must stop all illicit trade

outside the oil-for-food program. Iraq must

also release or account for all Gulf war personnel,

including an American pilot whose

fate is still unknown.

The United States takes the resolutions of

the Security Council seriously. We urge

other nations to do the same. We’re working

to build the broadest possible coalition to enforce

the demands of the world on the Iraqi

regime. I’ve told all the members of the

United Nations, America will play its historic

role in defeating aggressive tyranny.

I hope the good people of Iraq will remember

our history and not pay attention

to the hateful propaganda of their Government.

America has never sought to dominate,

has never sought to conquer. We’ve always

sought to liberate and to free. Our desire is

to help Iraqi citizens find the blessings of

liberty within their own culture and their

own traditions. The Iraqi people cannot

flourish under a dictator that oppresses them

and threatens them. Gifted people of Iraq

will flourish if and when oppression is lifted.

When Iraq has a government committed

to the freedom and well-being of its people,

America, along with many other nations, will

share a responsibility to help Iraq reform and

prosper. And we will meet our responsibilities.

That’s our pledge to the Iraqi people.

Like the Members of Congress here today,

I’ve carefully weighed the human cost of

every option before us. If we go into battle,

as a last resort, we will confront an enemy

capable of irrational miscalculations, capable

of terrible deeds. As the Commander in

Chief, I know the risks to our country. I’m

fully responsible to the young men and

women in uniform who may face these risks.

Yet those risks only increase with time, and

the costs could be immeasurably higher in

years to come. To shrink from this threat

would bring a false sense of temporary peace,

leading to a future in which millions live or

die at the discretion of a brutal dictator.

That’s not true peace, and we won’t accept

it.

The terrorist attacks of last year put our

country on notice. We’re not immune from

the dangers and hatreds of the world. In the

events of September the 11th, we resolved

as a nation to oppose every threat from any

source that could bring sudden tragedy to

the American people. This Nation will not

live at the mercy of any foreign power or

plot. Confronting grave dangers is the surest

path to peace and security. This is the expectation

of the American people and the decision

of their elected representatives.

I thank the Congress for a thorough debate

and an overwhelming statement of support.

The broad resolve of our Government is now

clear to all, clear to everyone to see: We will

defend our Nation and lead others in defending

the peace.

May God bless your work.