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BUSH: You know, every life is precious. Every life matters. You know, my hardest – the hardest part of the job is to know that I committed the troops in harm's way and then do the best I can to provide comfort for the loved ones who lost a son or a daughter or a husband or wife. You know, I think about Missy Johnson. She's a fantastic lady I met in Charlotte, North Carolina. She and her son Bryan, they came to see me. Her husband PJ got killed. He'd been in Afghanistan, went to Iraq. You know, it's hard work to try to love her as best as I can, knowing full well that the decision I made caused her loved one to be in harm's way. I told her after we prayed and teared up and laughed some that I thought her husband's sacrifice was noble and worthy. Because I understand the stakes of this war on terror. I understand that we must find Al Qaida wherever they hide. We must deal with threats before they fully materialize. And Saddam Hussein was a threat, and that we must spread liberty because in the long run, the way to defeat hatred and tyranny and oppression is to spread freedom. Missy understood that. That's what she told me her husband understood. Every life is precious. That's what distinguishes us from the enemy. Everybody matters. But I think it's worth it, Jim. I think it's worth it, because I think – I know in the long term a free Iraq, a free Afghanistan, will set such a powerful in a part of the world that's desperate for freedom. It will help change the world; that we can look back and say we did our duty.

LEHRER: Senator, 90 seconds.

KERRY: I understand what the president is talking about, because I know what it means to lose people in combat. And the question, is it worth the cost, reminds me of my own thinking when I came back from fighting in that war. And it reminds me that it is vital for us not to confuse the war, ever, with the warriors. That happened before. And that's one of the reasons why I believe I can get this job done, because I am determined for those soldiers and for those families, for those kids who put their lives on the line. That is noble. That's the most noble thing that anybody can do. And I want to make sure the outcome honors that nobility. Now, we have a choice here. I've laid out a plan by which I think we can be successful in Iraq: with a summit, by doing better training, faster, by cutting – by doing what we need to do with respect to the U.N. and the elections. There's only 25 percent of the people in there. They can't have an election right now. The president's not getting the job done. So the choice for America is, you can have a plan that I've laid out in four points, each of which I can tell you more about or you can go to johnkerry.com and see more of it; or you have the president's plan, which is four words: more of the same. I think my plan is better. And my plan has a better chance of standing up and fighting for those troops. I will never let those troops down, and will hunt and kill the terrorists wherever they are.

LEHRER: All right, sir, go ahead. Thirty seconds.

BUSH: Yes, I understand what it means to the commander in chief. the troops would wonder, how can I follow this guy? It's not a grand diversion. This is an essential that we get it right. And so, the plan he talks about simply won't work.

LEHRER: Senator Kerry, you have 30 seconds. You have 30 seconds, right. And then the president.

KERRY: Secretary of State Colin Powell told this president the Pottery Barn rule: If you

break it, you fix it. Now, if you break it, you made a mistake. It's the wrong thing to do. But you own it. And then you've got to fix it and do something with it. Now that's what we have to do. There's no inconsistency. Soldiers know over there that this isn't being done right yet. I'm going to get it right for those soldiers, because it's important to Israel, it's important to America, it's important to the world, it's important to the fight on terror. But I have a plan to do it. He doesn't.

LEHRER: Speaking of your plan, new question, Senator Kerry. Two minutes. Can you give us specifics, in terms of a scenario, time lines, et cetera, for ending major U.S. military involvement in Iraq?

KERRY: The time line that I've set out – and again, I want to correct the president, because he's misled again this evening on what I've said. I didn't say I would bring troops out in six months. I said, if we do the things that I've set out and we are successful, we could begin to draw the troops down in six months. And I think a critical component of success in Iraq is being able to convince the Iraqis and the Arab world that the United States doesn't have long-term designs on it. As I understand it, we're building some 14 military bases there now, and some people say they've got a rather permanent concept to them. Now, the problem is that they didn't think these things through properly. And these are the things you have to think through. What I want to do is change the dynamics on the ground. And you have to do that by beginning to not back off of the Fallujahs and other places, and send the wrong message to the terrorists. You have to close the borders. You've got to show you're serious in that regard. But you've also got to show that you are prepared to bring the rest of the world in and share the stakes. I will make a flat statement: The United States of America has no long-term designs on staying in Iraq. And our goal in my administration would be to get all of the troops out of there with a minimal amount you need for training and logistics as we do in some other countries in the world after a war to be able to sustain the peace. But that's how we're going to win the peace, by rapidly training the Iraqis themselves. Even the administration has admitted they haven't done the training, because they came back to Congress a few weeks ago and asked for a complete reprogramming of the money. Now what greater admission is there, 16 months afterwards. Oops, we haven't done the job. We have to start to spend the money now.

LEHRER: Ninety seconds.

BUSH: There are 100,000 troops trained, police, guard, special units, border patrol. There's going to be 125,000 trained by the end of this year. Yes, we're getting the job done. It's hard work. Everybody knows it's hard work, because there's a determined enemy that's trying to defeat us. Now, my opponent says he's going to try to change the dynamics on the ground. Well, Prime Minister Allawi was here. He is the leader of that country. He's a brave, brave man. When he came, after giving a speech to the Congress, my opponent questioned his credibility. You can't change the dynamics on the ground if you've criticized the brave leader of Iraq. One of his campaign people alleged that Prime Minister Allawi was like a puppet. That's no way to treat somebody who's courageous and brave, that is trying to lead his country forward. The way to make sure that we succeed is to send consistent, sound messages to the Iraqi people that when we give our word, we will keep our word, that we stand with you, that we believe you want to be free. And I do. I believe that 25 million people, the vast majority, long to have elections. I reject this notion – and I'm suggesting my opponent isn't – I reject the notion that some say that if you're Muslim you can't free,

you don't desire freedom. I disagree, strongly disagree with that.

LEHRER: Thirty seconds.

KERRY: I couldn't agree more that the Iraqis want to be free and that they could be free. But I think the president, again, still hasn't shown how he's going to go about it the right way. He has more of the same. Now, Prime Minister Allawi came here, and he said the terrorists are pouring over the border. That's Allawi's assessment. The national intelligence assessment that was given to the president in July said, best-case scenario, more of the same of what we see today; worst-case scenario, civil war. I can do better.

BUSH: Yes, let me

LEHRER: Yes, 30 seconds.

BUSH: The reason why Prime Minister Allawi said they're coming across the border is because he recognizes that this is a central part of the war on terror. They're fighting us because they're fighting freedom. They understand that a free Afghanistan or a free Iraq will be a major defeat for them. And those are the stakes. And that's why it is essential we not leave. That's why it's essential we hold the line. That's why it's essential we win. And we will. Under my leadership we're going to win this war in Iraq.