

Remarks for 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration at the US Embassy  
General David H. Petraeus  
July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2007

President Talabani, Prime Minister Maliki, Ambassador Crocker, distinguished guests and friends, and fellow Americans, Happy Fourth of July.

On this day 231 years ago, our founding fathers pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to the cause of a new nation as they signed the Declaration of Independence. This act did more, though, than just declare our country's freedom. It also established the ideals that have guided our nation ever since.

Among these ideals were two self-evident truths: that all men are created equal and that all men are endowed with certain inalienable rights, among them life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Today, we pay tribute to these ideals we hold so dear. This morning at Camp Victory, we celebrated by conducting the largest reenlistment ever held in Iraq and in perhaps our Armed Forces' history, as 588 troopers chose to continue serving in our military. We then granted American citizenship to 161 troopers who have already pledged their loyalty to America by defending her in uniform. And now, we will observe America's 231<sup>st</sup> birthday.

As we celebrate today, we should reflect on the ideals that have defined America for over two centuries. And in doing so, we must remember that these ideals are not unique to us alone. People the world over have built societies based on the universal principles of equality, freedom, and liberty.

Here in Baghdad, we are helping the Iraqis build such a society. One that will succeed as its Government puts what unites its people – such as its shared history and its shared hope for a secure, stable, and prosperous future – ahead of what divides it.

Undoubtedly, it is not easy to stand united. We have learned that lesson repeatedly during our nation's history, and we see that in Iraq today, as extremist enemies attempt to incite fear and increase division. In spite of these enemies, we have made progress – but even the best of us get frustrated at times with the pace of progress and the work that still lies ahead.

Still, I remain committed to this worthy endeavor and hopeful of its continued success because I believe the ideals that define America can and will succeed here as well – thanks to brave and dedicated individuals like each of you here today, individuals who are making a conscious choice to reject violence and the sectarianism that fuels it and to accommodate Iraq’s diverse ethnic, religious, and tribal groups as you forge a common, unified future.

Forty six years ago, a young American president challenged his countrymen during his inaugural address. “Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.” I believe that challenge is a universal one. Each of us here today is doing the hard work our countries require. We are not doing it for personal gain or advantage but instead because it is what our countries ask of us. And we are doing it because we believe in our countries and our ideals.

I thank you for your service and your sacrifice. Our countries will be forever linked by what we are together accomplishing, and it remains a privilege and honor to serve with you.

Happy Fourth of July!