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Text: Remarks by Retired General Tommy Franks to the Republican National Convention

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The following are remarks by retired Army General Tommy Franks at the 2004 Republican National Convention:

FRANKS: Thank you so much. That made me want to step out here...

(APPLAUSE)

Thank you. Thank you so much.

That introduction made me want to step out here and say, "Hi. I'm Tommy Franks, and I approved that message."

(APPLAUSE)

Wow. This convention rocks.

(APPLAUSE)

As P.X. Kelley said: I'm not a Republican. I'm not a Democrat. But I believe in democracy, and I believe in America.

(APPLAUSE)

For almost four decades as a soldier I've been independent.

FRANKS: Now, there are those who would say very independent. But here I stand tonight endorsing George W. Bush to be the next president of the United States.

(APPLAUSE)

Look, America is a land of opportunity. America is a land of choice. And a great wartime president, Franklin Roosevelt, once said, "Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely."

Delegates, friends, I'm prepared to choose wisely. And I choose George W. Bush.

(APPLAUSE)

And indeed I'm honored to join American patriots on this stage, men who know, as our troopers' moms and dads, and husbands and wives, know that freedom is never free.

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FRANKS: Freedom is never free.

(APPLAUSE)

And these men are men who stepped forward to lead America's sons and daughters. They led them selflessly. They remained loyal to their country and loyal to their troops.

And I join them in saluting our commander in chief, George W. Bush.

(APPLAUSE)

America finds itself today at an important crease in history. The attacks of September 11th brought a new enemy to our shores, an enemy unlike any we've ever faced before.

Our nation is safer today because we have hardened our defenses. We have also taken the fight to the terrorists.

(APPLAUSE)

And we still have work to do.

The global war on terrorism will be a long fight. But make no mistake about it: We are going to fight the terrorists. The question is: Do we fight them over there or do we fight them here?

(APPLAUSE)

FRANKS: I choose to fight them over there.

(APPLAUSE)

Now, some argue that we should treat this war as a law enforcement issue. And some say we should fight a less aggressive war, that we should retreat into a defensive posture and hope that the terrorists don't attack us again.

Well, my wife Cathy and I are simply not willing to bet the future of our grandchildren on the good will of murderers.

(APPLAUSE)

I learned a long time ago that hope, while so terribly important, is not a strategy. In the years ahead, America will be called upon to demonstrate character, consistency, courage and leadership.

FRANKS: You know, Lincoln once said, "Character is like a tree and reputation its shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing."

Well, citizens and friends, I've been with this president in tough and uncertain times, and George W. Bush is "the real thing."

(APPLAUSE)

He is "the real thing."

The past three years have been hard years, hard years, a time of hard decisions and tough choices. I've looked into this man's eyes, and I have seen his character.

I've seen courage, I've seen consistency, the courage to stand up to terrorists and the consistency necessary to beat them.

(APPLAUSE)

In the battle for Afghanistan, we removed a regime that provided the base of support for Al Qaida terrorists who had been killing Americans for years.

In the battle for Iraq, we removed a brutal regime with an avowed hatred of our country, with a history for torturing its own people, and a history for using weapons of mass destruction against its neighbors and against its own citizens.

FRANKS: We removed that regime with well documented ties to terrorists, like the Al Qaida murderer, Abu Zarqawi. Terrorism will not stand.

(APPLAUSE)

Ladies and gentlemen, terrorism against our country started long before 9/11. Terrorists have been killing Americans for more than two decades. And I am proud that this president has chosen to make a stand.

(APPLAUSE)

Today, in Afghanistan and Iraq, more than 50 million men, women and children have been liberated from tyranny. And these countries are no longer safe harbors for those who would launch the next attack against America.

We see smiles of little girls in Afghanistan who can now go to school.

FRANKS: We see pride in the faces of a new Iraqi Army as they begin to protect their new freedoms. We see resolve in the faces of emerging leaders of both Iraq and Afghanistan as they build those new nations. And soon, in both Afghanistan and Iraq, we will see free elections.

(APPLAUSE)

In Afghanistan and Iraq, terrorism and tyranny are being replaced by freedom, hope, opportunity. I for one am proud that my country, the United States of America, has given 50 million people a chance.

(APPLAUSE)

And we have not been in this fight alone. President Bush has built the largest coalition in the history of the world, nations united together against terrorism. Some have ridiculed the contributions made by these allies, but I can tell you that every contribution from every nation is important.

FRANKS: And, ladies and gentlemen, I would ask you to join me in saying thanks to coalition partners

for being there when America and the world needed them.

(APPLAUSE)

There can be no tougher decision -- no tougher decision -- than the decision to go to war, the decision to put our sons and daughters into harm's way.

When George W. Bush asked America's men and women to go to war, he gave them every resource our nation possessed.

This man, before sending us into battle, personally asked each of my military commanders if they had everything they needed. This is a man who made sure that everything possible was done to protect our troops from the weapons of mass destruction we all expected that the enemy owned.

(APPLAUSE)

FRANKS: This is a commander in chief who is compassionate as he is courageous.

President Bush has increased basic pay for men and women in uniform by more than 20 percent.

(APPLAUSE)

He has improved military housing for their families. He has provided strong support for those families who sacrificed so much. I respect that.

And while we celebrate these American fighting men and women when they're in the news, I guess the question is: Who remembers the veterans when the parades are over and the cheering fades? Who remembers the veteran's families?

President George W. Bush has provided support for these heroes. In fact, he secured a larger increase in veterans funding in four years than the previous administration did in eight.

(APPLAUSE)

This president remembers our veterans and is keeping America's promise to those who have sacrificed so much for us all.

George W. Bush remembers the sacrifices of the greatest generation and those who served bravely in Korea and in Vietnam.

FRANKS: To all our veterans I say: Welcome home. Welcome home.

This president, George W. Bush, has remained loyal to those who serve -- he has remained loyal to those who serve. And, ladies and gentlemen, for that he has my respect.

Citizens and friends, I started tonight by reminding you that America must make a choice. The time is coming.

I choose George W. Bush because he is a leader we can depend on to make the tough decisions.

(APPLAUSE)

He is a leader we can depend on to make the right decisions.

(APPLAUSE)

I choose George W. Bush because his vision to take the fight to the terrorists is the best way to protect our country.

(APPLAUSE)

I choose George W. Bush because he stands up for the American fighting man and woman and because he remembers our veterans.

(APPLAUSE)

FRANKS: I choose George W. Bush because we know that the next 200 years of American history will depend on the decisions our nation makes today.

(APPLAUSE)

I choose George W. Bush because I believe his leadership will help ensure a better future for my grandchildren, Anne Cathryn and Samuel Thomas Matlock.

Thank you all. May God bless you all, our country and our commander in chief.

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