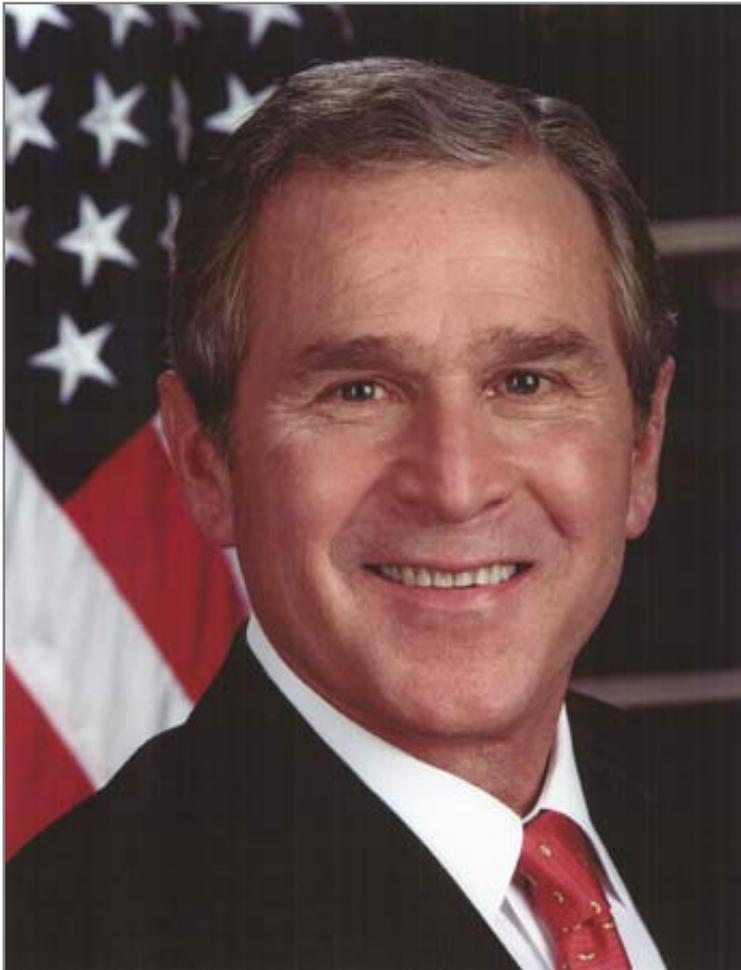


# George W. Bush



George W. Bush.

*Eric Draper/White House Photo*

George W. Bush Timeline						
1946	1994	2000	Sept. 11, 2001	October 2001	2003	2005
Bush is born in New Haven, Conn.	Bush is elected governor of Texas.	Bush defeats Al Gore in the presidential election.	Terrorists crash airplanes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.	The United States attacks Afghanistan and its Taliban government.	U.S. and allied forces invade Iraq.	Hurricane Katrina devastates New Orleans and the Gulf Coast.
						2008
						A major financial crisis strikes the United States.
						2009
						The Bush presidency ends.

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Key events in the life of George W. Bush.

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**George W. Bush**, in full George Walker Bush (born July 6, 1946, New Haven, Connecticut, U.S.), 43rd president of the United States (2001–09), who led his country's response to the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001 and initiated the Iraq War in 2003. Narrowly winning the electoral college vote in 2000 over Vice Pres. Al Gore in one of the closest and most-controversial elections in American history, George W. Bush became the first person since Benjamin Harrison in 1888 to be elected president

despite having lost the nationwide popular vote. Before his election as president, Bush was a businessman and served as governor of Texas (1995–2000). (For a discussion of the history and nature of the presidency, see presidency of the United States of America.)

## EARLY LIFE



The Bush family in 1964 in Houston, Texas. Parents George and Barbara Bush are shown sitting on the ...

*National Archives, Washington, D.C.*

Bush was the eldest of six children of George H.W. Bush, who served as the 41st president of the United States (1989–93), and Barbara Bush. His paternal grandfather, Prescott Bush, was a U.S. senator from Connecticut (1952–63). The younger Bush grew up largely in Midland and Houston, Texas. From 1961 to 1964 he attended Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, the boarding school from



George W. Bush at Yale University, 1964.

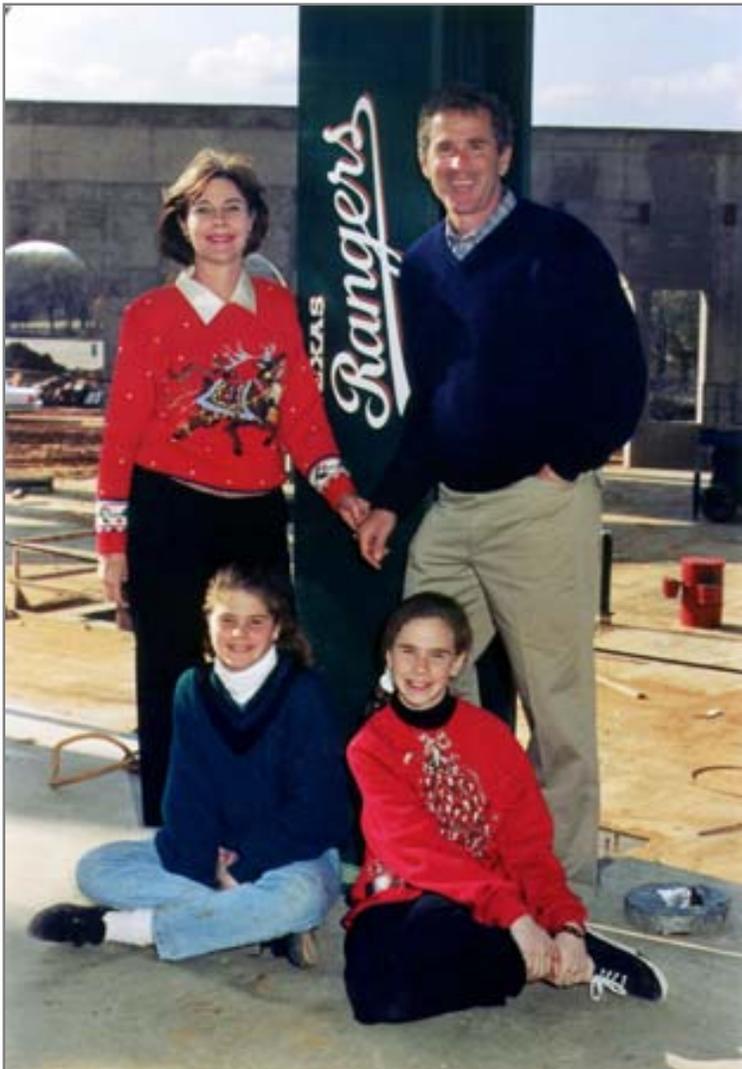
*Courtesy of the George W. Bush  
Presidential Library & Museum*

which his father had graduated. He received a bachelor's degree in history from Yale University, his father's and grandfather's alma mater, in 1968. Bush was president of his fraternity and, like his father, a member of Yale's secretive Skull

and Bones society; unlike his father, he was only an average student and did not excel in athletics.

In May 1968, two weeks before his graduation from Yale and the expiration of his student draft deferment, Bush applied as a pilot trainee in the Texas Air National Guard, whose members were less likely than regular soldiers to fight in the Vietnam War. Commissioned a second lieutenant in July 1968, he became a certified fighter pilot in June 1970. In the fall of 1970, he applied for admission to the University of Texas law school but was rejected. Although Bush apparently missed at least eight months of duty between May 1972 and May 1973, he was granted an early discharge so that he could start Harvard Business School in the fall of

1973. His spotty military record resurfaced as a campaign issue in both the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections.



George W. Bush with his wife, Laura, and the couple's daughters, Jenna (left) and Barbara, 1993.

*Courtesy of the George W. Bush  
Presidential Library & Museum*

After receiving an M.B.A. from Harvard in 1975, Bush returned to Midland, where he began working for a Bush family friend, an oil and gas attorney, and later started his own oil and gas firm. He married Laura Welch, a teacher and librarian, in Midland in 1977. After an unsuccessful run for Congress in 1978, Bush devoted himself to building his business. With help from his uncle, who was then raising funds for Bush's father's campaign for

the Republican presidential nomination, Bush was able to attract numerous prominent investors. The company struggled through the early 1980s until the eventual

collapse of oil prices in 1986, when it was purchased by the Harken Energy Corporation. Bush received Harken stock, a job as a consultant to the company, and a seat on the company's board of directors.

In the same year, shortly after his 40th birthday, Bush gave up drinking alcohol. "I realized," he later explained, "that alcohol was beginning to crowd out my energies and could crowd, eventually, my affections for other people." His decision was partly the result of a self-described spiritual awakening and a strengthening of his Christian faith that had begun the previous year, after a conversation with the Rev. Billy Graham, a Bush family friend.



After the sale of his company, Bush spent 18 months in Washington, D.C., working as an adviser and speechwriter in his father's presidential campaign. Following the election in 1988, he moved to Dallas, where he and a former business partner organized a group of

George W. Bush (left) and his father, George H.W. Bush, walking on the South Lawn at the White ...

*National Archives, Washington, D.C.*

investors to purchase the Texas Rangers professional baseball team. Although Bush's investment, which he

made with a loan he obtained by using his Harken stock as collateral, was relatively small, his role as managing partner of the team brought him much exposure in the media and earned him a reputation as a successful businessman. When Bush's partnership sold the team in 1998, Bush received nearly \$15 million.

## **GOVERNOR OF TEXAS**

In 1994 Bush challenged Democratic incumbent Ann Richards for the governorship of Texas. A major issue in the campaign concerned Bush's sale of all his Harken stock in June 1990, just days before the company completed a second quarter with heavy losses. An investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in 1991 into the possibility of illegal insider trading (trading that takes advantage of information not available to the public) did not uncover any wrongdoing. Bush won the election with 53 percent of the vote (compared with 46 percent for Richards), thus becoming the first child of a U.S. president to be elected a state governor.



George W. Bush (centre) being sworn in as governor of Texas, January 17, 1995.

*Courtesy of Texas State Library & Archives Commission*



George W. Bush and his wife, Laura, walking under an arch of swords to celebrate his reelection as ...

*Courtesy of the George W. Bush Presidential Library & Museum*

As governor, Bush increased state spending on elementary and secondary education and made the salaries and promotions of teachers and administrators contingent on their students' performance on standardized tests. His administration increased the number of crimes for which juveniles could be sentenced to adult prisons following custody in juvenile detention and lowered to 14 the age at which children could be tried as adults. Throughout his tenure Bush

received international attention for the brisk use of capital punishment in Texas relative to other states. Bush signed

into law several measures aimed at tort reform, including one that imposed new limits on punitive damages and another that narrowed the legal definition of “gross negligence.” Reelected in 1998 with nearly 70 percent of the vote, Bush became the first Texas governor to win consecutive four-year terms (in 1972 voters had approved a referendum that extended the governor’s term from two years to four).



George W. Bush at a campaign rally in Melbourne, Florida, 2000.

*Paul J. Richards—AFP/Getty Images*

Bush formally announced his candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination in June 1999. He described his political philosophy as “compassionate conservatism,” a view that combined traditional Republican economic policies with

concern for the underprivileged. Despite Bush’s refusal to give direct answers to questions about his drinking and possible use of illegal drugs (he implied that he had not used illegal drugs since 1974), he won the Republican nomination, taking a strong lead in public opinion polls over

Vice Pres. Al Gore, the Democratic Party nominee; Ralph Nader, the Green Party candidate; and political journalist Patrick Buchanan, the nominee of the Reform Party. His running mate was Dick Cheney, former chief of staff for Pres. Gerald Ford and secretary of defense during the presidency of Bush's father.



A canvassing board member showing a disputed ballot to an election observer at the Broward County ...

*Rhoma Wise—AFP/Getty Images*

As the general election campaign continued, the gap in the polls between Bush and Gore narrowed to the closest in any election in the previous 40 years. On election day the presidency hinged on the 25 electoral votes of Florida, where Bush led

Gore by fewer than 1,000 popular votes after a mandatory statewide machine recount. After the Gore campaign asked for manual recounts in four heavily Democratic counties, the Bush campaign filed suit in federal court to stop them. For five weeks the election remained unresolved as Florida state courts and federal courts heard numerous legal challenges by both campaigns. Eventually the Florida Supreme Court decided (4–3) to order a statewide manual

recount of the approximately 45,000 “undervotes”—ballots that machines recorded as not clearly expressing a presidential vote. The Bush campaign quickly filed an appeal with the U.S. Supreme Court, asking it to delay the recounts until it could hear the case; a stay was issued by the court on December 9. Three days later, concluding (7–2) that a fair statewide recount could not be performed in time to meet the December 18 deadline for certifying the state’s electors, the court issued a controversial 5–4 decision to reverse the Florida Supreme Court’s recount order, effectively awarding the presidency to Bush. By winning Florida, Bush narrowly won the electoral vote over Gore by 271 to 266—only 1 more than the required 270 (one Gore elector abstained).

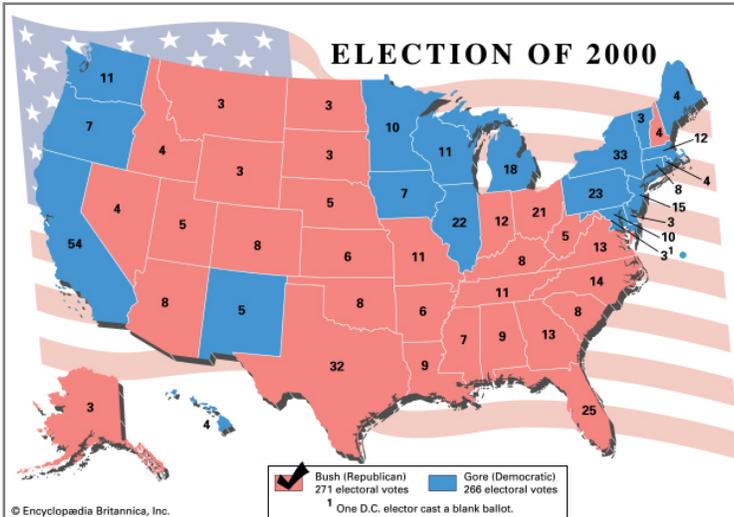


Chief Justice William Rehnquist  
administering the oath of office to George W.  
Bush, January 20, ...

With his inauguration, Bush became only the second son of a president to assume the nation’s highest office; the other was John Quincy Adams (1825–29), the son of John Adams (1797–1801).

## **PRESIDENCY**

*Doug Mills/AP*



Results of the American presidential election, 2000...

*Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.*



George W. Bush sitting at his desk in the Oval Office, with his father, George H.W. Bush, looking ...

*Eric Draper/The White House*

## EARLY INITIATIVES

Bush was the first Republican president to enjoy a majority in both houses of Congress since Dwight D. Eisenhower in the 1950s.

Taking advantage of his party's strength, Bush proposed a \$1.6 trillion tax-cut bill in February 2001. A compromise measure worth \$1.35 billion was passed by Congress in June, despite Democratic objections that it unfairly benefited the wealthy. In the same month, however, control of the Senate formally passed to the

Democrats after Republican Sen. James Jeffords left his party to become an independent. Subsequently, many of

Bush's domestic initiatives encountered significant resistance in the Senate.

In a report issued in May 2001, the National Energy Policy Development Group, a task force headed by Vice Pres. Dick Cheney, called for increasing the production of fossil fuels and nuclear power in the country by opening more federal lands to mining and oil and gas exploration, extending tax credits and other subsidies to energy companies, and easing environmental regulations. In July a coalition of nonprofit organizations filed suit to make public the secret deliberations of the task force and the identities of the groups it met with. (The case was decided in the administration's favour by the Supreme Court in June 2004.)

In foreign affairs, the Bush administration announced that the United States would not abide by the Kyoto Protocol on reducing the emission of gases responsible for global warming, which the United States had signed in the last days of the Bill Clinton administration, because the agreement did not impose emission limits on developing countries and because it could harm the U.S. economy. The administration also withdrew from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and attempted to secure commitments from various governments not to extradite U.S. citizens to the new International Criminal Court, whose jurisdiction it rejected.

# THE SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS



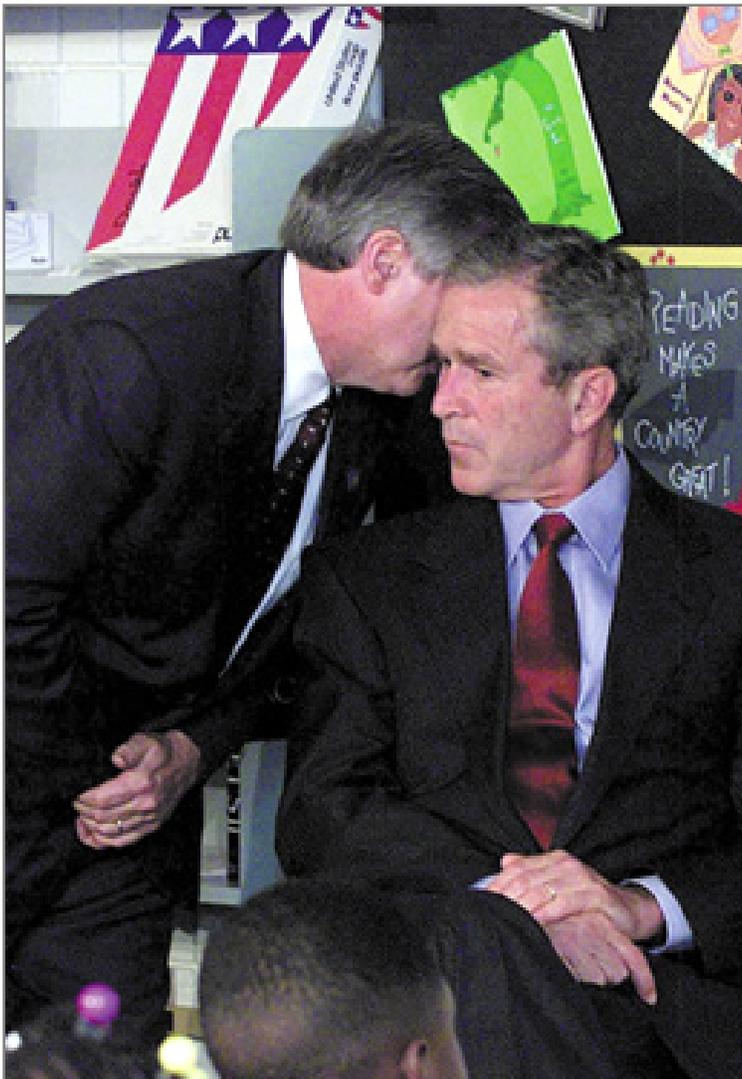
Hijacked airliner approaching the south tower of the World Trade Center.

*Carmen Taylor/AP*

On September 11, 2001, Bush faced a crisis that would transform his presidency. That morning, four American commercial airplanes were hijacked by Islamist terrorists. Two of the planes were deliberately crashed into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, destroying both towers and collapsing or damaging many

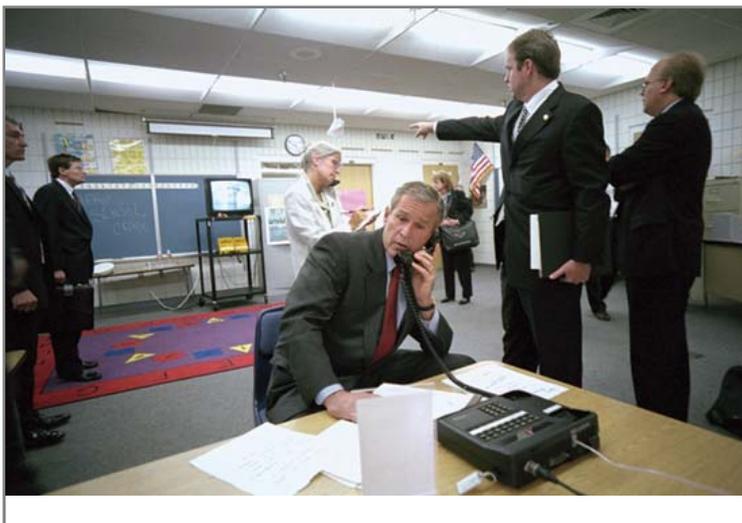
surrounding buildings, and a third was used to destroy part of the Pentagon building outside Washington, D.C.; the fourth plane crashed outside Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, after passengers apparently attempted to retake it (see September 11 attacks). The crashes—the worst terrorist incident on U.S. soil—killed some 3,000 people.

The Bush administration accused radical Islamist Osama bin Laden and his terrorist network, al-Qaeda (Arabic: “the



U.S. President George W. Bush in Sarasota, Florida, being notified of multiple terrorist attacks on ...

*Doug Mills/AP*



Base”), of responsibility for the attacks and charged the Taliban government of Afghanistan with harbouring bin Laden and his followers (in a videotape in 2004, bin Laden acknowledged that he was responsible). After assembling an international military coalition, Bush ordered a massive bombing campaign against Afghanistan, which began on October 7, 2001. U.S.-led forces quickly toppled the Taliban government and routed al-Qaeda fighters, though bin Laden himself remained elusive (he was eventually killed in

George W. Bush (seated) talking on the phone as advisers watch a television report about the World ...

*Eric Draper—White House photo*



U.S. Pres. George W. Bush conferring with his chief of staff aboard Air Force One, September 11, ...

*Eric Draper/The White House*



(From left to right) Donald Rumsfeld, Colin Powell, George W. Bush, and Dick Cheney at a National ...

a raid by U.S. forces in Pakistan in 2011). In the wake of the September 11 attacks and during the war in Afghanistan, Bush's public-approval ratings were the highest of his presidency, reaching 90 percent in some polls.

## DOMESTIC MEASURES

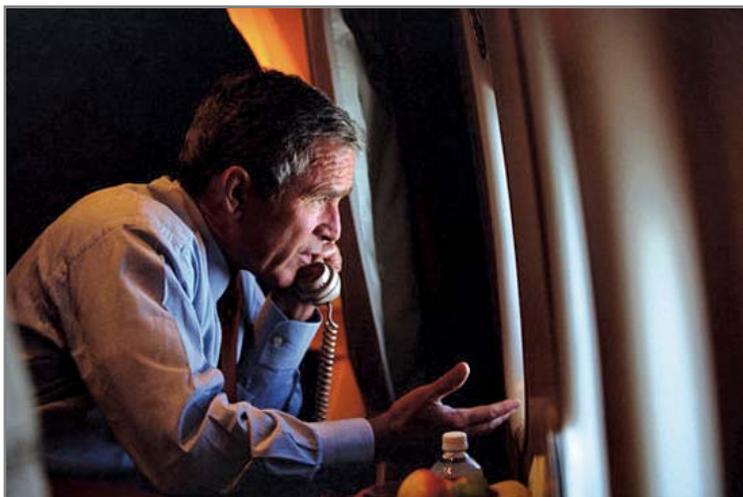
Immediately after the September 11 attacks, domestic security and the threat of terrorism became the chief focus of the Bush administration and the top priority of government at every level. Declaring a global "war on terrorism," Bush announced that the

*Courtesy of the George W. Bush  
Presidential Library & Museum/NARA*



George W. Bush addressing reporters in the Oval Office of the White House, September 13, 2001.

*Courtesy of the George W. Bush  
Presidential Library & Museum/NARA*



U.S. president George W. Bush on Air Force One, Sept. 11, 2001.

*Eric Draper/The White House*

country would not rest until “every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated.” To coordinate the government’s domestic response, the administration formed a cabinet-level Department of Homeland Security, which began operating on January 24, 2003.

In October 2001 the Bush administration introduced, and Congress quickly passed, the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act (the USA PATRIOT



U.S. Pres. George W. Bush addressing the country from the Oval Office on September 11, 2001.

*Eric Draper/The White House*



Pres. George W. Bush addressing a crowd as he stands on rubble at the World Trade

Act), which significantly but temporarily expanded the search and surveillance powers of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other law-enforcement agencies. (Most of the law's provisions were made permanent in 2006 by the USA PATRIOT Improvement and Reauthorization Act.)

In January 2002 Bush secretly authorized the National Security Agency (NSA) to monitor the international telephone calls and e-mail messages of American citizens and others in the United States without first obtaining

Center site in ...

*Eric Draper/The White House*



Pres. George W. Bush signing the USA PATRIOT Act in the East Room of the White House, Washington, ...

*George W. Bush Library/NARA*

an order from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, as required by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978. When the program was revealed in news reports in December 2005, the administration insisted that it was justified by a September 2001 joint Congressional

resolution that authorized the president to use “all necessary and appropriate force” against those responsible for the September 11 attacks. Subsequent efforts in Congress to provide a legal basis for the spying became mired in debate over whether telecommunications companies that cooperated with the NSA should be granted retroactive immunity against numerous civil lawsuits. Legislation granting immunity and expanding the NSA’s surveillance powers was finally passed by Congress and signed by Bush in July 2008.

## **TREATMENT OF DETAINEES**

In January 2002, as the pacification of Afghanistan continued, the United States began transferring captured Taliban fighters and suspected al-Qaeda members from Afghanistan to a special prison at the country's permanent naval base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Eventually hundreds of prisoners were held at the facility without charge and without the legal means to challenge their detentions (see habeas corpus). The administration argued that it was not obliged to grant basic constitutional protections to the prisoners, because the base was outside U.S. territory; nor was it required to observe the Geneva Conventions regarding the treatment of prisoners of war and civilians during wartime, because the conventions did not apply to "unlawful enemy combatants." It further maintained that the president had the authority to place any individual, including an American citizen, in indefinite military custody without charge by declaring him an enemy combatant.



The entrance to an internment facility at Camp Delta, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

The prison at Guantánamo became the focus of international controversy in June 2004, after a confidential report by the International

*Kathleen T. Rhem/U.S. Department of  
Defense*

Committee of the Red Cross found that significant numbers of

prisoners had been interrogated by means of techniques that were “tantamount to torture.” (The Bush administration had frequently and vigorously denied that the United States practiced torture.)



Scene from Errol Morris’s documentary *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008), ...

© Nubar Alexanian—Participant Media, LLC

The leak of the report came just two months after the publication of photographs of abusive treatment of prisoners by American soldiers at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq (see *below* Iraq War). In response to the Abu Ghraib revelations, Congress eventually

passed the Detainee Treatment Act, which banned the “cruel, inhuman, or degrading” treatment of prisoners in U.S. military custody. Although the measure became law with Bush’s signature in December 2005, he added a “signing statement” in which he reserved the right to set aside the law’s restrictions if he deemed them inconsistent with his constitutional powers as commander in chief.

In June 2006 the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*, declared that the system of military commissions that the administration had intended to use to try selected prisoners at Guantánamo on charges of war crimes was in violation of the Geneva Conventions and the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which governs American rules of courts-martial. Later that year, Congress passed the Military Commissions Act, which gave the commissions the express statutory basis that the court had found lacking; the law also prevented enemy combatants who were not American citizens from challenging their detention in the federal courts.

In separate programs run by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), dozens of individuals suspected of involvement in terrorism were abducted outside the United States and held in secret prisons in eastern Europe and elsewhere or transferred for interrogation to countries that routinely practiced torture. Although such extrajudicial transfers, or “extraordinary renditions,” had taken place during the Clinton administration, the Bush administration greatly expanded the practice after the September 11 attacks. Press reports of the renditions in 2005 sparked controversy in Europe and led to official investigations into whether some European governments had knowingly permitted rendition flights through their countries’

territories, an apparent violation of the human rights law of the European Union (*see also* European law).

In February 2005 the CIA confirmed that some individuals in its custody had been subjected to “enhanced interrogation techniques,” including waterboarding (interrupted or controlled drowning, often called simulated drowning), which was generally regarded as a form of torture under international law. The CIA’s position that waterboarding did not constitute torture had been based on the legal opinions of the Justice Department and specifically on a secret memo issued in 2002 that adopted an unconventionally narrow and legally questionable definition of torture. After the memo was leaked to the press in June 2004, the Justice Department rescinded its opinion. In 2005, however, the department issued new secret memos declaring the legality of enhanced interrogation techniques, including waterboarding. The new memos were revealed in news reports in 2007, prompting outrage from critics of the administration. In July 2007 Bush issued an executive order that prohibited the CIA from using torture or acts of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, though the specific interrogation techniques it was allowed to use remained classified. In March 2008 Bush vetoed a bill directed specifically at the CIA that would have prevented the agency from using any interrogation

technique, such as waterboarding, that was not included in the U.S. Army's field manual on interrogation.

## **THE IRAQ WAR**

### **ROAD TO WAR**

In September 2002 the administration announced a new National Security Strategy of the United States of America. It was notable for its declaration that the United States would act “preemptively,” using military force if necessary, to forestall or prevent threats to its security by terrorists or “rogue states” possessing biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons—so-called weapons of mass destruction.

At the same time, Bush and other high administration officials began to draw worldwide attention to Iraqi Pres. Ṣaddām Ḥussein and to suspicions that Iraq possessed or was attempting to develop weapons of mass destruction in violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions. In November 2002 the Bush administration successfully lobbied for a new Security Council resolution providing for the return of weapons inspectors to Iraq. Soon afterward Bush declared that Iraq had failed to comply fully with the new resolution and that the country continued to possess weapons of mass destruction. For several weeks, the United States and Britain tried to secure support from other

Security Council members for a second resolution explicitly authorizing the use of force against Iraq (though administration officials insisted that earlier resolutions provided sufficient legal justification for military action). In response, France and Russia, while agreeing that Iraq had failed to cooperate fully with weapons inspectors, argued that the inspections regime should be continued and strengthened.

As part of the administration's diplomatic campaign, Bush and other officials frequently warned that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, that it was attempting to acquire nuclear weapons, and that it had long-standing ties to al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations. In his State of the Union address in January 2003, Bush announced that Iraq had attempted to purchase enriched uranium from Niger for use in nuclear weapons. The subsequent determination that some intelligence reports of the purchase had relied on forged documents complicated the administration's diplomatic efforts in the United Nations. Meanwhile, massive peace demonstrations took place in several major cities around the world.

## **OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM**

Finally, Bush announced the end of U.S. diplomacy. On March 17 he issued an ultimatum to Ṣaddām, giving him

and his immediate family 48 hours to leave Iraq or face removal by force. Bush also indicated that, even if Ṣaddām relinquished power, U.S. military forces would enter the country to search for weapons of mass destruction and to stabilize the new government.



Explosions illuminating the skies of Baghdad during the U.S.-led air bombardment of the city, March ...

*Ramzi Haidar—AFP/Getty Images*

After Ṣaddām's public refusal to leave and as the 48-hour deadline approached, Bush ordered the invasion of Iraq, called Operation Iraqi Freedom, to begin on March 20 (local time). In the ground phase of the Iraq War, U.S. and British forces quickly overwhelmed

the Iraqi army and irregular Iraqi fighters, and by mid-April they had entered Baghdad and all other major Iraqi cities and forced Ṣaddām's regime from power.



In the wake of the invasion, hundreds of sites suspected of producing or housing weapons of mass

U.S. President George W. Bush greeting members of the U.S. military at a camp near Doha, Qatar, in ...

*AP*

destruction within Iraq were investigated. As the search continued without success into the following year,

Bush's critics accused the administration of having misled the country into war by exaggerating the threat posed by Iraq. In 2004 the Iraq Survey Group, a fact-finding mission comprising American and British experts, concluded that Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction or the capacity to produce them at the time of the invasion, though it found evidence that Ṣaddām had planned to reconstitute programs for producing such weapons once UN sanctions were lifted. In the same year, the bipartisan 9-11 Commission (the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States) reported that there was no evidence of a "collaborative operational relationship" between Iraq and al-Qaeda. Ṣaddām, who went into hiding during the invasion, was captured by U.S. forces in December 2003 and was executed by the new Iraqi government three years later.

## **OCCUPATION AND INSURGENCY**

Although the Bush administration had planned for a short war, stabilizing the country after the invasion proved



Pres. George W. Bush with sailors aboard the USS *Abraham Lincoln*, May 1, 2003.

*Tyler J. Clements/U.S. Navy*

difficult. From May 1, when Bush declared an end to major combat in Iraq, to the end of December 2003, more than 200 U.S. soldiers were killed as a result of attacks by Iraqis. During the next four years the number of U.S. casualties increased

dramatically, reaching more than 900 in 2007 alone. (The number of Iraqis who died during the invasion and insurgency is uncertain.) Widespread sectarian violence, accompanied by regular and increasingly deadly attacks on military, police, and civilian targets by militias and terrorist organizations, made large parts of the country virtually ungovernable. The increasing numbers of U.S. dead and wounded, the failure to uncover weapons of mass destruction, and the enormous cost to U.S. taxpayers (approximately \$10 billion per month through 2007) gradually eroded public support for the war; by 2005 a clear majority of Americans believed that it had been a mistake. By the fifth anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom in March 2008, some 4,000 U.S. soldiers had been killed. As the

death toll mounted, Bush's public-approval ratings dropped, falling below 30 percent in many polls.



U.S. Army soldiers surveying the scene where a car bomb exploded in front of a hotel in Baghdad, ...

*Mario Tama—Getty Images  
News/Thinkstock*

While acknowledging that it had underestimated the tenacity of the Iraqi resistance, the Bush administration maintained that part of the blame for the continuing violence lay with Iran, which it accused of supplying weapons and money to Iraqi-based terrorist

groups. In his State of the Union address in 2002, Bush had warned that Iran (along with Iraq and North Korea) was part of an “axis of evil” that threatened the world with its support of terrorism and its ambition to acquire nuclear weapons. In 2006–07 the United States joined other members of the Security Council in condemning Iran’s nuclear research program. The administration’s repeated warnings concerning a possible Iranian nuclear weapon led to speculation that Bush was contemplating military action against the country. In December 2007, however, the

administration's suspicions were contradicted by the National Intelligence Estimate, a consensus report of U.S. intelligence agencies, which declared with "high confidence" that in 2003 Iran had abandoned attempts to develop a nuclear weapon.

## **FOREIGN AID**

In his State of the Union address in January 2003, Bush proposed an ambitious program to address the humanitarian crisis created by the HIV/AIDS pandemic in 15 countries in Africa and the Caribbean. With a budget of \$15 billion over a five-year period, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) aimed to supply life-extending medications to 2 million victims of HIV/AIDS, to prevent 7 million new cases of the disease, and to provide care for 10 million AIDS sufferers and the orphaned children of AIDS victims. The program was widely praised in the United States, even by Bush's critics, and generated enormous goodwill toward the Bush administration in Africa. Medical professionals and public health officials welcomed the greater availability of retroviral drugs but generally objected to the program's requirement that one-third of prevention funds be spent on teaching sexual abstinence and marital fidelity.

In January 2004 the Bush administration established the Millennium Challenge Corporation to distribute development aid to poor countries that demonstrated a commitment to democracy, free enterprise, and transparent governance. The agency's innovative approach allowed recipient countries to design and manage their own multiyear programs to reduce poverty and promote economic growth. By 2008 the corporation had approved some \$5 billion in grant requests, though relatively little of the money had been dispersed.

The Bush administration's foreign aid programs were designed to serve its declared foreign policy goal of promoting democracy abroad, especially in parts of the world plagued by poverty and war. In eastern Europe, Bush supported expanding the membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as a means of securing democracy and stability in war-ravaged or formerly communist countries. During his presidency NATO gained seven new members: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

## **DOMESTIC AFFAIRS**

In December 2001 Bush successfully negotiated with the Democratic-controlled Senate legislation that provided federal funding to religious, or "faith-based," charities and



U.S. Pres. George W. Bush (left) and U.S. Rep. Emanuel Cleaver (centre) listening to Francis ...

*Eric Draper/The White House*

social services. The measure, he argued, would end long-standing discrimination in federal funding against churches and other religious groups that provided needed social services in poor communities. The bill was passed by the

Senate despite objections from many Democratic senators that it violated the constitutional separation of church and state. A White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives was created in January 2001.

In 2002 the U.S. economy continued to perform poorly, despite having recovered from a recession the previous November. Widespread corporate accounting scandals, some of the largest corporate bankruptcies in U.S. history, and fears over war and terrorism all contributed to consumer uncertainty and a prolonged downturn in the financial markets. Despite the economic turmoil, Bush's personal popularity enabled the Republicans to regain a majority in the Senate in midterm elections in November 2002 (though the party also lost three state governorships).

With both houses of Congress under Republican control, Bush secured passage of a second tax cut of \$350 billion in May 2003.

## **EDUCATION**

In January 2002 Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act, which introduced significant changes in the curriculum of the country's public elementary, middle, and high schools and dramatically increased federal regulation of state school systems. Under the law, states were required to administer yearly tests of the reading and mathematics skills of public school students and to demonstrate adequate progress toward raising the scores of all students to a level defined as "proficient" or higher. Teachers were also required to meet higher standards for certification. Schools that failed to meet their goals would be subject to gradually increasing sanctions, eventually including replacement of staff or closure.

In the first years of the program, supporters pointed to its success in increasing the test scores of minority students, who historically had performed at lower levels than white students. Indeed, in the 2000 presidential campaign Bush had touted the proposed law as a remedy for what he called "the soft bigotry of low expectations" faced by the children of minorities. Critics, however, complained that the federal

government was not providing enough funding to implement the program's requirements and that the law had usurped the states's traditional control of education as provided for in the Constitution. Others objected that the law was actually eroding the quality of education by forcing schools to "teach to the test" while neglecting other parts of the curriculum, such as history, social science, and art.

## **MEDICARE**

In December 2003 Bush won Congressional approval of the Medicare Modernization Act (MMA), a reform of the federally sponsored health insurance program for elderly Americans. Widely recognized as the most far-reaching overhaul of Medicare to date, the MMA enabled Medicare enrollees to obtain prescription drug coverage from Medicare through private insurance companies, which then received a government subsidy; it also vastly increased the number of private insurance plans through which enrollees could receive medical benefits. Although many members of Congress from both parties criticized the MMA as needlessly complex and expensive (its cost was estimated in January 2004 at \$534 billion over 10 years), a bipartisan majority accepted the measure as an imperfect but necessary compromise that would bring a much-needed insurance benefit to senior citizens. Some conservative

Republicans, however, rejected the MMA on both fiscal and philosophical grounds, and many Democrats objected to a provision in the plan that prevented Medicare administrators from negotiating with pharmaceutical companies for lower drug prices.

## REELECTION

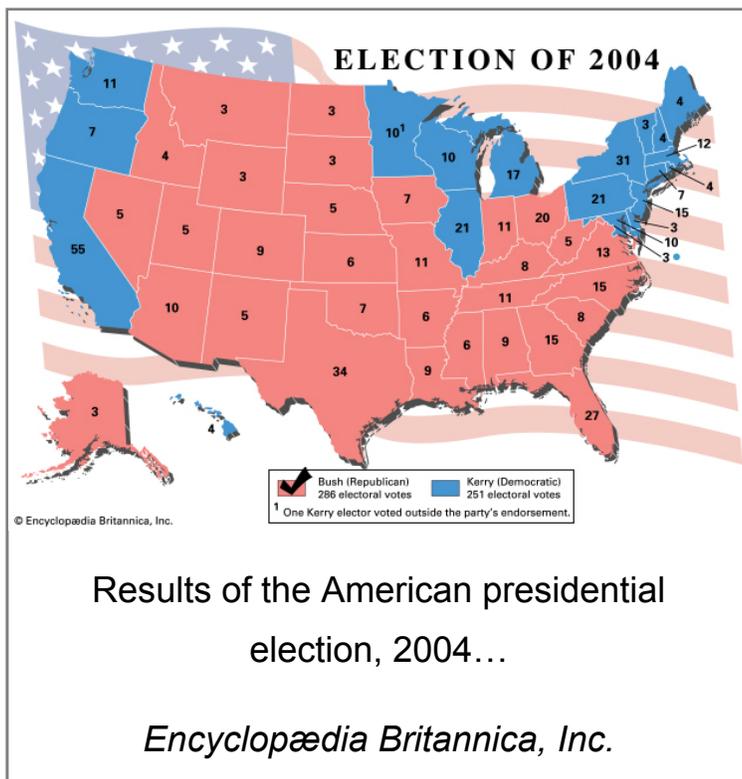


(From left to right) U.S. Pres. George W. Bush, Laura Bush, Lynne Cheney, and Vice Pres. Dick ...

*Alex Wong/Getty Images*

In 2004 Bush focused his energies on his campaign for reelection against his Democratic challenger, U.S. Sen. John Kerry. According to opinion polls, the candidates entered the fall elections in a virtual dead heat. Bush's key campaign platform was his conduct of the war on terrorism, which he

linked with the war in Iraq. Kerry countered that the Iraq War had been poorly planned and executed and that Bush had neglected domestic priorities. The election was notable for the prominent role played by independent political-action groups in organizing and fund-raising and for the



influence of highly partisan blogs as alternative sources of political news. Bush defeated Kerry with a slim majority of the electoral and popular vote, and the Republicans increased their majorities in both the House and the

Senate.

## **SOCIAL SECURITY AND IMMIGRATION**

The major domestic initiative of Bush's second term was his proposal to replace Social Security (the country's system of government-managed retirement insurance) with private retirement savings accounts. The measure attracted little support, however, mainly because it would have required significant cuts in retirement benefits and heavy borrowing during the transition to the private system.

Bush also proposed a reform of immigration laws that would have allowed most of the estimated 12 million people living in the country illegally to remain temporarily as "guest workers" and to apply for U.S. citizenship after returning to

their home countries and paying a fine (though citizenship would not be guaranteed). Although the proposal was supported by some prominent Democrats, including Sen. Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts, most other Democrats and many members of Bush's own party remained wary of the idea. Some conservative critics denounced the program as an amnesty that would encourage a new wave of illegal immigration, while liberal opponents warned that it would create a permanent underclass of poor and disenfranchised workers. More than two years of debate produced no reform legislation, though Bush did sign a measure that authorized the construction of a 700-mile (1,127-km) fence along the U.S.-Mexican border.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL AND SCIENCE POLICY**

The Bush administration's environmental policies reflected its conviction that economic development could be accomplished without serious harm to the environment and that limits on development, where necessary, should be achieved through voluntary cooperation by industry rather than regulation by government. In keeping with the recommendations of the energy task force, the administration's proposed Clear Skies Act would have introduced a cap-and-trade system to regulate major sources of air pollution by power plants throughout the

country. Although the measure would have reduced emissions of nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, and mercury by 70 percent by 2016, critics charged that the reductions were less than what would be achieved by enforcing the existing Clean Air Act. Largely because of disagreements about whether the Clear Skies Act should regulate emissions of carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas, the measure died in the Senate in 2005. Despite this setback, the administration soon implemented the Clean Air Interstate Rule, a regional cap-and-trade system for 28 Eastern states and the District of Columbia.

After the Supreme Court ruled in April 2007 that greenhouse gas emissions by automobiles constitute a form of air pollution under the Clean Air Act, Bush signed energy legislation that imposed increases in automobile fuel economy standards by the year 2020. In December, however, the Environmental Protection Agency blocked a proposal by California and 16 other states to issue regulations that would have required fuel economies greater than those called for in the new federal law.

The Bush administration was frequently accused of politically motivated interference in government scientific research. Critics charged that political appointees at various agencies, many of whom had little or no relevant expertise, altered or suppressed scientific reports that did not

promote administration policies, restricted the ability of government experts to speak publicly on certain scientific issues, and limited access to scientific information by policy makers and the public. Numerous complaints by environmental and scientific groups led to Congressional hearings in 2007 on political interference in the work of the Surgeon General of the United States and in research on climate change conducted by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). In most cases the administration claimed that the interventions were an appropriate attempt to ensure scientific objectivity or simply a benign exercise of the authority of political appointees.

## LATER DEVELOPMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

### 2006 ELECTIONS



George W. Bush surveying the damage to New Orleans caused by Hurricane Katrina

The continued lack of progress in the Iraq War, a series of corruption scandals involving prominent Republican politicians, and the administration's poor response to the

as he heads to ...

*Paul Morse/The White House*

devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and

surrounding areas in August 2005 helped the Democrats win control of both houses of Congress in the midterm elections of November 2006. The new Congress soon began investigations of the NSA spying program undertaken in 2002 and of allegedly improper political influence in the dismissals of several United States attorneys in December 2006. In the latter investigation the testimony of Alberto R. Gonzales, Bush's attorney general since 2005, was viewed with skepticism by both parties and reinforced the impression that the Justice Department under his leadership was not sufficiently independent of the White House. Gonzales resigned in August 2007 and was replaced in November with Michael Mukasey.

## **THE PLAME AFFAIR**

In March 2007 Cheney's chief of staff, I. Lewis ("Scooter") Libby, was convicted on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice in connection with an investigation into the leak of the identity of a covert CIA agent in 2003. The agent, Valerie Plame, was the wife of Joseph C. Wilson, a retired foreign service officer who had traveled to Africa in early 2002 at the request of the CIA to help determine whether Iraq had

attempted to purchase enriched uranium from Niger. Wilson reported that there was no evidence of an attempted purchase, and in July 2003 he publicly speculated that the administration had ignored or distorted intelligence reports such as his to justify a military invasion of Iraq. Plame was identified as a CIA agent to journalists, allegedly to punish Wilson and to discredit him by suggesting that his selection for the CIA mission was the result of nepotism. In testimony before a grand jury and agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Libby made false statements about the substance of conversations he had had with journalists concerning Wilson's mission to Niger and about when and how he had learned that Plame worked for the CIA. Libby was not charged with the underlying crime of disclosing the identity of covert intelligence personnel, nor were two other administration officials who had identified Plame to a journalist who subsequently published the information in his column. Bush commuted Libby's 30-month prison sentence in July 2007.

During his second term Bush appointed two Supreme Court justices: John G. Roberts, Jr. (confirmed as chief justice in 2005), and Samuel A. Alito, Jr. (confirmed in 2006). The appointments increased to four the number of solidly conservative justices on the nine-member Supreme Court.



Samuel A. Alito, Jr. (centre), being sworn in as associate justice of the Supreme Court by Chief ...

*Shealah Craighead/The White House*



Pres. George W. Bush delivering a statement about the economy with (from left to right) Ben ...

*Joyce N. Boghosian/The White House*

As Bush entered the final year of his presidency in 2008, the country faced enormous challenges. Although al-Qaeda had been subdued, it had not been destroyed. The United States and its allies continued to fight skirmishes with terrorists and their Taliban supporters in Afghanistan, and the insurgency in Iraq continued to claim U.S. casualties. The surpluses in the federal budget in 2000 and 2001 were a distant memory, as the combined effects of military spending, tax

cuts, and slow economic growth produced a series of enormous budget deficits starting in 2003. Later in 2008 the economy was threatened by a severe credit crisis,

leading Congress to enact a controversial Bush administration plan to rescue the financial industry with up to \$700 billion in government funds (see Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008). Despite Bush's 2000 campaign promise to be "a uniter, not a divider," the country remained politically polarized to an extent not seen since the Vietnam War. While Bush's critics faulted him for these problems and many others, his supporters vigorously defended him as a strong leader who had guided the country through one of the most dangerous periods in its history.

## POSTPRESIDENTIAL ACTIVITIES



(From left to right) Barack Obama, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George H.W. Bush, and Jimmy Carter ...

*David J. Phillip/AP Images*

In Dallas, Texas, in 2008, officials of Southern Methodist University (SMU) announced plans for the construction there of the George W. Bush Presidential Center. The centre would comprise a presidential library and museum and the George W. Bush

Institute, a think tank dedicated to research and “practical solutions” in the areas of education reform, global health, freedom, and economic growth. An executive director and the first fellows of the institute were appointed in 2009.



Pres. George W. Bush delivering his Farewell Address from the East Room of the White House, ...

*Chris Greenberg/The White House*



The U.S. Marine Corps helicopter carrying George W. Bush after the presidential inauguration of ...

After Bush left office in January 2009, he and his wife settled in Dallas. During his first year of retirement, he delivered several speeches to mostly private audiences but avoided criticizing his Democratic successor, Pres. Barack Obama. In response to a request from Obama in January 2010, Bush and former president Bill Clinton assumed leadership of private fund-raising efforts in the United States for disaster relief in Haiti, which had been struck by a devastating

MC1 Chad J. McNeeley/U.S. Department of  
Defense



George W. Bush (left) fishing at his ranch in  
Crawford, Texas, 2014.

*Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*  
*(reproduction no. LC-DIG-highsm-30297)*

earthquake earlier that month.

Later in 2010 Bush published the memoir *Decision Points*, in which he defended the Iraq War, stated that he personally approved the waterboarding of a captured member of al-Qaeda, reasserted his belief that waterboarding does not constitute torture, and acknowledged the

federal government's slow response to Hurricane Katrina. In 2014 he issued *41: A Portrait of My Father*, a biography of the elder Bush. An amateur artist, he later published *Portraits of Courage: A Commander in Chief's Tribute to America's Warriors* (2017), which features his paintings of veterans.



*(Q)*



“Our warriors are the one percent of America who kept the 99 percent safe. We have a duty to help make their transitions as successful as possible.” – President George W. Bush

*Watch: From Warrior to Civilian*

# VETERAN TRANSITION

Many post-9/11 veterans face challenges as they transition back to civilian life, including unemployment, feelings of isolation, and health issues such as the invisible wounds of war.

What's more, research shows a civilian-military divide. 71% of Americans say they have little understanding of the issues facing post-9/11 veterans, and veterans agree: 84% say that the public has "little awareness" of the issues facing them and their families.

***We have a duty to understand and serve those who volunteered to wear the uniform in defense of our Nation (/Publications/Resources-Reports/Reports/know-our-vets.html).***

The Bush Institute's work ensures post-9/11 veterans and their families make successful transitions to civilian life with the focus on gaining ***meaningful employment*** (<http://www.vetroadmap.org>) and overcoming the invisible wounds of war.

## Core Components

### Employment Transition

The Bush Institute partnered with the US Chamber of Commerce, Federal agencies, private business, and non-profits, to develop the Veteran Employment Transition Roadmap. This guide for veterans seeks to help transition and succeed in the civilian workforce.

***View The Roadmap***  
***(Http://Www.Vetroadmap.Org)***

### Wellness

In an effort to get more warriors into quality treatment for the invisible wounds of war, the Bush Institute's Warrior Wellness Alliance connects best-in-class care providers with veteran peer-to-peer networks.

***About The Warrior Wellness Alliance***  
***(/Publications/Resources-Reports/Reports/Invisible-Wounds.Html )***

### Collective Impact

Americans hold a strong desire to help veterans, but often don't know the best way to do so. Out of more than two million non-profit organizations in the U.S., 45,000 serve military personnel and their families. We aim to empower these non-profits and their funders to develop more effective services and impactful outcomes for veterans.

***Funder And Non-Profit Resources***  
***([Http://Www.Bushcenter.Org/Publications/Resources-Reports/Reports/Serving-Our-Post-911-Veterans.Html](http://www.bushcenter.org/publications/resources-reports/reports/serving-our-post-911-veterans.html))***

### RELATED RESOURCES



***[The Invisible Wounds of War \(/publications/resources-reports/resources/libraries/vet-resources.html#invisiblewounds\)](#)***

The Warrior Wellness Alliance connects veterans to high-quality care.



***[Employment \(/publications/resources-reports/resources/libraries/vet-resources.html#employment\)](/publications/resources-reports/resources/libraries/vet-resources.html#employment)***

The VET Roadmap helps warriors transition from military service to civilian employment.



***Collective Impact (/publications/resources-reports/resources/libraries/vet-resources.html#collectiveimpact)***

Tools for the nonprofit community and the warriors they serve.



**[#KnowOurVets \(/publications/resources-reports/resources/libraries/vet-resources.html#knowourvets\)](#)**

Learn more about the unique challenges facing our warriors.

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT: CORPORAL DAVE SMITH, USMC

Dave Smith enlisted in the Marine Corps in 2003. He deployed twice in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and was engaged in some of the war's heaviest fighting. He was honorably discharged

in 2007 but experienced severe post-traumatic stress (PTS). "When you go to war, something in you changes," he said.

He was angry, and worried about the stigma of PTS. "We don't admit weakness. That's not part of our warrior culture," he explained. But things got worse -- at one point, he even contemplated suicide. Then a fellow warrior gave him the wake-up call he needed. "He had the courage," Dave recalled, "to tell me, 'I'm getting help. I'm working on this, and you should too.'" So Dave took ownership of his transition.

He rode in the 2012 W100K ride, and since then has become one of the most active members members of Team 43. By sharing his story and encouraging others to make a difference, he helps others remember that they are not forgotten and their sacrifices were not in vain -- and that moving towards a successful transition is a major priority.

**SUPPORT OUR WORK (</EXPLORE-OUR-WORK/SUPPORT-OUR-WORK.HTML>)**

***[Read More On Dave Smith](/Publications/Articles/2015/11/Dave-Smith-Navigating-Transition.Html)***  
***(</Publications/Articles/2015/11/Dave-Smith-Navigating-Transition.Html>)***

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

 *RESOURCES & REPORTS*

*[Warrior Wellness Alliance: Addressing the Invisible Wounds of War](#)*

With effective care, invisible wounds can be overcome. We connect peer-to-peer veteran networks with best-in-class health providers. Find a member organization in your community.



## George W Bush Opens Up About Veterans, Iraq, And The Healing Power of Art

By AARON GELL on March 3, 2017

As the former commander-in-chief unveiled his new series of artwork, a tribute to America's veterans, he sat down with Task & Purpose to talk about his remarkable transformation from president to painter.

"Painting a picture is like fighting a battle," Winston Churchill once wrote, in what may be the dumbest statement ever attributed to the man who helped lead the Allies to victory in the Second World War and is otherwise rightly celebrated for his soaring rhetoric. "It is, if anything, more exciting. But the principle is the same."

Actually, no, it isn't. And there may be no better refutation of Churchill's airy claim than the intriguing career path of president-turned-painter George W. Bush. The former chief executive spoke with Task & Purpose on Tuesday in his sunlit office in the George W. Bush Presidential Center in Dallas. Dressed in a brown suit jacket over an olive green Under Armour shirt, he was genial and warm, with a disarming sense of humor and a lightness of spirit suggesting retirement was definitely agreeing with him. The occasion was the unveiling of his new series of artworks. Entitled "Portraits of Courage," the paintings depict 98 former members of the U.S. armed forces (there is one four-panel mural that includes 26 individual troops), most of whom fought in Iraq and Afghanistan during Bush's time in office. They are men and women he got to know during the various wounded warrior events — including the W100K mountain bike ride and the Warrior Open golf competition — that he hosts each year as part of his extensive work on behalf of veterans.

Bush cites Churchill, who mostly painted delicate landscapes, as the inspiration behind his post-presidential hobby. "I admired his leadership," Bush told Task & Purpose, emphasizing the word in a manner that instantly brought back memories of his time in the White House. "I thought his paintings were very good, and I decided if he could, I could."

But as the former president made clear as he paged through the hardcover volume of his new work, pausing here and there to critique a stray brush stroke, an oil painting can be reworked endlessly. "It's paint and scrape, paint and scrape," he told me, describing his process of revision and layering. "When this book came out, I started to look through it, of course, and I said, 'Man, I wish I had that color a little better.' Every one of these paintings could be improved upon."

There are no erasures or do-overs when it comes to waging war. Bush often described his role as that of "decider," and there were no more consequential decisions during his presidency than the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. The latter, which was based on false intelligence about Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction and nuclear ambitions, has been the subject of second-guessing since the first U.S. troops began massing in Kuwait in 2003. Among others, former National Security Advisor Mike Flynn and Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis have both criticized the decision. But nearly 14 years later, Bush said he doesn't doubt for a moment that toppling Hussein was the appropriate course of action. "I thought it was the right decision then, and I think it was the right decision now," he declared. Asked what he thought of Donald Trump's assertion that it was a "big, fat mistake," he shrugged. "A lot of people said that. I happen to disagree."

Bush added that the 2007 surge in Iraq had demonstrated an important point: “Our military proved that we can defeat ISIS, though they weren’t called ISIS then.” I suggested that the battlefield had grown more complicated with the addition of Russia and Syria, among other players. “Is it?” he said. “I don’t know. The ingredients are the same. Thugs, the local people are sick of them. Bullies, who when rocked on their heels can’t stand up to Coalition forces. Syria has complicated it. But, just remember, in 2009, Iraq had free elections. Yeah, there was violence, but nothing like after we left. So my point is, it’s possible. And the sacrifice won’t be wasted.”

Bush has said that the hardest part of being in office was reading the casualty reports and seeing the brutal consequences of his policy first-hand: placing calls to sobbing widows, looking into the eyes of Gold Star families, visiting injured soldiers at Walter Reade and Bethesda as they practiced using a prosthetic limb or struggled with PTS. (Bush does not use the “D,” pointing out that such psychic wounds represent not a disorder but an injury that can be overcome.) “He told me the hardest decision he had to make was sending us into harm’s way,” said Michael Rodriguez, a retired Special Forces Green Beret, who now serves on Bush’s Military Service Initiative advisory board and whose portrait graces the book’s cover. “In the Special Forces community, we have a profound respect and love for the man. We never questioned anything under his leadership.”

Task & Purpose spoke to several of the veterans depicted in the portraits — all deeply devoted to the former commander-in-chief — who wondered whether his extraordinary painting project might be a form of art therapy: a way of exorcising his own post-traumatic stress or “moral injury,” a not-uncommon response to the experience of sending service members into combat.

“Based on the paintings that he’s done,” suggested Robert Ferrara, an Army veteran, who was wounded by a roadside bomb in Iraq, “it has to be therapeutic for him.” Michael Rodriguez, who recently designed a fixed-blade knife for the CKRT Forged by War program, said making art had changed his own life. “I was hospitalized in Bethesda, and they introduced me to art therapy,” he recalled. “I’m like, ‘I’m a damn war fighter. I don’t do fucking art.’” Eventually he tried it, though, “and I saw the beauty in art, the ability to say something when words just can’t do it.” Jay Fain, a Army veteran who was wounded by a roadside bomb in Iraq, agreed. “I know a lot of guys that use art as part of their therapy process, and I’m guessing that’s exactly why he does it.”

“It’s an interesting question,” Bush said. “In a sense, it is therapeutic. Not that it unburdens my soul. It’s not the painting that unburdens my soul. It’s the belief in the cause and the people — to the extent that a soul needs to be unburdened. The painting was a joyful experience, and if that’s therapy, that’s therapy.”

It’s often said that every portrait is in some fundamental sense a self-portrait. If so, it’s impossible to look at these 98 extraordinary images without thinking deeply about the artist who made them: A leader who sent troops off to the battlefield, and who, so many years later, spends his days channeling the damaged but determined warriors who came home. In many cases, the eyes gazing out from these canvasses are plainly haunted by the horrors of war. Several bear expressions contorted with deep anguish. Spend a little time in the presence of these pictures, and one is overwhelmed by their subjects’ sacrifices, their courage, their strength and, in some cases, their turmoil. “So this one,” the president said, turning to page 115 and tapping the image of Staff Sgt. Alvis “Todd” Domerese with his forefinger. The portrait is one of the series’ most disconcerting and also most beautiful — Domerese’s large

forehead a swirl of pink and grey, eyes narrowed, face twisted into a grimace. The picture is accompanied by a graphic depiction of war written by Domerese himself:

*There was poverty like you can't even fathom. I saw bloody and burned dead bodies in the streets. There was stagnant water with bugs and raw sewage here, there, and everywhere. Imagine the worst place you have ever been and multiply it by 100. Then add to it that we were being hunted like a buck in the woods.*

"It's very powerful," Bush said of the letter. "And he filled out a questionnaire that mentioned he had night sweats. I'm thinking, 'night sweats'... man. What's going through the guy's mind? So the painting turned out kind of harsh — not harsh, like condemning Todd. But reflecting the agony that was in his letter." He'd seen Domerese a few days before and asked what he thought of the picture. "He said, 'Man, it's awesome,'" Bush recounted. "And of course that's exactly what you'd expect him to tell the commander-in-chief. But I don't want to in any way put out an image that would trouble somebody."

Looking at the painting, I couldn't shake the perception that Bush was also expressing something of his own state of mind. The pain was simply too palpable to be a matter of mere technique, reflecting a level of compassion and insight that can only be earned through genuine lived experience. Eventually, I put the question to him directly. After all, he himself regularly praises veterans for finding the courage to be open about their own internal struggles. Had he ever experienced symptoms of post-traumatic stress? "No. Not even close," he replied flatly. "Not even close. Did I feel grief as the person responsible for them being there? Yeah, I felt it, because others were grieving. And when others grieved, I grieved with them."

More often, Bush said, the troops and Gold Star families he met expressed pride in their service. "I can't tell you the number of times at Walter Reed or Bethesda a troop would look at me and say, 'I'd do it again,'" he recalled, noting that two of the men in the book had returned to combat with prosthetic limbs. "I'm sure there are people that are bitter and angry. I can understand that. I would occasionally run into one person, I'd try to be empathetic. But it's hard for people to understand how uplifting it is to be around such people of character."

Our first glimpse of George W. Bush, the artist, came in 2013, courtesy of an unemployed Romanian taxi driver. "My little sister was hacked by Guccifer," he recalled, referencing Dorothy Bush Koch, whose AOL account was compromised in one of a series of stunning if easily executed hacks. Bush had just started painting, and he'd emailed his sister a few images. "The one that got the most notoriety was my feet in a bathtub," he went on with a light chuckle. "I did the painting for several reasons. One, I was trying to learn perspective away from you. Secondly, I like the idea of painting water hitting water. And thirdly, it fit to my sense of humor. So yeah, that one got leaked out there, but you know, that's okay. I understand people are interested. Most of my painting is very private, and that's the way I like it. But I obviously made the decision to put these out for public consumption, because I wanted people to pay attention to our vets and what they're dealing with."

The bathtub picture, and another that depicted the former president in the shower from behind, his face reflected in a small circular mirror, were widely ridiculed in the media. But Bush kept at it, working with a series of teachers, and studying the work of masters like Lucien Freud, Jamie Wyeth, and Fairfield Porter. He spends endless hours every day in his studio now, mixing various hues from a handful of primary colors, listening to George Jones and Van Morrison, or sometimes the occasional Texas Rangers

game, on his Sonos speakers. In 2014, he mounted his first solo exhibition, “The Art of Leadership,” made up of 30 portraits of world leaders with whom he’d worked during his two terms in Washington, drawing some friendly praise from art critics. Especially noteworthy was the sharp depiction of Vladimir Putin: hollow-eyed, tight-lipped and corpse-like. Though clearly the effort of a novice, it’s a powerful piece, lent a mysterious resonance by the complicated public relationship of artist and subject.

As impressive as that series was, Bush’s latest works are in a new category altogether. Just five years after first picking up a brush, the ex-president has turned himself into a legitimate artist. His paintings are no longer historical curiosities or fodder for late-night comedy. They’re extraordinary works of art in their own right, demonstrating a confidently loose style, a fluid sense of color, and an ability to capture not only a subject’s likeness but his or her inner emotional state. Speaking of his world leaders series, Bush noted, “If you look at the brush strokes, they are very limited, as if I was trying not to make a mistake. So I think the looseness is an indication of growth.”

As much as anything, the paintings are an expression of the profound respect and tenderness Bush clearly feels for the men and women who served under him. “We all shared something,” he said. “And that was war. I vowed as president that I would make deliberate decisions, because I really knew the consequences. And that if these men and women were in combat, I’d support them all the way. And I did. Throughout my presidency, I met many wounded vets, and met with families of the deceased — the vast vast majority of whom, I tried to lift their spirits and they lifted mine.

“I believe our country’s future is in good hands if we help them,” he went on. “They’re remarkable individuals. I’m a Vietnam-era product. People are worried about divisiveness and all that stuff now. We were really divided then. There was a draft and people didn’t understand what was going on. And there was 55,000 casualties. And it was a horrendous time. Big protests. Big race riots. And our vets were treated despicably. Friends that came back from Vietnam War were spit on. And that affected me.”

I brought up one of the subjects of his portraits: Juan Carlos Hernandez, an Army veteran who lost his right leg in Afghanistan when an RPG hit the Chinook helicopter he was flying in. Born in Mexico, Hernandez crossed the border illegally when he was nine and joined the Army just out of high school, out of a desire, as he puts it in an accompanying profile, “to give back to the country that had done so much for me and my family.” During his presidency, Bush made a big push for comprehensive immigration reform, designed to strengthen border security while also providing a path to citizenship for the undocumented immigrants already here. The effort was unsuccessful, but Bush insisted, “The plan I proposed could easily come back to be. Look the politics are tough. Hernandez is good example for Americans, when they think about their position on this very hot-button issue. To remember this man was willing to wear the uniform of our country. Hernandez became a citizen at Bagram Air Base. And I had the privilege of watching others who serve our country get sworn in as citizens after they were wounded. So as we debate the issue, let’s think about the contributions that many are making.”

Though his own service during the Vietnam war — he was a member of the Texas Air National Guard — became a contentious issue during the 2004 campaign, current and former service members I spoke with venerate Bush as a leader of rare conviction, who has dedicated his post-presidency to their welfare. Whether or not one agrees with his foreign policy decisions, few doubt that they sprung from a deeply held belief in the goodness of the American people and the ennobling power of the democratic system. “I think it has a lot to do with my religious beliefs,” he said. “I believe a gift from an Almighty, deep in everybody’s soul, is the desire to be free — free to choose, free to worship the way you want to

worship. And if given that choice, people will go to extraordinary lengths to realize that freedom. And I used to say it's not an American gift to the world, it's a universal thought."

He noted that free societies contribute to international peace. "What's easy to overlook is the contribution of Japan and Korea to peace in the Far East," he said. "One was at war with us, and the other was in total turmoil, and yet those democracies evolved. It takes time to evolve. And as they did, they became allies in helping to keep the peace."

I asked him what he thought about the isolationist sentiment that had become a key element of the 2016 Presidential race. "I warned about isolationism in the State of the Union address," he said. "We were isolated prior to World War II. I admire Winston Churchill for his leadership, when their strongest ally went tepid in the face of a totalitarian ideology. And hopefully people learn the lessons. There's a lot of voices out there talking about the need to never forget values that have mattered over the course of time." He mentioned Africa, where the effort to combat HIV/AIDS was a cornerstone of his presidency. "America's a compassionate country," he said. "I used to say all the time, 'We don't conquer, we liberate.' Because of the generosity of the American people, millions are alive on the African continent today that wouldn't have been." The Bush Center is now working on an initiative to combat cervical and breast cancers in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. "My case is, it's in our interest to do so," he said. "We can't solve every problem, but we can work on the big ones."

It's important work, and a large painting of some of the women whom the program has helped hangs in a corridor just outside Bush's office. But it's clear that the contribution that's closest to his heart is his work on behalf of the men and women who serve in the armed forces. "I've got a platform," the man known as 43 noted with a self-deprecating wink. "It's not quite as big as the last one. But I intend to use it to help vets, and this book is just another way of doing so."

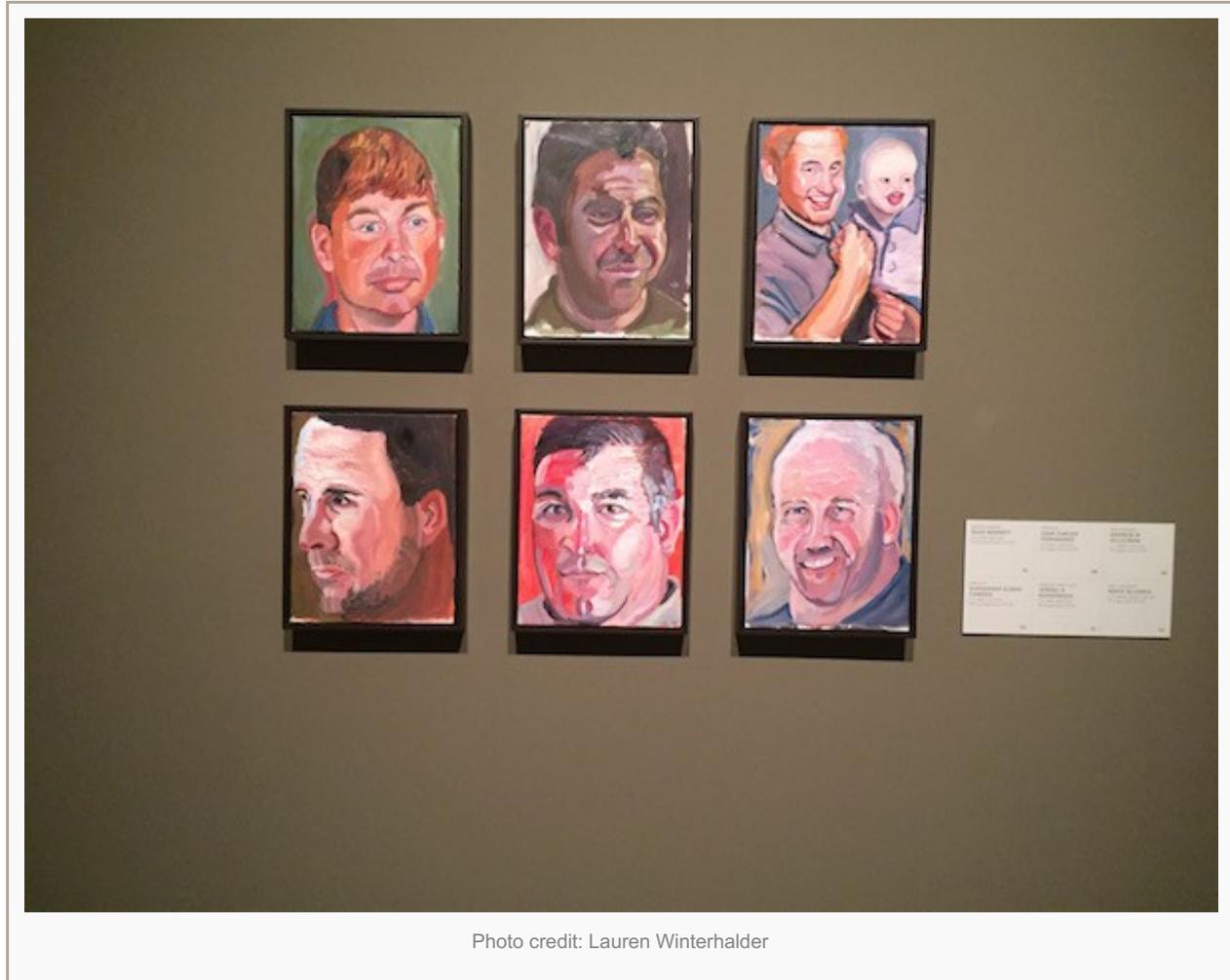


# President George W. Bush honors war veterans with a paintbrush

[smudailycampus.com/news/president-george-w-bush-honors-war-veterans-with-a-paintbrush](http://smudailycampus.com/news/president-george-w-bush-honors-war-veterans-with-a-paintbrush)

By Lauren Winterhalder

3/2/2017



Not just any President uses his time after his presidency to honor veterans, let alone with a paintbrush. Former President George W. Bush's painting pastime has now turned into a way for him to honor members of the United States military. His paintings will be featured at the George W. Bush Presidential Center on SMU campus in the exhibit "Portraits of Courage: A Commander in Chief's Tribute to America's Warriors."

The exhibit will showcase 66 portraits and a four-panel mural of 98 veterans, including men and women still in active duty. Bush has made supporting war veterans a top priority and the George W. Bush Institute since his presidency ended in 2009.

The exhibit "Portrait's of Courage" is part of President Bush's and the Bush Institute's Military Service Initiative goal to support post-9/11 veterans and their families in their transition back into society and eliminate the stigma veterans face when speaking about their mental and physical well-being.

Bush took up painting in 2012 and first released a series of portraits of world leaders in 2014.

He then realized he wanted to paint portraits of service men and women who served while he was their commander-

in-chief. Vibrant portraits of military veterans line the walls of the exhibits that leave visitors in awe of the former President's skills.

Exhibit visitor Brooke Swan found the portraits to be a surprisingly beautiful tribute to our military's service.

"I didn't know what to expect when coming to the exhibit, but I am pleasantly surprised by it," Swan said. "The portraits show President Bush's dedication to our nation's military. It's great to see and know that."

Other visitors experience the same feeling when viewing the portraits. Bush Library docent Sandra Mallon has seen a steady stream of visitors since the exhibit started.

"So far, everyone who walks into the exhibit has been moved by the portraits. My favorite portraits are the two of veteran, Christopher Andrew Turner," Mallon said. "In the first portrait he looks sad and sunken in and the second is him months later happier. It's very moving."

Patrons can see the moving exhibit painted by our nation's 43rd President from March 2 through Oct. 1, 2017, who leaves visitors with the reason for his exhibit on the wall of the George W. Bush Presidential Center: "I painted these men and women as a way to honor their service to the country and to show my respect for their sacrifice and courage."

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# PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH THAYER AWARD RECIPIENT SPEECH

West Point, NY, October 19, 2017

General Jordan, thank you. I am highly honored – (Applause) – I am unbelievably proud to be a Thayer Award winner, and I thank you for this high honor.

General Caslen, thank you, sir, for your leadership. I loved kissing your wife on the cheek. (Laughter and Applause.) I want to thank you and Shelly for your service.

Command Sergeant Major thank you, sir, for your service. I appreciate the Board of Visitors. It's good to see Ray Odierno, with whom I spent a lot of quality time under some difficult circumstances. General, thank you for being here. A 1989 graduate, Colonel Miguel Howe, who ran the Bush

Institute's Military Service Initiative and is now a Fellow helping our vets transition from military to civilian life – Miguel, we're glad you're here.

I want to talk about two other folks here, one of whom is Bryon Vincent, Class of 2005, and Major Abigail Vincent. They met right here at West Point. I painted him! I have become an artist – not a very good one.

(Laughter.) But he was one of the subjects. And so when it came time to go to the parade I looked over at the grandstand and said, "I recognize that face – hell, I've been living with the guy for about a month trying to get it right." (Laughter.)

Our first Bush Institute Military Service head was a man named Colonel [Mike] Endres, who sadly passed away. So, I go to his house to try to comfort his wife and his dear daughter. I introduced myself to Taylor and I said, "What are your objectives?"

I was trying to get her mind off her grief, and she said, "I want to go to West Point."

I said, "Wow. Can you pass the physical?"

She said, "Not a problem."

I said, "What about taking the entrance exam?"

She said, "I'm taking it tomorrow."

I said, “You’ve got to be kidding me – 48 hours after your dad passed away, you’re going to take the exam?”

She said, “I want to honor my father.”

I’m honored to be in your presence, Taylor. (Applause.)

I want to thank First Captain Simone Askew and the Corps of Cadets for your warm welcome. This is an awesome place. And I know there’s been some excitement among the because your probably think I’ll be able to uphold a longstanding tradition, and that is absolve all the cadets (Laughter) who are on restriction for minor conduct offenses. But the problem is, I’m no longer President. (Laughter.) Plus, I don’t think ‘ole Thayer – the “father of the Military Academy” and the demerit system – would have approved it if I tried. (Laughter.)

I studied up on Colonel Thayer before I got here. He was tapped to reform this institution by James Monroe 200 years ago. During his tenure, Thayer imposed a relentless focus on order, discipline, and scholarship that remains the hallmark of West Point. In addition to the 134 Thayer System regulations, he also founded the Dialectic Society in order to foster debate and good dialect – which makes my selection for this honor somewhat puzzling. (Laughter and Applause.)

So – Laura and I had dinner with Lorne Michaels, the creator of Saturday Night Live. During the course of the dinner, he told me something very disturbing. He said he put his best writers on me – this is while I was President – and they came up with “strategery.” (Laughter.) I said, “No, I said strategery.”

He said, “No, you didn’t say strategery. We invented strategery.”

I said, “Are you kidding me? For, 16 years, I thought I was the guy who said strategery?” (Laughter.)

He said, “Yep. You never did.”

I said, “Well let me ask you this: Did your writer come up with mis-estimate?” (Laughter and Applause.)

I want to read some of the words of General McArthur. He’s been quoted quite often; I want to be a part of those quotations. (Laughter.)

“This award is not intended primarily to honor a personality, but to symbolize a great moral code – the code of conduct and chivalry of those who guard this beloved land of culture and ancient descent. That I should be integrated in this way with so noble an ideal arouses a sense of pride and yet of humility which will be with me always.”

I know how he feels.

“Duty, Honor, Country: Those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, and what you will be.”

Those words remind me of the people who have preceded me with this Award – most especially the 1994 award winner, President 41, my dad. He sends his very best to this awesome gathering, and is doing well. (Applause.)

Here’s what Caslen mentioned – I did come here June of 2002 for the bicentennial of West Point, where I gave the graduation speech. I want to share some of what I said that day, right after the September 11th attacks – nine months after the September 11th attacks.

“Every West Point class is commissioned to the Armed Forces. Some West Point classes are also commissioned by history, to take part in a great new calling for their country. History has also issued its call to your generation. In your last year, America was attacked by a ruthless and resourceful enemy.

“You graduate from this Academy in a time of war, taking your place in an American military that is powerful and is honorable. Our war on terror is only begun, but in Afghanistan it began well. This war will take many turns we cannot predict. Yet I am certain of this: Wherever we carry it, the American flag will stand not only for our power, but for our freedom. Our nation's cause has always been larger than our nation's defense.

“We fight, as we always fight, for a just peace -- a peace that favors human liberty. We will defend the peace against threats from terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. And we will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent. Building this just peace is America's opportunity, and America's duty.”

In the years that have followed that speech, the graduates of West Point have taken their rightful place in history alongside the men and women who preceded them. They advanced the cause of freedom. They did their duty, with honor, for their country. And they proved themselves worthy of the long gray line that stretched before them.

At West Point, you have observed moments of silence here in Washington Hall for former cadets who gave their lives in the war on terror. At West Point, the lessons of 9/11 are still an important part of the curriculum. But for much of the country, memories have dulled with the passage of time.

New challenges have been gathering to the principles we hold dear, and we must take them seriously.

Some of these problems are external and obvious. You know the threat of terrorism all too well. It is being fought even now on distant frontiers and in the hidden world of intelligence and surveillance. There is the

frightening and evolving threat of nuclear proliferation and outlaw regimes. There is an aggressive challenge by Russia and China to the rules and norms of the global order – proposed revisions that always seem to involve less respect for the rights of free nations and less freedom for the individual.

These matters would be difficult under any circumstances. They are further complicated by a trend in western countries away from global engagement and democratic confidence. Parts of Europe have developed an identity crisis. We have seen insolvency, economic stagnation, youth unemployment, anger about immigration, resurgent ethno-nationalism, and deep questions about the meaning and durability of the [European Union].

America is not immune from these trends. In recent decades, public confidence in our institutions has declined. Our governing class has often been paralyzed in the face of obvious and pressing needs. The American dream of upward mobility seems out of reach for some who feel left behind in a changing economy. Discontent deepened and sharpened partisan conflicts. Bigotry seems emboldened. Our politics seems vulnerable to conspiracy theories and outright fabrications.

There are some signs that the intensity of support for democracy itself has waned, especially among some young Americans who never

experienced the galvanizing moral clarity of the Cold War, or never focused on the ruin of entire nations by socialist central planning. Some have called this “democratic deconsolidation.” Really, it seems to be a combination of weariness, frayed tempers, and forgetfulness.

We have seen our discourse degraded by casual cruelty. At times, it can seem like the forces pulling us apart are stronger than the forces binding us together. Argument turns too easily into animosity. Disagreement escalates into dehumanization. Too often, we judge other groups by their worst examples while judging ourselves by our best intentions – forgetting the image of God we should see in each other.

We have seen nationalism distorted into nativism – forgetting the dynamism that immigration has always brought to America. We see a fading confidence in the value of free markets and international trade – forgetting that conflict, instability, and poverty follow in the wake of protectionism.

We have seen the return of isolationist sentiments – forgetting that American security is directly threatened by the chaos and despair of distant places, where threats such as terrorism, infectious disease, criminal gangs and drug trafficking tend to emerge.

In all these ways, we need to recall and recover our own identity. We are a nation waiting for a reminder of its better self. And I believe that

reminder can be found right here at West Point.

Earlier today, I gave a speech outlining four recommendations from the Bush Institute on how to revitalize and strengthen our democracy, and restore confidence in it. I'm going to share those with you briefly.

First, America must harden its own defenses. Our country must show resolve and resilience in the face of external attacks on our democracy. That begins with confronting a new era of cyber threats. We cannot have any nation messing with our election process. And I am so pleased that cadets are being educated to work on cybersecurity right here at the Army Cyber Institute at West Point.

The second concerns the projection of American leadership – maintaining America's role in sustaining and defending an international order rooted in freedom and free markets. Our security and prosperity are only found in wise, sustained engagement around the world and in the cultivation of new markets for American goods. In the confrontation of security challenges – we must confront security challenges before they fully materialize and arrive on our shores. We must foster global health and development as alternatives to suffering and resentment. And we must not shy away from attracting of talent, energy and enterprise from all around the world. We must serve as a shining hope for refugees and a

voice for dissidents, human rights defenders, and the oppressed. In these endeavors, I believe the graduates of West Point will lead the way.

A third point is strengthening democratic citizenship. Here we must put particular emphasis on the values and views of our young. And that means the Corps of Cadets will have to step up and lead your contemporaries.

Our identity as a nation – unlike many other nations – is not determined by geography or ethnicity, by soil or blood. Being an American involves the embrace of high ideals and civic responsibility. We become the heirs of Thomas Jefferson by accepting the ideal of human dignity found in the Declaration of Independence. We become the heirs of James Madison by understanding the genius and values of the U.S. Constitution. We become the heirs of Martin Luther King, Jr., when we judge one another not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

This means that people of every religion, race and ethnicity can be fully and equally American. It means that bigotry or white supremacy in any form is blasphemy against the American creed. And it means that the very identity of our nation depends on the passing of civic ideals to the next generation.

We need a renewed emphasis on civic learning in schools. And our young people need positive role models. Bullying and prejudice in our public

life sets a national tone, provides permission for cruelty and bigotry, and compromises the moral education of children. The best way to pass along civic values is to live up to them. I'm counting on the cadets of West Point to serve as examples of character and integrity for your generation, and I'm confident you'll rise to the occasion.

Finally, today I called on the major institutions of our democracy, public and private, to consciously and urgently attend to the problem of declining trust. For example, our democracy needs a media that is transparent, accurate and fair. Our democracy needs religious institutions that demonstrate integrity and champion civil discourse. Our democracy needs institutions of higher learning that are examples of free expression. It is time for American institutions to step up and provide cultural and moral leadership for this nation. And they need only look to where the Hudson River bends to see how to do it.

A guy asked me the other day – he said, “Do you miss being President?”

“Not really.” (Laughter.)

I mean, I miss the pastry chef. (Laughter.) And General, frankly, the helicopters were a little cramped on the flight in from Stewart today. (Laughter.)





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# THE SYLVANUS THAYER AWARD

[Selection and Presentation](#) | [List of Recipients](#)

Since 1958, the West Point Association of Graduates has presented the SYLVANUS THAYER AWARD to an outstanding citizen of the United States whose service and accomplishments in the national interest exemplify personal devotion to the ideals expressed in the West Point motto, “DUTY, HONOR, COUNTRY.”



*The Sylvanus Thayer Award is funded by a generous endowment from E. Doug Kenna '45 and his wife, Jean.*

## Thayer Award Criteria

The Award is given to a citizen of the United States, *other than a West Point graduate*, whose outstanding character, accomplishments, and stature in the civilian community draw wholesome comparison to the

qualities for which West Point strives, in keeping with its motto: “Duty, Honor, Country.” The individual selected for the Thayer Award must agree to accept the Award at West Point.



For the Thayer Award, the following guidelines apply with respect to nominations:

- Classes, Societies, and individual Regular Members of the Association may submit nominations for the Thayer Award.
- The number of new annual nominations that Classes, Societies, and individuals may submit is unlimited. The intention is to present the Award to a single individual, not to a group or conceptual individual.

## Nominations for the Thayer Award

- It shall take the form of a letter to the Chairman of the Thayer Award Committee, noting how their nominee’s accomplishments draw wholesome comparison to the qualities for which West Point strives, in keeping with its motto: “Duty, Honor, Country.”
- The nominating letter shall be no longer than three pages.
- Any endorsements of the nomination that either accompany it or that arrive separately shall be confined to a single page.

## Selection and Presentation

Normally, the recipient is approved by the Board of Directors, and announced in late winter. The Award is presented in the following

October.

***The deadline for Award nominations is November 3. Nominations are considered active for three years.*** Letters should be addressed as follows:

Chair

Thayer Award Committee

c/o Laurie Fontana

West Point Association of Graduates

698 Mills Road

West Point, New York 10996

**THAYER AWARD**

**THAYER RECIPIENTS**

**DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE AWARD**

**DGA RECIPIENTS**

**NININGER AWARD**

**NININGER RECIPIENTS**

**DISTINGUISHED SOCIETY AWARD**