

The so-called “Land Letter”

October 3, 2002

The Honorable George W. Bush

President of the United States of America The White House Washington, DC 20502

Dear Mr. President,

In this decisive hour of our nation’s history we are writing to express our deep appreciation for your bold, courageous, and visionary leadership. Americans everywhere have been inspired by your eloquent and clear articulation of our nation’s highest ideals of freedom and of our resolve to defend that freedom both here and across the globe.

We believe that your policies concerning the ongoing international terrorist campaign against America are both right and just. Specifically, we believe that your stated policies concerning Saddam Hussein and his headlong pursuit and development of biochemical and nuclear weapons of mass destruction are prudent and fall well within the time-honored criteria of just war theory as developed by Christian theologians in the late fourth and early fifth centuries A.D.

First, your stated policy concerning using military force if necessary to disarm Saddam Hussein and his weapons of mass destruction is a just cause. In just war theory only defensive war is defensible; and if military force is used against Saddam Hussein it will be because he has attacked his neighbors, used weapons of mass destruction against his own people, and harbored terrorists from the Al Qaeda terrorist network that attacked our nation so viciously and violently on September 11, 2001. As you stated in your address to the U.N. September 12th: Disarming and neutralizing Saddam Hussein is to defend freedom and freedom-loving people from state-sponsored terror and death.

“We can harbor no illusions. . . . Saddam Hussein attacked Iran in 1980 and Kuwait in 1990. He’s fired ballistic missiles at Iran and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Israel. His regime once ordered the killing of every person between the ages of 15 and 70 in certain Kurdish villages in Northern Iraq. He has gassed many Iranians and forty Iraqi villages.”

Second, just war must have just intent. Our nation does not intend to destroy, conquer, or exploit Iraq. As you declared forthrightly in your speech to the U.N. General Assembly: This is clearly a just and noble intent.

“The United States has no quarrel with the Iraqi people. . . . Liberty for the Iraqi people is a great moral cause, and a great strategic goal. The people of Iraq deserve it; the security of all nations requires it. Free societies do not intimidate through cruelty and conquest, and open societies do not threaten the world with mass murder. The United States supports political and economic liberty in a unified Iraq.”

Third, just war may only be commenced as a last resort. As you so clearly enumerated before the U.N., Saddam Hussein has for more than a decade ignored Security Council resolutions or defied them while breaking virtually every agreement into which he has entered. He stands convicted by his own record as a brutal dictator who cannot be trusted to abide by any agreement he makes. And while he prevaricates and obfuscates, he continues to obtain and develop the weapons of mass destruction which he will use to terrorize the world community of nations.

The world has been waiting for more than a decade for the Iraqi regime to fulfill its agreement to destroy all of its weapons of mass destruction, to cease producing them or the long-range missiles to deliver them in the future, and to allow thorough and rigorous inspections to verify their compliance. They have not, and will not, do so and any further delay in forcing the regime’s compliance would be reckless irresponsibility in the face of grave and growing danger.

Fourth, just war requires authorization by legitimate authority. We believe it was wise and prudent for you to go before the U.N. General Assembly and ask the U.N. Security Council to enforce its own resolutions. However, as American citizens we believe that, however helpful a U.N. Security Council vote might be, the legitimate authority to authorize the use of U.S. military force is the government of the United States and that the authorizing vehicle is a declaration of war or a joint resolution of the Congress.

When the threat of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba presented a grave threat to America's security, President Kennedy asked for the support of the U.N. and the Organization of American States, but made it clear, with or without their support, those missiles would either be removed by the Soviets, or we would neutralize them ourselves. The American people expected no less from their president and their government.

Fifth, just war requires limited goals and the resort to armed force must have a reasonable expectation of success. In other words, "total war" is unacceptable and the war's goals must be achievable. We believe your stated policies for disarming the murderous Iraqi dictator and destroying his weapons of mass destruction, while liberating the Iraqi people for his cruel and barbarous grip, more than meet those criteria.

Sixth, just war theory requires noncombatant immunity. We are confident that our government, unlike Hussein, will not target civilians and will do all that it can to minimize noncombatant casualties.

Seventh, just war theory requires the question of proportionality be addressed. Will the human cost of the armed conflict to both sides be proportionate to the stated objectives and goals? Does the good gained by resort to armed conflict justify the cost of lives lost and bodies maimed? We believe that the cost of not dealing with this threat now will only succeed in greatly increasing the cost in human lives and suffering when an even more heavily armed and dangerous Saddam Hussein must be confronted at some date in the not too distant future. We believe that every day of delay significantly increases the risk of far greater human suffering in the future than acting now would entail.

How different and how much safer would the history of the twentieth century have been had the allies confronted Hitler when he illegally reoccupied the Rhineland in 1936 in clear violation of Germany's treaty agreements? It is at least possible that tens of millions of the lives lost in World War II might not have been lost if the Allies had enforced treaty compliance then instead of appeasing a murderous dictator.

We are extremely grateful that we have a president who has learned the costly lessons of the twentieth century and who is determined to lead America and the world to a far different and better future in the twenty first century. As you told the world's leaders at the U.N.: Mr. President, we make that stand with you. In so doing, while we cannot speak for all of our constituents, we are supremely confident that we are voicing the convictions and concerns of the great preponderance of those we are privileged to serve.

"We must choose between a world of fear and a world of progress. We cannot stand by and do nothing while dangers gather. We must stand up for our security, and for the permanent rights and hopes of mankind. By heritage and by choice, the United States of America will make that stand."

Please know that we join tens of millions of our fellow Americans in praying for you and your family daily.

Sincerely Yours,

Richard D. Land, D.Phil. President Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission Southern Baptist Convention

Dr. Chuck Colson Chairman Prison Fellowship Ministries

Dr. Bill Bright Founder and Chairman Campus Crusade for Christ International

D. James Kennedy, Ph.D. President Coral Ridge Ministries Media, Inc.

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