

# Bush Recants, Says Terror War Will Be Won



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By SCOTT LINDLAW, Associated Press Writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - President Bush ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) said repeatedly on Tuesday that the United States will win its war against terrorism, trying to contain political damage from the doubt he expressed a day earlier.



AP Photo

"We may never sit down at a peace table, but make no mistake about it, we are winning and we will win," Bush told 6,500 veterans at an American Legion convention.

"We will win by staying on the offensive, we will win by spreading liberty," Bush told the veterans.

The president was trying to douse the criticism he touched off Monday when NBC aired an interview in which he was asked if the United States could win the war on terror and he answered, "I don't think you can win it."

He added, in the interview, "I think you can create conditions so that those who use terror as a tool are less acceptable in parts of the world."

Democrats hit hard at Bush's comment for a second day.

"The president has gone from mission accomplished to mission miscalculated to mission impossible on the war on terror," said Phil Singer, a spokesman for Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry ([news](#) - [web sites](#)).

"George Bush ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) might be able to read a speech saying we can win the war on terror, but as we saw (Monday), he's clearly got real doubts about his ability to do so, and with good reason."

Sen. John McCain ([news](#), [bio](#), [voting record](#)), R-Ariz., campaigning through Tennessee at Bush's side, saw no problem.

"What he meant was, we're never going to have a peace signing on the Missouri, we're never going to have a signing at Panmunjom," McCain said.

McCain was referring to the battleship where the Japanese signed surrender papers that ended World War II, and the "truce village" where adversaries met to sign the armistice that halted the Korean War.

Bush himself said in a radio interview with talk show host Rush Limbaugh, "I probably needed to be more articulate."

The anti-terrorism campaign dominated Bush's travels through Tennessee, Iowa and Pennsylvania on Tuesday, just as they dominated the Republican National Convention where he will accept the party's nomination for a second term in New York City Thursday night.

Bush planned to visit firefighters and supporters in New York Wednesday night.

On the campaign trail, Bush defended his decision to make the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks the centerpiece of his re-election effort.

"Sept. 11 is a defining moment in our history, and it's certainly a defining moment in my presidency, and the question is whether or not we learned the lessons," Bush told Limbaugh.

The president added a new warning: "One of the most dangerous parts of this new war is that if the enemy were ever to acquire the capacity to use a weapon of mass destruction it would make Sept. 11 — it would pale in comparison."

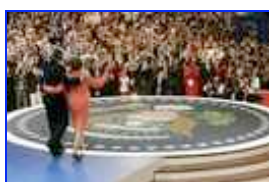
Bush's speech to the American Legion came in his 10th trip to Tennessee and marked his latest attempt to court the millions of U.S. veterans.

Democrat Kerry, a senator from Massachusetts, has emphasized his military service in the Vietnam War, and he was to speak to the Legionnaires on Wednesday.


Several veterans said in interviews here that they favored Bush, who served in the Texas Air National Guard during the Vietnam years.

"Right now I believe the captain of the ship is guiding us and I don't feel we should change captains in the middle of a war," said Delfo Barabani, an American Legion member from Chicopee, Mass. Barabani said he believed Kerry had gone to Vietnam to lay the groundwork for his future political career.

The president told the veterans what many of them most wanted to hear: that he supports a constitutional amendment "to protect the flag from desecration." The group listed the issue at the top of its legislative priorities.



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"Our fighting men and women are serving America under a proud flag, and that flag should be cherished and protected," Bush said, drawing his longest, loudest ovation.

From Tennessee, Bush flew to Alleman, Iowa — his 15th trip to the state he lost in 2000 — where his re-election campaign staged a rally near the annual Farm Progress Show.

Then he was off to Pennsylvania, another state he lost four years ago, for the 33rd time of his presidency — for a late-night "family-style picnic." While there, Bush was making his first "appearance" at the New York convention. Using a videoconference device, he was introducing wife Laura for her speech to the delegates.

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