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Bush Responds to Al Qaeda Tape, Saying U.S. Fight Will Continue

By [CHRISTINE HAUSER](#)

Published: August 4, 2005

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One of the top leaders of Al Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri, warned Britons and Americans in a videotaped message today of more attacks, and said that the United States must withdraw its forces from Iraq.

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Later this afternoon, President Bush said that Mr. Zawahiri's remarks demonstrated that Iraq was part of the "war on terror" and defended American operations there as

necessary to fight insurgents on foreign soil instead of at home. He also said the United States would "complete the job" of working with Iraqis to set up a permanent government. The tape was broadcast on the Arabic language station Al Jazeera and excerpts were published on the station's Web site. The timing of the threats was relevant following two attacks last month in London and Sharm al-Sheikh, Egypt.

The remarks did not say Al Qaeda was behind the London bombings. While a connection between the attacks and the group has been explored but not established, some officials and investigators have suggested that the ideology of the group might be helping inspire attacks through a violent interpretation of Islam, and London's police chief, Sir Ian Blair, had warned earlier in the year that it was "inevitable" that terrorists linked to Al Qaeda would attempt to attack London.

Mr. Zawahiri and Osama bin Laden are the top two leaders of Al Qaeda. Both men have been in hiding for nearly four years, and many of the group's commanders have been captured or killed.

In the broadcast today, Mr. Zawahiri is shown in a crisp white robe and black turban with a weapon propped up at his side. According to the Web excerpts, Mr. Zawahiri said that the policies of Prime Minister Tony Blair were to blame for the attacks on Britain and that the United States would bring more attacks on itself as well with its "policies of aggression against

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Muslims."

He said Washington should withdraw troops from Iraq or else the "horrors" the United States will experience would make it forget what happened in Vietnam.

At a news conference today with the president of Colombia, Álvaro Uribe, President Bush was asked to what extent he saw Mr. Zawahiri's remarks as a serious threat. Mr. Bush said Mr. Zawahiri was a terrorist member of the group that attacked the United States on 9/11, and that Americans were "at war."

"We are defeating the terrorists in a place like Iraq so we don't have to face them here at home," Mr. Bush said, later adding that the United States would press on with helping Iraqis write a constitution, train troops and elect a permanent government.

Mr. Zawahiri also warned Britons that Mr. Blair's policies "will bring upon them more destruction after the London explosions." Since the July 7 attacks on subway trains and a bus, which killed 52 people besides the four bombers involved, and failed attempts to set off more bombs on July 21, security has been strengthened in London's transportation system and several arrests have been made. In New York, the police began searching bags at stations checkpoints.

In his last taped message in June, also broadcast by Al Jazeera, Mr. Zawahiri said armed jihad was the only way to bring change in the Arab world and evict occupiers.

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