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ATFP Applauds Bush's Personal Commitment to Peace and a Palestinian State

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Press Release

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Washington DC, May 9 -- The American Task Force on Palestine (ATFP) applauded President George W. Bush's "personal commitment" to a Middle East peace centered on the creation of a "free and independent" Palestinian state living in peace alongside Israel. President Bush's speech, delivered at the commencement at the University of South Carolina today, pledged that the United States would ensure that, "if the Palestinian people take concrete steps to crack down on terror, continue on a path of peace, reform and democracy, they and all the world will see the flag of Palestine raised over a free and independent nation." ATFP noted that this promise was greeted with enthusiastic applause from the South Carolina audience.

The President also announced that he was dispatching Secretary of State Colin Powell to Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories to promote his recently published roadmap for peace. The Palestinian Authority has accepted the roadmap, while Israel has demanded numerous changes in the document. President Bush told the South Carolina audience that, "Secretary Powell leaves on this mission tonight. He carries with him my personal commitment: America will work without tiring to achieve two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in security and prosperity and in peace."

The President also reiterated that, "as progress is made toward peace, Israel must stop settlement activity in the occupied territories." One of the principal features of phase one of the roadmap is reciprocity based on the simultaneous implementation by Palestinians taking steps to end attacks against Israelis and by Israel ceasing settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territories. It remains for the Israeli government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to

accept the roadmap as proposed by President Bush.

ATFP urged the Administration to work, as the President pledged today, "without tiring" in pursuit of the roadmap and President Bush's vision of a peace based on an end to the occupation with Israel and an independent Palestine living side by side in tranquility and security. ATFP stressed that the Administration as a whole should follow the President's lead in resisting the campaign against the roadmap being waged by influential figures in Israel and United States. ATFP wished Secretary Powell the best of luck in his crucial trip, and urged all parties in the region to spare no effort in working urgently towards the implementation of the roadmap.

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