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GRAPEVINE, Texas (Reuters) - **President Bush**, following the deadliest roadside bomb attack on U.S. forces in **Iraq**, said on Wednesday the best way to honor those killed was to fight the insurgents and train Iraqi troops, and he rejected any early U.S. pullout.

"We're at war. We're facing an enemy that is ruthless. If we put out a (pullout) timetable the enemy would adjust their tactics," he said in a speech.

Bush spoke on the first day of a 33-day break from Washington, to be spent mostly on vacation at his Texas ranch.

Fresh from legislative victories in Washington on energy and trade, Bush called on Congress to work on his other priorities when legislators return from an August recess, citing in particular his nominee for the Supreme Court, John Roberts, and immigration legislation.



On Iraq, Bush insisted progress was being made despite the grim news that 21 Marines have been killed in three days in Iraq, including 14 on Wednesday in the deadliest roadside bomb attack since the Iraq war began.

Those killed in Iraq and Afghanistan , he said, "have died in a noble cause and a selfless cause."

"Their families can know that American citizens pray for them, and the families can know that will honor their loved ones' sacrifice by completing the mission, by laying the foundation for peace for generations to come," Bush said in remarks to the American Legislative Exchange Council.

Bush said he has a "strategy for success in Iraq" by hunting down insurgents, training Iraqis to provide for their own security and helping Iraqi political leaders write a constitution and prepare for elections.

Some members of Congress have been pressing for a date certain on a U.S. pullout, and **Pentagon** officials have talked about the possibility of a reduction in forces in Iraq by next spring or summer.

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Bush did not go into any of those details. He said U.S. troops would be pulled out "as soon as possible, but not before the mission is complete."

"The timetable depends on our ability to train the Iraqis, to get the Iraqis ready to fight and then our troops will come home with the honor they have earned," Bush said.

After a big week last week with victories on a long-sought energy bill and a Central American free trade agreement, Bush sought to keep up the momentum by urging members of Congress to take up in the autumn his proposals on immigration, medical lawsuit reform and making permanent some tax cuts that he pushed through in his first term.

He also did a little boasting on the U.S. economy, crediting his tax cuts for the growth and citing a recent forecast that the U.S. budget deficit this year will be \$94 billion lower than expected.

"Some have questioned in Washington whether or not you can cut taxes and increase revenues from the Treasury," he said.

The tax cuts, he said, "stimulated economic vitality and growth all throughout the country." Critics say the effect of the tax cuts has been exaggerated by the president.

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