



PRESIDENT BUSH VISITS ENGLAND

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During his official state visit to England this week, President Bush will face massive protests as he attempts to gain public support for his policies in postwar Iraq.

Many American presidents have visited England. Woodrow Wilson stayed at Buckingham Palace in 1918. And Ronald Reagan was even an official guest of the Queen. But President Bush, who arrived in London Tuesday, is the first U.S. president to be invited on an official state visit, the most formal way of recognizing a foreign head of state.

Though planned over a year prior to the invasion of Iraq, this four-day visit will focus on the situation there and is intended to reinforce the relationship between the United States and England, despite the many planned protests and peace demonstrations.

“I just want to say how strongly I believe that it is indeed the right time for the president of the United States to come here to this country,” Prime Minister Tony Blair said on Monday.

“This is the right moment for us to stand firm with the United States of America in defeating terrorism, wherever it is, and delivering us safely from what I genuinely believe to be the security threat of the 21st century.”

The president’s itinerary

State visits have a certain level of pageantry and the president’s visit will be no exception. Prince Charles greeted the president as he arrived at Heathrow Airport in London on his way to Buckingham Palace. On Wednesday morning President Bush met Queen Elizabeth and her husband Prince Philip at a formal welcoming ceremony before heading to a private palace to deliver a speech on the trans-Atlantic alliance.

After an embarrassing outburst by hecklers during President Bush’s speech to the Australian parliament in October, it was decided that he would avoid the British parliament and instead address a smaller group of academics.

In his speech President Bush defended the war in Iraq saying that military action is sometimes necessary to fight terrorism.

"In some cases, the measured use of force is all that protects us from a chaotic world ruled by force," he said.

But he also acknowledged that there are some who disagree with the United States' decisions.

"There are principled objections to the use of force in every generation and I credit the motives behind these views," Bush said. But, he added: "Those in authority are not judged only by good motivations. That duty sometimes requires the violent restraint of violent men."

Protesters

The protesters, expected to number in the tens of thousands, planned a series of demonstrations throughout the president's visit. Several hundred marched Tuesday evening to the U.S. embassy to express dismay at U.S. environmental policies but the major demonstrations are not expected until Thursday.

The Stop the War Coalition and other groups intend to march past Blair's office on Downing Street before tearing down a replica statue of Mr. Bush in Trafalgar square, mimicking the toppling of the statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad in April. According to coalition chairman Andrew Murray, the protest intended to demonstrate that Mr. Bush "is the most unwelcome visitor to these shores since William the Conqueror," the nobleman from Normandy who invaded England in 1066.

However, a recent poll in the British newspaper the Guardian showed that while 36 percent of those surveyed opposed the president's visit, 43 percent welcomed it. And 62 percent agreed that the United States is "generally speaking a force for good, not evil, in the world."

No formal agreements expected

The White House has suggested that this is a visit intended to reinforce the unique relationship between the United States and England, but that significant developments are not to be expected. Issues that will most likely remain unresolved include trade disputes and the controversy over nine British citizens among alleged terrorists being held by the United States at a naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

On Wednesday, President Bush met with British families who lost relatives in the Sept. 11 attacks and attended a formal banquet with the Queen at Buckingham Palace. Mr. Bush also intends to meet British soldiers who fought in Afghanistan and Iraq, hold meetings with Mr. Blair and host a dinner at the U.S. ambassador's residence. President Bush will return to Washington on Friday after meeting members of the public.

By Annie Schleicher, NewsHour Extra

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