

# Cheney boosts morale at Fort Riley

FORT RILEY (AP) — Vice President Dick Cheney used a visit Tuesday to this Army post for a morale-boosting rally for thousands of soldiers, even as questions about foreign policy continued to swirl about the administration.

Cheney took to a round stage on the Cavalry Parade Field on the south end of the post to praise the military for its service during the three-year-old war in Iraq and efforts to combat terrorism worldwide. His stage was circled by bleachers and an audience of almost 10,000.

“Terrorists will fail when soldiers like you are standing in the way,” the vice president said.

Just before Cheney arrived in Kansas, President Bush reiterated his support for Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Last week, six retired generals called for Rumsfeld to resign, saying he had ignored field commanders’ advice, mishandled the war and operated with an arrogant management style.

Bush also discussed Iran’s nuclear ambitions and hopes diplomatic efforts could prevent that nation from developing atomic weapons.

Cheney didn’t mention Iran or Rumsfeld. But he defended the war in Iraq, pointing to elections last year as evidence of success toward creating a stable, democratic nation. He said making Iraq stable would promote stability in the Middle East.

“If the terrorists were to succeed, they would return Iraq to the rule of tyrants, make it a source of instability in the Middle East and use it as a staging base for ever greater attacks against America and other civilized nations,” Cheney said. “The only way to lose this fight is to quit — and quitting is not an option. That’s not going to happen on our watch.”

He also said the United States should stay its course because, “We are a nation that keeps its word, and so we will carry out a strategy for victory in Iraq.”

Maj. Gen. Dennis Hardy, commanding general of Fort Riley and the 24th Infantry Division, said it was a great day for the post to get “a pat on the back,” with the majority of its soldiers back from the war. About 500 remain deployed, including a battalion that left recently for duty in the Horn of Africa.

Hardy said progress is being made, though often the public doesn’t see the results.

“We’re going to see this war on terrorism through,” Hardy said. “It’s not over tonight. Certainly it’s a hard-fought war.”

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