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War on terrorism defines first year of president's term

WASHINGTON (AP) — Friends notice more gray in his hair and more confidence in his voice. Few people call him an isolationist anymore. Fewer still question whether he is up to the job.

War and recession transformed the Bush presidency — and some say George W. Bush himself — since he swore the oath of office January 20, 2001.

On that cold, raw day, Bush quoted Thomas Jefferson to assure a divided nation that an American president — even one whose election was disputed — has help from above in troubled times.

"We know the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong," Bush said in his inaugural address. "Do you not think an angel rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm?"

Soon after, storms struck his own presidency.

The political landscape forever changed by war and recession, Bush's plans for health care, energy policy and other agenda items were scuttled or delayed, but his tax cuts gained currency. Budget surpluses became deficits. Bipartisanship made a brief comeback. The war alone forced him to improve relations with Russia and European allies and it dramatically changed the public's perception of the new president.

"He went from an accidental president who was a 'Saturday Night Live' joke to the commander in chief," said Bill Carrick, a Democratic political consultant in Los Angeles, Calif.

The recession began in March, but Bush's entire first year was marked by rising unemployment rates. The economy became his greatest political worry.

The war began Sept. 11 when suicide hijackers slammed commercial planes into Washington, New York and a Pennsylvania field. A U.S.-led coalition began bombing Afghanistan in October, targeting the terrorist-hiding Taliban regime and Osama bin Laden.

"The war helped him get beyond the controversy of a disputed election and let people accept him emotionally as president," said the Democrat Carrick. "It changed everything about this presidency."

Starting, perhaps, with the president himself.

"Determining who lives and dies, putting soldiers at risk, has an impact," said Brad Freeman, a California fund-raiser and Bush pal. "He looks a little older. I don't know what it is, his hair a little grayer or what."

Picking at a salad in her West Wing office, Bush adviser Karen Hughes said it has been a tough 12 months at the White House.

"One for the history books," she said. "I'm ready to turn the last page on it."

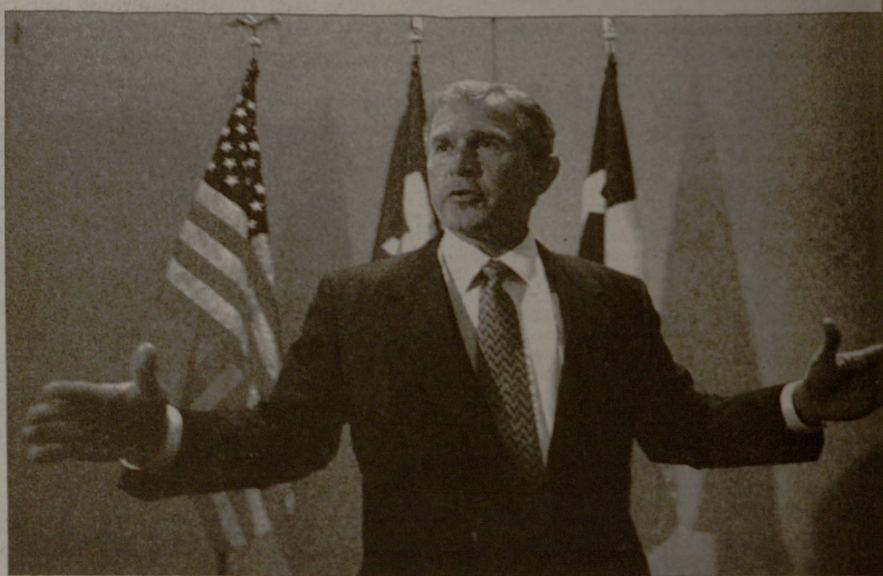
His 10-year tax-cut plans, proposed in 1999 while the economy was still booming, passed Congress after Bush portrayed them as a prescription for the ailing economy. He pushed for more tax cuts after the attacks, saying the economy needed another boost, but Democrats shelved the proposal and plan to make the economy an election-year issue.

Bush's trade bill passed the House after aides portrayed the vote as a measure of patriotism. It would let Bush negotiate global trade agreements and submit them to Congress for a yes-or-no vote, no amendments allowed.

But the attacks forced him to table a series of proposals urging Americans to become more involved in their communities. The initiatives will be part of his State of the Union address later this month as he tries to tap America's patriotic spirit.

Energy policy, tort reform and HMO reform also were tabled as the attacks dominated center stage.

An education bill, the biggest overhaul in nearly four decades, passed Congress late in the year — but only after several delays.



FILE PHOTO • THE BATTALION

War and recession eliminated government surpluses, leaving no money to tackle Social Security and Medicare reform.

While the crises forced Bush to alter his legislative and political strategies, he has not changed his agenda. The Bush presidency is as conservative as ever.

On foreign affairs, Bush's first months in office rankled allies who accused him of defying world opinion on global warming, missile defense, a germ warfare treaty and other international accords.

Some analysts say Bush's fragile anti-terrorism war coalition is proof that he has learned to work closer with allies. Others say Bush's success has served only to reinforce his belief that America is powerful enough to go it alone.

"The war reinforces his 'might-makes-

right' beliefs," said Antony Blinken, a foreign policy adviser to President Clinton.

"The war reinforces his 'might-makes-right' beliefs," said Antony Blinken, a foreign policy adviser to President Clinton.

Helen Ventrillo does not care whether America leads the world. A bakery owner in Woodbridge, New Jersey, she does want the war to overshadow the other needs.

"With all that's happened, Bush really hasn't done much this year other than fight war, has he?" said Ventrillo, who was viewed frequently by The Associated Press during the 2000 campaign as she was between supporting Bush and Gore.

She finally backed Bush, and now she says, "He's done a good job on the war, but year doesn't make a president."

Keeping campaign promises

President Bush's campaign promises have met with varying success. Here is a look at the fate of some of them after one year in office.

Campaign promise	Status
CHARITABLE CHOICE Money to religious groups to provide social services.	Defeated in Senate
SOCIAL SECURITY Let younger workers use some of their Social Security taxes to build private retirement accounts.	Advisory group has laid out proposals for Congress to act over next year.
MISSILE DEFENSE Build national missile defense system even if it means getting out of Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.	Bush says United States will opt out of treaty and go ahead with system.
NUCLEAR ARMS Deep cuts in nuclear arms, even if Russia does not reciprocate.	Bush says U.S. nuclear warheads will be cut to as few as 1,700 by the current 7,000. But they may be mothballed, not destroyed.
HEALTH CARE Immediate aid to states to subsidize prescription drug costs for elderly poor until federal drug plan can be set up as part of Medicare overhaul. Also, \$2,000 tax credit to help low-income working Americans buy health insurance.	Neither achieved.
EDUCATION Standardized testing of students, with states to be financially rewarded or punished for student performance. Students in persistently failing public schools can use federal money for private school or another public school.	Achieved, but no federal money for private-school choice.
ENERGY Increase domestic production and exploration, including in the protected Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska.	Bush has a broad energy plan, yet made into law. Refuge remains off limits from energy development for now.
ENVIRONMENT Opposed Kyoto agreement on global warming, said he would regulate carbon dioxide emissions from power plants as a pollutant.	Withdrew from Kyoto agreement. Broke promise on carbon dioxide emissions.
TAXES 10-year package of tax cuts with lower rates across the board.	Achieved most of package but face pressure to roll back cuts geared to the wealthy.

SOURCE: Associated Press



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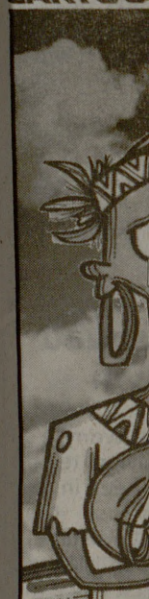
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