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## **Bush Embarks on European Tour**

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WASHINGTON -- President Bush undertakes delicate diplomacy on a European tour that celebrates the Allied victory in World War II against a backdrop of post-Cold War tensions over the march of democracy in the former Soviet Union.

Bush took off Friday on a voyage that will range from a solemn remembrance of wartime sacrifice at an American cemetery in the Netherlands to a military parade in Moscow's Red Square celebrating European victory in World War II. It is a trip that also will include a solemn wreath-laying ceremony at a Latvian monument symbolizing independence from communism and a speech before tens of thousands in the freshly democratic ex-Soviet republic of Georgia.

"It's a moment to understand that with each generation comes responsibilities to work to achieve peace," Bush said of his trip in an interview with several foreign media outlets.

Certainly other issues are on the agenda, as well, as Bush visits four countries.

Meeting in Riga, Latvia, on Saturday with the leaders of the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, he'll get questions about an American visa policy that makes it difficult for Central and Eastern Europeans to travel to the United States.

On Sunday, he visits the Netherlands, where he is deeply unpopular because of his decision to go to war in Iraq-- and later because of the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal and the indeterminate detention of terrorism suspects at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Georgia's president will want to know on Tuesday if Bush made good on his promise to intervene with Russian President Vladimir Putin on getting Russian troops and military bases out of Georgia.

With Putin, there is a long list of areas of both contention and cooperation that bedevil the Washington-Moscow relationship of late, including democratic backsliding in Russia, Moscow's arms sales to Syria and Venezuela and crackdowns on businesses, Iran, North Korea, the Middle East, and Russian fears that the United States seeks to supplant its regional influence.

The two leaders are meeting for just an hour Sunday night at Putin's dacha, followed by a social dinner with their wives, so aides downplayed expectations for progress on every front.

And everywhere Bush goes, Iraq is likely to come up. Of the six countries whose leaders Bush is visiting, only Russia, a leading war opponent, refused to contribute troops to Iraq. The Dutch mission there ended in March, however.

But democracy-- whether it's the WWII victory over the Nazis and fascists, the end of communism in Eastern Europe or modern-day recent democratic advances-- is Bush's overriding priority.

In Latvia, for instance, Bush's is to acknowledge that the victory in May 1945 60 years ago over Nazi Germany translated into communist occupation for millions in Central and Eastern Europe. The president said he also will talk about the mechanics of establishing truly democratic governments, such as the need for rule of law and protection of minority rights.

His speech at the Netherlands American Cemetery and Memorial in Margraten will honor the sacrifice of the Dutch people and the 8,301 U.S. soldiers buried there. It will also, Bush said, "remind people that there's more work to be done to make the world more free."

Then in Georgia, Bush delivers a speech in Tbilisi's Freedom Square where citizens celebrated the Soviet Union's fall and, years later, the ouster of pro-Moscow leader Eduard Shevardnadze. There, the president aims to celebrate last year's nonviolent Rose Revolution that brought reformer Mikhail Saakashvili to power and to encourage young democracies making the difficult transition to more open governments.

"We live in a world where everybody expects it to happen overnight, and yet the Georgian example shows that with time, diligence by a government, that positive foundations can be laid," Bush said.

Even in Moscow, where Bush has no plans for a public speech, he will be meeting with local "civil society" leaders to show support for reformers.

The reason for the intricate choreography of Bush's itinerary is the Moscow military parade on Monday. There, the heads of the former Allied forces-- Russia, America and Britain-- will stand alongside the leaders of the former Axis nations of Germany and Italy and dozens of others to celebrate the end of what is known in Moscow as the "Great Patriotic War."

But the ceremony also recalls darker chapters of history-- the Soviet's brutal wartime dictator Josef Stalin, the annexation of Baltic states still struggling to resist Kremlin influence. As a result, the White House added the stops in Latvia and Georgia that have rankled the Russians but help prevent Bush from sending the wrong signals.

Bush was to return to Washington on Tuesday.