

Veep's call to arms vs. a mother's plea for son

BY ABBY LUBY
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

WEST POINT, N.Y. — As Vice President Cheney urged strong leadership from the war on terror's newest officers, Joan Corbin wanted to ask him for only one favor: "Please, don't send my son to Iraq."

Brandon Corbin, 21, was one of 978 West Point graduates who heard Cheney's call to arms yesterday at the academy.

His family knows he'll soon see action in the Middle East.

"My son will do the right thing," Joan Corbin said. "It seems likely that he will be deployed to Iraq, but he is strong and will do what's needed to be done."

But with news yesterday of eight more U.S. soldiers slain in Iraq, she said, "I would still like to ask the vice president if he can keep my son home."

Cheney's speech to 20,000 graduates and guests at yesterday's ceremony told them of their duty to protect freedom and defend their country against terrorists.

Speaking of the 9/11 attacks, he said, "Nobody can promise us we won't be hit again."

"We're fighting a war over there because the enemy attacked us first. These are men who glorify murder and suicide. The security of this nation depends on the outcome."

However, as he got a standing ovation, the war's opponents gathered outside the academy's gates, barred Friday by a judge from protesting inside.



Vice president (r.) accepts award from West Point Class of '07 before they celebrate graduation. Photos by Craig Warga/Daily News

"They'll be spending their time in Iraq to protect American corporate oil interests," protest organizer Ann Wright said. More than 50 counterprotesters showed up, many with American flags and signs urging support for U.S. troops.

And as the families of other graduates also expressed hope that their children would not be sent to Iraq, the graduating cadets vowed to do their duty.

"I want to do a good enough job to bring my soldiers home," said Renee Rysiewicz, 21, of Crown Point, Ind.

Frank Brown, a graduating cadet from Vienna, Va., said he

was "ready to get out there and start leading troops."

Suzette and Tom Stoddard said their daughter Yvonne decided to go into the military after 9/11.

"She knows what she's getting into," the Texas dad said about his daughter. As an engineer, Yvonne Stoddard will be assigned to disarm land mines, lay down fuel lines or build schools in Baghdad, he said.

"No parent wants to send their kids off to war, but we are supporting her," the proud father said.

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