

Rage on the Streets in Calgary as Bush Visits

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CALGARY – The rage on the man’s face was evident as he berated police officers preventing him from entering the building where former U.S. president George W. Bush was making a speech Tuesday.

“There is a war criminal upstairs that has committed murder,” screamed the man, who identified himself only as Splits the Sky. “If I try to get in there you will arrest me. What is wrong with you?”

“I am going in there and make a citizen’s arrest,” he said as he attempt to push past police. “Arrest George Bush. Arrest George Bush.”

A few minutes later he was handcuffed and hustled past a long line of Calgary’s business elite waiting to get inside the Telus Convention Centre.

Protest organizers say at least four demonstrators were arrested at Tuesday’s event.

About 60 Calgary police officers were on duty outside to control between 200 and 300 people carrying signs that read “No to U.S. Crimes Against Humanity,” “Indict Bush For War Crimes” and “Canada Is Not Bush Country.”

Another sign read “Shoe Him The Door” – a reference to the Iraqi journalist who threw his shoe at Bush during a news conference in Baghdad in December.

Two Calgary men showed up at the demonstration to support the former U.S. president. Their signs read “The World Is Safer Because of George W. Bush.”

“Thank you, George Bush. Thank you, George Bush,” they chanted.

“He doesn’t sit down and negotiate with terrorists,” shouted one of the men, who identified himself as Merle.

“Try doing this in Cuba,” he said as he pointed to the jeering protesters.

There were shoes everywhere during the protest. A young woman wearing a hood, orange jumpsuit and a name tag that said “Club Gitmo” was pulling a shoe cannon along with a target festooned with pictures of Bush.

An obviously amused police officer told her to leave.

Some of those opposed to Bush’s visit have said he should be arrested as a war criminal because of alleged torture at military prisons in Iraq and Guantanamo Bay.

Tuesday's speech was one of the first public appearances Bush has made since leaving the presidency in January with a dismal approval rating and much of the blame for his country's collapsing economy. The speech was closed to the media.

"It's not too late to turn back. Walk away," the demonstrators yelled to some of the 1,500 guests invited to hear Bush speak to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce.

A couple of hundred people lined up early to go through a special security screening room before entering the hall where Bush was speaking.

A few said the former president has to take some of the responsibility for what has happened in the United States, but also has the right to talk about his administration.

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