

Don King Boxing Iraq

Written by Pete Wood

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — Legendary promoter Don King said he would like to host a morale-boosting boxing exhibition in Iraq featuring world champion boxers he represents. King made his comments to CNN's Wolf Blitzer while appearing on The Situation Room last week.

Major General Thomas R. Turner II of the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division told King earlier this year he would welcome such an event.

"There are many things that make a unit successful in combat," Turner said. "They need good equipment, the right number of people and good training. The army does that very well but the soldier also needs to know that the American people support them and Don King has done that."

King never forgot the major general's comments and later presented a check for over \$200,000 he raised to help create a 101st Airborne Memorial in Ft. Campbell, Ky.

He also visited troops fresh from the front lines in Iraq at Germany's Landstuhl Hospital near Ramstein Air Base in September, and he now wants to bring a boxing exhibition to Iraq to give soldiers a taste of home.

"Major General Turner and President George W. Bush are absolutely right about helping the troops," King said. "I intend to answer the President's call and do all I can to support our troops. Our men and women in uniform around the world are defending our freedom and liberties. They need to know that we appreciate their service and sacrifices to honor their bravery and dedication.

"I intend to stage exhibition matches in Iraq displaying the skills of many great champions from the boxing world. I want to entertain the troops, raise their morale and let our soldiers know that the American people are 100% behind them. It will be an unforgettable, historic event. I'll even stage a true championship match if I am allowed.

"While politicians in Washington debate the issues," added King, "we must show through action and deed that we support our troops fighting for our liberties and way of life. I honor them. I want to be the black Bob Hope of boxing."

King is now discussing the formal arrangements with the White House, USO and the Department of Defense.

"I am proud to be an American, I love my country and I love my troops," King said. "I want to do everything I can to lift them up in their hour of need but I cannot do it without the blessing of our commander-in-chief."

King has quietly provided all telecasts of boxing matches he promotes free of charge to Armed

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Forces Network for over 20 years, so troops stationed abroad can view his telecasts.