

## HYBRID DRIVE ENERGIZES W.

By **DEBORAH ORIN** *Washington Bureau Chief*

President Bush yesterday said America is on the brink of high-tech breakthroughs that will "startle" most Americans and could soon allow cars to get 100 mpg and reduce dependence on foreign oil.

"We're held hostage for energy by foreign nations that may not like us," Bush said as he kicked off a trip to tout new, smaller batteries for hybrid cars, solar power and biofuels made from wood chips to replace gasoline.

"Our nation is on the threshold of some new energy technologies that I think will startle the American people," Bush said as he began his trip at Johnson Controls, a plant outside Milwaukee that makes advanced batteries.

On a tour of the plant, Bush took a gander at two Ford Escape hybrid SUVs — one had the current nickel metal hydride battery that took up almost the entire back while the other had a much smaller lithium-ion battery.

Plant officials said the lithium battery takes up half as much space and is half the weight but provides 50 percent more power and predicted it's the technology of the future.

"How heavy is this thing?" Bush asked at one point in the tour as he reached over to heft a long blue battery.

"Pretty light," he said.

"Start picturing what I'm talking about — you've got your car, you pull in, you plug it right in the wall," Bush said later in his speech.

"Plug-in hybrids will be able to travel much greater distances on electricity alone, thereby saving more gas for our consumers, thereby making us less dependent on oil."

He said plug-in hybrids are estimated to go 40 miles on electricity initially but eventually could get 100 mpg, offering a boost to national security and "more important, for the pocketbook of our consumers."

Bush said he's going to add \$31 million to speed research on advanced lithium batteries which he said is a 27 percent increase.

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