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 [Releases](#)
 [Slides](#)
 [Speeches](#)
 [Today in DoD](#)
 [Transcripts](#)
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Testimony as Delivered to the House Armed Services Committee: Fighting to Win

By Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Washington, DC, Thursday, September 25, 2003.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before this committee, and on such an important subject.

I have with me some pretty remarkable Americans, two real heroes on my right, Ambassador L. Paul Bremer and General John Abizaid, who can give you the word direct from Baghdad, and I know that's what you want hear, and you want to ask your questions, so I'd like to keep my comments relatively brief here. I have a longer statement I'd like to submit for then record.

And General Jack Keane, an another American hero who, unfortunately, is nearing the end of a incredible career in the U.S. Army this year, to help answer what I know are going to be questions from this committee about the demands being placed on our both active duty and reserve component and National Guard forces.

I'd just like to make two specific comments and one general one as we open this. First of all, on a piece of bad news, I would like to express my own personal sorrow at the death of Aquila Hashimi, the member of the Iraqi Governing Council who was -- who died of wounds suffered a few days ago in an assassination attempt.

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I had the privilege of meeting her back in July. It was a remarkable experience to talk to this woman who has spent years in no less a position than deputy to Tariq Aziz, who expressed with enormous sincerity and conviction her belief in the future of a free and democratic Iraq.

It's a cause for which she has now given her life, and it is a noble cause.

On a piece of happier news, I'd like to just share with you as an example of the kind of thing that we see frequently, almost every day, a dispatch that came in from one of Ambassador Bremer's representatives in the province of Salahuddin, reporting on the elections of the new governing council for that province.

That name may not mean much even to people in this room, but if I point out that the capital of Salahuddin is Tikrit, then I think you'll understand why this dispatch was titled "A Ray of Democracy in Iraq's Heart of Darkness," in Saddam Hussein's own hometown.

"The process for selecting Salahuddin's interim governing council has ended, by and large successfully," this report says. The provincial judge, accompanied by an American officer instructed the delegates in the voting process, which was by secret, individual ballot.

While far short of Athenian democracy, the selection process in Salahuddin is a firm but small step on the path to participatory government, something inconceivable in Saddam's hometown just a few months ago.

"While it remains to be seen," this report goes on, "how effective this diverse group can be in tackling the daunting challenges facing Salahuddin, for the moment the predominant feeling among the members is one of constant optimism and appreciation for what the coalition has made possible."

Mr. Chairman and members of this committee, including, I know, a great many of you who have taken the trouble to travel to Iraq, along with the bad news, there is a great deal of good news, and this is one example.

If you'd permit me to just to make a general point, it seems clear to me that some people just don't get it. They just don't understand the lessons of September 11th.

September 11th should have changed the whole way we look at the world, and in particular the way we look at terrorism in the world. September 11th was a wake-up call. It wasn't just a wake-up call that Al Qaida was after us. The war on terrorism is more than just the war on Al Qaida, although that is obviously a

very important part of that war.

But we shouldn't kid ourselves that if we could only catch Osama bin Laden and the top leadership of Al Qaida, that we could go back to sleep the way we have for the last 20 years, treating terrorism as an evil, but a manageable evil, and continuing to live with a status quo in the Middle East that's been breeding terrorists by the thousands.

That's why the president has said over and over and over again that the war on terrorism will be a long and difficult one. It requires eliminating global terrorist networks and getting governments out of the business of sponsoring terrorism.

But it also involves what the president referred to in his State of the Union message last year as building a just and peaceful world beyond the war on terror, particularly by supporting moderate forces in the Muslim world.

September 11th should have brought a recognition that the old way of dealing with terrorism, that you deal with terrorism after the fact by catching the perpetrators, proving their guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, and if they're individuals, putting them in jail, and if they're countries, bombing them, as we did occasionally after the attack on the American discotheque in Berlin or the attack on our embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam -- in other words, that terrorism is an evil but a manageable evil, one that we can deal with by the weak deterrence of legal punishment and occasional retaliation. But we cannot.

September 11th demonstrated, first of all, that we're dealing with people that can't be deterred. But also, it should have been a lesson that we're not dealing with just one individual group of terrorists, that these terrorists work together, that they get support from states, that state sponsorship of terrorism is simply no longer tolerable. We've got to eradicate those international terrorist networks and end state sponsorship of terrorism.

Afghanistan was a very important place to start and Iraq was an important place to continue.

But the other thing we need to recognize is that dealing with terrorism is more than just killing and capturing terrorists. It also means winning the battle of ideas, demonstrating to the Muslim world, and particularly to the Arab world, that progress along the lines that has been so successful in this country and in Europe and increasingly in East Asia can also bring success for them.

And the terrorists understand that. That's why they write, as they did recently, on an Al Qaida Web site, that defeating democracy in Iraq is for them the most important battlefield in their campaign to impose their twisted way of thinking

on the world and on other Muslims.

Why? "Because," they write, "if democracy succeeds in Iraq, it could teach Arabs that a good life is possible on this Earth. And they could come to love life too much and fear death and be unwilling to become martyrs."

What twisted logic. What sick minds. That tells you the kind of people we're dealing with, but it also tells you that success in the battle for democracy in Iraq will be a major victory in the war on terrorism.

The brave young Americans who liberated Iraq from the clutches of one of the bloodiest and most sadistic tyrants in modern history have brought us to the possibility of a major victory in the war on terrorism.

Completing that victory requires not just winning the war in Iraq, but winning the peace, as well. That is the best way we can honor the memory of the heroes who have sacrificed to bring us and the Iraqi people to this point.

We are here today, Mr. Chairman, members of this committee, to ask the Congress, as you have done so often before, to give us the tools so we can finish the job.

Thank you.



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