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A Strategic Approach to the Challenge of Terrorism

Remarks as prepared for delivery to RAND by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Grand Hyatt Washington, Washington, DC, Wednesday, September 8, 2004.

Thank you, Jim [Thompson]. Tommy Franks and I once attended a briefing together here in town, in January. And he said, with an impish grin, that he always looks forward to the opportunity to leave Florida to come to Washington. Of course, the truth, as you all know, is that most of us in Washington look for the opportunity to leave here to go almost anywhere. And you're probably asking yourselves why you chose to come here to Washington and in the middle of Hurricane Frances, of all things. It must mean that RAND isn't any better at predicting the weather than any of the rest of us are.

Half a century ago, when General [of the Air Force Hap] Arnold set up the RAND Corporation, or at least so the legend goes, he put it in California so that it could be free of the influences of Washington and engage in independent thinking. In fact, my understanding is he directed RAND not to even come back with any results for the first year or two. He probably didn't plan on your predecessors spending most of that time on the beaches, but my guess is that's what a lot of them did. On a day like today, you probably wonder why you didn't stay there yourselves.

When I worked on the East Asian policy in the Reagan Administration, as George Shultz's Assistant Secretary of State for the region and then later as Ambassador to Indonesia, I was struck at how helpful it was for me in that job to be working for an administration of Californians. You didn't have to explain to them why Asia was important or, as sometimes happened, even just how big it was or where it was. Secretary Shultz loved to illustrate it with a joke about a proper Boston lady. She was from the old Boston, the one where the Cabots spoke only to Lodges and the Lodges spoke only to God. She paid her first visit to San Francisco and was asked how she liked the city, and she said, "Oh, it's quite beautiful. But it's so far from the ocean." Shultz used it to illustrate the fact that when you sit in California, you recognize that there's another ocean and another whole frontier and another whole way of looking at American foreign policy. I always took that a little personally, as a native New Yorker. But I certainly learned about the importance of the Asia-Pacific region.

Unfortunately, on a more serious note, the whole country came to have a different appreciation of New York three years ago when the city was subject to a brutal attack on September 11, and its firefighters and policemen and mayor and citizenry in general responded with the courage and dedication to duty that has earned the admiration of the entire country.

Twice in the last century, the United States went to war against a totalitarian evil, first in a bloody war

against Nazism and fascism, and then later in the “long twilight struggle” that was the confrontation with totalitarian communism. Each time, we achieved victories of truly historic proportions, united with allies dedicated to halting the spread of the totalitarian menace. Each time we thought, with the evil eliminated, we could enjoy a long period of unbroken peace. Each time, we suffered rude awakenings. This time, September 11, 2001 was our wake-up call.

With the cold-blooded murder of 3,000 Americans and citizens of many other countries, we were once again in the middle of a war we didn’t look for. It found us. We learned in one shattering and horrific attack that evil remains on the loose. Like each past confrontation, the target is freedom itself.

Three days after the Twin Towers crumbled into dust, the President stood among the smoking ruins, and assured rescue workers, and the rest of the nation, that “the people who knocked down these buildings will hear from all of us soon.” And Americans did fight back—for the same reasons Americans went to war in the past. During one of my recent visits to Capitol Hill, Senator Joseph Lieberman described it well, reminding us that when America goes to war, “it’s not for conquest, it’s not for imperial colonial plunder. It’s for security and a principle that has driven American history from the beginning, which is freedom and democracy.”

To be successful once again in defending our security and our freedom, four basic principles need to guide our strategy in combating terrorist fanaticism:

- We must recognize that the struggle will be a long struggle, not something we will win in three years or eight years or perhaps even decades. But, we will win it, even though victory will probably not be marked by anything as dramatic as the signing ceremony on the USS Missouri or the collapse of the Berlin Wall.
- We must use all the instruments of national power, including military force but not solely or even primarily military force. Indeed, the different instruments of national power, including the “softer” ones, reinforce one another;
- This is a struggle that will be waged in multiple “theaters,” including our own country. We cannot ignore any of these theaters, but we need to sequence our efforts so that we focus our energies in the right places at the right times;
- Perhaps most important, this is an ideological as well as a physical struggle. We must do more than simply kill and capture terrorists. We must, as the President said in his first State of the Union Message after September 11, work to build a “just and peaceful world beyond the war on terror,” particularly in the Muslim world, so that we can offer a vision of life and hope and freedom to counter the terrorists’ vision of tyranny, death and despair.

From the beginning, President Bush recognized that this fight would be long and difficult. Just five days after the attacks on New York and the Pentagon, the President said:

“This is a new kind of evil.This war on terrorism is going to take a while. And the American people must be patient. I’m going to be patient.[T]his will be a long campaign, a determined campaign; a campaign that will use the resources of the United States to win. They have roused a mighty giant. And make no mistake about it, we’re determined.”

On October 8, 2001, the day after Operation Enduring Freedom began in Afghanistan, Secretary

Rumsfeld told reporters:

“[T]hese strikes [in Afghanistan] are part of a much larger effort against worldwide terrorism, one that will be sustained and which is wide-ranging. It will likely be sustained for a period of years, not weeks or months. This campaign will be waged much like the Cold War.... We’ll use ... every ... resource at our command. We will not stop until the terrorist networks are destroyed. Regimes that harbor terrorists and their training camps should know that they will suffer penalties. Our goal is not one individual; it is not one group.”

I was struck by Secretary Rumsfeld’s reference to the Cold War. It was a dramatic contrast to those who suggested that “all” we had to do was to eliminate Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. As daunting as that task was—and it seemed even more formidable at the time Don Rumsfeld was speaking—it was nothing compared to the tasks that he laid out for us.

But indeed the problem does extend far beyond Afghanistan—to other states that harbor terrorists and use terrorism as an instrument of policy, to ungoverned areas where terrorists can find safe harbor and even to our own country and other free societies, where terrorists hide in plain sight.

And it extends far beyond Al Qaeda, as dangerous as that organization is. In fact, one of the lessons of 9/11 is that terrorism is something we can no longer continue to live with as an evil but inescapable fact of international life, the way we did over the previous two or three decades. We can no longer tolerate a terrorist capacity to inflict thousands of casualties in a single conventional attack or hundreds of thousands of casualties if terrorists gain access to the most terrible weapons human beings have invented. We may not be able to eliminate every individual terrorist, but we can hope to eliminate global terrorist networks and end state sponsorship of terrorism. We can hope to see the ideologies that justify terrorism discredited as thoroughly and made as disreputable as ideologies as Nazism is today. We can hope to see the bombing of churches denounced by Muslim leaders, as it was in Iraq last month, or the slaughter of schoolchildren universally condemned.

Americans have a reputation for impatience. That is a strength as well as a weakness. In this struggle, as in the Cold War, we may be impatient for results. But, looking at the stakes, we should recognize that we’re in this fight for the long haul. It’s striking in hindsight to look back at how quickly we became impatient with the situation in Europe just six months after the elation that greeted the end of the Second World War.

People were heard to say, “We’ve lost the peace.” In his speech last week, the President mentioned a New York Times article that reported in 1946 that “in every military headquarters, one meets alarmed officials doing their utmost to deal with the consequences of the occupation policy that they admit has failed.” Astonishingly, Life Magazine was able to write, also in 1946: “We have swept away Hitlerism, but a great many Europeans feel that the cure has been worse than the disease.”

Sometimes it’s hard to remember how long it took to begin to turn around the situation in Europe. A full two years after the end of the war in Europe, President Harry Truman courageously proposed the Marshall Plan. It’s purpose: to help the battered continent dig itself out of the economic catastrophe that was feeding the forces of communist totalitarianism. As late as the

communist takeover of Czechoslovakia in 1948, people in the West were still debating whether there was even a threat that we needed to confront. And the idea that we would eventually win that struggle, after an effort that would extend over four decades was something that few besides George Kennan dared to predict.

So too, today, a problem that grew up in 20 or 30 years is not going away in two or three. So, we must be resolved and patient. Our adversaries have demonstrated remarkable patience. They might be looking at Afghanistan, for example, and thinking: it took us 10 years to drive the Soviets out; the Americans have been there less than three.

But, we know how Europe's story ends. We know it can be done—when leaders are determined to persevere ... when the American people and its allies are resolved to stand firm for freedom.

Freedom is the glue of the world's strongest alliances and the solvent that has dissolved tyrannical rule. The same values that held the Allies together over the course of four decades of often contentious debates are the values that have brought some 40 countries into the Coalition effort in Afghanistan, more than 30 countries with us into Iraq, and some 80 or 90 countries into the larger coalition against global terrorism. The longing for freedom that penetrated even the Iron Curtain was what brought about the peaceful end to the Cold War. That same universal desire for liberty—among Muslims as well as non-Muslims—will be our strongest weapon in fighting fanaticism today.

Our enemies know us by our love of liberty and democracy. We know them by their worship of death and their philosophy of despair. We were given a window into their dark and barren world when we intercepted a letter from an al Qaeda associate in Iraq to his colleagues in Afghanistan. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a major terrorist mastermind, gives us an idea of how they view the benefits of a free and open society emerging in the heart of the Middle East. "Democracy" in Iraq, Zarqawi writes, "is coming" and that will mean suffocation" for the terrorists. He talks disparagingly about Iraqis who "look ahead to a sunny tomorrow, a prosperous future, a carefree life, comfort and favor." For Zarqawi, prosperity and happiness are inconsistent with the terrorists' mission. "We have told these people"—meaning Iraqi Muslims—Zarqawi writes, "that ... the nation cannot live without the ... perfume of fragrant blood spilled on behalf of God and that people cannot awaken from their stupor unless talk of martyrdom and martyrs fills their days and nights."

In the contempt he displays for whole groups of human beings, including Muslim Kurds and Muslim Shi'a, Zarqawi calls to mind the racism of the Nazis. And his glorification of death and violence also calls to mind the tyrannical movements of the last century. While he claims a mantle of religion, his rhetoric recalls the death's head that Hitler's SS proudly displayed on their uniforms.

But, the great majority of human beings, Muslims along with everyone else, want to embrace life and freedom, if given the chance. Indeed, a few months back, Hamid Karzai said that if they registered six million to people to vote, he'd consider it a success—currently, 10.5 million people are registered. In Iraq, the early caucuses for the Iraqi National Conference were met with an almost overwhelming number of Iraqis interested in serving Iraq—In Kut, more than 1200 people competed for 22 seats; in Najaf, 920 candidates vied for 20. Thus, just like Nazism and Communism, this latter day brand of totalitarianism contains the seeds of its own decay. But it will not collapse simply of its own weight. We must go on the offense.

Our offensive of necessity involves many and varied fronts. Not just different geographical theaters, though there are many of those. And not even primarily military fronts. This struggle is not just about killing and capturing terrorists, although that's critically important. More than three-quarters of al Qaeda's key leaders and facilitators have been killed. We will never know how many September 11th's have been prevented by intercepting the plotters and facilitators who have been killed or captured in the three years since.

The successes of the last three years have disrupted or prevented a large number of terrorist plans. But we can be virtually certain that there are still people out there plotting major attacks against us. Even capturing or killing bin Laden will not eliminate al Qaeda much less other terrorist groups.

While we cannot concentrate our efforts on only one front at a time, we also can't afford to put equal effort into each simultaneously. We need to sequence our efforts in a way that makes sense, recognizing also that what we do in one theater has impacts on others. We cannot have an al Qaeda strategy by cutting aid to, and thereby isolating, a country like Pakistan, for example, which is what happened in the 1990s. At the same time, success in one theater can provide a platform for success in others. Success in Afghanistan has not only deprived Al Qaida of a sanctuary there, it has also supported President Musharraf's bold position as a friend of the United States, and drove al Qaeda terrorists into Pakistan where it has been possible to capture them. The capture of terrorist operatives in Pakistan has led to the arrests of key associates in places as distant as London and Chicago, and provided significant new information about terrorist plans.

Terrorists once found Saudi Arabia a friendly place to find money. But, since the suicide bombings in Riyadh on May 12, 2003, it's been a far less hospitable place. The Saudis have been able to kill or capture more than 600 al Qaeda associates. And their counter-terrorist efforts have benefited substantially from the ability of the U.S. to remove the threat of Saddam Hussein as well as the burden of supporting a large military presence on Saudi territory, which was made possible by the liberation of Iraq.

Morocco, Egypt, Algeria, the UAE, Oman, Yemen, and other nations in the Arab world are giving us valuable cooperation. Uzbekistan, where we are encouraging internal political and economic reforms, is also a key state in the war on terror.

Indonesia, with the largest Muslim population of any country in the world, faces the challenge of terrorism at the same time that it is struggling to build new democratic institutions. For Indonesians, the attacks in Bali and Jakarta were their equivalent of September 11, and they have

taken serious steps to deal with their own terrorist problem.

The Palestinian-Israeli problem is another theater in this struggle. President Bush has laid out the very clear solution to that problem, the establishment of two states, living side by side in peace. Getting to that solution is an enormous challenge. But getting there will be enormous benefits for our other efforts.

It's been said that diplomacy without military capability is nothing more than prayer. Brave American troops are performing their roles magnificently, giving our diplomacy enormous credibility. In other theaters, our diplomacy has been strengthened by military success. Not long ago, Libya saw what was happening in the region, and agreed to peacefully dismantle its weapons programs.

For our military forces, the two central fronts are Afghanistan and Iraq. Today, in those two countries, 50 million people have been freed from brutal tyranny. Afghanistan and Iraq are on the way to becoming America's newest allies in the fight for freedom.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban has been overthrown and replaced by a new constitution and government, more representative of all the people than at any time in the country's history.

In Iraq, the government is under Iraqi control. Children no longer learn by textbooks that teach, "2 Saddams plus 2 Saddams equals 4 Saddams." And substantial progress is being made even in the face of an enemy who continued to fight long after the liberation of Baghdad, along with Zarqawi and its other terrorist allies, to prevent the emergence of a free Iraq. In Afghanistan, too, progress is being made despite the unwillingness of the Taliban to accept defeat.

Both Afghanistan and Iraq are moving with determination toward self-government. For terrorists, including associates of al Qaeda, the success of democracy in both countries will represent a major defeat.

There are those who debate whether Iraq was the right place to use military force. I agree with Senator John McCain who recently said, “our choice wasn’t between a benign status quo and the bloodshed of war. It was between war and a graver threat.”

As the Senator explained further, “There was no status quo to be left alone. The years of keeping Saddam in a box were coming to a close. The international consensus that he be kept isolated and unarmed had eroded to the point that many critics of military action had decided the time had come again to do business with Saddam, despite his near daily attacks on our pilots, and his refusal, until his last day in power, to allow the unrestricted inspection of his arsenal.”

The success of democracy in Iraq is the terrorists’ greatest fear—“suffocation” as I mentioned Zarqawi calls it. For success in Iraq will have effects far beyond its borders. As Senator McCain said, “Our efforts may encourage the people of a region that has never known peace or freedom or lasting stability that they may someday possess these rights.”

When they possess those rights, it will be one more step in pushing the extremist ideology they espouse to the margins of civilized society. As the President said last week, “The terrorists know that a vibrant, successful democracy at the heart of the Middle East will discredit their radical ideology of hate. They know that men and women with hope and purpose and dignity do not strap bombs on their bodies and kill the innocent.”

Winning in Iraq and Afghanistan is imperative, but it is only part of the larger war on terrorism. Winning in each of the geographical theaters I’ve mentioned is only part of the victory. Victory in the war on terror requires sowing the seeds of hope, expanding the appeal of freedom, particularly in the broader Middle East. That is why, in his speech marking the 20th anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy last November, the President said that we must work with our partners in the Greater Middle East and around the world to promote tolerance, rule of law, political and economic openness, and the extension of greater opportunities so that all people—men and women alike, Muslim and non-Muslim—can realize their full potential.

As democracy grows in the Middle East, it becomes easier for peacemakers to succeed throughout the region. There are so many wonderful Muslims who are our best allies in fighting this ideological battle. They are not just Muslims, they are devout Muslims, and we need to use a terminology that doesn’t put them on the other side—to our people or to theirs. Let me tell you briefly about three whom I know personally.

One of them is the new Prime Minister of Pakistan. Another one is the former President of Indonesia. The third is the former Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, who was released last week, having served six years in jail as a political prisoner.

These are three of the most wonderful human beings in public life anywhere. It is men and women like them who will lead change throughout the Muslim world.

Of course, there will be skeptics, like those who reported from Europe in 1946. They will say: It can’t be done,” and “Arabs don’t do democracy.” But, I remember a time, some 20 years ago, when I worked for President Reagan on East Asian and Pacific matters—first as his Assistant Secretary of State for that region, and then as his ambassador to Indonesia, the country with the

largest Muslim population in the world.

Back then, people said that the Philippines could do no better than the dictator they had, Ferdinand Marcos. People said that the Koreans and Chinese didn't care about freedom, or that their Confucian heritage predisposed them to tyranny, or that they were incapable of democracy because they had no historical experience with it. Those assertions ran counter to what President Reagan believed. As he put it in an historic address to the British Parliament in 1982, "It would be cultural condescension or even worse to say that any people prefer dictatorship to democracy."

In the Philippines, Ronald Reagan and his Secretary of State, George Shultz, initiated a persistent effort to prod Marcos to embrace democratic change. Supported by America's firm insistence, the Philippine people finally forced Marcos to step down in 1986—helping turn that country from dictatorship to democracy. The following year, we saw a similar development in South Korea. Not long after that, Taiwan began to demonstrate that Chinese people, too, craved freedom and democratic self-government.

And we may well remember the democracies emerging from the shadow of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe ... today moving forward to build free institutions and representative self-government. Like the recovering societies who stepped forward in 1949 to join NATO against Soviet expansion, countries like Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, along with seven other democracies of Central Europe, have also joined NATO. And they've become active contributors in the Balkans, in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and in the broader war against terrorism.

The President tells a story about the power of liberty ... about how President Truman and the American people believed after the Second World War that a free society could help turn Japan from an enemy in war to an ally in peace. And about how, today, he and Japan's Prime Minister Koizumi can sit down and talk about how to keep the peace in the Korean Peninsula, or in Iraq. "What's going to happen someday," said the President, "is that an American President is going to sit down with a duly elected leader of Iraq to talk about peace. And our children and grandchildren will be better off."

Just as in the years after World War II, victory will require great risk and sacrifice, and much hard work. The three Muslim leaders I mentioned earlier have risked their reputations, their freedom and even their lives to stand up for freedom and democracy and religious tolerance. President Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan knows that his life is at risk every day for the cause that he believes in.

Thousands of Iraqis are signing up to join the new army and national guard and police force, knowing that they are risking their lives for the cause of a new Iraq. On my recent visit to Iraq, I met with a young Marine whose life had been saved by five members of the Iraqi National Guard, who risked their own lives to rescue him when he was wounded under fire. I met with the President of Iraq, whose predecessor on the Governing Council was assassinated by a suicide car bomb. I met with the Deputy Prime Minister, who was the target of an assassination attempt by Al Qaeda-associated terrorists two years ago in Northern Iraq. I met with Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, who was almost chopped in half by an ax wielded by one of Saddam's assassins in his apartment in London 25 years ago.

We met with the very impressive Sunni Arab Governor of the Province of Nineveh, Osama

Kashmoula, who was tragically assassinated a month later. These Iraqis know what they are fighting for, and they understand the risks. Hundreds of Iraqi soldiers and police and national guardsmen have already given their lives in this cause. But as one young woman, whose sister had recently been murdered because she was working for a free Iraq said to us: “My father said, you must never back down in the face of evil.”

These people are not retreating in the face of evil, and they have the support of extraordinarily brave young Americans who are risking their lives so that other people can enjoy freedom and so that our own people can live in greater security.

American servicemen and women have fought bravely in battle to protect us, and in the process, they’ve liberated 50 million souls. They’ve labored with courage and decency and honor, helping Afghans and Iraqis heal the countries that were broken long before they arrived. We mourn each one of those Americans who have been lost for this cause. My friend Joe Lieberman put it eloquently when he said recently that “those who have given their lives have given them for a noble cause, a cause as critical to American security as most any I can think of that we fought over the centuries.”

A couple of months ago, I was privileged to be present when a group of wounded heroes from Iraq, men and women, met President Bush at the White House. There was also a delegation of Iraqi women who are active leaders in helping Iraq build a new free society. They’d come to Washington to learn more about elections and government in a democratic society. When they met the Americans who’d been their liberators, they embraced them, and they thanked them over and over, through tears of joy. And one Iraqi woman summed up the feeling of the group this way: There would have been no opportunity, she said, for Iraqi women to learn about democracy were it not for the sacrifice of American servicemen and women.

I recently got to know one American hero who helped give them that opportunity, an extraordinary young man, Army Sergeant Adam Replogle. He was fighting Sadr’s army with his unit in May near Karbala. An RPG [rocket-propelled grenade] slammed into him, and he lost his left arm and the sight in his left eye. Adam put his enormous sacrifice into perspective this way. He said, “We’re fighting for everything we believe in. We’ve freed Iraqis from a dictator who was killing Iraqis by the millions.”

Sergeant Replogle described how he’d personally changed so many lives in Iraq, how he’d helped destroy terrorist cells and get people back into their houses, how he and his fellow soldiers helped multiply the numbers of schools in his sector from two to 40 in just a year. He’d even bought bikes for Iraqi girls and boys. “After all,” he said, “they only cost five bucks, and these kids didn’t have anything.”

Sergeant Replogle summed up the situation like this: “Saddam affected everyone in that country.” And he added, “Something had to be done.”

Something had to be done, and Americans did it, just as Americans have always stood up to evil. There are others in the Muslim world who will one day join us as allies in this fight. That’s because history has shown that, in their hearts, most people are steadfastly unreconciled to tyranny. So hope remains. As the President reminded us: “As freedom advances, heart by heart,

and nation by nation, America will be more secure and the world more peaceful.”

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