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Speech to the Committee on the Present Danger and the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies
By Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Mayflower Hotel, Washington, DC, Wednesday, September 29, 2004.

Thank you, Cliff [May] ... [Audio inaudible].I really do want to thank you for your current role, leading the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. You're applying your impressive abilities to assemble effective coalitions of people who may not always agree with one another, but who all agree on the importance of a strong America. And in the battle of the airwaves, the Foundation is an articulate voice for freedom. So, congratulations on your great work.

And congratulations likewise to our other hosts, the members of the newly-re-formed Committee on the Present Danger. You took your cue from another group of forward thinkers from across the political spectrum who were "present at the creation," so to speak, in confronting the dangers of the Cold War in the early 1950s. They understood, as you do today, that we faced a great totalitarian threat. They worked hard, as I know you will, to keep that threat foremost in the nation's consciousness.

That great Cold War leader, Ronald Reagan, had a wonderful story that he liked to tell to people like you who were long-time veterans of that struggle. It's about the man who, late in life, became the last living survivor of the famous Johnstown flood. He decided to trade on that; he became a favorite on the lecture circuit, telling his dramatic stories all around the country about that historic disaster. But, finally the day came for him, too, to meet his heavenly reward. Pretty soon, what do you know, he was asking St. Peter—actually pestering St. Peter—to set up a date or two for him to talk about the Johnstown flood. Finally, St. Peter admitted that folks up in heaven did like to hear from recent arrivals about what was happening down on earth, so he set up the speech, he brought together all the seraphim and cherubim, and the saints and prophets, and gave him a fine introduction, just like Cliff gave me a fine introduction. And just as this veteran of the great flood stepped up to the podium, St. Peter whispered into his ear: "Just so you know, that fellow in the first row, second from the aisle ... that's Noah." [Laughter.]

I'm afraid I see quite a few Noahs in the audience today—no reflection on your age, but people who know about the subjects I'm talking about, and it's intimidating. They remember, as I do, a desperate time in the mid-1970s when communism was on the move all around the world. I remember how concerned Democrats and concerned Republicans got together to revitalize the Committee on the Present Danger to push for a stronger posture towards the Soviet Union.

One of the leading forces behind that effort was the remarkable late senator from the state of Washington, Scoop Jackson. He was, by the way, the first U.S. senator I ever met. He was a great leader and a great supporter of the U.S. military. And there were few others more passionately committed than Scoop to defending freedom and combating totalitarianism. There's no question that he took risks in doing so. But, as Scoop used to say, "In matters of national security, the best politics is no politics."

Twice in the last century, the United States went to war against totalitarian evil: first, in the bloody war against Nazism and fascism, and then later in the Cold War's long twilight struggle. Each time, when the war ended, with the evil eliminated, we felt we could enjoy a long period of unbroken peace. Each time we suffered a rude awakening.

With the cold-blooded murder of 3,000 Americans and citizens of many other countries, September 11th, 2001 put us once again in the middle of a war we didn't look for. It's a war that found us. Once again, the target is freedom itself.

President Reagan liked to tell another story, this one was true, about how British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan was delivering an address at the United Nations when Nikita Khrushchev famously took off his shoe and started banging it on the table. With that unflappability that we associate with the British, Macmillan famously replied, without missing a beat, "I'd like that translated, if I may." [Laughter.]

Of course, no translation was needed. Like the Nazis, the Soviets wanted to bury free societies. Today's terrorist fanatics are no different. Yet, in some very real ways, they have the capacity, possibly, to be far more dangerous.

After September 11th, Americans fought back. During a recent hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee, your honorary co-chairman Senator Joseph Lieberman reminded us why America goes to war. "It's not for conquest," he said, "it's for security and for a principle that has driven American history from the beginning which is freedom and democracy."

To successfully defend our freedoms once again, I believe that four basic principles must guide our strategy in combating terrorist fanaticism. First, we must recognize that this will be a long struggle. Second, and perhaps more important, we need to understand that this is an ideological as well as a physical struggle. Third, we must wage this war in multiple theaters, including here in our own country. And fourth, we have to use all the instruments—all the instruments—of national power, including military force, but not solely or even primarily military force.

On the first principle, President Bush was very clear from the beginning. The fight for freedom and democracy would be a long and difficult one. Just five days after the September attacks, he said, "The American people must be patient. This will be a long campaign." We will win this campaign, I would add, but victory will not be marked by anything as dramatic as a signing on the deck of the U.S.S. Missouri or the collapse of the Berlin Wall.

On October 8, 2001, just one day after the start of military operations in Afghanistan, my boss, Secretary

Rumsfeld told reporters that “these strikes in Afghanistan are part of a much larger effort, one that will be sustained for a period of years,” he said, “not weeks or months. This campaign will be much like the Cold War. We’ll use every resource at our command. We will not stop until the terrorist networks are destroyed.”

At the time, I remember being struck by 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. Of course, at the time, one day after the start of military operations, that challenge alone looked formidable. But the challenge extends far beyond Afghanistan, and beyond any single global terrorist network. The challenge extends to other states that harbor terrorists and use terrorism as an instrument of national policy. It extends to ungoverned areas where terrorists can find safe harbor and it extends very much to our own country and to many other free societies where terrorists can hide essentially in plain sight.

In fact, perhaps the principal lesson of 9/11 is that we need to stop thinking about terrorism and state support for terrorism as something that we could continue living with as an evil but inescapable fact of international life, the way we did over the previous two or three decades.

We simply cannot continue regarding a terrorist’s capacity to inflict thousands of casualties as primarily a law enforcement matter that begins with catching and punishing perpetrators after they attack. We must do everything we can to prevent attacks.

We may not be able to eliminate every individual terrorist, but we can hope over time to eliminate global terrorist networks and to end state sponsorship of terrorism.

We can hope to see the ideologies that justify terrorism discredited as thoroughly and made as disreputable 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 school children almost universally condemned as it was after the recent horrendous attacks in Russia.

But such objectives will take time to achieve and Americans have a reputation for impatience.

It’s striking sometimes to recall the impatience with the situation in Europe after VE Day. Just six months after Eisenhower’s great victory in Europe, people were saying, “We’ve lost the peace.”

You may have heard the President recently quote The New York Times from 1946, in an editorial where it wrote: “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.” More amazingly, John Dos Passos in Life magazine was able to write, at roughly the same time in 1946: “We have swept away Hitlerism, but a great many Europeans feel,” he said—get this—“that the cure has been worse than the disease.”

People sometimes forget that it was a full two years—two years—after the end of World War Two when the situation in Europe looked so desperate that [President] Harry Truman had to come forward with the

bold and courageous Marshall Plan to try to rescue a failing situation. If you think about it today, a problem that grew up over 20 or 30 years—perhaps longer—isn't going to disappear in two or three.

But if we're impatient, we also know how Europe's story ends. We know that representative government can triumph when leaders are determined to persevere—and when Americans and their allies are resolved to stand firm.

Along with our patience and resolve, the second important part of our strategy in combating terrorist fanaticism is to recognize it and confront it as an ideological as well as a physical struggle. We have to do more than simply kill and capture terrorists—although we've had some great successes in that regard. Some two thirds of senior al Qaeda leadership have been killed or captured, hundreds more of the lower ranks. And we'll probably never know exactly how many plots have been disrupted or prevented, but clearly the number is large.

As President Bush said in his very first State of the Union message a few months after September 11th, we must work, he said, to build “a just and peaceful world beyond the war on terror and particularly in the Muslim world.”

Freedom has been the glue of the world's strongest alliances and it has been the solvent that has dissolved tyrannical rule. It is the most powerful force in history. It has held NATO allies together over the course of four decades of often contentious debate. And it has brought some 40 countries into the coalition effort in Afghanistan, more than 30 countries into Iraq and some 80 or 90 countries into the larger coalition against global terror.

Our enemies know us by our love of liberty and democracy. We know them by their worship of death and their philosophy of despair.

Earlier this year, we were given a window into that dark and barren world when we intercepted a letter from an al Qaeda associate in Iraq to his colleagues in Afghanistan. That letter from Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a major terrorist mastermind, suggests how terrorists view the benefits of a free and open society in the heart of the Middle East. “Democracy” in Iraq, Zarqawi wrote, “is coming.” That, he said, will mean “suffocation” for the terrorists.

Zarqawi talks disparagingly about Iraqis who, in his words, get this, “look ahead to a sunny tomorrow, a prosperous future, a carefree life, comfort and favor.” What could be more contemptible, in his view? His letter is available on the Internet. I suggest you read it, and see if you don't agree that the contempt that Zarqawi displays for whole groups of human beings—including Muslim Kurds and particularly Muslim Shia—doesn't call to mind the racism of the Nazis. See if his glorification of death and violence doesn't call to mind the tyrannical movements of the last century. Zarqawi and others may claim the mantle of religion, but their rhetoric is more reminiscent of the death's head of Hitler's SS.

They may profess to be pious Muslims, but what they worship is death. They teach that destruction is good; murder is noble; that killing innocents, even children, will earn the murderer paradise, despite the fact that Islam condemns murder and suicide. They use mosques as part of their terror campaign, and

desecrate Muslim holy places. And while they say their ultimate goal is God's greater glory, what they glorify is cold-blooded murder. But reasonable people can see their ultimate goal for what it is—raw power through systematic and brutal oppression. That is not religion. That is totalitarian ideology.

That is the point where terrorists and Saddamists converge. Their long-term goals may differ, but their immediate goal in Iraq is the same—to use fear and terror to prevent the emergence of a new, free country. They have nothing positive to offer the Iraqi people, only death and destruction. But they play on the fears of a population that has been terrorized—literally raped and murdered and tortured for 35 years—and in some cases, by the same people who are killing today.

That same apparatus that murdered and tortured and literally raped the people of Iraq for 35 years didn't just disappear when Baghdad was liberated.

And that is the heart of why this fight continues to be difficult. But while our enemies' only strength—and it is a strength—is their ability to terrorize and destroy, that is also their major weakness. Because they offer nothing positive, most Iraqis want them defeated. And more and more Iraqis are stepping up to bring about that defeat.

The majority of Iraqis know that, whether terrorists and Saddamists actively work together or not, the efforts of one support the other. With each life claimed by an indiscriminate attack, with each act of sabotage of Iraq's infrastructure, with each barbaric beheading, our enemies define themselves, in vivid contrast to the goal of a free Iraq.

Our objective is to build up Iraq. Our enemies' want to finish Saddam's work and tear it down. Iraqis want to live in safety and freedom to pursue their own happiness. Terrorists target Iraqis who simply go about their daily lives. Iraqis want free and fair elections. The enemy desperately attacks each step of the process. We build schools. They kill children.

Despite our enemies' savagery, Iraqis are moving forward. Iraqis young and old face the reality, however, of having to overcome the habits of 35 years of captivity in Saddam's bitter jail. I recently learned of the wry observation of one Iraqi. He said that when some people have a bad day, they go and seek counseling. When Iraqis emerge from three and a half decades of death and destruction, they're expected to shrug it off overnight. It's not that easy.

And yet, even though they know they're risking their own lives, thousands of Iraqis continue to join the new army, the new national guard and the police force because they won't be intimidated. More than 700 Iraqis in those security organizations, by our official count—which is probably underestimated; it's probably hundreds more—have already given their lives in the line of duty.

Prime Minister Allawi has been the target of Saddam's assassination attempts over the course of many years. The Deputy Prime Minister, a friend of mine, Barham Salih, was a target of an assassination attempt just two years ago in Northern Iraq. I could go on with the list of the Iraqi leaders—they all know that they are on Zarqawi's hit list. They all know they are risking their lives for their country.

Last week, Iraqi Prime Minister Allawi gave Americans a window into that new Iraq that he and his colleagues and millions of Iraqis are building with our help. This was his dramatic summation of how, in less than 18 months, Iraq has begun to emerge from one of the worst tyrannies of the last century: “At every step of the political process to date,” the Prime Minister told a joint session of Congress, “the courage and the resilience of the Iraqi people have proved the doubters wrong. They said we would miss the January deadline to pass the Interim Constitution. We proved them wrong. They warned that there could be no successful hand-over of sovereignty by the end of June. We proved them wrong. They doubted whether a national conference could be started this August. We proved them wrong. Despite intimidation and violence,” the Prime Minister said, “over 1,400 citizens, a quarter of them women, from all religions and from every ethnic, religious and political grouping in Iraq, elected a national council. And I pledge to you today,” he said to the U.S. Congress, “we’ll prove them wrong again over the elections.”

Last week I met with a wonderful young American named Molly Wilkenson who had been part of helping to organize that national conference the prime minister spoke of. She told us about the conference’s loud and lively, open and honest debates—real democracy. She also told us about the violence that surrounded that conference. In fact, during the four days they were meeting, the conference came under fairly regular mortar attack. When one particular attack came especially close, the Iraqis paused momentarily just to be sure everyone was still safe, and then immediately resumed debating ideas and sipping tea. If that’s not a statement of Iraqi resolve in the face of terrorists in an assembly continuing to meet under mortar attack, I don’t know what is.

That fact alone, I think, demonstrates vividly that, like Nazism and Communism, the terrorist brand of totalitarianism runs fundamentally counter to the love of life and the love of freedom that represent the deepest longings of most human beings.

The terrorists’ doctrine contains within it the seeds of its own defeat.

But this totalitarian movement—as you understand so well from earlier such threats—will not collapse simply of its own weight. We must push, we must remain on offense.

So, along with the ideological struggle, goes a third part of the strategy: we must wage this war on many and varied fronts and not just different geographical theaters, although there are many of those, and not even primarily military fronts. But we have to sequence our efforts and focus our energies in the right places at the right times. We can’t address every problem at once.

We must sequence our efforts in a way that makes sense, recognizing also that what we do in one theater can impact others. For example, we can’t have an al Qaeda strategy by isolating Pakistan, and cutting aid to it the way we did in the 1990s.

And at the same time, we can build on success, because success in one theater can provide a platform for success in others. Success in Afghanistan has not only deprived al Qaeda of a sanctuary there and driven al Qaeda terrorists other places where we’ve been able to capture them, it has also supported [Pakistani] President Musharraf’s bold position as a friend and ally of the United States.

Saudi Arabia is another crucial theater. Terrorists once found Saudi Arabia fertile ground to find money. But, a May 12, 2003 suicide bombing in Riyadh was Saudi Arabia's wake-up call. And it's been a far less friendly place for terrorists ever since. The Saudis have been able to kill or capture more than 600 al Qaeda associates.

Indonesia, where, as Cliff noted, I was privileged to serve as U.S. ambassador for three years, has the largest Muslim population of any country in the world. By the way, you have to say it that way. They don't like you saying it's the largest Muslim country because Islam is not the state religion, and they practice religious tolerance. Indeed religious tolerance is a true hallmark of that country. Thanks to amazing progress, democratic elections are also a hallmark of that country. And they just completed the second successful, fair presidential elections in their history since the fall of the Suharto regime. But they also confront a terrorist threat. For Indonesians, the attacks in Bali and Jakarta were their 9/11, their wake-up call, and they have taken serious steps to deal with our own terrorist problem.

The Palestinian-Israeli problem is another theater in this struggle. President Bush laid out the very clear solution to this problem—two states living side by side in peace. As simple as it is to say it, getting to that solution is an enormous challenge. But getting there will bring enormous benefits for other efforts in that struggle. An Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, though a limited step, is an important one in the right direction.

Not long ago Libya saw our military success in the region and agreed to peacefully dismantle its weapons programs—an example of where diplomacy, at least diplomacy backed by military strength, can work.

The fourth key part of our strategy involves using all the instruments of national power, including military force, but not solely military force.

For our military forces, of course, the two central fronts are Iraq and Afghanistan, where some 50 million people, almost all of them Muslims, have been freed from brutal tyranny and are on the way to becoming America's newest allies in the fight for freedom.

Some debate whether Iraq was the right place to use military force. I think Senator John McCain put it very clearly and very well when he said recently, "Our choice wasn't between the benign status quo and the bloodshed of war, it was between war and a greater threat." "There was no status quo to be left alone," Senator McCain said. "The years of keeping Saddam in a box were coming to a close. The international consensus that Saddam be kept isolated and unharmed had eroded to the point that many critics of military action had decided the time had come, once again, to do business with Saddam, despite his nearly 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 because it will have effects far beyond the borders of that country. Iraq's freedom and lasting stability will help push the extremist ideology closer to the margins of civilized society.

As democracy grows in the Middle East, it becomes easier for peacemakers to succeed throughout the region.

There are many wonderful Muslims who will be our best allies in fighting this ideological battle. If you'll indulge me, I'd like to just tell you briefly about three that I've been privileged to know personally.

One of them is the new Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shaukat Aziz. I first met him about 10 years ago when he was a highly successful executive of Citicorp; I was a poor dean, out raising money for Johns Hopkins University. I was struck even then by his interest in substance. This was a man who has given up an incredible career in the American business world—some even talked about him as the next CEO of Citicorp—to go to his native country, to help that country achieve prosperity. He has been rewarded with one nearly successful assassination attempt. But that hasn't stopped him, or intimidated him, or his brave president, Pervez Musharraf.

Another old friend of mine is Abdurrahman Wahid, the first democratically elected president of Indonesia. He is perhaps even more distinguished for his long leadership of an organization called Nahdlatul Ulama. With 40 million members, it's the largest Muslim organization in Indonesia and, indeed, it's larger than most countries in the world. Abdurrahman Wahid is a Muslim leader, but he is also a true apostle of tolerance.

One of his first acts as the new president of that predominantly Muslim country was to go to a Hindu temple in Bali to participate in Hindu prayers. While he was in Baghdad in the 1960s studying his own religion, he studied Shia texts with an ayatollah now known to the world as Sistani. And tragically, he studied with a distinguished Sunni cleric, al-Badri, who was taken away while Wahid was one of his students, tortured with hot irons and brutally murdered. Abdurrahman Wahid has never forgotten what Saddam did [to his teacher.]

The third one, I'm happy to say, is a former deputy prime minister who was recently released from six years of unjustified imprisonment in his own country, Malaysia. Anwar Ibrahim, again, is a devout Muslim, who started his career as a leader of the Muslim student movement in Malaysia.

I attended a conference in Kuala Lumpur some eight years ago where Anwar was asked about his views of the relationship between Islam and politics, and he replied, "I have no use for countries that call themselves Islamic and then deny basic rights to half their population," clearly meaning their women.

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

Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan knows that his life is on the line every day, yet he continues to push toward what will be historic presidential elections next week. A few months back he said that if they registered six million people to vote, he'd consider it a great success. Well, 10.5 million people have defied the Taliban philosophy and registered to vote. Forty percent of those registered are women.

When I visited Iraq last June, I met a young Marine whose life had been saved by five members of the

Iraqi National Guard. When he was wounded under fire, two of those guardsmen risked their own lives to pull him from the battlefield.

They reflect the thinking of one young Iraqi woman we met in June up in Mosul, whose sister had recently been murdered because she was working with us. The general who was with me asked her why she continued to work with us and she replied simply, “My father said, ‘You must never back down in the face of evil.’”

Iraqis are not backing down and they have the support of extraordinarily brave young Americans. We mourn each one of those Americans who’ve been lost for this cause. Senator Lieberman put it eloquently when he called it “a noble cause as critical to American security as any we have fought over the centuries.”

One of those American heroes, who fought for this noble cause, is an extraordinary young man, Army Sgt. Adam Replogle of the 1st Armored Division. I met him at Walter Reed Army Medical Center shortly after he’d come back from fighting with his unit in Karbala against Sadr’s army. It was in May, and you may remember the 1st Armored Division had been extended three months to deal with the Sadr problem. He was in the turret of his tank when an RPG [rocket-propelled grenade] hit him; he lost his left arm and sight in his left eye. But he put that 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 them by the millions.”

And he 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 number of schools in his sector from 2 to 40 in just a year. He’d even bought bikes for Iraqi boys and girls with his own money. “After all,” he said, “they only cost five bucks and these kids didn’t have anything.”

And Sgt. Replogle summed up the situation like this: “Saddam affected everything in that country. Something had to be done.”

Something had to be done. And once again, Americans are doing it, as Americans have stood up against evil in the past.

Last week Prime Minister Allawi expressed his gratitude for America’s role. He came to the seat of our government to thank Americans, in his words, “for making our cause your cause, our struggle your struggle.” He told us that Iraqi “hearts go out to the families, [to] every American who has given his or her life and every American who has been wounded.” He concluded his remarks to the American people this way. He said, “Neither tyranny nor terrorism has a place in our region or our world. And that is why Iraqis will stand by you, America, in a war larger than either of our nations, the global battle to live in freedom.”

Others in the Muslim world will one day join us as allies in this fight. That’s because history has shown that, in their hearts, most people do not want to live under tyrants.

Clearly, hope is alive. As the President reminded us, “As freedom advances, heart by heart, nation by nation, America will be more secure and the world will be more peaceful.”

Thank you for your support. [Applause.]

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