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Presenter: Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz

Wednesday, December 17, 2003

Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz Remarks to Proliferation Security Initiative Conference

Wolfowitz: Thank you, Mark, and thank you for the short introduction. I'm squeezing this in but delighted to be able to do so because I wanted to have my personal opportunity to thank all of you for participating and to say in a few minutes just how important we view this initiative.

Mark, I'd like to thank you and the others on your team for setting up and chairing this important meeting. It's the first of its kind here in the United States. I'm delighted to know that we've moved beyond the first countries, the original 11 countries -- Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States -- those of us who initiated PSI, and to be able to say a very warm welcome this morning to five new joiners -- Canada, Denmark, Norway, Singapore and Turkey. This is an international effort, it is a multilateral effort, it will only be successful to the extent that we can get broad cooperation in what is, we believe, something vital to the security of the whole world.

And of course the initial, when the initial statement of interdiction principles was published in September, more than 50 other nations, 50 nations signaled their support for PSI and their readiness to take part in interdiction efforts so we expect this effort to broaden as time goes on.

It's been fast-moving. I think there are already some impressive achievements that should encourage many more countries to join the PSI principles and hopefully to give pause to some of those countries whose activities we're trying to stop.

The recognition that the spread of weapons of mass terror is one of the most urgent threats facing the globe today is what lies behind this initiative. The threat is global and our response has to be global as well. And we have to address this threat now, before an attack that would make the events of September 11th pale in comparison.

I think some of the good news since September 11th is that we have been able to avoid and prevent a repetition of any terrorist attacks here in the United States and we've been relatively successful as a coalition of some 90 nations in preventing many attacks worldwide. But I think a side effect of that success is a dangerous complacency, that people may think that somehow September 11th was the highwater mark of terrorism and the worst that we will ever face, and of course those of you who are here know or you wouldn't be here, that in fact if terrorists can get their hands on chemical or biological or God forbid nuclear weapons, they could make the events of September 11th pale in comparison.

Your attendance testifies to the fact that weapons of mass destruction in the hands of bad actors and rogue states is something that the international community cannot continue to live with. For too long we relied on diplomacy, arms control, non-proliferation and export controls to stop the trade in

weapons of mass destruction. Some major successes were achieved with that non-proliferation regime. But I think it was increasingly clear over time that certain nations lying outside that regime and terrorist groups definitely outside that regime were not going to be stopped by the normal standards of the non-proliferation treaty or international agreements.

In fact, when I served in 1998 on the Ballistic Missile Defense Commission that was chaired by Don Rumsfeld, known as the Rumsfeld Commission, one of the things that came as a surprise even to those of us who had been following the whole proliferation issue for, in my case, three decades was to see that a fundamental rule had changed. It used to be that when countries joined the so-called "nuclear club" they seemed to think that the club had just about the right number of members in it. They wanted to stop further expansion. But in the last ten years or more we've seen a very dangerous trade in the most dangerous materials and the most dangerous technologies among these countries that lie outside the non-proliferation regime. It's going to take concerted international effort to prevent that rogue trade in rogue materials from coming home to any of us in a disastrous form. We believe that this proliferation security initiative is an integral part of the world's response to the dangers that were demonstrated so clearly on September 11th, two years ago.

Because of the urgency of the mission to halt the spread of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems and related materials, I'm glad to be able to add my voice on behalf of Secretary Rumsfeld and the entire Department of Defense to that of Condoleezza Rice -- who I gather spoke to you yesterday -- and many others in our government, to underscore the point that the international community has to work together to stop the trafficking of weapons of mass destruction and related materials and technology.

John Bolton who I think you met here yesterday, rightly observed recently PSI is not so much an organization as an activity. Our activities this week are another important step in developing military and law enforcement capabilities and preparation to interdict that evil trade.

Our focus here is on proactive measures that we can take to stop the flow of weapons of mass destruction and related technology to and from states and non-state actors of proliferation concerns. We've made some significant progress since President Bush launched the initiative in Krakow this May. We've had four operational exercises led by Australia, the United Kingdom, Spain and France, each one in a key area of proliferation trafficking such as the Pacific Ocean or the Mediterranean. These exercises I think are important both at the symbolic political level and at the operational level. They help us to show the flag and to deter proliferators by demonstrating our commitment to stopping that trade but they also enhance our capability to take real action when action is necessary.

The Department of Defense is committed to PSI, to the exercises and activities associated with it, and to making interdiction an essential mission for our military. As we begin negotiations with major shipping flag nations to facilitate boarding and inspections that commitment will become even more apparent.

The Defense Minister of Australia, Senator Robert Hill, summed up I think the effects of these efforts quite well when he stood on the deck of HMAS Melbourne during the first maritime interdiction exercise. Senator Hill said that when nations work together in this way they "send a message to all those who may contemplate the transfer of weapons of mass destruction or their precursors that there is a committed global movement that is going to make every effort to stop them."

We will continue to make every effort to stop them. Only when we work together can we deal with this threat to global security.

I want to thank all of you here and your respective governments for the proactive measures that you're committed to and are already taking to stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction and look forward very much to learning the thoughts that come out of this meeting.

While PSI participants agreed in Brisbane that North Korea and Iran are of particular concern,

we know that our efforts cannot be confined to just any one or two countries alone. Our efforts have to be aimed at the larger global trade in weapons of mass destruction materials that pose a threat to all of us.

The need for interdiction has never been greater. Given the growing number of states pursuing WMD and missile programs combined with the threat that arises from the possible connection between those programs and terrorists, we have to go beyond the pre-existing non-proliferation architecture. Interdiction can help to ensure that treaty commitments are met. Interdiction can help to stop proliferation-related exports by states and non-state actors outside of export control regimes. And interdiction can deter suppliers and customers by making proliferation more difficult and more costly, and in some cases more embarrassing.

The state of Saddam Hussein I think has already sent a powerful message to those who would make it their business to support exporters of terror through weapons of mass destruction. One way or another, the world is determined to put them out of business. In fact, even before Saddam was found in his hole last weekend, as President Bush said, "No terrorist network will gain weapons of mass destruction from the Iraqi regime because that regime is no more."

But there's much more bad news for terrorists. Part of our job, your job here, is to help make sure that there are no safe harbors for terrorists or for the trade in WMD. The attacks of September 11th, the other brutal attacks like those in Bali and Saudi Arabia and Kenya and Turkey, have awakened us to a new era, an era of mass terror. So far that mass terror has been accomplished, unfortunately, with conventional means of killing. It could become far worse when the terrorists get their hands on the worst weapons we have invented. It has changed fundamentally the way we have to think about national security.

We know that terrorists today are still plotting more and greater catastrophes. We know that they are seeking more and terrible weapons. In the hands of terrorists what are often called weapons of mass destruction should more properly be called weapons of mass terror.

Your presence here today testifies to our collective commitment to thwart terrorists. As President Bush put it, "We're determined to keep the world's most destructive weapons away from all our shores and out of the hands of our common enemies."

Accordingly the President has made it clear that our long-term objective is to create a web of counterproliferation partnerships through which proliferators will have difficulty carrying out the trade in WMD and missile-related technology. Through PSI we are taking proactive measures to deny enemies the means to accumulate the ability to harm us and we are taking earlier and more aggressive actions to prevent and neutralize threats before they materialize. We cannot wait until after the fact to take action.

Despite the accomplishments of the first few months, obviously much more remains to be done. We need to broaden PSI to include every one with the capacity and the willingness to help in the fight to halt proliferation. We need to continue to improve operational information-sharing capabilities. We need to remedy gaps in legal authority. We need to act against proliferation-related trafficking.

Everything that we have done and will do will help our countries and the world to be more secure. Now is the time to redouble our efforts. As President Bush said recently, "After all the action we have taken, after all the progress we have made against terror, there is a temptation to think that the danger has passed, but the danger hasn't passed. We must not forget the lessons of September 11th."

In the Department of Defense, not only at the Pentagon, not only on the front lines in Afghanistan and Iraq, but throughout the department, our men and women remember well the lessons of September 11th. Those are lessons we will never forget. And mindful of such lessons PSI has to be one of our top priorities. We're committed. We're committing our resources, our manpower, and our brain power to work with you and the world community to stop the trafficking of WMD and the materials that can make them.

So let me say thank you to each of you individually and to all of your countries for what you've already done in working toward those goals. Let me urge you to still greater efforts. Your cooperation and coordination is a key to halting this dangerous menace.

So on behalf of President Bush, Secretary Rumsfeld, the rest of the Department of Defense, let me thank you, Mark, for organizing this conference; and thank all of you for participating; and we look forward to learning new ideas from you.

Thank you very much.



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