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**ASSOCIATION OF NAVAL AVIATORS DEFENSE INDUSTRY LEADERS
BREAKFAST: “SETTING THE DEFENSE INDUSTRY BAR HIGHER:
INTEGRITY; ACCOUNTABILITY; DISCIPLINE; AND THE WILL TO BE
GREAT”**

Remarks as Delivered by Inspector General Joseph E. Schmitz of the Department of Defense, Tysons Corner, VA, Thursday, June 10, 2004.

Thank you Admiral Hill for that introduction.

Admiral Smith, Admiral Arthur, ladies and gentlemen:

Thank God for courageous American military and industrial leaders of character.

Thank God for our late-President and Commander-in-Chief, Ronald Wilson Reagan, whose body lies in state today but whose spirit still inspires this nation to greatness.

Thank God for the wisdom of our founding fathers, who enshrined into our national conscience, beginning with the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, the self-evident truths that “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness,” and who crafted the most ingenious system of checks and balances in the history of mankind, all designed to prevent abuses of government authority at the expense of our unalienable rights.

Thank God for freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of religion, and for the ever-present and hopefully ever “loyal opposition” -- who exercises these freedoms to keep those of us in governmental power the honest stewards of hard-earned tax dollars that “We the People” of this great nation deserve.

My late father was a naval aviator -- a Marine fighter pilot to be precise -- who used to always repeat the admonition, “Let not perfection be the enemy of the good.”

By the way, as an aviator and as a parent, my father was both a perfectionist and a principled pragmatist. After his naval aviator career, my father turned to teaching and public service. As a college professor, he used to inspire his students by urging them to “take a B” – but only when the alternative was to do nothing.

By happenstance, a few weeks ago I discovered what appears to be the biblical foundation for my father’s admonition. In the book of Ecclesiastes, the ancient Hebrew

Philosopher writes, “If you wait until the wind and the weather are just right, you will never plant anything and never harvest anything.”¹

A year after Secretary Rumsfeld and I first met to discuss the position of Inspector General of the Department of Defense, and nine months after the President transmitted my nomination to the Senate – by the way, the Senate that confirmed me was at the time controlled by the current minority party – the Secretary of Defense welcomed me aboard in the finest naval aviator tradition: “Congratulations Joe. You’re finally the Inspector General. Now tell me what your job is.”

I responded, “Sir, the Inspector General Act lays out a myriad of specific duties, none of which are inconsistent with the American military tradition of the Inspector General serving as an independent extension of the eyes, ears, and conscience of his Commander.” “Over time,” I said, “I would like to earn your trust enough to serve in this capacity.”

“Well then,” said the Secretary as he turned to his Special Assistant, “you better give the IG my set of principles.”

Secretary Rumsfeld’s principles for running the Department of Defense set the bar very high for all of us, whether we serve in the Department of Defense or whether we contract with the Department of Defense.

His first principle is, “Do nothing that could raise questions about the credibility of DoD. DoD must tell the truth and must be believed to be telling the truth or our important work is undermined.” His second principle is, “Do nothing that is or could be seen as partisan. The work of this Department is non-partisan. We have to continuously earn the support of all the people of the country and in the Congress.” The third principle is that, “Nothing is more important than the men and women who work in this Department—they are its heart and soul and its future.”

I won’t belabor the other ten Rumsfeld principles, except to point out my personal favorite, which is Number 12: “The Legislative Branch is in Article I of the Constitution; the Executive Branch is Article II. That is not an accident. We must respect the Constitutional role of Congress, learn from those who have knowledge that can be helpful and work constructively, with revolving coalitions, to achieve the important goals of the Department and the country.”

Aside from the inherent wisdom of these Rumsfeld principles, the most important thing is that they are principles.

¹ Ecclesiastes 11:4 (Today’s English Version).

Without principles, America would not be the great nation and the beacon of hope we are today – notwithstanding what Secretary Rumsfeld has aptly called the recent “body blows” caused by unfortunate and immoral choices by certain members of our Armed Forces.

Allow me to read briefly from congressional testimony about “American national greatness and leadership” by a former Chairman of the Association of Naval Aviators, the late Admiral Thomas H. Moorer:

President Theodore Roosevelt had said this about American national greatness and leadership: “The stream will not permanently rise higher than the main source; and the main source of national power and national greatness is found in the average citizenship of the nation. Therefore it behooves us to do our best to see that the standard of the average citizen is kept high; and the average cannot be kept high unless the standard of the leaders is very much higher.”²

Reflecting on this call to national greatness, Admiral Moorer testified that, “Congress is responsible for setting these ‘very much higher’ standards of leadership for the United States Armed Forces. Section 8 of Article I empowers Congress to ‘make Rules for the Government and Regulation of the land and naval Forces.’

“. . . Responsibility without accountability ‘according to law’ undermines the core foundation of the Constitution, the principle known as the Rule of Law (as opposed to the rule of men), without which our Constitution is no more than a piece of paper.”³

Let’s talk a bit more about what Secretary Rumsfeld calls “body blows,” whether against an individual, a group, or a nation. This Association is no stranger to such body blows. Anyone who sets his or her own bar high enough to achieve greatness -- to be a champion -- inevitably encounters a few body blows along the way.

The key to being a champion, first of all, is a rock-solid “will” to be great. Second, a champion typically improves more through set-backs (or “body blows”) than through victories -- as long as he learns from his mistakes and holds fast to both his principles and his will to be great. According to Bob Richards, the late great American pole-vaulter, two time Olympic gold-medallist [1952 & 1956] -- and famed Wheaties poster boy -- “one of the most important [qualities of a champion is] the ability to take defeat and to bounce back to victory.”⁴

² T. Roosevelt, *Citizenship in a Republic* (delivered April 23, 1910), reprinted in *AMERICAN IDEALS: THE STRENUOUS LIFE, REALIZABLE IDEALS* 509 (Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York 1926) (quoted by Admiral Moorer in his December 1, 1998, testimony, *infra*).

³ Testimony of Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, U.S. Navy (retired), Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, submitted to the House Judiciary committee on December 1, 1998 (reprinted as an OP-ED, “Preserving the rule of law” in *The Washington Times* on December 15, 1998, p. A18, and in *Wings of Gold*, Winter 1998, at 25).

⁴ Bob Richards, *THE HEART OF A CHAMPION*, p. 85 (1959).

True national greatness cannot be turned on and off like a light; it requires integrity, training and discipline, investments in both physical and human capital, and constant vigilance by great leaders of character.

The key to being a champion in industrial partnership with the Department of Defense is understanding our shared principles and our respective differences. The shared principles are the ones I have already mentioned: integrity; accountability; discipline; and the will to be great – together. The differences ultimately come down to our respective bottom lines: for those of us in the Pentagon, our bottom line is a sacred oath to support and defend the Constitution, against all enemies, foreign and domestic; for those of you in industry, your bottom line is, in a word, the bottom line.

I do not mean to suggest that the two bottom lines are incompatible. My intention is precisely the contrary.

Having worked in the aviation industry for 15 years as a private sector attorney, I understand your bottom line. I also understand that bad things happen, even in the best of organizations. As the Inspector General, I am here today to tell you that there is no reason that your bottom lines cannot be served while helping those of us in government to serve our bottom line. The best hope for win-win relationships between the Department of Defense and Defense Industry leaders lies in our shared American principles: integrity; accountability; discipline, and the will to be great -- together.

Regarding the role of an Inspector General in helping the Department of Defense and the Defense Industry take on the asymmetric forces of evil in the 21st Century, I would repeat the words of President William Howard Taft, who early last century commissioned a monument to America's first effective Inspector General, which monument still graces Lafayette Park, across from the White House:

“The effect of [Inspector General von] Steuben’s instruction in the American Army teaches us a lesson that is well for us to keep in mind, and that is that no people, no matter how warlike in spirit and ambition, in natural courage and self-confidence, can be made at once, by uniforms and guns, a military force. Until they learn drill and discipline, they are a mob, and the theory that they can be made an army overnight has cost this nation billions of dollars and thousands of lives.”⁵

⁵ William Howard Taft, “Address of the President of the United States” reproduced in “Unveiling of the Statue of Baron Von Steuben, Washington, DC, December 7, 1910,” Compiled by George H. Carter and printed under the Direction of the Joint Committee on Printing (1911), at p. 50.

In conclusion, speaking of shared principles, leadership, national greatness and hope in the face of adversity, President Reagan said it best in a speech 22 years ago to the British House of Commons: “given strong leadership, time, and a little bit of hope, the forces of good ultimately rally and triumph over evil Here is the enduring greatness of the British [and, I should add, American] contribution to mankind, the great civilized ideas: individual liberty, representative government, and the rule of law under God.”⁶

May God continue to bless this great nation of ours, may He bless our allies who share these great principles, and may He bless each one of you. Thank you.

Are there any questions?

Q. Where can we find those Rumsfeld principles you talked about?

A. How about my lapel pocket? Ask and ye shall receive.

Q. What about the rules of engagement; aren't we tying our hands behind our back?

A. You may call it tying our hands behind our back, I call it the rule of law. The fact is that we have rules and the terrorists don't. That's what it all comes down to. That's everything. If we get to the point where we don't have rules, we would have lost the war. A fundamental tenet of our society is that no man is above the law. Do people break our rules? Of course, occasionally. That's why we have IGs. Nobody is immune from human nature, not even military police. The fundamental difference between us and terrorists is that we abide by the rule of law and they don't. When our people “color outside of the lines,” we hold them accountable.

If there are no further questions, that concludes my remarks. Thank you.

⁶ Ronald Reagan, “Speech to the House of Commons,” June 18, 1982
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1982reagan1.html>.