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A New Kind Of War

By Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, as published in The New York Times, Thursday, September 27, 2001.

WASHINGTON -- President Bush is rallying the nation for a war against terrorism's attack on our way of life. Some believe the first casualty of any war is the truth. But in this war, the first victory must be to tell the truth. And the truth is, this will be a war like none other our nation has faced. Indeed, it is easier to describe what lies ahead by talking about what it is not rather than what it is.

This war will not be waged by a grand alliance united for the single purpose of defeating an axis of hostile powers. Instead, it will involve floating coalitions of countries, which may change and evolve. Countries will have different roles and contribute in different ways. Some will provide diplomatic support, others financial, still others logistical or military. Some will help us publicly, while others, because of their circumstances, may help us privately and secretly. In this war, the mission will define the coalition — not the other way around.

We understand that countries we consider our friends may help with certain efforts or be silent on others, while other actions we take may depend on the involvement of countries we have considered less than friendly.

In this context, the decision by the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia — friends of the United States — to break ties with the Taliban is an important early success of this campaign, but should not suggest they will be a part of every action we may contemplate.

This war will not necessarily be one in which we pore over military targets and mass forces to seize those targets. Instead, military force will likely be one of many tools we use to stop individuals, groups and countries that engage in terrorism.

Our response may include firing cruise missiles into military targets somewhere in the world; we are

just as likely to engage in electronic combat to track and stop investments moving through offshore banking centers. The uniforms of this conflict will be bankers' pinstripes and programmers' grunge just as assuredly as desert camouflage.

This is not a war against an individual, a group, a religion or a country. Rather, our opponent is a global network of terrorist organizations and their state sponsors, committed to denying free people the opportunity to live as they choose. While we may engage militarily against foreign governments that sponsor terrorism, we may also seek to make allies of the people those governments suppress.

Even the vocabulary of this war will be different. When we "invade the enemy's territory," we may well be invading his cyberspace. There may not be as many beachheads stormed as opportunities denied. Forget about "exit strategies"; we're looking at a sustained engagement that carries no deadlines. We have no fixed rules about how to deploy our troops; we'll instead establish guidelines to determine whether military force is the best way to achieve a given objective.

The public may see some dramatic military engagements that produce no apparent victory, or may be unaware of other actions that lead to major victories. "Battles" will be fought by customs officers stopping suspicious persons at our borders and diplomats securing cooperation against money laundering.

But if this is a different kind of war, one thing is unchanged: America remains indomitable. Our victory will come with Americans living their lives day by day, going to work, raising their children and building their dreams as they always have — a free and great people.

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