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American Jewish Congress

Remarks as Delivered by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Westin Fairfax Hotel, Washington, DC, Monday, October 22, 2001 .

Thank you, Jack [Rosen, AJC President] for that very warm introduction, and congratulations on your being sworn in for a second term, and good luck in your important responsibilities.

When I was sworn in as Deputy Secretary, Secretary [of Defense Donald] Rumsfeld pointed out that I was coming back to the Pentagon for my third tour of duty, and he said, "Paul, we're going to keep bringing you back until you get it right." [Laughter.]

I must say it's fantastic to have a Secretary of Defense who's been there before, who's done so many amazing things in his career. I can't imagine a better person to be there supporting as our Secretary of Defense, and we're going to get it right. I guarantee you.

I'm told that an American consultant was once invited to give a speech in Japan and he consulted a consultant about a his speech, and the consultant told him, "You have to understand the Japanese like you to put on a great show of humility, so begin your speech by saying you're not really qualified to be speaking here, you're going to make mistakes, and you want to apologize in advance for any mistakes you make."

The speaker duly followed the advice and began the speech that way, but to his shock and dismay the audience erupted into uproarious laughter. He couldn't understand what happened. He struggled through the end of his speech. And then he got off the stage. The head of the Japanese company that invited him said, "Oh, we are so sorry, sir. You have to understand, we were briefing our employees before your speech and we told them Americans always start their speech with a joke, so whatever he says, you have to laugh." [Laughter.]

I was wondering whether I should start the speech tonight with a joke given what a grim time it is. Then

I thought, well it is a time for laughter. If the terrorists make us stop laughing, that's just one more victory, so let's not let them do it. [Applause.]

Last week at the [Pentagon Memorial Service Secretary Rumsfeld](#) said that those who were killed in the terrorist attack on the Pentagon on September 11th died for two simple reasons. One, because they were Americans; and two, because they worked in the Department of Defense They were at a place in power, but they were part of a country that has used its military might far differently from most nations throughout history.

We are freedom-loving people who want and support freedom the world over, and on September 11th, the attack was on that way of thinking, on that way of life. And it came from people who seek not to build a better life, but to destroy the lives of others.

Today we are fighting a war that is not a war of our own choosing. It is a war of self-defense. But we cannot fight it totally on defense. America is too big, too open, too developed, with too many high-value targets here for us to defend ourselves against terrorists solely on our home ground. We have to carry the fight to them on their home ground. As the President said, "We did not ask for this mission, but we will fulfill it."

I can tell you at the Pentagon today, in the Department of Defense, we are moving forward, ready to do our part.

But this war on terrorism is a very broad-based campaign that requires the active participation of not just the military, but of many different parts of our government—in many cases not even primarily the military.

The military facet of this operation may, in many cases, not even be the most important element. If there is anything that is absolutely critical to this campaign it is getting the intelligence that we need to track down those who pursue terrorist activities and those who give terrorists support and sanction. This intelligence, this information, is the necessary foundation on which we build all of our other efforts in this campaign—the military, the economic, the financial, the diplomatic, the law enforcement efforts.

Shortly after the attack of September 11th, the United States began a broad-based effort that includes all of these elements -- some overt and some covert -- to take this battle to the enemy.

International terrorism is a broad network of groups of state sponsors who collaborate with one another, some in ways that we can see, and frequently in ways that are hidden from us. And there is no way to deal with the problem of international terrorism other than to go after those individuals who are killing thousands of Americans and threatening and terrorizing much of the world.

But we are not just going to pick off individuals. We intend to drain the entire swamp. [Applause.]

Those familiar with the Middle East, and I assume that probably includes most people in this room, know very well that terrorism is not just murder. It is a political and strategic weapon. The terrorists and their sponsors want to drive us out of the Middle East. Make no mistake, they have no interest in peace.

Working with Israel and the moderate Arabs, the United States must continue to do everything we can to promote peace in the Middle East. But peace will not stop this terrorism. Indeed, the terrorists seek to stop peace. If we want peace, we have to eliminate terrorism.

They want to bend our foreign policy to their will. We cannot let them. We will not yield to blackmail. We will win. [Applause.]

In this war on terrorism there are no boundaries. In New York City, citizens of 80 nations died along with our own: dozens of Pakistanis; more than 250 citizens of India; citizens of El Salvador, Iran, Mexico and Japan, and hundreds of religions and, indeed, this is the most deadly terrorist attack in British history. And more than 130 Israelis.

So as we fight this war on terrorism the battlefield will be global as well. Terrorists may train in tactics of terror in places like Afghanistan, but it is estimated that al Qaeda alone has cells operating in some 60 countries including, obviously and most dangerously, in our own country.

Terrorists and their evil influence have spread throughout the world like a cancer. Our response must be correspondingly broad, sustained, and unrelenting. As President Bush said in his address to the joint session of Congress, our war on terrorism begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end, the President said, until every terrorist group with global reach has been found, stopped and defeated. [Applause.]

Our victory in this war is crucial, of course, for the safety and security of the people of the United States. But it will also make the world a safer place for our friends, including, very definitely, for the people of Israel.

It is important, too, that we have modern Muslim states with us in this fight. They, too, are targets of terrorists and terrorism and they, too, know the price of failure in this war. You need victory [against struggle] as Foreign Minister Shimon Peres told Secretary Rumsfeld just this afternoon. Victory [against struggle] would be a victory for everyone who values peace and freedom and a civilized way of life. And we will not achieve victory if it is not a victory for everyone -- if we create coalitions based on sacrificing the interests of some partners for those of others.

Indeed, we aren't going to see a single grand coalition with a single objective as we saw ten years ago during the Gulf War. Rather, we are seeing today a number of what Secretary Rumsfeld has called flexible coalitions -- coalitions that will change and evolve over time depending on the activity and the circumstance of the country involved.

In a press conference last week the Secretary [of Defense Rumsfeld] said that at some point someone might report that a particular nation is not doing something or it stopped doing something, prompting the question, "Is the coalition unraveling?" The Secretary added, by way of clarification, "No single coalition has raveled, so how can it possibly unravel?" [Laughter.]

Some who join in this struggle will contribute openly. Some will contribute in ways that cannot be seen or challenged. Some nations are contributing to the military effort. Some are helping on the financial or intelligence or economic or diplomatic fronts. Ultimately the mission will determine the coalition. The coalition will not determine the mission. [Applause.]

That mission, as the President has said, is to take the battle to the terrorists, to their networks, and to those states and organizations that harbor and assist terrorists networks. Our objective in Afghanistan is just that, and that is what we have been doing. We continue to create conditions so that we can root out the terrorists. We are raising the cost of doing business for foreign terrorists who have chosen Afghanistan as a base from which to organize their murderous activity. We are raising the cost of doing business with a repressive Taliban regime that not only tolerates terrorists but also protects and supports them and depends upon them.

Through our military action we want to make it clear to Taliban leaders and the supporters that harboring terrorists carries a price. We want to acquire intelligence that will enable future operations against al Qaeda and the Taliban. We want to develop relations with groups in Afghanistan that oppose the Taliban and the foreign terrorists that they support. We want to make it increasingly difficult for the terrorists to use Afghanistan freely as a base of operations. We want to alter the military balance over time by denying to the Taliban its offensive capabilities that hamper the progress of opposition forces. We want to force the Taliban and terrorists to change their operational methods in ways that open them up to further attack.

It is important for people in the world to understand some things that this campaign is not. It is a campaign against terror, but it is not against any race, religion or ethnic group. First, we are certainly not at war with the Afghan people. To the contrary we are helping the Afghan people to oppose Taliban oppression; to oppose al Qaeda, a foreign terrorist influence that exploits and damages their country.

The Taliban does not represent the Afghan people, they oppress them. The Afghan people never had a chance to elect or choose their leaders. Indeed, they have been suffering at the hands of leaders who rule by sheer terror and by the most brutal barbarisms, as one Afghan woman said to a Canadian reporter, "in the name of Islam and with the force of a gun."

They had decreed that acid be thrown on a woman's unveiled face. They have beaten men who don't wear the turban or grow long beards. They have closed schools for girls, driving literacy rates to almost zero in a country where women not long ago were doctors and lawyers and teachers. They have deprived people of medical treatment and food, intentionally killing countless more. They have murdered fathers and mothers in order to create an atmosphere of terror, leaving as orphans thousands and thousands of children, those on which the future of Afghanistan ought to rest.

The list goes on. As my former colleague at Johns Hopkins University, Fouad Ajami, has said, the Taliban has become the Khmer Rouge of our time.

Second, we are not trying to impose a government on the Afghan people, but we will assist them to seek a peacefully economically developing Afghanistan free of terrorism. The entire world will benefit from a stable Afghanistan and the entire world should contribute to promoting stability in that country when al Qaeda and the Taliban are defeated.

From the first day of our military campaign, humanitarian assistance has been an important part of our effort. We have already dropped thousands and thousands of pounds of food and medicine to the people of Afghanistan and we will provide much more. We are vigorously supporting relief operations of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other international aid organizations. We are trying to open new relief access corridors in the north to aid those whom the Taliban are deliberately starving.

Third, this is not a war against Islam. It's a very important but little commented upon fact that over the last ten years on five different occasions the United States has led armed coalitions on behalf of Muslim people to deny hostile regimes the opportunity to oppress their own people and others. In Kuwait, in Northern Iraq, in Somalia, in Bosnia, and in Kosovo the United States military has come to the aid of Muslim victims of aggression or war-induced famine.

Through my professional experiences, I have dealt with many Turks, Arabs, Iranians, Indonesians -- by the way, it's worth noting I was the Ambassador to Indonesia -- the largest Muslim population of any country in the world, and I know what the Indonesians are like and I know what so many other Muslims are like, and I have many Muslim friends. And I know that there are hundreds of millions of Muslims in this world who not only abhor the fanaticism and methods of the terrorists, but who truly aspire to enjoy the benefits of a free, democratic and prosperous world that the United States and our democratic allies enjoy.

We need to be doing everything we can to open the door to these millions of Muslims and encourage them to join us.

Fourth, this is not just a military war against the Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan. The entire effort -- diplomatic, financial, military -- will continue until we have successfully rooted out the terrorists everywhere—not just the Taliban and al Qaeda networks, but other networks as well. This campaign will be waged much like the long struggle of the Cold War -- on many fronts and over a sustained period of time. It will require continuous pressure from countries around the globe. It will require patience and firmness, but eventually the terrorist networks will crumble from the inside. It will disintegrate like a house of cards, as you saw in the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union. It will decay because it will be starved for support.

As we say quite often, there is no silver bullet that will magically end this problem, but given the power of the weapons available to terrorists today, they have given us no choice but to use all our resources to

stop them.

Victory, as President Bush has said, will take time and it will be seen and understood when people are not terrorized, when people are free to go about their business and have their children go to school and know that they'll come home in safety.

One final message, perhaps the key message I'd like to leave with you this evening, is this. Our nation's men and women in uniform do amazing, difficult and frequently dangerous work, and they do it extraordinarily well—in times of war and in times of peace. They are doing that on our behalf today around the globe, and we are enormously proud of them.

One young man, a reservist who was called to active duty and now helps provide security for my house, feels this personally. He left a wife and a nine-year-old daughter back in Kansas and he doesn't know when he'll see them again. He does this for his country without complaint, and I can't begin to express how grateful I am personally.

That's the kind of sacrifice that is a day-to-day matter for the men and women who wear this nation's uniform, especially those who serve abroad and in the military campaign we began a couple of weeks ago. Many of these young people embark on a mission not knowing when they'll come back, not even knowing whether they'll come back.

You've no doubt seen the footage of Army Rangers parachuting from a C-103 at 600 feet at night near an airfield in Afghanistan. It's an amazing sight and you can't help but feel pride in the courage and sense of danger inherent in these operations, especially in the dark of night at low altitude. Indeed, the risks are real.

Twenty-year-old Army Specialist Jonn Edmund of Cheyenne, Wyoming, and 28-year-old Kristofer Stonesifer of Missoula, Montana, made the ultimate sacrifice when their Blackhawk helicopter crashed trying to land in Pakistan as a backup to Saturday's operation. These two young Americans were the first ones killed in this war. The first and, unfortunately, probably not the last. Despite the risks, our men and women are proud to have a chance to do their part to win this war.

Last Friday Secretary Rumsfeld visited the men and women at Whiteman Air Force Base, the home of the B-2 bomber. He met with young men and women who make it possible to take those incredible air machines halfway around the world to deliver their armaments, then return to Missouri and begin the process all over again. He said to them, "The terrorists thought they could strike fear in America's heartland, but through you, the heartland strikes back."

It's the pilots who fly those long and dangerous missions, the air refuelers, the maintainers, the weapons loaders, the intelligence officers and many, many others who make such flights possible. We are indeed fortunate to have such men and women in uniform.

One of the Air Force pilots who took part in the first day's operations in Afghanistan characterizes the spirit that fuels the men and women. With regard to the attacks on our soil he said, "It doesn't matter if you're from New York City or Washington, D.C. We're all Americans and we're all in this together."

He's right. That's the sort of spirit that will lead us to victory. As the President has said, "We ask a lot of those who wear our uniform. We ask them to leave their loved ones, travel great distances, to risk injury, even to be prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice. They are dedicated, they are honorable, they represent the best of our country."

May God bless them, may God bless America, and may God give us the strength and courage and will to persevere in the struggle that lies ahead.

Thank you. [Applause.]

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