



United States Department of Defense

Speech

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Center for Security Policy "Keeper of the Flame" Award Dinner

Remarks as Delivered by Secretary of Defense Donald A. Rumsfeld , Washington, D.C. , November 6, 2001 .

Thank you very much.

Jim Schlessinger, Cap Weinburger, senior leaders of the Department of Defense, civilian and military, members of the House, members of the Senate, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It's a real pleasure to be with friends, and particularly those who not only appreciate the importance of defending freedom and democracy but who do so every day. And you do. I know that.

For more than 13 years now the Center and its associates, friends and supporters have been staunch friends of freedom, unwavering in your support of peace through strength, as the sign behind me says, and true keepers of the flame of freedom.

And Frank Gaffney -- one thinks of energy, conviction, dedication. Few have done more than you and the Center to inform the national debate, to challenge the fashionable and sometimes erroneous assumptions and, indeed, to fight for a robust and ready U.S. military. [Applause]

On behalf of the Administration, the Department of Defense, and our men and women in uniform, I thank you all for your support, for your patriotism, and for holding fast to your principles year after year after year.

If there was any doubt about the power of your ideas, one has only to look at the number of Center associates who now people this Administration. Frank had them stand earlier, and I must say I noticed a couple of them over here -- J.D. Crouch and Doug have been in six countries in three days. It makes

me wonder about their judgment for being here. [Laughter]

I was thinking about calling a staff meeting in... [Laughter] But I think I'll wait until tomorrow morning.

I can think of no one more deserving of your esteem and mine than the man we honor tonight. He is more than a wise and valued colleague and friend. He is truly a national asset.

When I need a powerful intellect and an informed opinion -- and that's often -- I call him. I don't know anyone who knows so much about so many things, and not necessarily the conventional things, but also the unconventional, the still obscure things that have not yet reached the nation's radar screen.

Over the years when I'm asked what I think about a complicated issue, I find I often call Jim to test my impressions, to get educated, and to get calibrated.

Early in this Administration when we were thinking about the more obvious things -- transformation, strategic forces, organizational changes -- Jim called in and brought up the subject of Spectrum. He became a one man task force, briefing key officials, meeting with members of Congress, quietly helping all of us get our heads wrapped around that issue.

He's like that with really whatever challenge comes along. He is in a sense a one man multidisciplinary powerhouse, applying the skills of his broad past experiences.

If one thinks about it, he has the keen insights of a respected author, the attention to detail of an economist and a budgeteer, the perspective of a strategist. His background as Director of Central Intelligence, Secretary of Energy, Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, as I recall, as well as Secretary of Defense, all coupled with the determination and the directness of a native New Yorker. [Laughter]

Now I know a lot of you are not going to agree with me on something, but I've thought about it a great deal -- and I've known Jim for 30 years. I really do honestly believe he's mellowing. [Laughter]

For myself, I think I'll wait a few more years to mellow. [Applause]

You know there are a lot of times in government when tenacity and bull-headedness is important. For example, when trying to keep your country from being committed to a flawed treaty. There is no doubt but that we would have lost many more fights had it not been for the direct, determined, tenacious, and unmellowed efforts of one Jim Schlessinger. And I'm thankful for that. [Applause]

I had an uncle named Lou Serett who taught speech and persuasion at Northwestern University many years ago, and he used to say that persuasion was a two-edged sword. Reason and emotion plunge it deep.

If you think about it, that is what this fellow on my right does. He brings a keen intellect and reason but he also brings emotion and passion and deep caring about this country.

In the first State of the Union address President George Washington reminded the nation that the destiny of self- government and the "preservation of the sacred fire of liberty" is, in the final analysis, "entrusted to the hands of the American people."

That sacred fire of liberty is safe in the hands of Jim Schlessinger, which is why he is a true Keeper of the Flame. He has your admiration, he has my admiration, friendship and respect, and he has well-earned the gratitude of our country. (Applause)

And in times like these, when freedom is under unprecedented and vicious attack, that we need such Keepers the most.

Let me comment on a couple of misperceptions about the war on terrorism that have been raised and fanned by some in recent days.

I was leaving the house the other day and Joyce stopped me, and as I was walking out she said, "Have you seen this?"

I looked, and she had a newspaper article, and it showed that the World Trade Center -- this was last week or the week before -- was still smoking. Still smoldering. The flames were still there, deep in that pile of rubble.

And there we were, less than a month and a few days since we had launched the military campaign in Afghanistan, and the fire in the New York World Trade Center was not yet out --smoke was still rising from the rubble. And the press was already asking why the war wasn't over yet.

As we all know very well here, a little historic perspective is useful: It took 11 months before we commenced the land campaign against Germany. It took almost five years of continuous bombing before we reached the same point in Germany.

The terrorists, the mass murderers as they probably should be called, attacked New York and Washington on September 11th.

On October 7th, less than a month later, the coalition forces were positioned in the region and military operations against the Taliban and the al Qaeda targets had commenced throughout the country of Afghanistan.

In one month, since October 7th, our pilots have flown more than 1800 strike aircraft and bomber sorties. They have broadcast over 300 hours of radio transmissions, and delivered more than 1.25

million rations to the starving Afghan people.

And as we've said from the beginning, this will not be quick and it certainly will not be easy. This is a marathon, not a sprint. There is no silver bullet.

But we will find and root out the global terrorist networks wherever they are to ensure that they cannot threaten the American people and our way of life.

Let me make a quick point about coalitions, and I use the word in the plural form, not the singular.

We need a lot of help to do this. And nations will help in some ways and some other nations will help in other ways, and that's fine. Countries ought to participate in a way that they can contribute and feel comfortable with.

It's important because if it were a single coalition, and a coalition member decided not to participate in one way or another, it would be charged that the coalition was falling apart.

On that basis the weakest link in the chain would end the mission, which is why we don't have a single coalition, we have flexible coalitions for different aspects of the task.

In this way, the mission determines the coalition; the coalition must not determine the mission.
[Applause]

A couple of other thoughts:

We intend to win the war, to deal with the problem... [Applause] And I would say that we have no choice but to win the war. [Applause] Because it strikes at our very way of life, what we are as people, free people.

We cannot stop our campaign for Ramadan -- The terrorists threaten us still today, and we must root them out and defend the American people. You can be sure that the terrorists will not stop. [Applause]

Nor will we stop for winter.

We will conduct a sustained campaign to take out the al Qaeda and their Taliban protectors.

And then we'd best get after the rest of the terrorists... [Applause]

Let me just say a word or two about missile defense. I know that the Center has been active and interested and enormously helpful on that subject.

We have said that we would not violate the ABM Treaty. In fact our country doesn't violate treaties period, and we won't.

And we've said that the ABM Treaty is a relic, and it is.

And we've said that we need to set the ABM Treaty aside and get on with the 21st Century. And we do.

Last month terrorists took civilian airliners and turned them into missiles killing thousands of innocent people. Does anyone doubt for a minute that if they had had missiles and weapons of mass destruction capable of killing not thousands, but hundreds of thousands of human beings that they would hesitate for one moment to use them? They would not.

And while we're on the subject of missile defense, let me just acknowledge a man who fought hard and eloquently for missile defense, who skillfully guided us through some of the most difficult moments of the Cold War, Cap Weinburger. [Applause]

Cap, it's a privilege for me to see you and to be able to thank you personally for your long and outstanding service to our country.

Now, if I may, I'd like to read just a paragraph about America.

"They said we were soft. They would never be unified. They would fool around at a distance. They would never come to grips. They would never stand bloodletting. Their democracy and system of recurrent elections would paralyze the war effort. They would be just a vague blur on the horizon to friend or foe. Now we should see the weakness of this numerous but remote, wealthy, and talkative people."

That was not written by the terrorists, although it might have been. It was a description of the critic's view of America written by Winston Churchill, just after the United States entered World War II. And Churchill knew better.

He said, "I thought of a remark which Edward Gray had made to me more than 30 years before. The United States is like a gigantic boiler. Once the fire is lighted under it there is no limit to the power it can generate."

There have always been those who have doubted America's spirit and America's resolve, but those who have underestimated the American people have always been wrong.

The war we are in is not optional. We did not ask for it, but we cannot fail to respond. We were attacked on our soil. Thousands of innocent American citizens were murdered, and citizens from several dozen other countries.

We continue to be threatened by those terrorist networks.

Failure to act in this case would not be viewed as restraint, but as weakness to be exploited. Weakness that would only invite further attacks on the innocent of all countries, races and religions.

It will not be quick, it will not be easy, but as President Bush has said, "We will not tire, we will not falter, we will not fail."

And let us not forget those patriotic Americans who are tonight not having dinner in an elegant ballroom like this, but eating rations in the mountains of Afghanistan. [Applause]

I flew over the Afghan mountains on Sunday, where some of our Special Forces are moving around on horseback, and it is a rugged, hostile environment.

They have their instructions, they know their missions and they'll not stop until those missions have been accomplished. [Applause]

So we keep them in our prayers tonight, and every night, until the fight is finished and they are safely home.

The President of the United States, the Commander-in-Chief, is doing his part, and in my view he is doing it exceedingly well. [Applause]

And without a doubt, each of you is doing your part.

And, as it has been the case for a number of decades now, Jim Schlessinger is doing his part and more. [Applause]

Jim, you have my congratulations, my appreciation for all you do for our country, my friendship and my respect. You are truly a Keeper of the Flame.

God bless you all. [Applause]

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