

United States Department of Defense



# Speech

On the web:

<http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2001/s20011114-depsecdef.html>

Media contact: [media@defenselink.mil](mailto:media@defenselink.mil) or +1 (703) 697-5131

Public contact: [public@defenselink.mil](mailto:public@defenselink.mil) or +1 (703) 428-0711

## Fletcher Conference

*Remarks by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center Wednesday, November 14, 2001*

---

Thank you, thank you, thank you. I do feel like you pulled my name from an envelope. I have to confess I never have spoken in a place like this before. I've never been asked to make an entrance like that before. And I have to tell you, Tom [White, Secretary of the Army], the acoustics back there are so bad that you could have said anything you like about me and I wouldn't have known it. [Laughter.] But I'll assume it was a warm introduction, and I'll thank you for it.

This is a magnificent building, but I always wondered what Ronald Reagan, the great apostle of small government, would think about having his name on this building. [Laughter and applause.]

It's a great pleasure to be here. I know there are a great many distinguished guests in this audience, so I won't get myself in trouble by singling out any of you, and I think all of you are distinguished. This is an impressive conference and my compliments to Bob Pfalzgraff [President of the Institute of Foreign Policy Analysis] and the Army and everyone who put this together, and I gather you have been doing it for 31 years. I hope you have another 31.

I think, but I didn't hear him, that Tom mentioned that this is my third tour at the Pentagon. Since I was coming back to familiar turf, I thought that things might be easy. A lot of you might know that great Yankee catcher, Yogi Berra, was the author of some of the most profound thoughts in the American language. One of which was, "this is déjà vu all over again." And I thought that maybe that's what my third tour of the Pentagon would be like. But, I was quickly disabused of that notion when Secretary [of Defense Donald] Rumsfeld swore me in and said, "we'll 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. I can't imagine a better person to be our Secretary of Defense at a critical time like this, and we are getting it right. I guarantee

you.

I also can't imagine a better Commander in Chief. Those of us who know him were not surprised by his fierce determination and his genuine humility, and all the qualities that make a great leader, a great leader that the whole world is now coming to see.

I face a challenge this evening. Extensive scientific research has demonstrated that, after dinner, the average human brain has difficulty remembering two thoughts at once—just as Washington has difficulty handling two crises at one time. But since this audience is definitely above average, I will challenge you this evening to think about two ideas—wars of the future and the war of the present—and we as a nation must address both at the same time.

The attacks that came so suddenly and so brutally on a date that is now etched in our national consciousness were targeted not only against our citizens and our buildings—the attacks of September 11th were targeted against everything that defines America—targeted by oppressors who seek to impose on their own people an almost medieval regime of terror.

"These terrorists," as President Bush told the nation, "kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life. With every atrocity," he said, "they hope that America grows fearful, retreating from the world and forsaking our friends."

Until two months ago, the date most synonymous with surprise was December 7<sup>th</sup>. As we mark the sixtieth anniversary of Pearl Harbor next month, we may also recall that Japan's attack drove us not to fear, but to action; not into isolation, but to accept a greater role in the world; not to forsake our friends, but to form with them the most powerful alliance against evil in history.

December 7<sup>th</sup> was a turning point for the world, and September 11<sup>th</sup> should be no less a turning point. On 9/11, our generation received one of history's great wakeup calls. Like the Greatest Generation, we must answer that call. And as we do, we have a chance to make sure that the world that emerges will be better for our efforts.

Maybe we should not have been surprised on September 11<sup>th</sup>. Yet throughout history, people have been surprised not only by the timing of attacks, but by their character. All too often people focus on one threat or one possibility to the exclusion of all others, suffering from what one scholar of Pearl Harbor called "a poverty of expectations—a routine obsession with a few dangers that may be familiar rather than likely."

Often people say that the solution to the problem of surprise is better intelligence. But, the solution is not just better intelligence. We always need better intelligence, but we must also learn not to depend too much on intelligence; not to assume that other people operate on assumptions that mirror our own about what is impossible, what is irrational, or both. The answer is not building our war plans around one or two well-defined, familiar threats. We must have plans that make allowances for complexity and

uncertainty and the unexpected—plans that give us a range of options and the flexibility to respond to surprise.

Reportedly once, at a dinner with Mark Twain, a fellow diner was eager to impress the famous author. He asked Twain to pass the sugar, and then he said, "Mr. Twain, don't you think it's unusual that sugar is the only word in our language in which 's-u' has the 'shu' sound?" And Twain replied, "Are you sure about that?" [Laughter.]

Now, as we begin to absorb the implications of the surprise that struck us on September 11<sup>th</sup>, there is a danger that those previously unfamiliar events will become the new definition of the familiar and the expected. As we develop a successful strategy for this first war of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we might be tempted to conclude that we have covered all the eventualities that we must now be concerned about.

One thing we can be sure of: adapting to surprise—adapting quickly and effectively—must be a central element of defense planning. That is hard to do. We were spoiled by the seeming certainties of the Cold War. Then we perceived a predictable, albeit growing, threat, a threat we could make precise predictions about. We knew the schedule on which enemy divisions planned to mobilize; we matched our armies to meet our adversary on a very precise schedule on the battlefields of Europe; we measured our ballistic missile capabilities so they would be "sufficient" to strike the right balance. We knew the threat, we planned for it, we matched it. But, that is not where we are today. There has been a revolution in threats that calls for a revolution in how we think about defense.

Surprise and uncertainty provide the context in which we must think about future war. And these two concepts were at the heart of the major defense review that we undertook at the President's direction earlier this year. That review spanned some nine months and it involved an unprecedented degree of debate and discussion among the Department's most senior leaders. Out of that intense debate, we reached agreement on the urgent need for real change.

To deal with surprise and uncertainty, we agreed that we needed to shift our planning from the "threat-based" model that has guided thinking in the past to a "capabilities-based" model for the future. We don't know who may threaten us or when or where. But, we do have some sense of what may threaten us and how. Capabilities-based planning requires taking account of an adversary's existing and potential capabilities and assessing them against our own.

That requires thinking about "asymmetric threats," a term that is now part of our lexicon, referring to the tactics and weapons our adversaries will choose to circumvent our well-known and enormous military strengths and attack us where we are vulnerable. Such threats include forms of warfare that most civilized nations long ago renounced: chemical and biological weapons and the intentional killing of civilians through terrorism. But, we must also exploit our own asymmetric advantages – capabilities such as precision strike, intelligence, and undersea warfare. Our challenge is to deny our adversaries the benefits of asymmetric threats and capitalize on our own asymmetric advantages.

Our review also reached agreement on the six top transformational goals that should guide our efforts to build a 21<sup>st</sup> century military. Very briefly, these six goals are: First, to protect the U.S. homeland and our bases of operations overseas, particularly against the threat of weapons of mass destruction. Second, to project and sustain power in what we call "anti-access" environments, or those environments in which adversaries seek to hinder our presence. Third, to deny our enemies sanctuary, particularly through long-range precision strike capabilities. Fourth, to protect our own information networks from attack and to attack those of our adversaries. Fifth, to leverage information technology to enhance joint operational capabilities. And finally, sixth, to maintain unhindered access to space and protect the infrastructure that supports our critical space capabilities.

As you think about those six goals, I think you can see that the first three capabilities are being immediately applied in the crisis that we face today. The last three are capabilities that are not particularly stressed in the current crisis, but if we ignore them, we may be creating the conditions for the Pearl Harbor of the next decade.

I think it's obvious today that the first goal, homeland defense, is an urgent priority, and should have been one year ago. Providing for homeland defense must include not only passive defenses such as medical countermeasures and biological surveillance systems, but the development of active defenses against ballistic and cruise missiles as well. We know that both terrorists and state-supporters of terrorism are actively looking to build or buy nuclear and chemical and biological weapons, as the President described it, "barbarism emboldened by technology." From such barbarians, we should anticipate the likelihood of future nuclear, chemical and biological attacks, and build our homeland defenses accordingly.

Projecting and sustaining power in anti-access environments, the second goal, is also a necessity in the current campaign. Although our access to Afghanistan has improved steadily and most recently spectacularly, we have been forced by circumstances to operate from very great distances—and this against an enemy whose active efforts to deny us access have met so far with very little success. It's only a shadow of what a more determined, more advanced enemy could do. And I might remind you, lest you think it's not a problem, I might remind you that one of al Qaeda's principle targets from the beginning was Pakistan, and it was a near miss, a near run thing in a way, that we got what we have there and hopefully we will keep it.

We need to reduce our dependence on a predictable and vulnerable base structure, by exploiting a number of technologies that include longer-range aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles, and stealthy platforms as well as reducing the amount of logistical support needed by our ground forces.

Our third goal, denying our enemies sanctuary, is also important as our adversaries in Afghanistan try to evade attack by a variety of means. As we try to root out al Qaeda and remove the Taliban regime, it's readily apparent how important it is to rob our enemies of places to hide and function—whether it be in caves, in cities, or on the run.

A key element in denying sanctuary is our ability to conduct long-range precision strikes. That is a

capability that should be approached not simply as an air component or simply as a ground component, but as an integration of the two that will greatly enhance our ability to take out targets at great distances.

We had an early experience of that during the Gulf War 10 years ago when our most effective means for finding Iraqi Scud missiles was putting very brave Special Forces people on the ground in western Iraq. But, when they found the targets, which our pilots from 15,000 feet couldn't, we didn't have the kind of integration with our air capability to make their bravery as effective as it should have been. We have improved in the last ten years, but we still have a ways to go.

In hindsight, it's clear that we should have been investing heavily over the past several years to address those first three goals—homeland defense, projecting power in anti-access environments, and denying our enemies sanctuary with long-range precision strike. But, if anyone had predicted when we presented our budget request on Capitol Hill last July that the Department of Defense would soon need billions of dollars to conduct combat operations in Central Asia, and moreover do so while a large fraction of our surveillance assets and combat air patrol aircraft were engaged over the United States—there would have been any number of skeptics on hand to say: "No way—you're just building the budget again."

September 11<sup>th</sup> ought to give this country a new perspective on the issue of what is affordable. The economic losses alone from that attack have been measured in the hundreds of billions, if not trillions, of dollars. And there is no way to put a price on the lives of the Americans who were lost. The capabilities that look so expensive in peace seem relatively cheap when you're confronted with the challenges we face today.

But, if today we focus on those first three goals alone, we are likely to neglect the last three transformation goals, which have not been heavily stressed in the present crisis – at least not so far. Again, those are conducting effective information operations—and I suppose when I say, "so far," I have my fingers crossed that we won't see cyber terrorism before we are finished—leveraging information technology to enhance interoperability, and maintaining unhindered access to space. Yet these may all play major roles in wars of the future. If we neglect these areas, they could provide the Pearl Harbors of the next decade, at costs that could exceed even the enormous sums that we have lost in the last two months.

Having talked about future wars and our need to expect the unexpected, about our transformational goals and the need to make the right investments for the future, I would now like to share with you some observations about the current campaign.

It is often said, especially around the Pentagon, that it's better to be lucky than to be smart. We certainly have been lucky in Afghanistan in the last few days. But, we have also been smart. Our recent successes can be attributed in considerable measure to exploiting our asymmetric advantages while going after the asymmetric weaknesses of our enemy.

One of the U.S. military's great asymmetric advantages is that ability that I've already mentioned to

strike at long distance with great precision. But the real leverage from long-range strike comes not simply from destroying targets from the air, but from using that capability to leverage the capability of friendly forces on the ground.

We have seen that in recent weeks and that success has come not just in the remarkable ability to fly bombers from a base in Missouri halfway around the world to strike targets with great precision. Success also comes from putting some extraordinarily brave men on the ground so they can direct that air power and make it truly effective.

I'd like to share with you a couple of situation reports from one of our men in northern Afghanistan. It will give you an appreciation for what I'm talking about. The classified details I removed, and until a few days ago the whole report, the mere fact of it, I suppose, would have been classified. But the content of the message is now unclassified, and I'm going to give it to you verbatim. From the 25<sup>th</sup> of October, our Special Forces man reports:

"I am advising a man on how to best employ light infantry and horse cavalry in the attack against Taliban T-55s, mortars, artillery, personnel carriers and machine guns—a tactic which I think became outdated with the invention of the Gatling gun. The Mujahadeen have done that every day we have been on the ground. They have attacked with 10 rounds of AK-47 ammunition per man, with snipers having less than 100 rounds...little water and less food. I have observed a sniper who walked ten plus miles to get to the fight, who was proud to show me his artificial right leg from the knee down....

"We have witnessed the horse cavalry bounding overwatch from spur to spur to attack Taliban strong points -- the last several kilometers under mortar, artillery and sniper fire. There is little medical care if injured, only a donkey ride to the aid station, which is a dirt hut. I think the Mujahadeen are doing very well with what they have. They have killed over 125 Taliban...while losing only eight.

"We couldn't do what we are doing without the close air support. Everywhere I go the civilians and Mujahadeen soldiers are always telling me they are glad the USA has come. They all speak of their hopes for a better Afghanistan once the Taliban are gone. Better go. My local commander is finishing his phone call with someone back in the U.S."

Yes, they were reporting by cell phones constantly. With that, one of our amazing Special Forces members went off on a cavalry charge with a Northern Alliance commander.

This from the same man, November 10<sup>th</sup>: "Departed position from which I spoke to you last night. We left on horse and linked up with the remainder of the element. I had a meeting with commander. We then departed from our initial linkup location and rode on begged, borrowed and confiscated transportation. While it looked like a ragtag procession, the morale into Mazar-i-Sharif was triumphant. The locals loudly greeted us and thanked all Americans. Much waving, cheering and clapping even from the women. U.S. Navy and Air Force did a great job. I am very proud of my men who have performed exceptionally well under very extreme conditions. I have personally witnessed heroism under

fire by two U.S. non-commissioned officers, one Army, one Air Force, when we came under direct artillery fire last night, which was less than 50 meters from me. When I ordered them to call close air support, they did so immediately without flinching even though they were under fire. As you know, a U.S. element was nearly overrun four days ago and continued to call close air support and ensured the Mujahadeen forces did not suffer a defeat. These two examples are typical of the performance of your soldiers and airmen. Truly uncommon valor has been a common virtue."

In Afghanistan, a country we think of in somewhat medieval terms, our Special Forces have taken a page from the past, from the history of the horse cavalry with soldiers armed with swords and rifles, maneuvering on horseback. But now they use radios to direct close air support and bomber strikes, sometimes from halfway around the world. When reporters asked Secretary Rumsfeld about the reintroduction of the horse cavalry in modern war, he told them, "it's all part of the transformation plan." [Laughter.] Indeed it is. Taking risks, thinking boldly, adapting to circumstances, exploiting our advantages, is what we're after.

Perhaps the greatest asymmetric advantage with which we've been blessed is the one that the terrorists tried to attack on September 11<sup>th</sup>. That is the power of a free democratic people, whose government is based on universal ideals.

We govern by law and self-determination. The Taliban, on the contrary, rule by terror—one of their great weaknesses, and apparently one of the reasons why they are collapsing so quickly. We have grown stronger as a nation since the attack—the Taliban has only weakened their country through their barbarism. Their collapse is making unmistakable what should have been clear to the whole world from the beginning – they are oppressors whom the Afghan people never had a chance to elect or choose. Indeed, Afghans have been suffering at the hands of the Taliban who rule, as one Afghan woman said to a Canadian reporter, "in the name of Islam and with the barrel of a gun."

As one of this country's foremost experts on the Middle East and Islam, Fouad Ajami, has said, "the Taliban has become the Khmer Rouge of our time."

Beyond Afghanistan, one of our great assets in this large and broad campaign is that our enemies not only menace us, but they terrorize the vast numbers of people they claim to speak for. It should be no surprise that every state that sponsors terrorism also terrorizes its own people. The people that suffer from the terror of their own rulers can become our best allies in getting their rulers out of the business of supporting terrorism. Our soldiers on the ground, helping to liberate Mazar-i-sharif, reported that Afghani people greeted the arrival of their liberators with joy, hopeful that this is the beginning of the end of their national nightmare, and proving barbarism cannot kill the basic human desire for freedom.

That is a truth that Ronald Reagan understood well. In 1982, in one of the darker moments of the Cold War, he told the British Parliament that even in the Communist world, "man's instinctive desire for freedom and self-determination surfaces again and again.... How we conduct ourselves here in the Western democracies will determine whether this trend continues...."

History records that this insistence on promoting democracy and human rights throughout the world resulted in one of Reagan's most important legacies—the triumph of democracy in previously totalitarian and authoritarian regimes on both sides of the Cold War divide.

It is not unreasonable to think and hope that similar legacies are yet to come. As President Bush said to Naval Academy midshipmen last May: "Remember that America has always been committed to enlarging the circle of human freedom."

Our mission today is not only to root out and eliminate the terrorists—we must also enlarge the circle of human freedom to include that vast majority of Muslim people who are seeking to enjoy the benefits of living in a free and prosperous society, but do not yet do so. Turkey and Indonesia are two important models of nations who are becoming part of this world. And it is no accident that the prevailing practice of Islam in these two countries is vastly different from the fanaticism preached by bin Laden and the Taliban.

It is an infrequently noted fact that over the last ten years, on five different occasions, the United States has led armed coalitions on behalf of Muslim people. Not only in Kuwait, but in Northern Iraq, in Somalia, in Bosnia, and in Kosovo, the United States has come to the aid of Muslim victims of aggression or war-induced famine. Now the people of Afghanistan, another predominately Muslim nation, are freeing themselves from terror and famine with the help of the U.S. military.

It is a sound strategic principle to reinforce success. There are successes in the Muslim world, and it is very much in our country's interests to support them, even when they are fragile. The tragedy of September 11<sup>th</sup> demonstrates that we have an enormous stake in encouraging the successful progress of those countries that are now pursuing freedom and self-governance as a model for the rest of the Muslim world. Showing other Muslims that there is an example to follow is critical to achieving future success.

Nations throughout the world see that our democratic and free society has been blessed by other significant advantages: the power generated by the innovation of the individual as well as the power of the people united in one purpose. This freedom to build and create is what has drawn so many from around the globe to American shores.

The collective will of the American people united in the war on terror will be the decisive factor in this war, just as it was during the Second World War. Still, along with the incredible moral resources of our nation, it's good to know that we do have one heck of a war machine. It includes men and women who, as the President has said, "contribute not just to the military might of our country, but to its meaning and conscience and soul."

I began by mentioning the attack on Pearl Harbor. Let me conclude by mentioning what Winston Churchill wrote in his diary on December 8<sup>th</sup>, after he learned of the attack. It may not surprise you that he didn't waste a lot of sympathy on us. To the contrary, his words were words of joy.

"I knew the United States was in the war," Churchill wrote, "up to the neck and in to the death. So we had won after all! ... Silly people—and there were many, not only in [Germany but even here in England]—might discount the force of the United States. Some said they were soft, others that they would never be united. 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 their 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." We haven't changed much in 60 years, have we?

"But," Churchill said, "I had studied the American Civil War, fought out to the last desperate inch. American blood flowed in my veins. I thought of a remark which [our Foreign Minister] Edward Grey had made to me more than thirty years before [as the United States entered World War I]. The United States, he said, is like 'a gigantic boiler. Once the fire is lighted under it there is no limit to the power it can generate.'"

Today, our greatest asymmetric advantage is that there is no limit to the power that we as a free people can generate. Consider what the people of this nation have been willing to sacrifice since our nation's birth to win freedom and keep it. We instinctively know that what we have here, as Abraham Lincoln said, is "something that holds out a great promise to all the people of the world for all time to come."

Last week, President Bush spoke about the courage and defiance of those passengers on Flight 93 in the skies over Pennsylvania. They rebelled against the terrorists, giving their own lives to save lives on the ground. They were led by a brave young man named Todd Beamer whose last known words were the Lord's Prayer followed by "Let's roll."

The President concluded his remarks by saying: "Our cause is just and our ultimate victory is assured. We will, no doubt, face new challenges. But we have our marching orders: My fellow Americans, let's roll."

In the Department of Defense, our direction is clear, and we are rolling—in this war, and in our mission to prepare our forces for the future—to protect the great promise that is the United States.

May God bless America, and may God bless the wonderful men and women who serve our country so nobly and so faithfully. And thank you. [Applause.]

<http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2001/s20011114-depsecdef.html>