

United States Department of Defense



Speech

On the web:

<http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2002/s20020309-depsecdef.html>

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

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

Gridiron Luncheon

Remarks by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Gannett/USA Today Headquarters, McLean, VA, Saturday, March 9, 2002.

Thank you, Doug [McCorkindale, Chairman of Gannett] I asked him at the reception how long he'd been with Gannett. He said, "Oh, back to the beginning of time." I said, "When was that? He said, "1971." I said, "I go back much further. I started reading the Ithaca Journal in 1954, [Laughter.] which was my hometown newspaper."

It's a pleasure to be here. It's a little intimidating to be filling in for the person you'd all most rather hear from, which is my boss, the Secretary of Defense, and it's particularly intimidating to fill in for someone whom even the President of the United States has been describing as a "matinee idol." [Laughter.] This is the early afternoon, but I'm not a matinee idol, whatever else I may be accused of.

I do want to extend Secretary Rumsfeld's personal greetings and sincere apologies. He would very much like to have been able to be with you today and at the dinner tonight, which he's also going to have to miss.

Since I'm filling in for him today, I decided I would ask him for a few pointers. I said, "It's obvious you handle the press pretty well. Is there anything you would suggest I keep in mind for this luncheon with a lot of news executives and reporters present?" He said, "Well, whatever you do don't try to be hard hitting, clever or witty like me." [Laughter.] "Just be yourself." [Laughter.]

Then warming to the subject he got this big toothy grin and his eyes crinkled a little and he said, "Well maybe you could be a little hard hitting. I think Sam Donaldson will be there. You know he's part of my demographic group." [Laughter.]

But he said, "You know, dealing with the media you should avoid getting into a quagmire." He said, "You can begin with an illogical premise and proceed perfectly logically to an illogical conclusion.

After all, they do it all the time." [Laughter.] "And if you do it first," he said, "they'll be eviscerated." [Laughter.] That is a famous word that passed the lips of one of our Marine Corps lieutenant generals who had the Taliban eviscerated a few weeks ahead of their time.

I have a wonderful Marine who serves as my military assistant. He said, "Marines may not know what the word eviscerated means, but they sure know how to do it." [Laughter.]

So you see, I was getting a lot of good advice, but there is only one Don Rumsfeld. So I'm going to follow the advice of that other great American philosopher, Yogi Berra, who said, "If you can't imitate him, don't copy him." [Laughter.]

I've had some fun in my own Pentagon press briefings. There have been one or two. And I'm even told there's a grass roots movement, a write-in campaign, to bring me back to the podium. It's been led by the Johns Hopkins University Paleontology Club. [Laughter.]

Let me be a little more serious. I really would like to salute the members of America's free press. There is some interesting back and forth regularly between us and the press, but that's part of the job we do and it's something we wouldn't dream of changing about our system.

During this critical time in our nation's history, the men and women of the press, in very great measure, give all Americans objective and unbiased reporting. They work long hours and put themselves in harm's way to tell important stories. They help to keep us and the bureaucracies that work for us, or are supposed to work for us, honest. And one of the most important stories they are telling is the story about our brave men and women who serve this country so nobly and so well, and we appreciate everything that the media is doing to tell that story.

Those men and women are fighting bravely for us now, and the people who work for you covering the Pentagon tell me you'd like to hear something about the current campaign. So let me get to that and then I'd be happy, if there's a few minutes, to take some questions.

We're not quite sure whether to call this a campaign or a war. Sometimes we use one word, sometimes the other. It's a measure of the fact that this war is a unique war. It's unique in the way in which it began, with the largest attack on this country in our nation's history.

It's unique in the fact that we continue to fight abroad while there's a continuing threat of attack at home. And while sometimes we almost seem to have now taken for granted the fact that there have been no further attacks, successful ones, since September 11th, it's not because they aren't trying. It's not because Richard Reid didn't have explosives in those shoes of his. Or because any number of the people that we've been able to catch and detain weren't planning terrible acts of terrorism.

It's unique in that it's much more subtle and complex than a conventional war. It's unique in the speed with which it came together.

We are, in the Pentagon, not infrequently accused of being slow and clumsy and long to get even to the fight. Our critics like to point out that it took us six months to build up for Desert Storm ten years ago. It is striking against that comparison to note that General Franks got his instructions to begin planning a campaign in Afghanistan on September 20th. Believe me, there was nothing on the shelf to refer to. I can only imagine what would have happened if we had gone to the Congress last June and said, we have to have another \$10 billion in our defense budget to prepare to deploy forces to Karshi Khanabad, and they would have said, where is that? We would have said oh, it's in Uzbekistan. They'd have said, what do you need that for? We would have said, because we might have to go to war in Afghanistan. And I'm sure the answer would have been there's no limit to what you people in the Defense Department will do to justify increases in your budget. [Laughter.]

But General Franks got those instructions on September 20th. Twenty days later we were at war in Afghanistan with a plan that, I suppose, was also unique in the speed with which we were accused of getting bogged down and not succeeding, and equally the speed with which everybody then declared the war was over. All of that seemed to take place in the cycle of about six weeks, and yet here we are fighting the largest battle so far in that campaign in Afghanistan.

The war is very far from over. It's far from over in Afghanistan and Afghanistan is just one of 60 countries in which al Qaeda has burrowed in, not least of which is the United States of America.

I think it's unique, therefore, in the fact that this is a war that has to be fought by many means other than just military. As the President has said, "we have to use every resource at our command, every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and, finally, he got to us—and every necessary weapon of war for the destruction and the defeat of the global terror network."

You notice that the military means were the last in that list. General Hugh Shelton, who was our previous Chairman of the Joint Chiefs who retired at the end of September, was at the historic sessions at Camp David where the initial steps in our campaign were plotted out. He commented afterwards that, in his four years as Chairman, he had never been in a discussion where the use of military force was on the table where so much attention was given to all the other instruments of national power: diplomacy, intelligence, law enforcement, Treasury work, and on and on.

Talking about the current operation, if you will permit me, I'd like to share with you my favorite dispatch so far from the war. It's something that I have referred to a bit around town, so some of you may have heard it before. Indulge me.

It's a situation report from one of our brave men in Northern Afghanistan, and I think it will give you an appreciation not only for the bravery that our forces have been displaying since the beginning, but also how well they've adapted to the conditions of this first war of the 21st Century.

This comes from a Special Forces captain who was one of the first to be inserted into Afghanistan, less

than a week after he arrived, with General Dostam's forces in Northern Afghanistan. He sent this dispatch back to General Franks.

"I am advising General Dostam on how best to employ light infantry and horse cavalry in the attack against tanks, mortars, artillery, personnel carriers and machine guns—a tactic which I thought had become outdated with the invention of the Gatling Gun. The Muj have done that every day we've been on the ground. They've attacked with ten rounds of ammunition per man and snipers having less than 100 rounds.

"We have witnessed the horse cavalry attacking Taliban strong points, the last several kilometers under mortar, artillery and sniper fire with little medical care if injured, but the Muj are doing very well with what they have. They have killed over 125 Taliban while losing only eight.

"We could not do what we have done without the close air support. Everywhere I go, the civilians and the Muj are always telling me they're glad the USA has come. They all speak of their hope for a better Afghanistan once the Taliban are gone.

"Better go now. General Dostam is finishing his phone call with a congressman back in the United States." [Laughter.]

This from the same captain on November 10th after enormous successes in the space of just three weeks, less than three weeks.

"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 General Dostam and we then departed from our initial location and rode on begged, borrowed and confiscated transportation. While it was a rag-tag procession, the morale in Mazar-e-Sharif was triumphant. The locals greeted us loudly and thanked all Americans. Much waving, cheering and clapping."

This from an Army officer: "U.S. Navy and Air Force did a great job. I am very proud of my men who performed exceptionally well under very extreme conditions. I have 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 less than 50 meters from our position. When I ordered them to call close air support they did so immediately without flinching, even though they were under fire.

"As you know, one of our elements was nearly overrun four days ago but our people continued to call close air support and ensured that the Muj forces did not suffer defeat.

"These two examples are typical of the performance of your soldiers and airmen. Truly uncommon valor has been a common virtue."

In Afghanistan, indeed, we have seen a remarkable combination of bravery by U.S. Army and Air Force

people, literally on horseback, a 19th Century capability, if it needs any pointing out, using satellite communications to call in strikes by B-52s, a 20th Century capability, but I point out a 50-year-old aircraft, together producing a truly 21st Century capability to transform the battlefield and transform the course of the war.

Some of you may recall that when a reporter asked Secretary Rumsfeld about what he had in mind by reintroducing the horse cavalry into modern warfare he said, "It's all part of our transformation plan." [Laughter.] And indeed it is, because transformation, which is our other big concern in the Pentagon these days, is not just about new systems. It's about using old systems in new ways.

A lot of you probably know that Donald Rumsfeld likes making lists and rules. He's made an interesting list based on his observations of the campaign so far about the concepts that he believes guided the campaign. I'd like to share a few items from that list now.

One of them that's been at the top of the list since the beginning is that this will be a long, hard and difficult campaign. I think a few weeks ago some people were beginning to doubt that, beginning to think that this war on terrorism was all but over. I think the recent phase of our campaign demonstrates that, even in Afghanistan, our work is far from finished and the risk to our forces is far from over.

As history has proven, including not so far from here at the battlefield of Gettysburg, half-defeated and desperate enemies can continue to pose considerable risks and dangers.

We've seen some of the fiercest fighting so far in rooting out hardcore al Qaeda members holed up in the remote mountains of Eastern Afghanistan. The Americans who have been killed in this present action speak vividly about the sacrifices and risks that our young men and women make every day in defense of freedom. They do it because, as the President has said, we want "to make sure that our country is safe from further attack."

It is as the President and Secretary Rumsfeld have been saying regularly, truly noble work, and we in the Defense Department deeply appreciate the sacrifices that our men and women are making and the risks they're taking on our country's behalf.

Clearly, there is still much work to do and it's work that extends beyond Afghanistan, beyond just one man, beyond just one terrorist network.

A second concept that Rumsfeld has emphasized from the beginning, the shortest version of it is his phrase, "We have to be leaning forward, not leaning back." If we go into a defensive crouch every time we take a casualty, it's an invitation for people to inflict casualties on us. We're going to lean forward. We're willing to put lives at risk. We're not going to rule out anything. That's been true from day one when the President said this isn't going to be just a cruise missile war, but that's going to continue as this campaign goes forward.

I'm going to skip over a few of these in the interests of time, but a third very important one has been the emphasis on the flexible nature of the coalitions we're putting together. We have assembled an extraordinary coalition. Indeed in Afghanistan today, a point that I think is not sufficiently appreciated, there are more coalition troops serving in Afghanistan, including and importantly in the peacekeeping force in Kabul, than there are Americans. In this fight in the mountains of Afghanistan, we have Special Forces from four or five coalition partners fighting in combat alongside Americans.

So we're not going alone on this. And beyond Afghanistan, we couldn't possibly do the work we need to do if we didn't get cooperation from those 60 countries, or at least some large fraction of those 60 countries where al Qaeda is present. Some of that cooperation may be military. An awful lot of it is in the intelligence and law enforcement fields.

But while coalition activity is crucial, this is very different from the grand coalition that was assembled ten years ago to deal with one specific problem in one specific place, i.e., the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

The coalition we've had to assemble to deal with Afghanistan which has crucially, by the way, included countries with whom we had little, or in the case of Pakistan, no relationship in the past, is a different coalition from the coalition to address terrorism in Southeast Asia, for instance. What Secretary Rumsfeld has emphasized is that we have to have the mission determine the coalition, not the coalition determine the mission. If there's an important job to be done, we can't refuse or fail to do it because one or another particular partner disagrees with us. But we are getting a great deal of cooperation. Some of it is private and not public, and that is another key point in this assembling of coalitions. That we will let countries characterize themselves what cooperation they're giving us. We won't try to do it for them.

I think I'm losing count because I'm trying to abbreviate here. I believe fourth, and very importantly, our strategy in Afghanistan has been based not on the overwhelming use of American force, but rather on leveraging the great weakness of the Taliban, which is that they were a regime that ruled by force and terror. They terrorized their own people and gave al Qaeda a base from which to terrorize us and other countries.

We believe that's been our great strategic advantage, leveraging the hostility of the Afghan people toward their own rulers. It has allowed us to learn, I think, one of the lessons of history in Afghanistan; some people say it goes back to Alexander the Great, but it surely covers the British in the 19th Century and the Soviets in the 20th Century. That is, that any foreign army in Afghanistan is going to be viewed to some extent with suspicion. For that reason, we've emphasized from the beginning keeping a small footprint. We've emphasized that we're not there to stay, although we are going to see this thing not just through to the elimination of al Qaeda, but to help the Afghans construct a stable government afterwards and to help them reconstruct their country.

It's a striking fact that during the Olympics in Salt Lake City we had, in fact, more American troops deployed in Utah than we did in Afghanistan. I think being able to do that is part of being able to sustain the kind of long-term policy we need to have toward that country.

I suppose this is a useful transition to the last concept I'd like to emphasize and that is we are aware that this is much more than a military conflict. It is a battle for hearts and minds as well.

Of course in winning the battle for hearts and minds, it doesn't hurt to win on the ground. I think anyone who tracks the way the media, I would say particularly in the Muslim world, change, not as dramatically as we would like to have seen them change, but nevertheless change significantly after the fall of the Taliban and after the direct testimony from so many Afghans about what a relief it was to be rid of that regime, I think we can see that there is a connection between victory on the ground and victory in that crucial battle for minds.

But it's also been a reason why, from day one of this operation, we have emphasized humanitarian operations. Our humanitarian operations now represent one of the largest, if not the largest, humanitarian assistance program in the history of warfare. We, between October 7th and December 21st of last year when we stopped the air deliveries, we delivered 2.4 million humanitarian daily rations or Meals Ready to Eat. Some of our soldiers question describing those as humanitarian because they've had to eat them. [Laughter.] But if you're a starving Afghan, it's been literally a gift from heaven. [We also delivered] 3.4 million pounds of wheat and some 328,000 blankets.

As a situation report I read earlier described, the Afghan people greeted the arrival of their liberators with joy and proved that barbarism does not kill the basic human desire for freedom. Even today our coalition partners, in particular the Jordanians, a rather small country with one of the largest coalition contributions in Afghanistan, has set up a field hospital in Mazar-e-Sharif that has already, I think, treated 18,000 Afghans, the majority of them women and children.

Let me take it beyond where we are today, and the last point I'd like to touch on is what I think is a very important challenge in front of us—to expand this alliance against terrorism, particularly in the Muslim world. I guess it was USA Today actually—to put a plug for our host here—that published that, sorry to say, appalling Gallup Poll that shows how much work we have to do in the Muslim world and particularly in the Arab world. But this fight against terrorism is not just the fight of the Western countries. It's the fight of everyone who aspires to peace and freedom throughout the world, and most emphatically in the Muslim world itself.

I had the privilege to be the U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia for three years. That is the largest Moslem population of any country in the world. I know from that and from many contacts with Arabs and Turks and Iranians and Uzbeks, Bosnians, the list goes on, that the vast majority of the world's Muslims have no use for the extreme doctrines of the al Qaeda and the Taliban. To the contrary, they abhor terrorism and the way that the terrorists have not only hijacked airplanes, but also have attempted to hijack one of the world's great religions.

To win that war against terrorism, we have to reach out to the hundreds of millions of Muslims who believe in tolerance and moderation. They are on the front line of this struggle against terrorism. We not only have an obligation to help them, but by helping them to stand up against the terrorists -- and bear in mind it's a lot easier to stand here in Washington and make speeches against terrorists than it is to do so

in any of these Muslim countries, even relatively modern ones like Indonesia. By helping them to stand up against terrorists, we help ourselves. And equally important, we help to lay the foundation for a better world when this war against terrorism has been won, because our goal has to be more than just defeating the terrorists and dismantling the terrorist networks.

As President Bush said in his State of the Union message, "We have a great opportunity during this time of war to lead the world toward the values that will bring lasting peace. Let the skeptics look to Islam's own rich history with its centuries of learning and tolerance and progress. We have no intention of imposing our culture. America will take the side of brave men and women who advocate these values around the world, including the Islamic world, because we have a greater objective than eliminating threats and containing resentment. We seek a just and peaceful world beyond the war on terror."

Let me mention a few of the people I think who have earned our support. No leader has taken greater risks in the struggle against terrorism than President Musharraf of Pakistan, and no country has more at stake in this fight. Pakistan's success will be a success for all of us in the fight against terrorism and Pakistan deserves support from all of us.

Last month I was in Germany for the annual Wehrkunde Conference, and I made a point of telling our NATO allies that, in NATO, we have an important ally that is a model for the Muslim world's aspirations for democratic progress and prosperity. That ally, of course, is Turkey, and Turkey deserves our support and the support of our European allies. A Turkey that overcomes its present problems and continues the progress that Turkey has made over the course of the last century can become an example for the Muslim world, an example of the possibility of reconciling religious beliefs with modern secular democratic institutions.

Indonesia is another example of a nation struggling to build a democratic government based on a culture of tolerance, but it does so in the face of severe economic obstacles. If we are serious about opposing terrorism, we should also be serious about helping that country that has the largest Muslim population in the world in its quest for a stable democracy.

But our support should extend beyond governments to those brave men and women that President Bush spoke of. Prince Talal bin Abdulaziz, the son of the founder, the great King Abdulaziz, the founder of the Saudi dynasty, speaking of his own country and the Arab world said not long ago, "We need movement because the world is changing and the world around us is changing. Kuwait has elections. Qatar has communal elections. There's change in Bahrain, Oman, Yemen," and referring to his own country, "the system has to progress and evolve."

And our system has to evolve, too. Let me give you just one example.

Recently I asked for some information about leading liberal Islamic thinkers, who they are and what they're saying. I got a memo back that had some very promising and interesting information. It described in detail several Islamic thinkers who are arguing for freedom of thought, a democratic and humanist Islamic state, a modern liberal interpretation of the Koran. It was heartening to see such a

good analysis. It was disheartening to see that it was several years old.

If the most recent memo we have on these brave advocates of freedom of thought dates back to the 1990s, one would think that someone made the decision that these people aren't very important. But they are terribly important, not just to the Arab world, but to us as well.

Fouad Ajami, one of our leading scholars of modern Islam in the Arab world, recently wrote in *The New York Times* about the sort of ideas that are now dominating portions of the Arab media through what he called "stridency and anti-Americanism." He concluded, "There's a war on the battlefield and that is America's to win. But the repair of the Arab political condition—and the weaning of the Arab world away from radicalism—is a burden and a task for the Arabs themselves. The only thing America can do is make sure it never gives this radicalism a helping hand."

So I would ask your help. The smarter we are about the moderate voices in the Arab world, the more effective we can be in helping them, in the President's words, "lead the world toward those values that will bring lasting peace."

We must follow and encourage moderates who are giving voice to the ideals that we value. They give learned encouragement to countries and Muslims who aspire to the benefits of free society and self-government.

I'd like to close with a remarkable observation by Winston Churchill, one that I've gone back to many times since September 11th. It's from his World War II memoirs, and it's his entry from December 8, 1941, upon learning about the attack on Pearl Harbor and learning that the United States was into the war. It won't surprise you that he didn't waste a lot of sympathy on us. Indeed, his emotions were those of joy. He said, "I knew the United States now was in the war up to the neck. So we have won after all," Churchill said, four years before the war actually ended.

And he went on to talk about "silly people here in England [not just in Germany or in enemy countries] who," in his words, "discounted the force of the United States." "Some said the Americans were soft, others that they would never be united. They would fool around at a distance. They would never come to grips. They couldn't stand the bloodletting. Their democracy and system of recurrent elections, these people were saying, would paralyze the American war effort. They would be just a vague blur on the horizon to friend or foe. Now," these people said, "we would see the weakness of this numerous, remote, wealthy, and talkative people." We haven't changed much, have we? [Laughter.]

"But," Churchill said, "I have studied the American Civil War fought out to the last desperate inch. American blood flowed in my veins. I thought of a remark which Edward Grey [the British Foreign Minister] had made to me more than 30 years before [as the United States entered the First World War]." Grey had said "that 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.'"

And part of that power indeed is the power of a free press and a government that responds to a free press, and I believe we have great partners in this venture going forward, and I thank you for what you're doing for our country. Thank you. [Applause]

<http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2002/s20020309-depsecdef.html>