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

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Defense Forum Foundation

Remarks by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC, Friday, October 18, 2002.

Bill, thank you very much. I think someone might have said, if this organization didn't exist, someone would've had to create it. I learned you created it 30 years ago, and you've been with it for 30 years, and that's remarkable. And our thanks to you for that.

My thanks to Congressman Horn for joining us today. Actually, my thanks to all of you. There's a lot of talk these days about liberation, as in our goal in Afghanistan is liberation, not occupation. And should it come to that, the same statement would apply to Iraq. But someone told me the real definition of liberation is how congressional staffers feel when their bosses are home for recess. So—[laughter] for those who have been recently liberated, let me express my thanks that you're willing to share some of that liberated time with me to talk about a serious subject.

In fact, I had prepared a 50-minute talk—knowing that Congressman Horn would be here—on improving efficiency of DOD financial management. [Laughter] But before you leave, I decided that maybe, given the interest in the subject of Iraq, I would talk about Iraq today.

Let me begin with a couple of quotes which I think are important in framing part of what we're talking about here. One describes the security reality we face, words that Colin Powell spoke before the House International Relations Committee in this very building. "Since September 11th, 2001," the Secretary of State said, "the world is a more dangerous place. As a consequence of the terrorist attacks on that day, a new reality was born. The world had to recognize," Powell said, "that the potential connection between terrorists and weapons of mass destruction moved terrorism to a new level of threat—a threat that could not be deterred ... because of this connection between states developing weapons of mass destruction and terrorist organizations willing to use them without any compunction and in undeterrable fashion."

The other quote is from somebody who's been in the news quite a bit lately, Scott Ritter, who describes

part of the horrific reality of what's inside Iraq. And he does so even though he admits reluctantly—in fact, he said he's not going to describe quite how horrible it is, because, in his words, he's waging peace now—but he describes the prison in Baghdad, whose stench, he said, was "unreal," an amalgam—I'm sorry, it's lunchtime, but I'm quoting—"of urine, feces, vomit and sweat"; a hellhole where prisoners were "howling and dying of thirst."

In this prison the oldest inmates were 12, the youngest mere toddlers. Their crime was being children of the regime's political enemies.

It's hard to imagine a more grim symbol of a regime that rules by terror and that embraces terror as a policy against those who oppose it, both at home and abroad, than a children's prison. And I think there are few, if any -- in this country, at least -- who would deny that the present Iraqi regime is an evil one and a dangerous one. And it would be difficult to find Americans who would not agree that the world would be safer and the Iraqi people would be much better off if that regime no longer ruled.

The real issue we face, though, is not what we'd like to see, but how we weigh the risks of using force, should we have to do so. And that's what I'd like to talk most about today.

And the risks are very real. No sensible person would likely undertake an operation that endangers the lives of our marvelous men and women in uniform. And President Bush has demonstrated over and over again that he takes those risks extremely seriously, as does everyone in his administration.

That's why the President has made it clear—and we are making it clear in the activities going on in New York as we speak—that he will do everything possible to achieve a peaceful disarmament of Iraq that resolves this issue, that resolves this danger to our country and the world, if possible without the use of force.

So the debate in this country is not between those who desire peace and those who desire war. The issue is how best to achieve a peaceful outcome. And in approaching that objective, one has to approach what sometimes to some appears paradoxical. It is this fact:

Our only hope of achieving a peaceful disarmament of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction is by having a credible threat of force behind our diplomacy.

Those are not two different policies. To be effective, diplomacy and the threat of force have got to be part of a single policy.

We know, from 11 years of stubborn defiance of some 16 U.N. Security Council resolutions, that Saddam Hussein will not easily give up those horrible weapons that he has worked so hard and paid such a high price to develop and to retain. No one should be under any illusions that Saddam Hussein will give up the weapons that he is not supposed to have simply because the United Nations passes another resolution. He will only do so if he believes that doing so is necessary for his personal survival

and for the survival of his regime.

That's a paradox that was well understood by President Kennedy 40 years ago. When he began negotiating with the Soviet Union for the removal of their missiles from Cuba, he assembled a powerful force to demonstrate to Nikita Khrushchev that if the missiles were not removed peacefully, the United States would force their removal. That action was unquestionably risky, but without it, a peaceful resolution of that crisis would not have been possible.

Over the last 12 months, President Bush and his advisers have been weighing very carefully the risks of the various courses of action. While everything possible is being done to reduce those risks, no one is discounting them. The fundamental question is how to weigh the risks of action against the risks of inaction, and to weigh the risks of acting now against the risks of acting later, and doing so inevitably requires making judgments about things that are fundamentally uncertain. The search for evidence is understandable; the search for facts on which to pass those judgments is absolutely necessary. But at the end of the day, we are trying to judge what will happen in the future along different courses that we might take.

That famous American philosopher, who was even more famous as a catcher on the championship Yankee baseball team, Yogi Berra, once said, "It's dangerous to make predictions, especially about the future." [Laughter.] That's true of even the most ordinary predictions, and it is doubly true in trying to predict the future—to predict the future action of terrorists or terrorist regimes, where we frequently have difficulty even knowing the past, much less the future.

I'd like to address—and I'll try to do it briefly so we can get to some of your questions as well—what I think have been some of the most important questions that have been raised in this debate so far.

And let me emphasize that this debate isn't over, even though the Congress has acted. And let me take this opportunity to thank all of you, and all the people you work for, and all of this great body for the terrific bipartisan support that led to that joint resolution. If we are achieving success in New York this week in our diplomacy, I am convinced that it is in some large measure due to the strong demonstration of support that we had from the Congress. Indeed, I was involved, as was mentioned, in the last Gulf War, and at that point I suppose it's fair to say our strategy was, let's see if we can get the U.N. behind us, and maybe that will help us to get the Congress. This time it's very much the other way around. Having the Congress behind us has been key to trying to get the U.N. behind us. And I thank you all for that.

But I also want to emphasize that this issue of the risks that we face as a country is not one that goes away just because that vote went away. And all of your members who cast those fateful votes I know are going to be following events and worrying a great deal about them and wondering whether they voted the right way, just as anybody in the administration who is making decisions on these issues has got to constantly ask themselves whether we're on the right course of action.

So I believe the debate has to continue. It's a healthy feature of our democracy. And it's in that spirit

that I want to address these questions. But let me also emphasize—it can't be said often enough—what I said earlier. Our goal is to avoid the use of force. And the President has not made any decision to use force, but I think we need to think about what it would mean if we did.

One of the questions that's been asked frequently, and maybe even more frequently since the horrendous attacks in Bali, is whether an attack on Iraq would disrupt or distract the United States from the global war on terror. The answer to that, I believe, as Secretary Rumsfeld has said, is that "Iraq is part of the global war on terror—stopping terrorist regimes from acquiring weapons of mass destruction is a key objective of that war." And as Secretary Rumsfeld has said, "we can fight all elements of this war simultaneously." And I would add, we must do so, and we must do so not only with our military power but, as the President has said, with every available resource and with every element of national power.

Indeed, in many fronts of this war on terrorism, the military is a relatively minor element, and other parts of our government, other parts of our country, are in the lead.

So this fight is a broad fight. It's a global fight. But Iraq is part of that fight. Although the demand on our military resources will be significant, if it becomes necessary to use force against Iraq, we have a military that is strong enough to take on that task, and we've put a lot of time and effort into thinking through all the implications of an operation of that size.

But the war on terrorism is a global war, and one that must be pursued everywhere. And it's hard to see how we can expect to be successful in the long run if we leave Iraq as a sanctuary for terrorists and its murderous dictator in defiant safety. Indeed, as we look at the problems we face today, be it in Indonesia, most tragically recently; in the wilds of Pakistan, where significant numbers and probably significant figures from al Qaeda are still hiding; or Yemen, where we see or have evidence of people plotting dangerous operations; in each one of those cases, our goal is to deny the terrorists sanctuary. But each one of those places, the approach to the goal is different, depending on the attitude of the government, depending on the nature of the terrain, depending on other factors. But it is impossible to see how a policy of denying terrorists sanctuaries in those countries could be assisted by a policy that leaves them a sanctuary with the most murderous dictator we know.

Saddam Hussein supports and conspires with our terrorist enemies. He lends them both moral and material support. Disarming Saddam Hussein and fighting the war on terror are not merely related; they are part of the same struggle. And if we can defeat a terrorist regime in Iraq, it will be a defeat for terrorists globally.

When we toppled the Taliban in Afghanistan, the effects were felt far beyond Afghanistan. We sent a powerful message to governments outside that were undecided before then where they stood in the war on terrorism, and cooperation with several governments increased measurably.

When we got to safe houses in Afghanistan, we discovered documents and captured terrorists who helped us to break up plots in Southeast Asia and North Africa and around the globe. When we drove al Qaeda out of Afghanistan, out of their sanctuaries, we were able to capture terrorists like Abu Zubaydah

and Ramzi Binalshibh, and not only get them off the street but get important intelligence from them.

Similar effects can be expected if there is a decent government in Baghdad that can help us to uncover evidence, to capture terrorists and to deny them sanctuary.

Some ask, "Why act now? Why not wait until the threat is imminent?" In some ways, it seems to me, the answer is very simple, and it was expressed very clearly by Senator Lieberman in the Rose Garden the day this original draft [use of force] resolution was introduced.

Senator Lieberman said, "I have felt for more than a decade now that every additional day that Saddam Hussein is in power in Iraq is an additional day of danger for the Iraqi people, for his neighbors in the region, particularly for the people and the military of the United States and, indeed, for the people of the world." And I share that view strongly.

The notion that we can wait until the threat is imminent assumes that we will know when it is imminent. That was not even true in 1962, with the very obvious threat of Soviet missiles in Cuba. As President Kennedy said at the time, the United States cannot tolerate deliberate deception and offensive threats on the part of any nation, large or small. We no longer live in a world," the late President said, "where only the actual firing of weapons represents a sufficient challenge to the nation's security to constitute maximum peril."

If that was true 40 years ago of a threat that was comparatively easy to observe, how much more true is it today of threats developed by evil people who use the freedoms of a democratic society to plot and plan even in our midst, in the midst of our allies in Europe and around the world?

Some people ask, why run the risk of provoking Saddam Hussein? Doesn't the only danger that he will use those weapons of mass destruction come if we threaten his survival? There is no doubt a serious concern here, and we must certainly plan on the assumption that a moment of great danger will come if Saddam Hussein believes that his survival is in peril and that he has little to lose by using his most terrible weapons. But it's important to recognize how many assumptions -- in my view, dubious assumptions -- underlie the contention that this is a danger we can avoid forever if we simply seek to contain the Iraqi regime indefinitely.

First, it assumes that we can guarantee Saddam's survival; that his survival will never be threatened by events beyond our control, such as an internal revolution. Second—in my view, more important—it assumes that we understand the way his mind works and that he will always avoid actions that would risk his survival, and to assume that despite an enormous body of evidence that we do not understand the way his mind works and that he is a risk-taker who has frequently taken actions that put his regime in grave danger.

What evidence we do have suggests an enormous appetite, an enormous thirst for revenge—a thirst that was signaled in some of the Iraqi regime's earliest rhetoric, at the end of the Persian Gulf War, when

Radio Baghdad, for example, announced in February of 1991—and I'm quoting—"What remains is for Bush"—and they meant the former President—"and his accomplices in crime"—by which they clearly meant the Saudis and the other weak regimes—and the weak regimes of the Persian Gulf—"to understand that they are personally responsible." This is Baghdad Radio. "The Iraqi people will pursue them for this crime. Even if they leave office and disappear into oblivion, there is no doubt that they will understand what they mean if they know what revenge means to the Arabs," unquote.

Indeed, the true significance of the attempted assassination of former President Bush in 1993 is what it tells us about Saddam Hussein's thirst for revenge. All rational considerations, at least as we would understand that word, would have argued against taking such a provocative step at the very moment when there was a brand-new administration here in Washington and a President who had openly signaled his desire to come to peaceful terms with the Iraqi regime. We will probably never know why Saddam Hussein went ahead with that plot, but we must confront the fact that he did. We must confront this enormous appetite for revenge and consider also that Saddam Hussein might have concluded from that event that he could risk an extraordinarily dangerous act and still suffer only relatively minor punishment.

But the most dangerous assumption of all is the assumption that Saddam would not use terrorists as an instrument of revenge. That is the very danger that Secretary Powell warned about so eloquently in the quote that I read to you at the beginning: the use of terrorists as an undeterrable weapon for delivering the most terrible weapons of all. As our President has said, and I quote, "Saddam Hussein is harboring terrorists and the instruments of terror -- the instruments of mass death and destruction. And he cannot be trusted. The risk is simply too great that he will use them or provide them to terrorists."

Finally—and this is the last question I'd like to raise myself—I'm sure you'll have many more—many wonder whether Iraq will be even more unstable and dangerous after Saddam Hussein is gone. Of all the risks involved—and we are looking at many—the risks that we'd face should it come to the use of force, the one risk that seems to be frequently exaggerated is the risk that the removal of the Saddam Hussein regime would be a cause of instability in the region.

Of course my caution—or Yogi Berra's caution—about predicting the future needs to apply here both to optimists and pessimists. But it seems to me that the optimists have a much better factual case. Unlike the Balkans, for example, Iraq's recent history is not one of bloody ethnic conflicts among different groups but, rather, unfortunately, one of bloody repression by the regime against all groups.

Indeed, in the northern part of Iraq, which has been beyond the reach of Baghdad for a decade, thanks to the marvelous efforts of our Army and Marines and Air Force and Operation Provide Comfort—a rather important operation to think about, it took place a month after the Gulf War ended, and its results were quite amazing. As a result, the Iraqi Kurds have been beyond the reach of Baghdad for more than 10 years. And they've been able, in difficult circumstances, to demonstrate an impressive ability to manage long-standing differences, and even to develop relatively free and prospering societies, despite laboring, ironically, under the very same economic sanctions that apply to the rest of Iraq.

The enormous talent pool of Iraqis, both in the country and among the 4 million or so Iraqi exiles, also bodes well for the future of that country. And just as the experience of decades of tyranny in Central Europe and the Soviet Union seems to have engendered a deep resistance to going back to their Communist past, I think it's a reasonable hope that the experience of Ba'athist tyranny in Iraq will encourage powerful resistance to the emergence of another harsh dictatorship.

But apart from the facts, it seems to me the pessimists in this argument have a heavy burden. Do they really believe that the only way to preserve what they call stability in this, one of the most important Arab countries in the Middle East, or in the Middle East more generally—a stability which the once tyrannized Poles used to call the "stability of the graveyard"—the only way to preserve that stability is by preserving indefinitely the rule of a despotic tyranny? If so—and I sincerely doubt that many believe that—then they would have to explain how this so-called stability is going to be preserved after the demise of Saddam Hussein. Do they believe that his sons—Qusay and Uday—will successfully carry on his despotism after him, like the sons of Hafez al-Assad and Kim Il Sung? Hardly something one would wish for.

In fact, for better or for worse—and I am convinced it will be for far, far better—sooner or later the Middle East and the world will have to cope with the reality of the demise of this Iraqi regime. And for the sake of the suffering Iraqi people, there is no question it would be far better for that to happen sooner rather than later. And in the interest of minimizing what risks there may be to regional stability—and I don't dismiss that there may be some—it would be far better for that admittedly enormous change to take place when the eyes of the world are upon Iraq, and when the United States and a strong coalition are committed to seeing it through to a successful conclusion; in short, to have this change take place on the world's terms, not on Saddam's terms or on some fateful throw of the dice.

Indeed, I must say that I'm surprised that so many people who know the Middle East well, people who admire, as I do, the talents of the Arab people, believe that the demise of this despotic regime would be harmful to the Arab cause. To the contrary, I believe there is actually a great opportunity here to liberate one of the most talented populations in the Arab world and, indeed, to bring back some significant fraction of those talented Iraqis in exile with positive effects throughout the Middle East, and indeed, throughout the world's billion Muslims.

That also constitutes a huge strategic advantage for us should force ever become necessary. Saddam Hussein rules by fear and only by fear, and when his people no longer fear him, he will have to fear them and we will have millions of Iraqi allies.

So let me just conclude by saying that with this regime, this regime has turned that country, one of the potentially richest countries in the Middle East, into the most savage kind of prison. But as we've seen in Afghanistan, when the yoke of terrorism is removed, people use their new-found freedom to sing, to work, to learn, to build a better future for themselves and their children. And there's no question that if it comes to it, that if we can do all of that, with the world's help, we will have removed yet another haven for terrorists and will have made a significant step forward in helping the Muslim world to build a better future.

Thank you. I'll be happy to take questions. [Applause.]

WILLIAM MIDDENDORF (Defense Forum Foundation president): Thank you very much, Paul, for those great, enlightening remarks. Now we will open up for questions. Paul has to leave here in about 20 minutes. He's got a schedule that's a real blockbuster today. We'll start right over here.

Q: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for coming here today. It's really quite good of you to do that. So many of the points that you made seem to be perfectly applicable to Kim Jong Il as well. Is it the connection to international terrorism—

MR. MIDDENDORF: Introduce yourself, please.

Q: I'm sorry. I'm Chuck Downs, private consultant. North Korea --(inaudible) -- I guess. Is it the connection to international terrorism, and specifically al Qaeda, that distinguishes Saddam and makes him a more present danger? Secondly, there are a number of people in the room today who have devoted a lot of their time and efforts to helping North Korean refugees get out of North Korea in hopes of bringing down the regime. If you have any comment on that, would be very interesting to hear.

MR. WOLFOWITZ: Well, first of all, as the President said, more importantly than I, there clearly are some common characteristics between the Iraqi regime and the North Korean regime, and, for that matter, the Iranian regime. And the common characteristics have to do with possessing or developing weapons of mass destruction and consorting with terrorists. Of course, there are also differences. And among those differences are the degree of relationship between particular terrorist groups—that's clearly one thing we look at—the level of clearly expressed animosity to the United States. To the best of my knowledge, Saddam Hussein is the only world leader who openly glorified the attacks of September 11th. And if you look at some of the magazine covers that appeared in Baghdad—and there's no free press in Baghdad, need I point out—on the anniversary of September 11th, it's really chilling. One of those is a horrendous montage of scenes of the World Trade towers burning and collapsing, and in big red letters in Arabic, it says, "Allah's Judgment." As bad as the North Koreans are, I haven't seen it there.

Another huge difference, of course, is that the North Koreans are desperately in need of help from the outside. We have leverage on North Korea that we do not have on Iraq. And, finally, the Iraqi regime is in violation of some 16 U.N. Security Council resolutions. As the President said when he spoke to the General Assembly, this issue is a test of the U.N. and the seriousness of the U.N., in addition to all those other issues that we've raised. So while the President correctly called the country's and the world's attention to the common characteristics of those three countries, he's also made it clear, both in his words and his policies since then, that we don't have a one-size-fits-all, that we have different approaches to each one.

On the issue you raised about North Korean refugees: It is a horrendous and tragic situation. I remember reading in The Washington Post some five or six years ago a horrendous description of what happened

to North Korean refugees who were sent back. And I'm sorry it's over lunch, but again—these things stay in my mind, and I think it's important to realize what we're talking about. One case, a hapless refugee was, according to the Post reporter—was turned over to the Chinese—turned over by the Chinese to North Koreans. And before the North Koreans even took him away, they took his two hands and nailed them to a board. Obviously, that was only the first of what was going to happen to him.

You mentioned it as a way to bring down the regime. I don't think that's the way to address it. I think the way to think about the North Korean refugees is to think about what we did 20 years ago. When I say "we," I mean, really, one of the few humanitarian achievements of the benighted 20th century was the rescue of some 2 million Indo-Chinese refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia and Laos.

And it was accomplished through the remarkable combination of a group of countries that really didn't want to have anything to do with refugees, who became countries of first asylum, who accepted these millions of unwelcome people because they had a guarantee from other countries, led by the United States, that these people would be permanently resettled. It was a great humanitarian achievement. The government of Vietnam did not collapse as a result of it, though maybe some wished it would.

I think the way to make progress on an issue, and it's an important issue, is not to make it a political one.

MR. MIDDENDORF: Dr. Constantine Menges over here, formerly of the NSC.

Q: Mr. Secretary, it's wonderful to have you here. And I want to say, as a citizen, I'm deeply grateful to you, to Secretary Rumsfeld, to your entire team for your leadership. You're right on this issue. You've done, I think, a superb job of trying to help inform the public, as you've done again today. And I hope that your views and perspectives will prevail in fact, and that this terrible regime will be removed and the people of Iraq will be liberated.

In thinking about this issue, as you know, in the 1980s I worked quite intensively on issues of terrorism at the CIA and at the White House. And it seems to me that there is a lot of evidence that Iraq has been very much involved with terrorist attacks; that, in a sense, one might say, has been the secret partner of al Qaeda. And, for example, if you look at the World Trade Center in '93, the Jayna Davis material on the Oklahoma bombing, that even today, for example, right now as we're here that there are activities going on in Oklahoma involving terrorist groups that have Iraqi connections.

And I just wonder if one could do more, if the administration could do more to bring that evidence together and synthesize it because there is so much. There was the airplane that you know flew from Baghdad to Sudan weekly, and there's a lot of evidence from open sources that I'm sure you would have—could augment.

So that's one perspective I'd like to just ask you about. And I think it's important in terms of the whole case for action now.

The other that I'd like to share with you is that Secretary Rumsfeld, in his testimony when he was being confirmed, talked very wisely about the importance of prudent preventive actions in international politics and national security affairs. And I'm a believer in that, as you know from our many years of association.

And I believe there's an example right now, right now, where the United States of America, your administration, can help prevent a nuclear-armed axis of evil, including Castro, the Chavez regime in Venezuela, and the pro-Castro radical who's now leading for the presidency in Brazil, from establishing a nuclear-armed ballistic missile—Brazil—that would help covertly destabilize neighboring countries. And what has to be done now, in the time before the election, which is October 27th, is simply to tell the truth about Mr. Lula da Silva's support for terrorist organizations since 1990, when he has convened every year a group of all the terrorists from Latin America, many from Europe, many from the Middle East and official delegations from Iraq and Iran.

If that truth were communicated widely in Brazil, along with his interest in nuclear weapons that he himself alerted—to—and you have a letter I hope that Bill will give you from members of Congress to the President, copying Secretary Rumsfeld about Mr. da Silva's interest in removing—getting away from the nuclear weapons treaty—I think you'd find that you'd have a democratic president in Brazil on January 1st, 2003, instead of a man who will be a radical ally of Iraq, Iran, Cuba and all of the state sponsors of terrorism and harm our national security enormously. So I think there's an enormous opportunity to do some prevention.

MR. WOLFOWITZ: Okay, let me just take the first question, because that's complicated enough. [Laughter.]

First of all, a simple answer to start with would be to refer you to the letter—the unclassified letter that George Tenet sent to the Intelligence Committee, at their request, declassifying some of the testimony that had been given to them. Most of the attention in the press to that letter went to one particular sentence, which was actually, I believe, the personal judgment of a senior intelligence official. And it was—it was basically a judgment.

What is mentioned in more detail at the end of the letter are facts—facts about the connections between Iraq and al Qaeda and the fact that as time goes on, we keep learning more about those connections. We've learned some important things from senior al Qaeda people whom we've detained and interrogated. Moreover, those interrogations have sometimes led us to put much more weight on old evidence that we had that we weren't so sure of before. In fact, probably the word "evidence" is a misleading word here. And I think this is an important point to understand.

I said it's hard to predict the future. It's even hard to predict the past, if I could put it that way. It's hard to know what happened. It's important to understand that in this area of terrorism, with all of our marvelous intelligence resources—and they have made some amazing, they cracked some amazing puzzles—we are looking at the tip of an iceberg. And the part that's under water isn't just there by

accident. It's the most important things that the terrorists take the greatest effort to hide from us. I mean, just think about how well they hid September 11th from us. And even a year after, with all the resources we've applied to it—and we've learned more about September 11th—I'd still say we know only a small fraction of the details of how that operation was put together.

So if that's true about the past, think how much more true it is about the future. And if it's true about al Qaeda, which is relatively—not only relatively—which is openly willing to claim credit for what it does, think how much more true it's going to be for Saddam Hussein, who has to know that if he openly said "I'm involved," it would mean his end.

In many ways, he's a little bit in the position of someone who wants to scare and threaten people but at the same time not be fully accountable for his threats. I think of the —maybe I've read too many crime novels, but, you know—crime boss who sends a letter offering to take on the garbage contract for your neighborhood and says, "P.S. How are the wife and kids?" [Laughter.]

So there's a lot of ambiguities here, and we're trying to state the facts as we know them and as they develop. And I think the word "facts" is probably better than "evidence." Evidence implies that you're going to get proof, and forget about—I mean, in a court of law, you need proof. In predicting where dangers lie to the United States, you have to make judgments about whether something is 10 percent likely or 50 percent likely or 80 percent likely, and then you've got to make some judgments based on what you think the likelihood is and what you think the potential danger is. And remember, now the dangers we're talking about are not 3,000 Americans dead in a day, but 30,000 or 300,000 or even, God forbid, 3 million.

So you weigh all of those things, and these facts that we have and the facts that are in the George Tenet letter, or facts about a decade of senior-level contacts between Iraq and al Qaeda, facts about Iraqi training of al Qaeda people, including in chemical and biological weapons, and facts about Iraq providing sanctuary for al Qaeda people, including senior al Qaeda people, including in Baghdad. Combine that with the fact that the President referred to in his speech, which is not about al Qaeda but is about Iraq, that we know they're working on unmanned aerial vehicles, the capability of targeting the United States, and you begin to have facts that I think you have to make judgments against.

But again let me emphasize the underlying uncertainty in all of this. And I think one way to think about it is to go back to August of last year. If we had launched an attack against the Taliban and said, "This is to prevent an attack on the World Trade Center," the whole world would have said, "Where's your evidence?" Not only would we not have had the evidence, but we would have been way too late. The main hijackers, the pilots, who were crucial to the operation, arrived in the United States in early 2000.

The rest of the team arrived in the spring of last year. By August nothing we could have done in Afghanistan could have prevented it.

So we are dealing with facts that are uncertain, facts that we frequently discover one, two, sometimes as long as four, seven years after the fact. In fact, Secretary Rumsfeld keeps commenting on one that we

turned up during the Ballistic Missile Threat Commission, where it was 13 years between the time a country did something menacing with weapon of mass destruction development and the time we learned about it. And I think we just came on one the other day where it was 17 years before we learned about one of the things the North Koreans were doing.

So I wouldn't use the word "evidence." We're trying to lay out the facts as best we can. We're laying them out precisely and accurately. And I believe those facts more than justify the concern the President has expressed that this regime is too dangerous to be left with the world's most dangerous weapons in its hands.

MR. MIDDENDORF: I have a question here.

Q: Mr. Secretary, I'm Doug Anderson with the House International Relations Committee. Your remarks twice referenced the heinous bombings in Bali this past weekend, and I'd like to ask you a question about Indonesia, a country you know very well.

The thesis underlying it is that in decades past, overbearing and unaccountable Indonesian security forces have contributed in significant part to the radicalization of some segments of Indonesian society -- (off mike) -- making it, perhaps, more hospitable to terrorist organizations. How do we balance in the short term our obvious interest in seeing Indonesia take a more proactive role in counterterrorism activities with a longer-term interest in not retarding democratization, professionalization and civilian control of the Indonesian armed forces? And where does that --

MR. WOLFOWITZ: It's a great question, but I think you tried to bring it in by talking about terrorism. Let me first reject the premise of the question but then answer what I think is a very serious question.

I just think there's no substance to the notion that the terrorists are in Indonesia because of the enormous—and admittedly enormous—past abuses of the Indonesian security forces. If anything, unfortunately, one could make the argument that the reason the terrorists are successful in Indonesia is because the Suharto regime fell and the methods that were used to suppress them are gone. And the reason they're succeeding is because of outside money and outside influence.

We're talking about a tiny little sliver of Indonesian society. I mean, 200 million Indonesians were abused by the Indonesian military. Two hundred million Indonesians did not become terrorists, I guarantee you. In fact, one of the heartwarming things to me was in reading the otherwise appalling poll taken—I think USA Today published it in the fall of last year—about how many people in Muslim countries seem to think the World Trade Center attack was justified. Almost statistically insignificant, 4 percent of Indonesians thought so.

I mean, this is a population that is just profoundly moderate and tolerant in its outlook. But the security forces are a real problem, okay, let's come to that. And it's no secret, at least to you, obviously, and maybe others in this room, that I've been pushing hard to restore U.S. relations with the Indonesian

military. I don't do so because I'm under illusions about what their past record is, and I don't do so in the belief that all we need to do is just kind of get back in bed with the Indonesian military and everything will be fine. I think there are real problems there, but I don't think those problems are solved by isolating them. And in fact, we've been isolating them for the last 10 years, so if they're—one could hardly say that isolation has worked. What I think isolation has helped to produce is a rogue military, a rogue military that does a lot of things that are bad and that does not come to the support of a democratic government that now needs it.

And I think for Indonesian democracy to succeed—and in the long run, this is connected to terrorism because I believe fighting terrorists in Indonesia requires the success of Indonesian democratic institutions—they need a military that is disciplined and where abuses are punished. But they also need a military and police that can be effective in dealing with some quite serious ethnic conflict.

A major source that the terrorists go after, they clearly are stimulating the Christian-Muslim conflict in Sulawesi and Maluku. And one of the reasons it goes on is when they send security forces to deal with the problem, they have about 20 percent of what they need to live off of, so they are adopted by one village or another. If they're adopted by a Christian village, they quickly become advocates of one side, or Muslim village, the other. In order to have effective peacekeeping forces—police or military—in that situation, you've got to reform them, but you've also got to support them adequately.

So we're trying—short answer—we're trying to develop a prudent course of developing relations with the Indonesian military based on reform, not based on opening the door to everything, but based also on the notion that isolating them is harmful to democracy in Indonesia and harmful to dealing with terrorists in Indonesia. And I think we've gotten support from the Congress on that, and for that I also thank you.

MR. MIDDENDORF: In the back -- far back of the room there. The young lady.

Q Hi. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I'm Amanda Carter (sp) with Fox News Channel, and I have three different questions or your comments.

MR. WOLFOWITZ: Better try one.

Q Okay.

MR. WOLFOWITZ: Otherwise I get to pick which one I answer. [Laughter.]

Q I understand. Thank you. On Pakistan and North Korea, their support for one another with nuclear support, your comments and concerns of this new revelation?

MR. WOLFOWITZ: I think I'd like to ask—let's go on to those other two questions. [Laughter.]

But I'll just say briefly, the reason for that is we're obviously dealing with an extremely delicate issue right now, where we're talking about diplomacy at the highest levels of every government involved and the interests of not only our Japanese and Korean allies, but also Russia and China.

I would say that one would have to conclude from the facts underlying your question -- let me put it that way -- that the policy of isolating Pakistan for 10 years wasn't exactly a glowing success. And I just think I'd put it -- leave it there.

Do you want to try another one, since I didn't really answer your first one? [Laughs.]

Q Your comments on the string of bombings in Indonesia and the Philippines, just --

MR. WOLFOWITZ: Just to say that -- well, first of all, I mean, they're just horrible. And stop and think for a moment: As a proportion of its population, I believe Australia lost as many people in Bali as we lost on September 11th. It's a country that's not much more than a 20th or a 15th the size of ours, so do your multiplication. And so many young people in the prime of life. It's just horrible.

It's also horrible to think about what this means for Indonesia. And it's pretty striking too that this was done in the one province in Indonesia that is almost -- roughly 98 percent Muslim -- Hindu, excuse me, non-Muslim. It's an incredible blow to Indonesia as a country. The economy is struggling. We talked about military reform. That economy—if democracy is going to succeed in Indonesia—that economy has to succeed. And whoever planned that attack obviously dealt a body blow to the Indonesian economy, and therefore, I think, also to Indonesian democracy.

And the Indonesians are going to have to decide what conclusions to draw from it, but I believe from what I'm reading in the newspapers that they are drawing the conclusion that, as much distaste as they have for the bad practices of the Suharto era, they're going to have to find a democratic way to get tougher on terrorists. And I hope they will. I better --

MR. MIDDENDORF: There's time --

MR. WOLFOWITZ: One last one.

MR. MIDDENDORF: Time for one more question. We haven't had anybody from this side of the room.

Q Hi. I'm (Jack Sanders ?) from New Zealand. I was just wondering what your comments would be on a meeting that you had with our prime minister a few months ago and the cooperation between the New Zealand government and the U.S. government on the war on terror.

MR. WOLFOWITZ: Well, it was a good meeting. We've had good cooperation. And I think the thing I'd most like to say is, you have some very brave and capable soldiers who have been in difficult situations with us, and also, who have taken on some difficult tasks in East Timor, where one of your

people was killed. In fact, we did discuss precisely the case of the New Zealander who was killed in East Timor and the relative success of your government in getting the Indonesians to deal properly with the perpetrators of that crime. I think you did better so far than we did. So we're trying to figure out how to copy your success.

Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

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