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Association of Old Crows Annual Symposium and Convention

Remarks by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Nashville, TN, Monday, October 28, 2002.

Thanks, Hank [Driesse, symposium chairman], and thanks to the Old Crows for having me here today. More importantly, thank you for the work that you've been doing over the decades, and right now, in the present in the defense electronics and information technology arenas. Those are unquestionably some of the most important areas for our military, even more so today than at the time of your founding.

And it's also great to be here in Nashville, not only the capital of country music, but also home to the 118th Airlift Wing at Berry Field. The 118th has been heavily involved in various operations here and abroad since last September. And if we have any folks here from the 118th, let me say thank you. These volunteers have certainly done the Volunteer State proud.

I do know we have a lot of former military folks in the audience, but I don't think there's anyone with more "formers" behind his name than my own boss, Don Rumsfeld—former naval aviator, former Congressman, former Ambassador to NATO, former White House Chief of Staff, and of course, former, and again, Secretary of Defense.

On my first day back in the building when he was swearing me in, the Secretary remarked that this was my third tour in the Pentagon. And he said, "Paul, we're going to keep bringing you back until you get it right." [Laughter] I felt like saying, "Mr. Secretary, you're back for your second tour, so what should we conclude from that?" [Laughter] But I may be dumb, but I'm not crazy, so I didn't say that. [Laughter] Before I left Washington, I did tell the Secretary I was coming down here to speak to the Old Crows, and he said, "You know, that sounds like my kind of crowd." [Laughter] So I said, "You got any message for them?" He said, "Yeah. Just tell the Old Crows I said, 'Hi, kids.'" [Laughter]

Then the Secretary told me he thought it was just great that I'm going to this conference. He said, "It's

good for people to hear from the experts." And just as I was basking in what I thought was praise, he added, "So don't talk too long." [Laughter] He did ask me to bring his warmest regards to all of you experts here, and as usual, Don Rumsfeld's onto something. It is a privilege and a pleasure to be serving with him. And in fact, I must say, I cannot think of a more inspiring time to be part of American's national security team than right now. It's a distinct privilege to serve with President Bush, Vice Present Cheney, Colin Powell, Condi Rice and Don Rumsfeld. The American people have every reason to be both proud and appreciative of how that team is pursuing our country's noblest objectives and our fundamental security goals.

And certainly, one of those goals is what the Old Crows is all about. DOD has not only been a big consumer of information technology, but a big proponent of it as well. In fact, as I'm sure most of you probably know, we could claim to be the grandfathers of the internet, having gotten in close to the ground floor with some of the early work of DARPA. But, in typical government fashion, we forgot to take out options on our inventions. [Laughter] So, we have to keep going back to Congress for annual budgets—it's a shame. [Laughter]

I'd like to begin by telling you a bit about the theater in Afghanistan, where we've seen some other inventions and innovations. And certainly, information technology and electronic warfare are helping our troops in the air and on the ground to fight more efficiently and effectively. And then, I'd like to give you a brief look at the way ahead.

First, let me read from a dispatch that we received in the early days of the campaign. It came from one of our brave Special Forces soldiers on the ground, less than two weeks after the start of the campaign in Afghanistan. And by the way, the speed with which this whole campaign unfolded is little short of amazing—the speed with which the plan was put together, the speed with which we got people in on the ground, and the speed with which they achieved results. At the time, I remember every day felt like a month. When I learned that this dispatch had been sent on October 25th -- of course, the war began on October 7th -- I couldn't believe that it was that quickly.

"I am advising," this man dispatched, "I am advising a man on how best to employ light infantry and horse cavalry in the attack against Taliban 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 [Mujahideen] have done that every day we've been on the ground. They've attacked with 10 rounds of ammunition per man, with snipers having less than 100 rounds, with little water and less food. We have witnessed the horse cavalry attacking Taliban strong points, the last several kilometers under mortar, artillery and sniper fire. But the Muj are doing very well with what they have. They've killed over 125 Taliban, while losing only 8. But we could not do what we are doing without the close air support. Everywhere I go, the civilians and Muj 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 now. General Dostam is finishing his phone call with Congressman "X" back in the United States." Yes, we had that kind of communications going as well. And with that, one of our amazing Special Forces members went off on literally a cavalry charge with a Northern Alliance commander.

This other dispatch came from one of his comrades barely two weeks later on November 10th, after the fall of the first major Taliban city, Mazar-e-Sharif. "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 linkup location, and rode on begged, borrowed and confiscated transportation. While it looked like a ragtag procession, the morale into Mazar-e-Sharif was triumphant. The locals loudly greeted us and thanked all Americans; much waving, cheering and clapping. The U.S. Navy and Air Force" -- this from an Army man -- "the U.S. Navy and Air Force did a great job. I am very proud of my men who have performed exceptionally well under 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 less than 50 meters away. 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 U.S. element was nearly overrun four days ago, but continued to call close air support and ensured 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."

Indeed, we saw something remarkable, the integration of a 19th century, literally 19th century capability, the horse cavalry, with 50-year-old B-52 bombers through the miracle of modern communications, which resulted in a truly 21st century weapon, a product of the successful innovative application of information technology. When Don Rumsfeld was asked at one of his famous press conferences what on earth he was doing by bringing the horse cavalry back into warfare, he said, "It's all part of our transformation plan." [Laughter] And indeed, it is, but as you in this audience know better than anyone else, it's a transformation that can only be achieved by owning the information space.

And there are other examples of innovation, transformational innovation in Afghanistan. For example, young non-commissioned officers routinely integrated multiple intelligence collection platforms by simultaneously coordinating what amounted to chat rooms. They were integrating in real time multiple disparate sources, such as Rivet Joint and Joint STARS, satellites and SIGINT and Predator information in a truly remarkable way. In fact, this joystick generation, if we can label them that, displayed agility that comes from being completely comfortable with that new way of doing things. Over the last three decades, we invested billions of dollars in collecting and analyzing electronic intelligence. The new challenge before us is how to integrate electronic warfare capabilities into a transformed, distributed network-centric expeditionary force. Such a force will be key to any future operations we may embark upon.

Permit me to shift gears here a little bit, and look at a major issue in our national debate and share some thoughts with you. I'd like to read you a couple of quotes, which I think are important in framing the notion that in Iraq today, we face a grim, new reality. One of those quotes describes the security reality that we face. It comes from Secretary of State Colin Powell's testimony before the House International Relations Committee, where he said, and I'm quoting, "Since September 11th, 2001, 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," the Secretary of State said, "that the potential connection between terrorists and weapons of mass destruction move 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 compunction and in undeterrable fashion."

The other quote is from someone who's been in the news a bit lately, a former U.N. inspector named Scott Ritter, who describes part of the horrific reality of what's going on inside Iraq. He does so, as he admits quite reluctantly; in fact, he says he's not going to describe just how horrible it really was, because in his words, he's "waging peace now." Nevertheless, he describes a prison in Baghdad whose stench, he said, was unreal -- an amalgam, I quote, "of urine, feces, vomit and sweat," unquote, a hellhole where prisoners were "howling and dying of thirst." In this prison, the oldest inmates were 12; the youngest were 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, at least in this country, 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 better off if that regime no longer ruled.

The real issue we face, though, is how to weigh the risks of using force, should we have to do so, and that's what I'd like to talk about briefly this afternoon. Those risks are very real. As President Bush has demonstrated over and over again, he takes those risks extremely seriously, as does everyone in his administration. That's why the President has made it clear 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. Everyone desires peace. The issue is how best to achieve a peaceful outcome. And there is a seeming paradox at work here that takes some effort to grasp. Our only hope—in my view, our only hope—of achieving the peaceful disarmament of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, is if we have a credible threat of force behind our diplomacy. To be effective, the two must be part of a single policy. We know from 11 years of stubborn defiance of some 16 UN Security Council resolutions that Saddam Hussein will not easily give up those horrible weapons that he's worked so hard to develop, and paid such a high price 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.

Over the past 12 months, President Bush and his advisors have been weighing very carefully the risks of various courses of action. While everything possible is being done to reduce those risks, no one is discounting them. The fundamental question, though, 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.

I'd like to address what I think have been some of the most important questions that have been raised in this debate so far. The debate must continue. It's a healthy feature of our democracy, and it's in that spirit that I'd like 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 very clearly about what it would mean if we came to that point.

One of the questions that's been asked frequently, perhaps more frequently since the horrendous terrorist attack 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 very simple. Iraq is part of the global war on terror. "Stopping terrorist regimes from acquiring weapons of mass destruction," the Secretary said, "is a key objective of that war. And," as he added, "we can fight all elements of that war simultaneously." And I would add, we must do so. We must do so not only with our military power, but as President Bush has said, with every available resource and every available element of national power. Indeed, in many fronts of this war on terrorism, the military is just a minor element, and other parts of our government, other elements of national power, are in the lead.

So, this is a broad fight, but Iraq is part of the fight, and if it becomes necessary to use force against Iraq, we have a military that is strong enough to take on that task. The war on terrorism is a global war, and one that must be pursued everywhere. 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 in Yemen, where we see or have evidence of people plotting dangerous operations. Though our tactics may differ, in each one of those cases, our goal is to deny the terrorists sanctuary. It's hard to see how a policy of denying terrorists sanctuary in those countries, but be assisted by a policy that leaves them a sanctuary in Iraq with one of the most murderous dictators we know. We cannot continue to allow one of the world's worst dictators to continue developing the world's worst weapons, and consorting with the world's worst terrorists.

When we got to safe houses in Afghanistan, we discovered documents and captured terrorists who helped us to break up plots in Southeast Asia, in North Africa, and elsewhere around the globe. When we drove al Qaeda out of Afghanistan, out of their sanctuaries, we were able to capture some key figures like Abu Zubaydah and Ramzi Binalshibh, and not only get them off the street, but get important intelligence from them as well. Similar effects can be expected if there is finally a decent government in Baghdad, one that can help us to uncover evidence to capture terrorists and to deny them sanctuary.

Another question that some people ask is, why act now? Why not wait until the threat is imminent? In some ways, it seems to me the answer to that is also very simple. It was expressed quite clearly by Senator Joseph Lieberman in the Rose Garden the day the original draft use-of-force resolution was introduced. The Senator said, quote, "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," unquote.

I share the Senator's view very strongly. The notion that we can wait until the threat is imminent assumes that we will know when it is imminent. That wasn't even true in 1962, with the very obvious threat of Soviet missiles in Cuba. As President Kennedy said at the time to those who questioned the imminence of the threat, "The United States cannot tolerate," he said, "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 democratic societies to plot and plan, even in our midst, in the midst of our allies in Europe, and around the world?

Another question some people ask is, why run the risk of provoking Saddam Hussein? [Doesn't] the only danger that he would actually use those weapons of mass destruction come if we threatened his survival? There's 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 belief that this is a danger we can avoid forever, if we simply seek to contain the Iraqi regime indefinitely. First, it assumes that we understand the way Saddam Hussein's mind works, and that he will always avoid actions that would risk his survival. And it makes that assumption, despite an enormous body of evidence to the contrary. In fact, we do not understand the way his mind works, and he is a risk-taker who has frequently taken actions that put his regime in grave danger. The evidence that 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.

Indeed, the true significance of the attempt to assassinate former President Bush in 1993 is what it tells us about Saddam Hussein, and about his appetite for revenge. All rational considerations, at least as we understand that term, would have argued against taking such a provocative step at precisely the time when there was a brand new administration 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 thirst for revenge, and consider also that Saddam Hussein might have concluded from that event that he could indeed risk an extraordinarily dangerous act, and get away with it.

But the most dangerous assumption of all behind this notion that we can live forever with Saddam 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 is an undeterrable and perhaps anonymous weapon for delivering the most terrible weapons of all.

Finally -- and this is the last question I'd to address in these remarks -- many ask whether Iraq will be even more unstable and dangerous after Saddam Hussein is gone. Of all the risks involved, should it come to the use of force, and we are looking at many, this is the one risk, it seems to me, most often exaggerated: the risk that the removal of the Saddam Hussein regime would be a cause of instability in the region. Indeed, if we look at what has happened through the removal of his influence over the northern third of his country, the northern part of Iraq has been beyond the reach of Baghdad for a decade now, thanks to the marvelous efforts of our Army and Marines and Air Force in Operation Provide Comfort back in 1991. It's a very important operation to think about. It took place a month after

the Gulf War ended, and its results were quite amazing. The Iraqi army cleared out of the northern third of the country without a shot being fired. As a result, the Iraqis in the north, predominantly Kurds, but with significant numbers of Arabs and Turcomans as well, have been beyond the reach of Baghdad for more than ten years. And they've been able, in difficult circumstances, to demonstrate an impressive ability to manage some of their longstanding differences, and even to develop relatively free and prospering societies. And they do this, ironically, even though they labor under the very same UN sanctions that apply to the rest of the country.

Do the pessimists really believe that the only way to preserve what they call stability in this, one of the most important countries in the Middle East -- a stability which the once-tyrannized Poles used to call the "stability of the graveyard" -- do they really believe that the only way to preserve stability is by preserving indefinitely the rule of this despotic tyranny? And 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 after him, like the sons of Hafez al-Assad and Kim Il Sung? Hardly something to wish for. In fact, for better or for worse, and I am convinced that 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. It would be far better for that admittedly enormous change to take place when the eyes of the world are upon Iraq, than when the United States and a strong coalition are committed to seeing it through to a successful conclusion.

Indeed, I must say I'm surprised that so many people that know the Middle East well, people who admire, as I do, the enormous talents of the Arab people, believe that the demise of this despotic tyrant would be harmful to the Arab cause. To the contrary, I believe there's 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 -- some 4 million of them, by the way -- with positive effects throughout the Middle East, and indeed, throughout the world's billion Muslims. And that also constitutes a huge strategic advantage for us, should the use of force become necessary. Saddam Hussein rules by fear, and when his people no longer fear him, he will have to begin to fear them.

So let me just conclude by saying that with this regime, a regime that has turned that country, one of the potentially richest countries in the Middle East, into the most savage kind of prison, and as we've seen in Afghanistan, when the yoke of terrorism is removed, people use their newfound 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, and if we can do all of that with the world's help, we will have removed yet another haven for terrorists, and we will have made a significant step forward in helping the Muslim world to build a better future, a better future for all of us.

To those of you here who are helping to build peace, and helping us to build, as the President said, a better world beyond the war on terror, a great mission lies ahead. But we will not be deterred from the truth. And this truth we know: that the single greatest threat to peace and freedom in our time is terrorism. So, this truth we must also affirm. The future does not belong to the terrorists. The future

belongs to those who dream the oldest and noblest dream of all, the dream of peace and freedom. Thank you. [Applause]

MALE SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. We appreciate your remarks. Would -- I think we have time for one or two questions. Perhaps you could address them to Dr. Wolfowitz?

Q: Sir, you have a -- here in the audience here, have not only a U.S. military and (inaudible), but I think there's probably 20, 25 countries represented here. Is there some message that you might want to talk to them right now, that they can take back?

WOLFOWITZ: Thank you. Great straight man, and I didn't even ask you to ask that question. [Laughter] First of all, I'm assuming that probably every one of those 20 countries is part of our coalition in the war against terrorism. We've assembled, I think, some 90 countries, by the Secretary's count, that are supporting us in this war against terrorism. It would be, by number of countries, by far the largest coalition ever assembled in history, and we couldn't do what we're doing without that kind of cooperation. As I think I alluded to in my comments, it isn't just military, and in fact, in many cases, it isn't primarily military. It's cooperation across many different elements of our governments, and we are grateful for it. I think we're now up to some 26 countries that have liaison officers down in Tampa working with General Franks. And I think it's also worth saying that if it comes to the use of force in Iraq, it's going to be very important to have countries with us, and we are grateful for the large number of countries that have already begun to indicate that if it comes to it, they will be with us. Others have indicated that if the U.N. Security Council passes a new resolution, they will be with us. And I'm quite sure that if we actually have to act, we'll have a very substantial coalition. I also believe that if we come to the point that we're dealing with an Iraq that has been liberated and in need of help, we'll have even more countries out there to help. We are not a go-it-alone country; this is not a go-it-alone President. We value the help that we get from others, and depend on it crucially.

I might also say, at the risk of repeating what I said earlier, our real hope -- and I admit it's going to take an effort -- is to finally convince Saddam Hussein that his only hope of survival is a complete change of course, and to give up these weapons of mass destruction. And I think the one thing that might bring that message home to him is a unified message from the world community. If he understands that this time finally, the world community is serious, the United Nations is serious, I think it is our best hope of avoiding a conflict. And certainly, that is the best way to achieve this. So, someone told me coming in here that some 50 percent of your group are from outside the United States. That's great, and I thank you for your cooperation. [Applause]

MALE SPEAKER: One more question?

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MALE SPEAKER: A year ago, we had a proposal that would be set up a Homeland Defense group, or structure, or something like that, in the Pentagon that would be under Secretary White for the executive agent. What is the status of that at this time?

WOLFOWITZ: We're still basically working under that interim arrangement to provide the channel for our support to domestic authorities in their Homeland Security responsibilities. We've moved beyond it, though, with the creation of Northern Command. For the first time in our history, we have a unified commander with responsibility for the continental United States and for Homeland Security that brings together particularly the elements of national air defense and of support to civilian authorities in the event of emergency.

As I think most of you probably know, that command was stood up on October 1st in Colorado Springs, and Air Force General Ed Eberhard is the first commander of Northern Command. We've also got a proposal before the Congress to create an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Security. We haven't got that authorization yet, unfortunately, but the idea is that that person would be the assistant secretary level point of contact with General Eberhard, and with civilian authorities here in the United States. We're developing a whole set of new relationships that take some time to sort out and to develop, but there are analogies, I think, to the way in which we relate to unified commanders in foreign areas, and the way in which we have assistant secretaries on the civilian side in the Pentagon who relate to their counterparts at the State Department and embassies overseas. Only, in this case, the counterparts are not in embassies, they're in state governments and in local governments throughout the country, and in the civilian departments of the executive branch.

Obviously, the biggest piece of all that we're hoping to fill in is the Department of Homeland Security, which the President has proposed to the Congress, and which we have not yet reached agreement on. But I know we're hopeful that when the Congress comes back after the election, in lame duck session, that we will get that important piece of business done. As the President has said -- I believe he's got the right analogy -- the 1947 National Security Act that restructured the way in which the military does business, brought the War Department, the Navy Department together for the first time in a single Department of Defense, created the National Security Council. It was a revolution in the way we organized as a government, and over the subsequent 50 years, we elaborated on that 1947 act in important ways. It was definitely the instrument that carried us through the Cold War into what must count as one of the most successful peaceful strategic successes in history.

We face a very different kind of threat now with terrorism in the 21st century, and we need a different kind of organization. Most of all, I think we do need a department and a cabinet secretary who's got the principal responsibility for Homeland Security. It can't be the Secretary of Defense; it can't be the Secretary of State; it can't be the Attorney General; although each one of those cabinet officers has very important supporting roles. But there needs to be someone who has that main responsibility, and we're hopeful that the Congress will see its way through to supporting what the President has proposed. And then, we've got a lot of work to do to sort out those new relationships.

I guess that's time for me.

MALE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. We appreciate it. [Applause]

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