

# Remarks for Secretary Tom Ridge on Fighting Global Terrorism: Security and Cooperation in the 21st Century

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Minister Wong, Dr. Chew, Mr. Desker, Ambassador Lavin, ladies and gentlemen: thank you all for your warm welcome.

I'd like to begin by thanking Barry Desker and the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies for your kind invitation. I'd also like to congratulate you on the recent opening of the Institute's new International Center for Political Violence and Terrorism Research. A free and open exchange of ideas is the foremost instrument of international understanding and vitally fundamental to a peaceful and cooperative global security environment. That, of course, is the guiding philosophy behind your new Center and the mutual goal that brings us together for discussion this afternoon.

The American people know that we will always find friends and strength in international partners -- in the Asia-Pacific Region, in the United Nations -- in a true "culture of cooperation." And that is important. Because we know all too well -- from the terrorist attacks in America, in Bali, in Istanbul, in Riyadh, in the incidents of destruction and chaos that occur each and every day -- that terrorism is a global scourge, not a regional one. And a global enemy requires a global response.

Moments after the attacks of September 11, 2001, an attack that took the lives of nearly 3,000 citizens from 80 nations, America and its friends knew full well -- the fight against international terrorism would, much like the Cold War, be long and not easily won. And yet, together, freedom-loving people united. We saw the obstacles and the long road ahead, and said simply and rightly, "Let us begin."

In America, the images of 9-11 still resonate deep within. We will never forget. And so, our national goal to do everything possible to avoid another September 11th -- in our country or in any other -- has and will affect how we engage the rest of the world.

And yet, terrorists will never take from us our most defining characteristic. For more than 227 years, America's fortunes and freedoms have been tied to wave after wave of immigrants from around the world. Such openness to diversity continues today; it is a reflection of who and what we are as a nation.

Several hundred thousand international students attend our colleges and universities every year. They enrich our academic community and contribute to the intellectual, cultural and scientific climate of our country. Thousands of international travelers arrive every single day at our airports. By land, by air and by sea, we welcome annually nearly 600 million workers, tourists, students, business travelers and families.

Not too long ago, I boarded a cargo ship in the harbor of New Orleans, Louisiana. The ship was registered in Singapore. The crew was from India. The cargo was American grain. The destination was Japan.

The U.S., by design and by desire, has been -- and will always be -- connected to the rest of the world. The interconnectedness of the world today spans many sectors -- military, economic, educational and, yes, even homeland or domestic security. No one country can be truly safe without the cooperation and like-minded commitment from all others.

This type of "interdependence" is a good thing. It helps inspire one another to higher standards. It drives the global policies that daily shape the twin pillars of security and prosperity. It compels us to be innovative and unified in our approach to security. And that goes against the grain of what terrorists want, which is dissension. But they will not distract us from our common goal, which is their defeat.

If we are to be successful against them, a worldwide commitment and worldwide resolve is required. And worldwide, that is what we are seeing. Since the events of September 11th, an informal counter-terrorism coalition of nearly 70 nations began working together in the critical areas of law enforcement, information sharing, transportation security, cyber security and financial asset seizure.

A few months after 9-11, Singapore narrowly missed its own conflagration, when terrorists plotting a series of attacks here were stopped by Singapore's own vigilance. Like the United States, Singapore is a great commercial republic -- with a diverse population and a society that is open and economically successful. The terrorists hoped to cause you -- and us -- substantial damage. Singapore's reaction was characteristically firm; you investigated the cell and cleaned it

out. And like the United States and many other countries, you tightened border controls, instituted new security measures, and yet defended your openness and your multiculturalism.

So Singapore has been an active, courageous and integral participant in this global coalition. You were instrumental to the capture of many suspected members of Jemaah Islamiya, the al-Qaeda-linked terrorist group believed to be responsible for the devastating Bali bombing of 2002. Other Southeast Asian countries also played key roles. The arrest in Thailand of Hambali serves as yet another great example of shared leadership and commitment, of information sharing and collaboration, as together, Asia-Pacific nations, rooted out one of the most deadly terrorist operatives in the world.

Additionally, many nations of this Region have engaged extensively in the rebuilding of Afghanistan and Iraq. It's been a wonderful demonstration of a strong transpacific partnership and a collective commitment to the cause of oppressed peoples -- wherever they are found.

On a personal note, President Bush and all of us in his Cabinet, greatly value the personal and professional relationships we have with our investigative and security counterparts here in Singapore. We are more than partners; we are friends. And we have been fortunate to work with you, and, in the spirit of friendship, learn from you as well.

We know that the Asia-Pacific nations are uniquely qualified to talk about terrorism. From attacks by the abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines to the sarin gas attack in the subways of Tokyo, terrorism is part of your Region's collective experience. It has become part of ours.

So to terrorists who continue to play out this tragic prologue who continue to plague the world: I can tell you that your weapons will be destroyed; your tactics will be disarmed. No matter what your form or faction -- you are civilization's collective shame. On this issue, the world has come together, and the world is coming after you.

Some terrorists have tried to pervert a great religion to cover their criminal acts. They claim to have "Islamic" goals. But when we see the pictures of innocent Muslims killed and wounded in places like Jakarta, and Riyadh, and just last week in Iraq, we see the terrible damage done by terrorism to the Islamic nations themselves. So, to my mind, these are the acts of madmen.

Some call terrorism a nuisance; some call it a fact of life. Let them call it what they will. But let us always speak the truth: Terrorists are not "freedom fighters," nor "political warriors." Freedom fighters do not crash planes into buildings, detonate bombs in dance clubs and tourist buses, or release bioagents in subways. Freedom fighters do not engage noncombatants in battle. Terrorists murder. They recruit child soldiers and march them toward dark deeds. Their motivation and methods are merely to kill what they do not understand, or what they resent and hate -- open, multicultural, civil societies around the world.

Today's terrorists run the gamut -- from well-funded groups to lone individuals who use catastrophic acts of violence as instruments of expression. They seek the disintegration of open societies through attempts to undermine free governments. They seek false glory in casualties and chaos.

As many have recognized: We have passed over into a far more menacing frontier of warfare -- potentially with far more horrifying consequences. International terrorism is the "new totalitarian threat." For the first time in the history of humankind, a small group of people with weapons of mass destruction can wreak untold havoc in our cities and against our nations. These perpetrators seek chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and before them lays a map of the world.

My colleague, Minister Wong, identified the challenge of international terrorism in a powerful and sobering way in his address to this body a few weeks ago. His words bear repeating.

"In the religious world view of the extremist, there are no ethical boundaries over methods to defeat the enemy. Nothing is unthinkable! This moral free-fall and lack of restraint is what makes us sense that the scale of violence of this current terrorism has no boundaries other than what the imagination supported by opportunity and access to relevant resources can achieve."

Today the international community faces two realities in the fight for broad security: One, the reality that terrorists find safe haven in hostile nations--or safe havens within the borders of failing governments and unstable regions. And two, the reality that terrorists have ready access to varying weapons of scope and scale, built and tested in camps and caves across the deserts and mountain terrain in which they hide.

Surely, it is no coincidence that the threat to the stability and peace of the world has coincided with the globalization of technology, transportation, commerce and communication. The same benefits enjoyed by peace-loving people across the world are available to terrorists as well. That means that terrorists themselves have greater mobility, more targets and more places to hide than ever before. That's why, on September 11th, 2001, they were able to turn passenger airplanes into missiles, with an "army" of fewer than two dozen men, and a budget of roughly a half a million dollars.

So to fight back, we too must exploit our assets. We must investigate and prosecute and confiscate. We must utilize diplomacy, intelligence, law enforcement and asset seizure -- a multilateral approach to a multinational problem. We must enlist stronger collaboration and cooperation, and improved information-sharing, both within nations and between them. We must use every available tool to repel these shadow soldiers.

Minutes after the second plane hit the World Trade Center, Americans knew the tools and tactics of old wars would no longer apply. We knew that to secure our country, we would have to become just as adaptable, just as rapidly innovative and just as decisively responsive as today's new breed of terrorists. We would have to fight this 21st-century enemy in a bold, broad, brand new 21st-century way. And that is why the President created the Department of Homeland Security -- to make the fullest protection of our people the highest charge of our nation.

This historic reorganization of our government has required a whole new philosophy of how we secure America and how we help to secure open societies everywhere. It has engendered a sense of urgency and commitment, unprecedented in modern times. It has driven unity, a framework of shared responsibility, shared leadership, and shared accountability -- a shared imperative.

Homeland Security is a unified effort, a national strategy. Our role as a Department is to lead, but Washington cannot, nor should not, micro-manage the protection of an entire nation. Instead, it must be a priority in every city, every neighborhood and every home across America. Leadership must be at all levels. And so perhaps moreso than anything, homeland security in the 21st century is really about the integration of a nation, and nations -- led by national leaders but also governors, mayors, county executives, tribal leaders, airline personnel, border patrol agents, the intelligence community, law enforcement, firefighters, diplomatic officers, business leaders, international partners -- citizens, and defenders of civil societies everywhere.

Standing up the Department of Homeland Security has not been an easy task. It has presented the biggest "change management" challenge of all time. And yet, today, one year after the merger of 22 agencies and 180,000 employees, we can say that the American people are more secure and better prepared than ever before.

Today, where anti-bioagent medications were once drastically undersupplied, we've stockpiled a billion doses of antibiotics and vaccines, including enough smallpox vaccine for every man, woman and child in our country. We have significantly strengthened security at our borders, keeping the doors open to the free flow of trade and travelers, but shut to those who wish us harm. As many of you know, we've taken extensive measures to enhance aviation security. In less than a year, we deployed newly trained screeners, thousands of federal air marshals and state-of-the-art technologies, which, from the curb to the cockpit, have made airline travel safer worldwide.

As you also know, we launched US-VISIT, a universal, transparent, biometrics-based system that speeds the entry of millions of travelers and stops terrorists and criminals in their tracks. Since the program began, more than 150 potential entrants have been matched against the FBI's watch lists. In that same spirit, we have also vastly opened communications channels and are now sharing intelligence information, domestically and internationally, as never before. Globally, thanks both to new information-sharing tools and greater teamwork, more than 3,000 suspected terrorists have been detained in 90 countries. And, finally, among many other initiatives completed in the Department's first year, as I speak, there is now a U.S. inspector in Rotterdam, in Singapore, in Hong Kong, working alongside other inspectors to ensure the safety of cargo and world commerce.

In the coming year, the Department and our partners will be focusing on several strategic priorities -- for example, initiatives that will bolster the global scope of our information sharing capabilities, integrate better service and security into our immigration practices, and drive the development of high technology to combat the weapons of high consequence.

All of our progress, all of our actions, are predicated on the strength we gain by building strong partnerships -- global partnerships that build barriers to terrorists, and build bridges to one another. And not only when it comes to terrorism. Collaborations between our two nations, and others, have greatly improved our ability to combat transnational crimes -- counterfeiting, drug trade, human trafficking, currency violations and more. Our global partnerships have made us all better prepared to address earthquakes, landslides, wildfires, Internet worms, diseases and outbreaks. As you saw here in your Region with SARS, fears and attacks come in many forms, whether wrought by disaster or by design. So how we work together will strengthen our ability to respond together--whatever the crime or crisis might be.

In that spirit, let me say clearly: The United States is particularly sensitive to the historical, constitutional and cultural differences among nations. We are mindful of concerns over the issues of standards and civil liberties with respect to biometrics, machine-readable passports, border security, student visas and other security changes. And that is why we are working closely with our friends in the Asia-Pacific Region, in the European Union and elsewhere, to seek common ground on these important issues. It's why we're working with the State Department and universities to ensure that legitimate students who pose no threat to this country are not delayed upon entry.

Many of the 19 hijackers who perpetrated the attacks of 9-11 had fraudulent visas. SEVIS gives us a tool to "spot and stop" people seeking entry to phony schools. US-VISIT, using the objective science of biometrics, provides for a

stop people seeking entry to priority schools. US-VISIT, using the objective science of biometrics, provides for a universal system that eliminates reliance on the more arbitrary notions of nationality. Technology, after all, presumes no bias. But it can ensure the integrity of our border practices and speed the processing of visitors to our country. It can also build in efficiencies that enhance trade, by giving us the means to speed cargo containers through their trade routes without delay or disruption. Again, security and prosperity are the twin pillars of our global economy; they are inextricably linked. Security is essential to prosperity; so everything we do together to advance these technologies and protective measures also advances the bonds of commerce and community throughout your country and mine, and throughout the world.

Your country has been at the forefront of developing biometrics, and so, the border of the 21st century is essentially already here -- in Singapore. We know that Singapore has done a great deal to look at how better to coordinate its homeland defense. We welcome the collaborations that have grown from a mutual, Regional and global goal we all have to protect our homelands -- and our world. We are grateful for the expertise and assistance you have shared with the United States, and we continue to look forward to the cooperation, networking and strength that will continue to grow from these vital partnerships.

Homeland security is a very human endeavor that is shaped by millions of human decisions and actions -- all across the globe. America knows we cannot seek a double standard. And, America knows we get what we give. And so we must and will always be careful to respect people's privacy, civil liberties and reputations. To suggest that there is a tradeoff between security and individual freedoms -- that we must discard one protection for the other -- is a false choice. You do not defend liberty to forsake it.

It is true: since September 11th, our world has changed. America has changed. But much of what is important remains the same. America is still a welcoming nation that opens her borders to citizens from all over the world. Our promise still rests on a respect for the vast diversity of people and cultures that enrich our lives. Freedom is still the hope of many and terrorism the choice of an embittered few.

For centuries, tyrants and imperialists mistook power as a means to pillage and plunder. People and potentials were squandered at the expense of royal gold and mistaken glory. And, as a result, the history of human folly -- great massacres and human misfortunes -- is written in the textbooks of our time.

But we have learned the lesson of time and events. We have learned that great powers can work together to do great things -- and that challenging times demand nothing less. When it comes to the suppression of terrorism, when it comes to the protection of free peoples of the world, we are all equal to the task.

Winston Churchill once joked of himself: "I am certainly not one of those who need to be prodded. In fact, if anything, I am the prod." In all his greatness, gusto, guidance and guile, he was. And so we all should be. Ideals must have their champions. And in the global community, openness, multiculturalism and freedom have many.

In my country and yours, across Asian nations and throughout the world, we are blessed by the covenant of shared values and shared vigilance. We are both determined and self-determining. So, we will not rest, we will not waiver, we will not relent in the fight against international terrorism.

So much so that years from now, historians will one day tell the story of strong allies and good friends, who in fighting for the freedoms and security of the world, surrendered neither. They will say, that, together, their salvation was their solidarity -- and their solidarity became a force for good throughout the world.

America is proud to join Singapore as full partners, and fond friends, in this cause.

Thank you.