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Remarks by Secretary Rumsfeld at 41st Munich Conference on European Security Policy

Remarks as Delivered by Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, Munich, Saturday, February 12, 2005.

Thank you very much, Horst [Teltschik]. It is good to be back with you. We have had some interesting times in this chamber.

Secretary General Annan, it's good to see you sir. And Secretary-General of NATO. Jaap Hoop de Scheffer. How did I do? Pretty good?

My colleague Minister Peter Struck, it's nice to see you sir.

And fellow ministers, I see all arrayed here fresh from our ministerial meetings in Nice.

Members of the United States Congress who will be soon reviewing our budget, it's always a high privilege to see you, and looking so forthcoming, leaning forward. That's wonderful. Parliamentarians, distinguished officials and friends.

First, let me thank our hosts here in Bavaria for their always very warm hospitality, although I did notice this conference was scheduled away from Fasching. I don't know quite how that happened. It didn't used to be that way.

When I first mentioned that I might be traveling this week to France and Germany, it raised some eyebrows. One wag said. "That ought to be an interesting trip, after all that has been said." I paused and thought for a moment. That was "old Rumsfeld."

Well, it has been forty years since I was a NATO parliamentarian. So I hope you will permit me to make a few personal observations about the enduring relationship that has existed among the nations of this Alliance.

There have been times when it was predicted by the all-knowing pundits that the Atlantic Alliance would crumble, that it would become irrelevant, that it was history. And that is surely what our enemies have wished for. They know that divisions and differences aid their cause. But we know that our collective security depends on our cooperation and mutual respect and understanding.

Since we met last year, consider the historic events that have taken place. And I would say some would not have happened were it not for the contributions of some in this room:

- NATO added seven new members - nations eager to contribute to the Alliance in important ways;
- In Afghanistan, 8 million voters, 40 percent of them women, chose their first democratically elected President in 5,000 years. Think of it. Attending that inauguration with President Karzai was a truly memorable event for me;
- And in the Palestinian Authority, a democratically-elected president offers the hope of a new chance for peace;
- Ukrainians have demonstrated the depth of their commitment to free and fair elections;
- And in Iraq, Saddam Hussein's former subjects voted for the first time with ballots that offered 70 political parties, rather than but one.

I spent Christmas Eve with our forces in Iraq as they were anxiously preparing for those elections. Yesterday was my first trip back to Iraq since the elections a week ago Sunday. I can tell you the Iraqi people are proud of their accomplishment. As well they should be. Even after a suicide bomb went off at a polling station, Iraqis still came to vote. Across the country, voters arrived on crutches and in donkey carts. They passed by posters that threatened: "You vote, you die." But they voted.

On election day, Iraqi security forces protected with an inner perimeter and an outer perimeter more than 5,000 polling stations and they did it well. These are the brave forces that some critics still try to belittle.

Think of the transforming events these elections can have. Braving threats of bombings and beheadings, the Iraqis went out, tentatively. In some cases, they stood around polling places but not going in, waiting to see what others would do and they discovered that they were all there for the same purpose, and eventually they all went in.

For years, under the Iraqi dictator, decent citizens learned to keep their thoughts and their beliefs and their hopes to themselves. Imagine their astonishment to learn that everyone around them felt that very same desire to vote.

That life-changing experience had to give them enormous encouragement and a strong sense of national, as well as, individual identity. And what a damaging blow to the extremists whose ideology the voters were so clearly rejecting.

While there have been differences over Iraq, such issues among longtime friends are not new. Consider just a few of the divisions that have come up among NATO allies over the past decades since I was a parliamentarian in the 1960's:

Remember Skybolt in 1962;

- France's decision to pull out of the NATO integrated command and to ask NATO out of France in the late 60's.

- Henry Kissinger and Michel Jobert debates of the 1970's; Frank, you remember those so well.
- Disagreements about the deployment of Pershing II missiles in the 1980's;
- Differences in approaches as to how the Middle East peace process should be handled, on frequent occasions;

As ambassador to NATO in the 1970's, I can remember having to fly back to Washington to testify before the United States Senate to try to defeat an amendment in the Senate to withdraw all of America's forces from Europe. Think of it - in the middle of the Cold War in the mid-70's. What if we had lost our will?

So our Atlantic Alliance relationship has navigated through some choppy seas over the years. But we have always been able to resolve even the toughest issues. I submit that is because there is so much that unites us: common values, shared histories, and an abiding faith in democracy.

Today, we also share a common enemy. Extremists have targeted all civilized societies: in New York and Washington; Istanbul; Madrid; Beslan; Bali; and so many more.

Radical Islamists do not seek an armistice with the civilized world. They will not negotiate a separate peace. Rather, they seek to impose a totalitarian rule George Orwell described as "a boot stomping on a human face – forever."

By now it must be clear that one nation cannot defeat these extremists alone. Neither can any one nation successfully combat the asymmetric threats of this new era.

It will take the cooperation of many nations to stop the proliferation of dangerous weapons.

It's a global concern, and it requires a global effort. This is why some 60 nations now have joined the Proliferation Security Initiative in an effort to keep deadly weapons from dangerous regimes.

Together, we are having success in dismantling proliferation networks, such as the one directed by the now notorious A.Q. Khan.

German, Italian, British and American authorities confiscated nuclear equipment bound for Tripoli in 2003. Such pressure surely prompted Libya's decision to open its WMD inventories to inspectors.

Building on this collaboration, the U.S. proposed a Global Peace Operations Initiative – another way to work together by helping to train countries for peacekeeping operations and to develop their own defense capabilities.

And it surely takes a community of nations to gather intelligence about extremist networks, to break up financial support lines, or to apprehend suspected terrorists.

These efforts require the contributions of many governments and all elements of national power, not just military but legal, diplomatic, law-enforcement, and intelligence gathering. It is not the work of the military alone.

The arrests of Islamic extremists last month by French and German authorities show the work necessary to win the struggle against extremists. Often quietly, the U.S. and other nations are sharing intelligence, capturing terrorists, and disrupting their finances. And because we work together, some three-quarters of known al-Qaeda leaders have been killed or captured and still others are on the run.

This important work extends beyond the Atlantic alliance, as it should, to a 90-nation coalition that includes old friends on every continent, many here today, and most recently, two new allies with capitals in Kabul and Baghdad.

It will take many nations to help the Afghans and the Iraqis succeed in bringing democracy to places where tyrants ruled and terrorists once trained.

Because we know the value of democracy, we stand with those who freely choose it. In Afghanistan, NATO is leading the International Security Assistance Force. Every NATO nation, I believe, has had personnel in Afghanistan, and more than half of all NATO nations have had forces in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

Our host country, Germany, has been a contributor to Afghanistan's security and reconstruction efforts. At the Marshall Center in nearby Garmisch, the United States and Germany are educating young leaders from Partnership for Peace countries on the challenge of building more modernized militaries and more efficient Ministries of Defense.

Spurred on by such examples, one of NATO's newest members, Lithuania, is taking the leadership of a Provincial Reconstruction Team – joining other European nations in contributing to Afghanistan's stability and progress.

In Iraq, the people are rejecting the ideology of Bin Laden and Zarqawi.

And as the Iraqi people take more steps along what is undoubtedly going to be a challenging road to democracy, more nations are standing with them. A few days ago, at our NATO Defense Ministerial Meeting in Nice, I was struck by the enthusiasm over the democratic experiment in Iraq. Many NATO countries have agreed to help train Iraqi Security Personnel, put together a war college and military academies, and still others to provide funds or send equipment for Iraqi Security Forces.

These are welcome and encouraging signs, and the Iraqi people are grateful. It sends an important message to the extremists: that they are on the wrong side of history.

These are historic times for freedom and democracy. Members of NATO share much more than the Atlantic alliance; we are united by ties and purpose, a heritage of liberty, and a calling to confront

extremists' violence -- and to defeat it.

Sixty years ago, World War II came to an end. Since that time, we have counted on each other in times of peril and challenge. I am old enough to remember both the rise and fall of the Berlin Wall, the rise and collapse of Nazism, and of Soviet Communism as well. Together we have helped to protect Kosovo. And recently we brought aid, as Peter said, to the victims of a devastating tsunami. Great achievements are possible when the Atlantic community is united.

Our unity need not be a uniformity of tactics or views, but rather a union of purpose. And those who cherish free political systems and benefit from free economic systems benefit from them, share similar hopes. And working together, those hopes can be realities for many more who yearn to be free.

As Winston Churchill once said of our Atlantic Alliance: "If we are together, nothing is impossible."

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