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## Speech

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National Press Club

*As Delivered by Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, Washington, DC, Thursday, February 2, 2006*

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I don't know whether to thank him or comment on the introduction. In a sense, he made me sound like I can't hold a job.

It's nice to see these folks at the head table, so many of whom are national security or defense reporters and journalists. Before I begin, I'd like to say that recently we've been reminded of the dangers that journalists face when covering combat. Reporters, of course, have been kidnapped, they've been injured and each is in our prayers.

I'm reminded of a corridor in the Pentagon that pays tribute to journalists -- down near the public affairs office. It recognizes that an informed citizenry is essential to democracy, and that the reporters who inform the American people about the United States military and their activities make a valuable contribution to the nation. They certainly deserve our gratitude -- and our thanks.

This capital city of Washington, D.C. is filled with energetic and industrious free people. Free societies prosper, of course, because generally speaking, we can kind of trust one another to obey laws and we all seem to have similar values and want the best for our families and our country. We go to work, and our children go to school, with a high confidence that we'll all get home safely at the end of the day, and that's not true, of course, in many countries of the world.

But on September 11th, 2001, it called into question that trust and that confidence.

Fifty-two months have passed since 19 men checked into hotels near Boston, New York, and Washington. They carried airline tickets and box cutters. And they waited patiently for the morning of September 11th, 2001.

For a long time after that, Americans worried about flying, they worried about riding a subway, sending their youngsters to schools. Those of us in the Pentagon that day, of course, felt the plane hit the Pentagon and smelled the fire and the thick smoke and probably everyone in this room on one occasion or

another has watched the startling collapse of the World Trade Center and heard the final brave words of those aboard the aircraft over Pennsylvania.

We knew instinctively that the only way we could protect our way of life would be to take the fight to the terrorists. And though we made considerable progress in the years since September 11th, the enemy -- while weakened and under great pressure to be sure -- is still capable of global reach, still possesses the determination to kill more Americans -- and is still trying to do so with increasingly powerful weapons.

Today I want to talk about the war that's being waged -- and discuss the nature of the enemy we face, and about the way ahead for us and probably for a generation to follow.

One way to begin is to note how different this war is from others in the past. There's no draft, there are no war bonds, no victory gardens. The movies don't start with a newsreel showing the latest activities in the war as they did during World War II when I was a young man. Newspapers don't carry maps every day showing the latest allied activity.

Because of the differences in this struggle, there's not the same sense of immediacy as there was in other wars. It's not, to many people, as personal. Yet, the threat today may well prove to be more dangerous than any our country has faced. I say that because the weapons available today are vastly more powerful and more dangerous. We know that the enemy is unrelenting, its attacks indiscriminate, its motivations evil.

Compelled by a militant ideology that celebrates murder and suicide with no territory to defend, with little to lose, they will either succeed in changing our way of life or we'll succeed in changing theirs.

Listen to some of their voices:

- In 1998, Osama bin Laden called the murder of Americans, "an individual duty of every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible;"
- Bin Laden's lieutenant Zawahiri warned: "All Americans in New York and Washington, the losses you are having in Afghanistan and Iraq are only the losses of the initial clashes;"
- And in the U.K., shortly after the 2005 London bombings, a cleric there said: "I would like to see the Islamic flag fly, not only over number 10 Downing Street, but over the whole world."

Unlike America's past conflicts, the enemy is not a nation. It's not even one particular organization. Al Qaeda was the architect of the 9/11 attacks to be sure, but there are others equally dangerous. No fewer than 18 organizations -- loosely affiliated with al Qaeda -- are conducting terrorist acts in Israel, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Somalia, Algeria, Russia, Indonesia and elsewhere. And it seems to me it's worth noting that each of those nations that have been recently attacked by terrorists even though none of those nations have any troops in Iraq. So the argument that Iraq is some sort of a trigger is obviously inconsistent with the facts.

Unlike prior wars, this enemy is often located in countries with which we're not at war -- some of those

countries are friendly to us and some of those countries are not friendly. Some of those countries have military capabilities with considerable capacity to track down terrorists. Other countries -- maybe friendly or not friendly -- lack the military capacity to track down terrorists. Some of those countries govern their territory reasonably well and still others have large ungoverned areas or ..... or border areas where terrorists can operate freely in a safe haven.

Because they cannot defeat our forces on the battlefield, they challenge us through nontraditional, asymmetric or irregular means. Interestingly -- particularly to this audience -- the terrorists have media relations committees. Think of that -- they get up in the morning, have committee meetings and think about how they're going to manipulate the world's press to their advantage. They have repeatedly proven to be highly successful at manipulating the world's -- media here in this country as well as elsewhere and they carefully plan attacks to garner headlines in their effort to try to break our will.

The United States is not going to lose wars or battles with our capabilities out across the globe. The battle -- the true battle -- is a test of will and the battleground -- the battle space -- is less Iraq and less Afghanistan and more here in the United States and the capitals of Western nations. They operate clandestinely on the Internet, in schools and madrassas, through phony charities, front companies and with fake passports and false identities.

Because they lurk in shadows without visible armies and are willing to wait long periods between attacks, there's a tendency to underestimate the threat they pose.

During the 1920's, few people took seriously what some characterized as the mad ravings of a failed painter's book, "Mein Kampf." Similarly, most people earlier ignored the excited utterances of an exiled lawyer a so-called rabble-rouser named Lenin, who had published the pamphlet, "What is to be Done?"

But imagine if we could go back today, knowing what we know now about Adolph Hitler and Lenin, to warn the world about those two individuals before they spawned their movements, and before literally tens of millions of human beings on this earth were victims -- were killed?

Today, we have a similar opportunity. We can read the fatwahs and the plans that have been publicly outlined by bin Laden and his followers. Get on the Internet. You can find them. You can read them. You can see them. It's not a secret. It's not a mystery. And we have an opportunity to take action before those groups grow still stronger and gain even more adherents. But it's up to our generation to listen and to learn and to act, or to be prepared to pay severe penalties.

The enemy's goals should be a mystery to no one.

They seek to take over governments from North Africa to South Asia to re-establish a caliphate they hope, one day, will include every continent. They have designed and distributed a map where national borders are erased and replaced by a global extremist Islamic empire.

Today, they call Iraq the central front in their war against the civilized world. And they hope to turn it into the same sort of haven for training and recruitment that Afghanistan served for the al Qaeda prior to September 11th.

In the words of al Qaeda's second in command, Zawahiri:

[QUOTE] "The first stage: expel the Americans from Iraq. The second stage: establish an Islamic authority. The third stage: extend the jihad." [UNQUOTE]

That is their strategy.

We have a strategy as well.

- First, to use all elements of national power to do everything possible to prevent them from obtaining weapons of mass destruction -- chemical, biological, nuclear.
- Second, to defend our homeland through sharing intelligence, law-enforcement, and more integrated homeland defense; and
- Third, to help friendly nations increase their capabilities to fight terrorism in their own countries.

There's been good progress over the past few years.

There have been successful elections in Afghanistan and Iraq, the mass rejection of terrorist threats and intimidation, the building of institutions of representative governments -- still fragile in both countries, but evolving.

Think what the terrorists tried to do and failed. They tried to stop the election of a president, the first popularly elected president in the 5,000-year history of Afghanistan. They failed to stop the election of a parliament and of provincial leaders in Afghanistan. They tried and failed to stop the election in January 30th of this year in Iraq. They tried to stop the drafting of an Iraqi constitution and failed. They tried to stop the referendum that approved the Iraqi constitution and -- and failed. And they tried to stop the elections that took place on December 15th of last year in Iraq and they failed.

Every day, Afghan and Iraqi forces are gaining in experience and capability. And as we help our friends increase their ability to fight terrorists -- because in the last analysis, it's their task. They will be the ones over time who will succeed in quelling that insurgency. American forces are able to draw down as the capacity and capabilities of these Iraqi forces improve; not just in Iraq and Afghanistan, but elsewhere.

It's important to understand that this is not war between the West and the Muslim world, as extremists would cast it. This is primarily a war within the Muslim world. It's a struggle between the relatively small fringe groups of extremists -- violent extremists -- who seek to hijack an ancient religion against the overwhelming majority of Muslims, who reject those extremist goals.

The vast majority of people in the Middle East do not share the violent ideology of al Qaeda. They hope for a better future for themselves and for their children. They don't want the extremists to prevail.

But they need help. And we need to help to strengthen the moderate Muslim leaders who are battling our common enemy.

Pakistan's President Musharraf recently noted the difference between terrorism and extremism. Terrorism is an act of violence; and it can be combated by military means. Extremism is a state of mind; and it has to be addressed in other ways -- by finding ways to keep extremists from turning into terrorists, by showing them a different way of life.

The transformations that are currently underway in Afghanistan and Iraq have shown those who have been uncertain which side to take in the War on Terror that there is an alternative to dictatorial regimes of the past.

There's an alternative to the kind of regime that existed in Iraq, that put literally hundreds of thousands of dead in mass graves under the regime of Saddam Hussein.

A recent survey shows that a large and growing number of Muslims believe freedom can work in their countries. More than 80 percent of Afghans have a favorable opinion of the United States, and only 5 percent have a favorable opinion of bin Laden. In Iraq, a growing majority wants a representative government. These views are all the more startling when you consider what Iraq and Afghanistan were -- were like before September 11th, 2001.

Consider the recent words of the Lebanese political leader, Walid Jumblatt. He has been from time to time a critic of America, and he made these comments about the liberation of Iraq within the last week.

He said:

[QUOTE] "It's strange for me to say it, but this process of change has started because of the American invasion of Iraq. I was cynical about Iraq. But when I saw the Iraqi people voting three weeks ago -- 8 million of them -- it was the start of a new Arab world."  
[UNQUOTE]

It's no wonder, then, that the terrorist Zarqawi has written of "few supporters, a lack of friends and tough times."

Think back to when the enemy launched this war, stating that we were, in their words, a "paper tiger." They sought to transform the world and make us, "cower." Instead, it is their world that's changing. The only way that terrorists can win this struggle is if we lose our will, and surrender the fight, or think it's not important enough, or in confusion or in disagreement among ourselves give them the time to regroup and reestablish themselves in Iraq or elsewhere.

A decade ago, we celebrated the collapse of the Soviet empire and the end of the Cold War. But that war

-- what President Kennedy called, "a long twilight struggle," -- lasted some 45 years before we saw a hope of victory. In its early decades, the way was uncertain. Allies bickered over tactics. They bickered over strategies. They even bickered over the seriousness of the threat. There were motions in Congress to pull all of our forces out of Europe and -- and concede. Euro-communism became fashionable. It's not really communism, it's Euro-communism, so it's okay.

Then as now, we found ourselves building new organizations to help in our new circumstances. And today, in many ways, we find ourselves echoing the words once spoken by Dwight Eisenhower in the early decades of the Cold War.

He said:

[QUOTE] "We face a hostile ideology -- global in scope... ruthless in purpose, and insidious in method.... to meet it successfully we must carry forward steadily, surely and without complaint the burdens of a prolonged and complex struggle -- with liberty the stake." [UNQUOTE]

And we did.

Once more, history is being written by the valiant men and women of our armed forces. And I would add, by determined American citizens who once again are demonstrating perseverance -- the perseverance needed to win this test of wills.

Thank you very much.

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