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National Security Advisor Dr. Rice Remarks to National Legal Center

Remarks by National Security Advisor Dr. Condoleezza Rice to the National Legal Center for the Public Interest

The Waldorf Astoria Hotel
New York, New York

DR. RICE: Thank you very much. (Applause.) Well, thank you very much. But I just have to say one thing, Bill, I am not one year from my 50th birthday. I am one year, 16 days, and 15 hours from my 50th birthday. (Laughter.) So I have a little longer than one year.

I want to thank my good friend, Judge Webster. When after September 11th, we were trying to figure out some of the issues about how the CIA and the FBI might work better together to make the country more secure, the person that I called first was the person who had actually merged them, Bill Webster. And he came right away and talked about his experiences, both as Director of the FBI and as DCI. And I want to thank you, Bill, for your advice and counsel throughout the years.

I want to thank Ernie Hueter, who has been a good friend for a long time. And your service to this organization and to the country is wonderful. And we honor you tonight, too, for your service. (Applause.)

I'm really pleased to be speaking to this distinguished group. I, too, want to thank you for changing your schedules so that you could join me here. The rule of law is one of the vital foundations of civilization and one of America's defining principles. And it's a central part of what we are and who we are, and it's a central part of what it is that we protect every day. And this organization has been stalwart in discussing the important issues that face us in this area. And so I'm really delighted to be here with you.

It has been more than two years since terrorists made this city -- and our country -- a battleground in the war on terror. It will take years to understand fully the long-term effects of that fateful day, September 11th. But that tragedy brought home to us certain verities in the most vivid way. It crystallized our vulnerability to attacks hatched in distant lands that come without warning, bringing tragedy to our shores. It made clear that sweeping challenges under the rug is not an option. And it laid bare the shortcomings of our and, indeed, the world's approach to terrorism for many years before.

It is now undeniable that the terrorists declared war on America -- and on the civilized world -- many years before September 11th. The attack on the Marine barracks in Lebanon, in 1983; the hijacking of the Achille Lauro, in 1985; the bombing of Pan Am 103, in 1988; of the World Trade Center, in 1993;

attacks on American embassies, in 1998; and the attack on the USS Cole, in 2000 -- these and other atrocities were part of a sustained and systematic campaign for utter devastation and fear. Yet until September 11th, the terrorists faced no sustained and systematic and global response. They became emboldened -- and the result was more terror and more victims.

Since September 11th, the United States and, indeed, the international community have pursued a different strategy. We are taking the fight to the enemy. And as President Bush said to the nation last month, we are finally rolling back the terrorist threat to civilization, not on the fringes of its influence, but at the heart of its power.

This bold strategy is, in fact, emblematic of a larger approach to foreign policy that we now must follow in the wake of September 11th. We live in a time of grave threats to our national security -- to our very national life -- from terrorists, from rogue states, from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. And the gravest threat of all is the potential nexus between them -- the dreadful possibility that terrorists could gain nuclear, biological or chemical weapons from an outlaw regime, thereby realizing their means -- and rationalizing their means to match their hatred.

These threats cannot be ignored or wished away. The only prudent course in the face of such dangers is to meet them head on, without illusions. That is what the administration and our friends, our allies, around the world are doing.

Rooting the Taliban out of Afghanistan was the first battle because the Taliban had provided the home base and primary sanctuary for al Qaeda. Today, that sanctuary is denied to them. Al Qaeda remains a danger, and we continue to pursue its members. Across the globe, unparalleled law enforcement and intelligence cooperation efforts are underway, successfully breaking up cells and disrupting operations. It happens all over the world in many, many different place. Nearly two-thirds of al Qaeda's senior leaders, operational managers, and key facilitators have been captured or killed. And the rest are on the run -- permanently.

Some time, just listen to the stories of the various places in which it happens. Many countries of Europe, in Thailand, in Indonesia, in Pakistan, in Afghanistan, across the world, there is a net, an umbrella of intelligence and law enforcement cooperation that is making a difference.

Confronting Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq was also essential. For 12 years, Saddam Hussein sat in the middle of the world's most volatile region, defying more than a dozen United Nations Security Council resolutions, threatening his people, his neighbors, and the world.

Saddam Hussein twice launched unprovoked invasions of his neighbors. After losing a war of aggression that he began, Saddam's threatening posture toward other Gulf nations -- and his continued oppression of his people -- required the United States and Great Britain to maintain a massive military presence in the Gulf, and to patrol vast no-fly zones for a dozen years to keep him in check. Saddam is the only tyrant of our time, not only to possess weapons of mass destruction, but to use them in acts of mass murder. He maintained ties to terror. He harbored known terrorists within his border, and he subsidized Palestinian suicide bombers. And he remained, until his final days in power, one of the cruelest tyrants of this or of any time. As his killing fields continue to yield up their dead, as

more mass graves are discovered, the world sees fresh evidence of his torture and his oppression of the Iraqi people.

All of this had been well known for more than a decade when President Bush went to the United Nations in September, 2002. The intelligence agencies of most governments agreed on Saddam's capabilities and his appetites. The United Nations and other international organizations had -- again and again -- documented his aggressions against his neighbors, the tortures of the Iraqi people, and the violations of international law. The United Nations Security Council passed resolution after resolution -- 17 in all -- laying out Saddam's obligations to the world and demanding that he comply or face consequences.

Can we really debate the wisdom of removing Saddam Hussein from power and liberating Iraq? Let us be clear: Saddam Hussein was not going to go away of his own accord. For 12 years, he gave every indication that he would never disarm and never comply with the Security Council's just demands. In fact, he mocked those demands and made every effort to circumvent them through massive programs of denial and deception. There was no reason to believe that waiting any longer for him to change his mind was going yield results. The threat, and the challenge, he posed to the international community could not be tolerated any longer.

The choice before the world was stark. Should we have countenanced indefinitely his continued deprivations of the Iraqi people? Should we have stood by indefinitely as more mass graves were dug, more innocent children put into prison? Should we have let Saddam Hussein continue to defy the world and indefinitely, poised in the heart of the Middle East, sit atop a potentially deadly arsenal of terrible weapons, threatening his neighbors?

Those, ladies and gentlemen, were the alternatives. President Bush and a coalition of more than 40 nations chose to act, and the world is both safer and better because they did.

The threat from the proliferation of the world's deadliest weapons and the means to deliver them is another danger that has simmered for years. The traffic in ballistic missile technologies between North Korea and Iran is longstanding. People have known for a long time that the nonproliferation treaty was in trouble from those who would sign it, but easily violate its tenets.

Under President Bush's leadership, the world is taking new action against this old threat. We are working with the international community to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. Thanks in large part to the President's unwillingness to sweep this problem under the rug and his patient yet persistent diplomacy, countries around the world are keeping the pressure on Iran to abandon its nuclear weapons program. And Iran is feeling that pressure, as evidenced by its recent announcement that it will sign the Additional Protocol for the IAEA and suspend its enrichment activities. While we will only be able to judge Iran's compliance by its actions, the firm stand of the United States against proliferation has clearly established a broad consensus that the international community must be proactive in countering this growing threat.

Diplomacy is also yielding results in our dealings with North Korea, a rogue state that for years has been cheating on its agreements to halt all nuclear weapons development. The path of least resistance

would have been for the United States to, once again, engage in bilateral talks with North Korea in hopes of stopping its programs. But this would simply have repeated the experience of the past, when North Korea accepted, and then systematically violated, an agreement offered by the United States in good faith, while gaining the benefits that it, the North Korean regime, sought. President Bush saw from the beginning that there was another way, that Japan, South Korea, China and Russia -- no less than the United States -- all had a vital interest in ensuring that the Korean Peninsula is free of nuclear weapons, and that only close cooperation among all five of these nations could lead to a lasting resolution of the issue. And today all of us are working together to show North Korea that its continued pursuit of nuclear weapons will bring only further isolation.

Building a diplomatic consensus took time. Some believed that such a consensus could never be reached. But today, when the North Koreans come to multiparty talks, they look across the table at a united front of nations opposed to their own nuclear armament. And the North Koreans know that a strategy of divide and conquer is no longer an option.

As we advance a broad non-proliferation agenda, we also recognize that determined proliferators cannot always be stopped by diplomacy alone. But they can be stopped. Through the Proliferation Security Initiative, the United States and 10 global partners have recently approved a Statement of Interdiction Principles and are developing the capability to search planes, ships, trains and trucks carrying suspect cargo, and to seize weapons and equipment that raise proliferation concerns. This initiative will soon be broadened to include new members from across the globe. While all actions will be taken consistent with existing national and international legal authorities, we are also seeking ways to expand those authorities. And it is for this reason that the President proposed in his September address to the United Nations that the Security Council adopt a resolution calling on all states to criminalize proliferation activities, establish effective export controls, and ensure the safety and security of sensitive materials and technologies.

The world has an obligation to confront squarely the threats of our time, and President Bush is determined to meet that obligation. But, of course, we must do more than just confront problems. We also have an historic opportunity to make the world better by fighting poverty, by fighting disease, and by ending hopelessness.

It has always been America's way to try and leave the world, not just safer, but better. And we follow in that great tradition. For years, the world talked of the need for a decisive action to stop the spread of AIDS. President Bush has matched his words with deeds, and by committing the United States to a five-year, \$15-billion emergency plan for AIDS relief, the world will now begin to confront this challenge in a serious way with assistance to developing nations that need it.

For years, there was always talk about the need for greater development assistance to those who are trying to fight their way out of poverty. President Bush stepped forward with a 50% increase in American aid over three years. By linking increased aid to sound policies, the President's plan encourages developing nations to govern justly, to invest in their people, and to support economic freedom. Those who do those things will be eligible for this new assistance. Those who do not cannot be eligible because, ultimately, unless development is a partnership between donor and recipient, nothing of lasting value can be achieved.

And for many years, the world viewed the Middle East as hopelessly mired in conflict and misery -- somehow incapable of liberty, or prosperity, or democracy. President Bush, instead, sees a region of potential, filled with talented and resourceful people who, when blessed with greater political and economic freedom, and better and more modern education, can fully join in the progress of our time.

As the President has said, Iraq is the central front in the war on Terror. But it is also a central front in the international effort to realize the vision of a Middle East that is a center of hope and change, rather than despair and hatred. We are aggressively attacking the Baathist remnants and foreign terrorists. And increasingly, Iraqis are fighting alongside our troops to secure their own freedom. The numbers of Iraqis now risking their lives to defend their nation is over 85,000 and growing. Together, we continue to discover arms caches, thwart attacks, track down killers, and dismantle the terrorist infrastructure.

And we are helping the Iraqi people rebuild their country, reform their economy, and create a road to a representative and democratic government. Success will take time. And recent attacks by Baathist remnants and foreign terrorists show that the enemies of freedom will stop at nothing to prevent the emergence of a free Iraq. We must always remember that every democracy, even our own, is built day-by-day, brick-by-brick. Persistent effort produces something strong and solid.

These achievements do not, of course, come without great sacrifice. Today those sacrifices are being borne by our men and women in uniform, by those of our coalition partners, by international aid workers, and by the Iraqi people. But we must and will stay the course -- because free nations do not sponsor terror, and free nations do not breed hatred.

As we move forward across this broad and ambitious agenda, we must remember that times of the greatest strategic importance are also times of great turbulence. Anyone who has ever built a successful democracy has been through times of turbulence. We here in America have no reason to have false pride in the democracy that we have built over 225 years, if we do not remember the sacrifices and the difficulties that were incurred in building it. When the Founding Fathers said, we the people, they didn't mean me. It's taken us quite a long time to find a way to live up to our principles and our ideals.

And so when we see the people of Iraq, or the people of Afghanistan toiling in the new freedoms, toiling against a dangerous landscape and backdrop of those who would try and kept them from that success, I hope that we will remember that nothing of lasting value is ever won without sacrifice.

It is also the case that great historic changes take time. I well remember serving on the National Security Council staff a dozen years ago, when the Berlin Wall fell, when the Warsaw Pact dissolved, and when the Soviet Union gave way to a free Russia. It was, of course, an exhilarating time to be in government, and I will tell you that I felt some small measure of pride. But that pride quickly gave way to a humble awe for the giants who faced the great challenges of the post-World War II moment - Truman and Marshall and Acheson and Kennan.

These men -- in the most uncertain of times, amidst often noisy acrimony -- made decisions that bore fruit only decades later. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, my colleagues and I were lucky enough to reap the harvest that they had sown.

That harvest, a safer, freer, better world, is no less our hope for today's moment of decision and challenge. That that we do today with our allies and our friends will take years to fully realize a vision and a completion. It will require a commitment of many years. But if done well, the march of freedom and security and safety and prosperity will continue. And it will continue because America has chosen, again, to lead. The effort will take time, but the wait will be worth it.

Thank you very much.

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