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Meeting the Challenge of the War on Terrorism

The Honorable Richard B. Cheney

Thank you all very much. And, Ed [Heritage Foundation President Edwin J. Feulner], thank you for the welcome and for allowing me to be here this morning to see so many old friends in the room, including distinguished scholars and writers whose work I've admired for years. The Heritage Foundation sets a very high standard of scholarship and public advocacy. In my various jobs over the years—as Congressman, Secretary of Defense, and now Vice President—I've benefited greatly from the work done in this building. I want to thank all of you for what you do for all of us.

All of you are serious observers of public affairs, especially in matters of national security. And that's why I've come here this morning to discuss the war on terror, the choices America has made in that war, and the choices still before us.

For most of this year, the attention of the world has centered on Iraq. From the final ultimatum to Saddam Hussein last March, to the removal of his regime, and on up to the present, as we continue to battle with Saddam loyalists and foreign terrorists. Iraq has become the central front in the war on terror. It was crucial that we enforced the U.N. Security Council resolutions. Now, having liberated that country, it is crucial that we keep our word to the Iraqi people, helping them to build a secure country and a democratic government. And we will do so.

Our mission in Iraq is a great undertaking and part of a larger mission that the United States accepted now more than two years ago. September 11, 2001, changed everything for this country. We came to rec-

- In the post-9/11 era, certain risks are unacceptable. The United States made our position clear: We could not accept the grave danger of Saddam Hussein and his terrorist allies turning weapons of mass destruction against us or our friends and allies.
- Inspectors have determined that: "Iraq's WMD programs spanned more than two decades, involved thousands of people, billions of dollars and were elaborately shielded by security and deception operations that continued even beyond the end of Operation Iraqi Freedom."
- On every front in the war on terror, the United States has cooperated with friends and allies, and with others who recognize the common threat we face. The United States is committed to multilateral action wherever possible. Ultimately, however, America must be in charge of her own national security.
- The U.S.-led coalition is helping Iraqis to build a secure, hopeful and self-governing nation which will stand as an example of freedom to all the Middle East.

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ognize our vulnerability to the threats of the new era. We saw the harm that 19 evil men could do, armed with little more than airline tickets and box cutters and driven by a philosophy of hatred. We lost some 3,000 innocent lives that morning, in scarcely two hours' time.

Since 9/11, we've learned much more about what these enemies intend for us. One member of al-Qaeda said 9/11 was the "beginning of the end of America." And we know to a certainty that terrorists are doing everything they can to gain even deadlier means of striking us. From the training manuals we found in the caves of Afghanistan to the interrogations of terrorists that we've captured, we have learned of their ambitions to develop or acquire chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons. And if terrorists ever do acquire that capability—on their own or with help from a terror regime—they will use it without the slightest constraint of reason or morality.

That possibility, the ultimate nightmare, could bring devastation to our country on a scale we have never experienced. Instead of losing thousands of lives, we might lose tens of thousands, or even hundreds of thousands of lives in a single day of war. Remembering what we saw on the morning of 9/11, and knowing the nature of these enemies, we have as clear a responsibility as could ever fall to government: We must do everything in our power to keep terrorists from ever acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

This great and urgent responsibility has required a shift in national security policy. The strategy of deterrence, which served us so well during the decades of the Cold War, will no longer do. Our terrorist enemy has no country to defend, no assets to destroy in order to discourage an attack. Strategies of containment will not assure our security, either. There is no containing terrorists who will commit suicide for the purposes of mass slaughter. There is also no containing a terror state that secretly passes along deadly weapons to a terrorist network. There is only one way to protect ourselves against catastrophic terrorist violence, and that is to destroy the terrorists before they can launch further attacks against the United States.

Sustained Campaign of Terrorism

For many years prior to 9/11, it was the terrorists who were on the offensive. We treated their repeated attacks against Americans as isolated incidents and answered, if at all, on an ad hoc basis, and rarely in a systematic way. There was the attack on the Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983, killing 241 men; the bombing of the World Trade Center, in 1993; five more murders when the Saudi National Guard Training Center in Riyadh was struck in 1995; the killings at Khobar Towers in 1996; the East Africa Embassy bombings in 1998; and in 2000, the attack on the USS *Cole*.

There was a tendency to treat incidents like these as individual criminal acts to be handled primarily through law enforcement. Ramzi Yousef, who perpetrated the first attack on the World Trade Center is the best case in point. The U.S. government tracked him down, arrested him and got a conviction. After he was sent off to serve a 240 year sentence, some might have thought, "case closed." But the case was not closed.

The leads were not successfully followed, the dots were not adequately connected, the threat was not recognized for what it was. For al-Qaeda, the World Trade Center attack in 1993 was part of a sustained campaign. Behind that one man, Ramzi Yousef, was a growing network with operatives inside and outside the United States, waging war against our country. For us, that war started on 9/11. For them, it started years ago, when Osama bin Laden declared war on the United States. In 1996, Khalid Sheik Mohammad, the mastermind of 9/11 and the uncle of Ramzi Yousef, first proposed to bin Laden that they use hijacked airliners to attack targets in the U.S. During this period, thousands of terrorists were trained at al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan.

Since September 11th, the terrorists have continued their attacks in Riyadh, Casablanca, Mombasa, Bali, Jakarta, Najaf, and Baghdad.

New, Global U.S. Strategy

Against this kind of determined, organized, ruthless enemy, America requires a new strategy—not merely to prosecute a series of crimes, but to conduct a global campaign against the terror network. Our strategy has several key elements. We've

strengthened our defenses here at home, organizing the government to protect the homeland. But a good defense is not enough. We are going after the terrorists wherever they plot and plan. Of those known to be directly involved in organizing the attacks of 9/11, most are now in custody or confirmed dead. The leadership of al-Qaeda has sustained heavy losses. They will sustain more.

We are also dismantling the financial networks that support terror, a vital step never before taken. The hidden bank accounts, the front groups, the phony charities are being discovered and the assets seized, to starve terrorists of the money that makes it possible for them to operate.

Our government is also working closely with intelligence services all over the globe, including those of governments not traditionally considered friends of the United States.

And we are applying the Bush doctrine: Any person or government that supports, protects or harbors terrorists is complicit in the murder of the innocent and will be held to account.

The first to see this doctrine in application were the Taliban, who ruled Afghanistan by violence, while turning the country into a training camp for terrorists. With fine allies at our side, we took down the regime and shut down the al-Qaeda camps. Our work there continues—confronting Taliban and al-Qaeda remnants, training a new Afghan army, and providing security as the new government takes shape. Under President Karzai's leadership, and with the help of our coalition, the Afghan people are building a decent and just society—a nation fully joined in the war on terror.

In Iraq, we took another essential step in the war on terror. The United States and our allies rid the Iraqi people of a murderous dictator, and rid the world of a menace to our future peace and security. Saddam Hussein had a lengthy history of reckless and sudden aggression. He cultivated ties to terror—hosting the Abu Nidal organization, supporting terrorists, making payments to the families of suicide bombers in Israel. He also had an established relationship with al-Qaeda, providing training to al-Qaeda members in the areas of poisons, gases, making conventional bombs. Saddam built, possessed and used weapons of mass destruction. He refused or evaded all international demands to account for those weapons.

Twelve years of diplomacy, more than a dozen Security Council resolutions, hundreds of U.N. weapons inspectors, thousands of flights to enforce the no-fly zones, and even strikes against military targets in Iraq—all of these measures were tried to compel Saddam Hussein's compliance with the terms of the 1991 Gulf War cease-fire. All of these measures failed.

Last October, the United States Congress voted overwhelmingly to authorize the use of force in Iraq. Last November, the U.N. Security Council passed a unanimous resolution finding Iraq in material breach of its obligations, and vowing serious consequences in the event Saddam Hussein did not fully and immediately comply. When Saddam Hussein failed even then to comply, our coalition acted to deliver those serious consequences. In that effort, the American military acted with speed and precision and skill. Once again, our men and women in uniform have served with honor, reflecting great credit on themselves and on the United States of America.

Unacceptable Risks

In the post-9/11 era, certain risks are unacceptable. The United States made our position clear: We could not accept the grave danger of Saddam Hussein and his terrorist allies turning weapons of mass destruction against us or our friends and allies. And, gradually, we are learning the details of his hidden weapons programs. This work is being carried out under the direction of Dr. David Kay, a respected scientist and former U.N. inspector who is leading the weapons search in Iraq.

Dr. Kay's team faces an enormous task. They have yet to examine more than a hundred large conventional weapons arsenals—some of which cover areas larger than 50 square miles. Finding comparatively small volumes of extremely deadly materials hidden in these vast stockpiles will be time-consuming and difficult. Yet, Dr. Kay and his team are making progress, and have compiled an interim report, portions of which were declassified last week. Let me read to you a couple of passages from Dr. Kay's testimony to Congress, which deserve closer attention.

He notes:

> Iraq's WMD programs spanned more than two decades, involved thousands of people, billions of dollars and were elaborately shielded by security and deception operations that continued even beyond the end of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Dr. Kay further stated,

> We have discovered dozens of WMD-related program activities and significant amounts of equipment that Iraq concealed from the United Nations during the inspections that began in late 2002. The discovery of these deliberate concealment efforts has come about both through the admissions of Iraqi scientists and officials concerning information they deliberately withheld, as well as through physical evidence of equipment and activities that the Iraq survey group has discovered [that] should have been declared to the United Nations.

Among the items Dr. Kay and his team have already identified are the following:

- a clandestine network of laboratories and safe houses within the Iraqi intelligence service that contained equipment suitable for continuing chemical and biological weapons research;
- a prison laboratory complex, possibly used in human testing of biological weapons agents, that Iraqi officials were explicitly ordered not to declare to the United Nations;
- reference strains of biological organisms, concealed in a scientist's home, one of which can be used to produce biological weapons;
- new research on BW-applicable agents, Brucella and Congo Crimean Hemorrhagic Fever, and continuing work on ricin and aflatoxin, which has not been declared to the United Nations;
- documents and equipment hidden in scientists' homes that would have been useful in resuming uranium enrichment by centrifuge and electromagnetic isotope separation;
- a line of unmanned aerial vehicles, not fully declared, and an admission that they had been tested out to a range of 500 kilometers—350 kilometers beyond the legal limit imposed by the U.N. after the Gulf War;
- plans and advanced design work for new long-range ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges capable of striking targets throughout the Middle East, which were prohibited by the U.N. and which Saddam sought to conceal from the U.N. weapons inspectors;
- clandestine attempts between late 1999 and 2002 to obtain from North Korea technology related to 1,300-kilometer range ballistic missiles, 300-kilometer range anti-ship cruise missiles and other prohibited military equipment.

Ladies and gentlemen, each and every one of these finding confirms a material breach by the former Iraqi regime of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441. Taken together, they constitute a massive breach of that unanimously passed resolution and provide a compelling case for the use of force against Saddam Hussein.

Critics' Arguments

Even as more evidence is found of Saddam's weapons programs, critics of our action in Iraq continue to voice other objections. And the arguments they make are helping to frame the most important debate of the post-9/11 era.

Some claim we should not have acted because the threat from Saddam Hussein was not imminent. Yet, as the President has said, "Since when have terrorists and tyrants announced their intentions, politely putting us on notice before they strike?" I would remind the critics of the fundamental case the President has made since September 11th. Terrorist enemies of our country hope to strike us with the most lethal weapons known to man. And it would be reckless in the extreme to rule out action, and save our worries, until the day they strike. As the President told Congress earlier this year, if threats from terrorists and terror states are permitted to fully emerge, "all actions, all words and all recriminations would come too late."

That is the debate, that is the choice set before the American people. And as long as George W. Bush is President of the United States, this country will not permit gathering threats to become certain tragedies.

Critics of our national security policy have also argued that to confront a gathering threat is simply

to stir up hostility. In the case of Saddam Hussein, his hostility to our country long predates 9/11, and America's war on terror. In the case of the al-Qaeda terrorists, their hostility has long been evidenced. And year after year, the terrorists only grew bolder in the absence of forceful response from America and other nations. Weakness and drift and vacillation in the face of danger invite attacks. Strength and resolve and decisive action defeat attacks before they can arrive on our soil.

Another criticism we hear is that the United States, when its security is threatened, may not act without unanimous international consent. Under this view, even in the face of a specific, stated, agreed-upon danger, the mere objection of even one foreign government would be sufficient to prevent us from acting. This view reflects a deep confusion about the requirements of our national security. Though often couched in high-sounding terms of unity and cooperation, it is a prescription for perpetual disunity and obstructionism. In practice, it would prevent our own country from acting with friends and allies, even in the most urgent circumstance.

To accept the view that action by America and our allies can be stopped by the objection of foreign governments that may not feel threatened, is to confer undue power on them, while leaving the rest of us powerless to act in our own defense. Yet we continue to hear this attitude in arguments in our own country. So often, and so conveniently, it amounts to a policy of doing exactly nothing.

In Afghanistan, in Iraq, on every front in the war on terror, the United States has cooperated with friends and allies, and with others who recognize the common threat we face. More than 50 countries are contributing to peace and stability in Iraq today—including most of the world's democracies—and more than 70 are with us in Afghanistan. The United States is committed to multilateral action wherever possible. Yet this commitment does not require us to stop everything, and neglect our own defense merely on the say-so of a single foreign government. Ultimately, America must be in charge of her own national security.

Choosing Action

This is the debate before the American people, and it is of more than academic interest. It comes down to a choice between action that assures our security and inaction that allows dangers to grow. And we can see the consequences of these choices in real events. The contrast is greatest on the ground in Iraq. Had the United States been constrained by the objections of some, the regime of Saddam Hussein would still rule Iraq, his statues would still stand, and his sons would still be running the secret police. Dissidents would still be in prison, the apparatus of torture and rape would still be in place, and the mass graves would be undiscovered. We must never forget the kind of man who ran that country, and the depravity of his regime.

Last month, Bernard Kerik, the former police commissioner of New York, returned from Iraq after spending four months helping to activate and stand up a new national police force. Bernie Kerik tells of many things he saw, including the videos of interrogations in which the victim is blown apart by a hand grenade. Another video, as he describes it shows: "Saddam sitting in an office, allowing two Doberman Pinschers to eat alive a general because he did not trust his loyalty."

Those who declined to support the liberation of Iraq would not deny the evil of Saddam Hussein's regime. They must concede, however, that had their own advice been followed, that regime would rule Iraq today.

President Bush declined the course of inaction, and the results are there for all to see. The torture chambers are empty, the prisons for children are closed, the murderers of innocents have been exposed, and their mass graves have been uncovered. The regime is gone, never to return. And despite difficulties we knew would occur, the Iraqi people prefer liberty and hope to tyranny and fear.

Building an Example of Freedom

Our coalition is helping them to build a secure, hopeful and self-governing nation which will stand as an example of freedom to all the Middle East. We are rebuilding more than a thousand schools, supplying and reopening hospitals, rehabilitating power plants, water and sanitation facilities, bridges and airports. We are training Iraqi police, border guards and a new army, so that the Iraqi people can assume full responsibility for their own security. Iraq now has its own Governing Council, has appointed interim government ministers, and is

moving toward the drafting of a new constitution and free elections.

The contrast of visions is evident as well throughout the region. Had we followed the counsel of inaction, the Iraqi regime would still be a menace to its neighbors and a destabilizing force in the Middle East. Today, because we acted, Iraq stands to be a force for good in the Middle East.

Comparing both sides of the debate, we can see certain consequences for the world beyond the Middle East, consequences with direct implications for our own security. If Saddam Hussein were in power today there would still be active terror camps in Iraq, the regime would still be allowing terrorist leaders into the country, and this ally of terrorists would still have a hidden biological weapons program capable of producing deadly agents on short notice. There would be today, as there was six months ago, the prospect of the Iraqi dictator providing weapons of mass destruction, or the means to make them, to terrorists for the purpose of attacking America.

Today we do not face this prospect. There are terrorists in Iraq, yet there is no dictator to protect them, and we are dealing with them one by one. Terrorists have gathered in that country and there they will be defeated. We are fighting this evil in Iraq so we do not have to fight it on the streets of our own cities.

The current debate over America's national security policy is the most consequential since the early days of the Cold War and the emergence of a bipartisan commitment to face the evils of communism. All of us now look back with respect and gratitude on the great decisions that set America on the path to victory in the Cold War and kept us on that path through nine presidencies. I believe that one day, scholars and historians will look back on our time and pay tribute to our 43rd President, who has both called upon and exemplified the courage and perseverance of the American people. In this period of extraordinary danger, President Bush has made clear America's purposes in the world, and our determination to overcome the threats to our liberty and our lives.

Sometimes history presents clear and stark choices. We have come to such a moment. Those who bear the responsibility for making those choices for America must understand that while action will always carry cost, measured in effort and sacrifice, inaction carries heavy costs of its own. As in the years of the Cold War, much is asked of us and much rides on our actions. A watching world is depending on the United States of America. Only America has the might and the will to lead the world through a time of peril, toward greater security and peace. And as we've done before, we accept the great mission that history has given us.

—The Honorable Richard B. Cheney is Vice President of the United States.