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Presenter: Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz

Sunday, January 16, 2005

Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz Interview with Tempo

Jakarta, Indonesia

TEMPO INTERVIEWER: So, let me ask about the future plan of the lateral relationship between the two countries in President Bush's second term. Could you explain a little bit to us?

DEPUTY SECRETARY WOLFOWITZ: I think that Indonesia is important in its own right. It's such a big country, and it's I think made some impressive achievements in the last seven years since this, it was called I think an "economic tsunami" that hit Indonesia, and you started really for the first time in your history a real democracy under the worst possible economic conditions. Some people predicted that the country would fall apart, and dictators would come back, and here the economy's starting to grow again and you've had two consecutive presidential elections, successful ones. It's very important I think, from my country's point of view to encourage that success. But it's even more important when one stops for a minute and realizes that Indonesia is the largest Muslim population of any country in the world, and at the same time a country that, so there's an opportunity, among other things, to demonstrate, which I think is important, that freedom and democracy are something that I think are universal values. I think it would have, President Bush has made it very clear we believe it's an important movement to encourage in the Muslim world as a whole. But, particularly I'd say because Indonesia has such a strong tradition of religious tolerance. Officially you recognize five different religions, it's, the world needs more good examples of tolerant societies, and this is a tolerant society. We think that's something that is good for the world and good for my country, so we want to support that.

TEMPO INTERVIEWER: On the second term, could you elaborate what is the main focus on the next period?

DEPUTY SECRETARY WOLFOWITZ: In, clearly one of the important things the President wants to focus on is continuing the progress that's been made in rooting out global terrorist networks and getting governments out of the business of supporting terrorism. But he also particularly with a very important speech he made in I think it was November of 2003 where he talked about, it's called the Greater Middle East Initiative, and he talked about the need for supporting democratic reform in the Muslim world and particularly in the Arab world. And he was, actually as, for President, fairly frank and critical about our failure to do that in the past and our too willingness to accept dictatorships in Arab countries as somehow serving American interests or this was the best that Arabs can do. I believe strongly it doesn't serve American interests, and I think Arabs can do much better than that. So, and that if you want to demonstrate a better alternative to what the radicals are offering, I think the real alternative is freedom and democracy. I think that President believes that.

Another thing he's made clear is he intends to put a lot of his own political capital into pushing toward an Israeli-Palestinian resolution. And he's made it clear for a couple of years now his belief that the solution to that is two states, Israel and Palestine, at peace with one another. But, it's not much of a secret that Yasser Arafat seemed to be a leader who wasn't willing or able to agree to anything. And now Palestine has, or the Palestinians, not yet Palestine, but the Palestinians have a new leader with an electoral mandate and I think a willingness to negotiate. Even Ariel Sharon is taking on some difficult challenges with his own extremists to pull Israelis out of Gaza and out of four settlements on the West Bank. So, that's, there's the opportunity there and that's what the President has said about expending his political capital to try to move forward on that issue. I think those are areas where major emphasis will be placed.

TEMPO INTERVIEWER: Do you think it will reach a mass-collision in Palestine because you know an up-coming event you know is a road map, so some people say that yes, Arafat is a moderate people, I mean maybe then the new Palestinian leader?

DEPUTY SECRETARY WOLFOWITZ: I guess we'll have to see, but I don't think so. I mean I think, I think Mahmoud Abbas is, has shown much more willingness to come to some kind of reasonable settlement. I, one hopes that he's got the strength to do it. You know, it's, Sharon isn't the most likely candidate to be promoting any kind of peace. Yet if he does it, it gets done. It's like Nixon going to China. Sometimes it takes someone doing something that's politically unusual, but we'll just have to see. But what I have no doubt about is President Bush believes that the Americans have a big stake in this, and he intends to play a significant role in pushing it.

TEMPO INTERVIEWER: But yesterday Sharon cut all ties with all Palestinians at all levels.

DEPUTY SECRETARY WOLFOWITZ: Things are gonna, you know, go back and forth. This is not something that's going to be. . .

TEMPO INTERVIEWER: . . .that may be permanent. . .

DEPUTY SECRETARY WOLFOWITZ: . . .solved simply. A friend of mine once said that nothing in the Middle East goes in a straightforward way. It's always a zig and a zag, so I'm not going to comment on the latest zig or the zag. And these are difficult issues and sometimes difficult people. Often difficult people. But, the stakes are enormous, and the fact is that more and more I think people are beginning to say there's really only one outcome, and you can argue a little bit about whether the border's 10 km this way or 10 km that way. But, the Palest, I mean Israelis have stopped denying that there is a Palestinian people and with a right to a Palestinian state. Most Palestinians, I think, are accepting the fact that like it or not, Israel's going to exist. One of the big challenges is going to be to convince the Israelis that the Palestinians are going to give up or control terrorism. And the problem on the Israeli side is to deal with the problems that have been caused by the, not problems that have been caused, but the obstacles that have been created by all the settlement activity. It's not simple. If it were simple, it wouldn't. . .

TEMPO INTERVIEWER: Yeah, it's a long way yet, yeah?

DEPUTY SECRETARY WOLFOWITZ: Yeah, but there's an opportunity now, and the President's made it clear he's going to try to take advantage of it.

TEMPO INTERVIEWER: How about the fight against terrorism? Do you think that Indonesia was good cooperation than before? I mean, right now, even our neighbors Thailand say that this is the house of the terrorists, so, what do you think about this?

DEPUTY SECRETARY WOLFOWITZ: I didn't know they say that. I wouldn't call Germany the house of the terrorists even though many of the 9/11 terrorists came out of Hamburg in Germany. I mean, it doesn't take very many of these people hiding in a country to do a lot of damage. I think at least ever since the horrible bombing in Bali I think Indonesians have recognized that these people are not just our enemies, they're your enemies. I think your government is working hard to deal with that problem. Again, I hate to repeat myself, this isn't a simple one either, and we, both of us face the challenge that we're free and open societies. You didn't used to be, but you are now. And terrorists have to be pursued within the limits of the law. But, I think it's very important to make sure that they are pursued because these people are out to destroy everything that Indonesians believe in and everything Americans believe in. They would like nothing better than to create societies in which people are taken back to the Middle Ages. It's just, it's, they're very twisted minds.

TEMPO INTERVIEWER: Excuse me for my question, but I have to make a clarification because some Muslims in Indonesia have the thinking that in the second term in the Bush Cabinet there is another war after Iraq. So, do you think that it will happen during the next period? And, I'm sorry, they accuse you as a man of war. Of course I don't believe this statement, but they said so because they say that you were behind these wars, just like?

DEPUTY SECRETARY WOLFOWITZ: Well, I don't, I'm, I don't think any of us feel that the war in Afghanistan was a mistake or that the war in Iraq was a mistake. But, I think they also ought to think about the fact that the war in Iraq was really started fifteen years ago by Saddam Hussein when he invaded Kuwait, and he never really stopped being at war with us and with Saudi Arabia, and with Kuwait. Part of that was this support for terrorism, and part of it was the games that he was playing with the U.N. inspections. It's still a bit of a mystery exactly what was going on, but he disobeyed one resolution after another. War is a terrible thing even when it's the right thing to do as it was in Afghanistan or it was in Iraq, and none of us, none of us want wars. I certainly hope that there isn't another war in the second Bush Administration. But, there are certain terrible people in the world who may sometimes only behave for that reason. I think that the reason Mu'ammar Qadhafi agreed to give up his weapons of mass destruction was because he saw what happened to Saddam Hussein. I would never want to reassure people like that that they're completely safe.

But look, the real way ahead is through what I think is an impressive movement throughout the Arab world toward political reform. You read in places like Egypt and Saudi Arabia about people talking openly about democracy in a way they never did before. In places like Morocco, they actually have made real political reforms. When Iraq succeeds, and it's going to succeed, in spite of the most brutal terrorism, it's going to show to its neighbors in Iran and Syria that there's a much better way to live as Arabs and Muslims than living under terrible dictators, and I think it's going to have a big effect on them, and a lot of change can happen without wars. A lot of change happened in this part of the world without any wars. I just maybe end with that when I started getting deeply involved in Asian affairs, it was when I in the State Department twenty-two years ago. And at that time, Japan was the only democracy in East Asia. Think about it. And since that, I'm proud that I had a little bit to do with helping the Philippines get an election that got rid of Ferdinand Marcos. And then, the Koreans had an election that started a democratic government in Korea. And then Taiwan had a democracy, and then somewhere in, I guess you'd say probably the early-90's, Thailand really ended its coups, and then in 1998, Indonesia became a democracy. That's a lot of progress and not a single war. So, I think a lot can happen without wars. Believe me, I'm not, I don't like wars at all. Thank you very much.?

TEMPO INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much.

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