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Council on Foreign Relations

Remarks as Delivered by Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, New York City, New York, Monday, October 4, 2004.

Thank you very much, Lou, ladies and gentlemen, Pete, David, Richard. It's good to be back here, and as before it's a very full crowd in a small room, tightly packed in. So I thank all of you for being here as well.

Now, last month we observed the third anniversary of the day that awakened our country to a new world, a day that extremists killed so many innocent men, women and children. Thursday will mark the third anniversary of the commencement of Operation Enduring Freedom, when America resolved to take the battle to the extremists, and we attacked the al Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan. Three years into the global war on terror, some understandably ask, "Is the world better off? Is our country safer?" They're fair questions, and today I want to address them by taking a look at the last three years at what the world looked like then, compared to what we find today, and what has been accomplished, and to be sure what remains to be done.

It's been said that the global struggle against extremism will be the task of a generation, a war that could go on for years -- I should say will likely go on for years, much like the Cold War, which of course lasted for decades. We look back at the Cold War now as a great victory for freedom, and indeed it was. But the 50-year span of battle between the free world and the Soviet empire was filled with division, uncertainty, self-doubt, setbacks and indeed failures along the way as well as successes. Territories were seized, wars were fought. There were many times when the enemy seemed to have the upper hand. Remember when euro-communism was in vogue, when the West considered withdrawing. I was ambassador to NATO in the early '70s and had to fly back to testify against an amendment in the Senate to withdraw all of our troops back in the '70s. And a lot of people from time to time over that long span considered withdrawing from the struggle exhausted. The strategies varied -- from co-existence to containment to detente to confrontation. Alliances wavered. In NATO there were disputes over diplomatic policy, weapons deployments, military strategies, the stance against the Soviets.

In the 1960s, France pulled out of the military organization of NATO and asked NATO out of France. In America, columnists and editorialists questioned and doubted U.S. policies. There were vocal showings of support for communist Russia, marches against military build-up, proposed freezes -- even

instances where American citizens saw their own government challenges as warmongers and aggressors. Clearly many did not always take seriously the challenge posed by communism or the Soviet appetite for empire. But our country, under leaders of both political parties over a sustained period of time, and with our allies, again of mixed political parties over time, showed perseverance and resolve.

Year after year they fought for freedom. They dared to confront what many thought might be an unbeatable foe, and eventually the Soviet regime collapsed.

That lesson has to be relearned throughout the ages, it seems, the lesson that weakness can be provocative. It can entice people into doing things they otherwise would avoid, that a refusal to confront gathering dangers can increase rather than reduce future peril. That while there are risks to acting, to be sure, there also can be risks to not acting, and that victory ultimately comes to those who are purposeful and steadfast. It's with those lessons in mind that the president and a historic coalition of some 80 or 85 countries have sought to confront a new and perhaps even more dangerous enemy, an enemy without a country or a conscience, and an enemy who seeks no armistice or truce -- with us or with the civilized world.

From the outset of this conflict it was clear that our coalition had to go on the offense against terrorists. The goals included the need to pursue terrorists and their regimes that provide them aid and comfort, havens; to establish relationships with new allies and bolster international coalitions to prosecute the war; to improve considerably America's homeland defense; and to advance freedom and democracy, and to work with moderate leaders to undermine terrorism's ideological foundation.

In the last three years progress has been made in each of these areas. Four years ago al Qaeda was already a growing danger well before 9/11. Terrorists had been attacking American interests for years. The leader, Osama bin Laden, was safe and sheltered in Afghanistan. His network was dispersed around the world. Three years later, more than two thirds of al Qaeda's key members and associates have been detained, captured or killed. Osama bin Laden is on the run. Many of his key associates are behind bars or dead. His financial lines have been reduced, but not closed down. And I suspect he spends a good deal of every day avoiding being caught.

Once controlled by extremists, Afghanistan today is led by Hamid Karzai, who is helping to lead the world in support of moderates against the extremists. Soccer stadiums in Kabul, once used for public executions under the Taliban, today are used for soccer.

Three years ago in Iraq, Saddam Hussein and his sons brutally ruled a nation in the heart of the Middle East. Saddam was attempting regularly to kill American air crews and British air crews that were enforcing the northern and southern no-fly zones. He ignored more than a dozen U.N. Security Council resolutions, and was paying some \$25,000 to the families of suicide bombers to encourage and reward them.

Three years later, Saddam Hussein is a prisoner awaiting trial by the Iraqis, his sons are dead, most of his senior associates are in custody. Some 100,000 trained and equipped Iraqis now provide security for their fellow citizens. Under the new prime minister, Mr. Allawi, and his team, Iraq is a new nation, a

nation determined to fight terrorists and build a peaceful society.

And Libya has gone from being a nation that sponsored terrorists and secretly sought a nuclear capability to one that has renounced its illegal weapon programs, and now says that it's ready to reenter the community of civilized nations.

The rogue Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan's nuclear proliferation network was providing lethal assistance to nations such as Libya and North Korea today has been exposed and dismantled, and is no longer in operation.

Pakistan three and a half or four years ago was close to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Today under President Musharraf, Pakistan is working effectively and closely with the global coalition against terrorism. Thanks to the coalition, terrorist safe havens have been reduced, major training camps have been eliminated. Their financial support structures have been attacked and disrupted, and intelligence and military cooperation with countries all around the world has dramatically increased.

NATO is now leading the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, and is helping to train Iraqi security forces. This is an historic move for NATO. Not only is it out of the NATO treaty area, but it's out of Europe this activity on their part. The U.N. has taken a role in helping the free elections in both Afghanistan and Iraq, which are coming up very soon in Afghanistan later this week, and we anticipate in Iraq in January.

And over 60 countries have expressed support for an effort to halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Here at home the demands of the global war on terror have accelerated the need to transform our armed forces, and to undertake an increasingly complex array of missions around the world. We've increased the size of the active duty army by about 30,000 troops, and we're reorganizing it into more agile, lethal and deployable brigades with enough protection, fire power and logistics assets to sustain themselves. And we're increasing the number of these brigades from currently 33 to 43 or possibly 48 over the coming two and a half to three years. We're re-training and re-structuring the active and reserve components to achieve a more appropriate distribution of skill sets, to improve the total force responsiveness to crises, and so that individual Reservists and Guardsmen will mobilize less often for shorter periods of time, and with somewhat more predictability.

We're increasing the ability of the branches of the armed services to work seamlessly together. Joint operations are no longer an exception. They must become the rule. Communications and intelligence activities have been improved in the department. We've significantly expanded the capabilities and missions of the special operations forces and much more.

Since the global war on terror began, we have sought to undercut the extremists' efforts to attract new recruits. The world has been divided between regions where freedom and democracy have been nurtured and other areas where people have been abandoned to dictatorship or tyranny. Yet today the talk on the street in Baghdad and Kabul is about coming elections and self-government. In Afghanistan over

10 million people have registered to vote in this month's election. They estimate that some 41.4 percent of them are women. Iraq has an interim constitution that includes a bill of rights and an independent judiciary. There are municipal councils in almost every major city and most towns and villages and provincial councils for the provinces.

Iraqis now are among those allowed to say and write and watch and listen to whatever they want, whenever they want. And I sense that governments and people in the Middle East are taking note of that. Have there been setbacks in Afghanistan and Iraq? You bet. It is often on some bad days not a pretty picture at all. In fact, it can be dangerous and ugly. But the road from tyranny to freedom has never been peaceful or tranquil. On the contrary, it's always been difficult and dangerous. It was difficult for the United States. It was difficult with respect to Germany and Japan and Italy.

The enemy cannot defeat the coalition in a conventional war on any battlefield. But they don't seek conventional war. Their weapons are terror and chaos, and they want us to believe that the coalition cannot win; that the free Iraqi and Afghan governments cannot win; that the fight is not worth it; that the effort will be too hard and too ugly. They attack any sort of hope or progress in an effort to try to undermine morale. They are convinced that if they can win the battle of perception -- and they are very good at managing perceptions -- that we will lose our will and toss it in. I believe they are wrong. Failure in Afghanistan or Iraq would exact a terrible toll. It would embolden the extremists and make the world a far more dangerous place. These are difficult times.

From Baghdad, Kabul, Madrid, Bali, the Philippines, the call to arms has been sounded and the outcome of this struggle will determine the nature of our world for some decades to come. Our enemies will not be controlled, or contained or wished away. They do seek to enslave, and they have shown that they are willing to die to achieve their goals. The deaths of innocent people are not incidental in this war. Innocent people indeed are in fact their targets, and they will willingly kill hundreds and thousands more.

The world has gasped at the brutality of the extremists -- the hundreds of children in Russia who were killed or wounded on their first day of school; the commuters blown up in the trains in Madrid; innocents murdered in a night club in Bali; the cutting off of heads on television. And should these enemies acquire the world's more dangerous weapons, more lethal weapons -- and they are seeking them, to be sure -- the lives of hundreds of thousands could be at stake.

There have been costs, and there will be more. More than 1,000 U.S. soldiers, men and women, have died, killed or in accidents in Iraq, and some number more since the global war on terror began. Every loss is deeply felt. It is in freedom's defense that our country has had the benefit of these wonderful volunteers deployed, these the most courageous among us. And whenever freedom advances, America is safer.

And amid the losses, amid the ugliness, the car bombings, the task is to remain steadfast. Consider the kind of world we would have if the extremists were to prevail.

Today, as before, the hard work of history falls to our country, to our coalition, to our people. We've been entrusted with the gift of freedom. It's ours to safeguard. It's ours to defend. And we can do

it, knowing that the great sweep of human history is for freedom, and that is on our side.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

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