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A Strategic Approach to the Challenge of Terrorism

Remarks as prepared for delivery to RAND by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Grand Hyatt Washington, Washington, DC, Wednesday, September 8, 2004.

Thank you, Jim [Thompson]. Tommy Franks and I once attended a briefing together here in town, in January. And he said, with an impish grin, that he always looks forward to the opportunity to leave Florida to come to Washington. Of course, the truth, as you all know, is that most of us in Washington look for the opportunity to leave here to go almost anywhere. And you're probably asking yourselves why you chose to come here to Washington and in the middle of Hurricane Frances, of all things. It must mean that RAND isn't any better at predicting the weather than any of the rest of us are.

Half a century ago, when General [of the Air Force Hap] Arnold set up the RAND Corporation, or at least so the legend goes, he put it in California so that it could be free of the influences of Washington and engage in independent thinking. In fact, my understanding is he directed RAND not to even come back with any results for the first year or two. He probably didn't plan on your predecessors spending most of that time on the beaches, but my guess is that's what a lot of them did. On a day like today, you probably wonder why you didn't stay there yourselves.

When I worked on the East Asian policy in the Reagan Administration, as George Shultz's Assistant Secretary of State for the region and then later as Ambassador to Indonesia, I was struck at how helpful it was for me in that job to be working for an administration of Californians. You didn't have to explain to them why Asia was important or, as sometimes happened, even just how big it was or where it was. Secretary Shultz loved to illustrate it with a joke about a proper Boston lady. She was from the old Boston, the one where the Cabots spoke only to Lodges and the Lodges spoke only to God. She paid her first visit to San Francisco and was asked how she liked the city, and she said, "Oh, it's quite beautiful. But it's so far from the ocean." Shultz used it to illustrate the fact that when you sit in California, you recognize that there's another ocean and another whole frontier and another whole way of looking at American foreign policy. I always took that a little personally, as a native New Yorker. But I certainly learned about the importance of the Asia-Pacific region.

Unfortunately, on a more serious note, the whole country came to have a different appreciation of New York three years ago when the city was subject to a brutal attack on September 11, and its firefighters and policemen and mayor and citizenry in general responded with the courage and dedication to duty that has earned the admiration of the entire country.

Twice in the last century, the United States went to war against a totalitarian evil, first in a bloody war