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Remarks As Delivered At

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GEN. MYERS: Thank you, Strobe, for the nice introduction.

I see lots of friends here in the audience and I think most of them have been introduced already. It's always great to see you Justice Breyer.

To the many ambassadors here, Secretary Dam [Under Secretary of Treasury Kenneth Dam] and your wife, to all the other distinguished guests. One of the things that Strobe didn't tell you was that we did travel a lot together. I was privileged to travel with the Secretary of State and sometimes the deputy Secretary of State.

Strobe said that he'd like me to talk about the current strategic environment and how the U.S. military is going to play in it and so forth. I said, "Well, I could easily talk about this subject for an hour or more." And he said, "Well, I know you can do that, but I really suggest you start at the 45-minute mark and wrap it up from there." So that's what I'm going to try to do. We'll save some time for some Q&A at the end.

First I'd like to review the environment that we're in and how it's changed over time. Against that backdrop, I'll talk about three things that we're doing in the military to try to ensure that our military can support the President's National Security Strategy.

Whenever I've tried to capture things from a historical perspective, I'm reminded of what occurred with President Reagan when he was talking to a crowd of students about how America had changed. A young man interrupted and said, "You can't possibly understand today's world--you grew up in a different era. Today we have airplanes and computers and space travel and cable TV." And President Reagan calmly replied, "You know, you're right. My generation didn't have those things--we invented them." (Laughter.)

So tonight, some of you folks may see what I talk about as history. For others, you invented a lot of what I'm going to talk about. You've lived it and you've made it.

To start, let's look back at September, when our nation was shocked by an extremist's attack. In the aftermath, the President declared that the extremist struck at the "very heart of the American republic." And as happens after events like that, of course Wall Street took a dive. Certainly the motivation for that attack in part came from how others perceived America and our role in the world. For example, the Philippines was caught up in a conflict between their Muslim and Catholic communities. And U.S. forces were there to help.

Now, some of you may think I'm talking about September of last year. Actually what I was referring to September of 1901. The point is that there are parallels over time. I'd like to play on this for just a little bit, talk about the parallels, and then jump ahead to what we're doing today.

A hundred years ago, the extremist attack that I was referring to was done by an anarchist who hated America and all it stood for. He took his wrath out by assassinating President McKinley. Today, of course, we probably wouldn't call him an anarchist--he'd be an extremist or perhaps a terrorist. It was also a hundred years ago that the nation debated America's Manifest Destiny, as we brought in new territories of Wake and Guam and Hawaii and they all came under the American flag. Of course, today the parallel is our debate of the part we play in globalization.

In 1901, our armed forces had to adapt to meet these new challenges. President Teddy Roosevelt championed many of the efforts that today we would call transformation. Our Navy was ranked fourth or fifth in the world. In the Atlantic, the German Navy had 12 battleships to the U.S.'s eight. And to fix this, Roosevelt built 24 new capital ships. This fleet was called "the Great White Fleet" that set sail in 1907. The Army underwent similar changes when they went to the Enfield rifle. They also purchased new bayonets because the old ones would bend in hand-to-hand combat.

But in my view, it's not the hardware change that makes it transformational, but the intellectual and organizational changes. Roosevelt's Secretary of War, Elihu Root, created the War College over at Fort McNair. The reason he did this is because we needed military officers to have the mental agility to anticipate events in this new international environment. He also set up the army staff, so that the army could have a cadre of planning experts on hand. This ensured that the army had the flexibility to meet the new challenges of going from strictly a U.S.-based force to one that would have worldwide interests. He also changed the Commanding General of the Army to become the chief of staff. It's like my position today--that the chief of staff wasn't in the chain of command. Instead, he had an advisory role to the secretary and to the president.

My point is that 100 years ago, those involved in our nation's national security business wrestled with many of the same, or certainly similar, issues that we face today. Then and now, regional powers can threaten the nation's interest in distant conflict. Then, as now, internal strife from religious hatreds, ethnic rivalry, tribal conflicts, can, and often does, lead to bloodletting. And then and now, U.S. troops often play a role in the crisis to restore peace.

But compared to 100 years ago, our 21st century security environment has, I think, two profound changes that makes it different. First, is the presence of transnational actors. They find sanctuary by design within the borders of hostile states. Or they find sanctuary by default within the borders of failing states or in ungoverned areas.

The second profound change is that belligerents of all types have access to dramatically more sophisticated tools. It's probably an outgrowth of our great global telecommunications industry that gives hostile states and terrorists alike access to a treasure of information. The post-Cold War arms markets offer them many different types of weapons--advanced radars, sophisticated submarines and so forth. Unfortunately, these markets also include weapons of mass destruction: chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear know-how to make them and how to use

them. And this proliferation of advanced technology accentuates a trend in warfare that has a potentially profound impact on our security.

Since the time of Thucydides, the premise of conflict between nations is that the stronger states could defeat the weaker ones. That was the common wisdom. In the past 200 years, that's been roughly true about 70 percent of the time. But as we saw in Vietnam, and the Soviets saw in Afghanistan, great powers can fail because there's a mismatch in interest. What is a peripheral issue to a powerful state may be a core issue of survival to a weaker state. This disparity of interest, then, can get translated into a disparity of commitment. It's one reason why a weak power can overcome a stronger nation's designs.

And since 1980, one political scientist reports that this trend for the weaker to succeed has actually increased as the weaker states have come out on top almost half of the time in the last 20 years.

And now if you add weapons of mass destruction to the equation, you have a case where relatively weak actors may have access to lethal power that rivals what the strongest nations have. Weak actors can potentially inflict unprecedented devastation on a great nation. With weapons of mass destruction, they can hold at risk large portions of societies.

During the Cold War, of course, we faced the threat of nuclear conflict with a superpower, but deterrence contained that threat because we placed at risk something the adversary held very dear. That was, in essence, their very existence. Today, if a weak power is a terrorist network with weapons of mass destruction, deterrence won't work most of the time. When they're willing to commit suicide to further their agenda, what do they value that we can place at risk?

This dilemma, I think, reflects an unprecedented nature of today's security environment. And to meet these very daunting challenges, the president recently published a new National Security Strategy, or NSS. In support of that, let me tell you about three broad considerations of the military's role in supporting our new national security strategy.

The first consideration is that United States military has got to accomplish a multitude of tasks. We must promote security, of course, to fight and win our nation's wars. But nothing is more central to our mission tonight -- or today, then to defend this nation and here at home. And that's why we've made a series of very significant changes to the way the President tells us how to go about our business. We call that the Unified Command Plan. It's how the president says, "Here's what I want your various commands to do."

One of the central things we've done is establish U.S. Northern Command. It stood up on 1 October of this year, so it's a little over a month old. And to stand here and say it knows exactly where it's going would be a mistake. I mean, it's got about a year before it gets up to what we think would be its full operational capability. We gave it, though, the mission to deter, to prevent and defeat aggression that was aimed at the United States. And should the necessity arise, from an act of war or an act of God, Northern Command will provide the talents and the skills of our armed forces to assist and, in most cases, be subordinate to civilian authorities for whatever the crisis of the moment is.

Key to Northern Command's effectiveness in carrying out the mission that I described is its -- is the flow of information. This applies to not just inside the Department of Defense, and not just inside this new Northern Command, but with all the Federal departments and agencies that have something to do with keeping us safe.

In our new security environment, we know that everybody has a role -- State, Treasury, Justice, Customs, intelligence agencies, the FBI and, I think, all the way down to local law enforcement agencies and departments. But you can only take action and you're only as smart as your information will help you be.

This past Friday I was fortunate enough to see a program that we're experimenting with and hope to bring to fruition fairly quickly. It's the project we call Protect America and it sounds simple. But its integrating techniques have not been done, at least inside the government. It's a web-based collaborative and interactive tool that offers a lot of promise in sort of the things I was talking about. It's integrating data from different people and allowing people to interact with that data. It's structured in a way that allows hands-off gathering of data until it becomes important to you.

These kinds of tools are absolutely essential if we're going to come up with the agility and the flexibility to deal with the terrorist threat that we see today. What they're going to really enable us to do is to think faster than our adversary. And I would submit that early on in Afghanistan we were absolutely thinking faster than the adversary and therefore very successful. I think you could make an argument now that we're not thinking as fast as we need to think, that we're not inside the decision loop, if you will, of the adversary. We need to speed that up. So these kinds of tools will help us do that.

And I would add one bit of -- another complex factor that you have to think about here, and that is that it's not just inside the U.S. that this has to work very well and its information flow has to work very well. We have several allies represented by ambassadors here tonight from Norway and Finland and Poland. We've all got to be able to interact, at least in an informational way, certainly, with a common foundation, if we're going to be effective against this terrorist threat.

I see our new Northern Command as the catalyst to sort of capability for the rest of government to develop these information-sharing techniques. They'll enable us, from a cop on a beat somewhere who notices something interesting and unusual going on to the Coast Guard, who tracks shipping coming into our ports, to individuals that just want to call up and make a report. It's much like during the sniper case here [in Washington DC], was completely inundating the law enforcement network. You're going to have to have some way to manage it and that's what I'm suggesting. These are tasks that we've got to do today.

At the same time, we've got to ensure our military is ready for tomorrow. And it's not something that we can do tomorrow, it's something we've got to do today for tomorrow. So we made some other changes to our Unified Command Plan. We have a command in Norfolk called Joint Forces Command, and we've given them a primary job now of transforming our military in terms of our exercises and experimentation. And we removed one of the hats that this command

used to have--and that was the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic, which was a NATO command. We've done it with some controversy, but we've done it. And the way it will probably wind up is that that command in Norfolk will also have a NATO hat that will work transformation and the interoperability of the US and European nations. This is still being in the proposal stage, but that's probably the way it's going to work out.

The second aspect is our military's role in this the 21st century and geography. The question you might ask: Should the military be focused regionally or should we focus more globally? My unequivocal answer is yes. (Laughter.) On the one hand, we've got to focus regionally because so often that's where the interests are. That's where we've got to maintain a local capability. The regional combatant commanders -- the Pacific Command, the European, the Central Command, the Southern Command -- they're out there to promote stability, to foster good military cooperation between forces and to provide that immediate crisis response force--from humanitarian up to conflict.

On the other hand, we know that there are certain threats that transcend regional and political borders. So our response must transcend those borders as well. And that means that we've got to also have a global capability that's equal to our regional capability, which we don't have today in most respects. This is something that's going to be evolving.

We did stand up a new U.S. Strategic Command in Omaha. And some of that understand these things understand know that we've always had a Strategic Command in Omaha. But what we did is really gave it a dramatically new mission by closing down what's known as U.S. Space Command in Colorado Springs and putting the two together with a brand-new command. We're also looking at giving the command new missions that weren't assigned before.

These missions, I think, reflect the kind of global capabilities that we need, things like missile defense. There's a notion out there about global strike, information operations, and command and control, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance. There is a need to look at these on a global basis, not just regionally.

Let me explain the missile defense issue to you for just a second. Hypothetical situation: A missile is launched from Iraq into Israel. Iraq happens to be in one of our regional commands called Central Command. And it comes out of Iraq, it goes through space, it potentially lands in Israel, in my hypothetical example. Israel happens to be in European Command. So we have -- immediately we have two commands involved and perhaps Strategic Command -- the one that was part for the warning.

Those kinds of events are inherently multi-command and more global in nature than they are regional. So to do the job right, we've got to have a global approach to how we integrate our missile warning, our command and control, the defensive options that we have and the attack options, for that matter, that we have. And we need one commander that sort of looks at this holistically on a global basis.

The same mindset has to go into how we deal with computer network defense and attack. And this is one area where I think we've done a reasonably good job in terms of defending our

Department of Defense networks. And I'm talking about the Department of Defense -- not all government. This was a real issue four years ago. If you'd call a meeting in the Pentagon and you ask: who is responsible for defending our computer networks -- both classified and unclassified? You'd probably get 50 to 100 people come to the meeting all thinking they were in charge. And that was the problem, because nobody was really in charge. There were a lot of people who thought they were. We finally put computer network attack in a one command. Computer attack doesn't have boundaries. It can start in Pacific Command, but it can have an impact or an effect in European Command. And it's another example of how this global thought needs to interact with these regional commands. It's going to require some change of thought on how we do our business.

So those are a couple of examples that explain what we're talking about between a global view of the world. And it particularly has applicability when you think about dealing with terrorists because they're not respecting any boundaries. They go back and forth, as we've talked about, very, very easily.

The third role is an issue that's been talked about a lot lately. It's in the national security strategy and the military has a role. It's the issue of preemption. At times, and especially if you pay attention to a lot of the articles that have been written, you wonder if folks have really read the national security strategy.

Because if you do, you'll realize that the national security strategy really describes using all instruments of national power to prevent an attack. It describes how preemption must include strengthening our non-proliferation efforts, to use diplomatic and financial tools to keep weapons of mass destruction technology out of the wrong people's hands. And it talks about ensuring our military forces are well-equipped to deal with the weapons of mass destruction environment. It would cause any belligerent who would want to use weapons of mass destruction to pause to think if they might be able to gain their desired effect. It clearly states that preemption doesn't have to include the use of offensive military force at all.

I would submit that this concept isn't really new to Americans. In fact, it was President Franklin Roosevelt talked about it in the days before Pearl Harbor, before the U.S. was involved in World War II. It was during a fireside chat on September 11th in 1941, where FDR talked about a Nazi sub that had attacked USS destroyer GREER near Iceland. He told America, "Let us not say: We will only defend ourselves if the torpedo succeeds in hitting home or if the crew and the passengers are drowned. The time for active defense is now."

In addition, international law for a long time has recognized exactly what FDR described. A nation does not need to wait for attack before it acts. In FDR's time, absorbing the unprovoked torpedo attack cost a couple hundred lives of sailors and civilians. It certainly was a tragedy. But today absorbing a first blow of a chemical, or a biological or a nuclear attack, radiological attack, could cost up to tens of thousands, perhaps more, of innocent lives. That would be a catastrophe. So the questions we've got to debate are: Can, or should we accept this risk? And in today's dramatically different era, must a free people wait until the threat is physically present before you act? Or can you act if there is some sort of mix of latent potential and demonstrated motive that really you don't think you're going to be able to deter? Having an open discussion about these sort of things is, I think, very, very important and very, very healthy.

That's why I thought this chance to come here to the Brookings Institution is a good idea. This is probably an ideal place to talk about these ideas and to have people think about these ideas. Certainly you all are recognized, as an important part of society where serious minds discuss these very, very serious matters and contribute to the robust dialogue that we absolutely have to have. I hope my short comments may be added to this discussion. In my view, any discussion we have here in the future almost has to include weapons of mass destruction, and the dramatic change they've brought to our security environment. If terrorists or hostile regional powers have them, they can hold at risk our society and certainly the societies of our friends and allies.

To help counter the threat, as I mentioned, our Armed Forces are increasing our ability to operate in a coherent and in a global manner. We've got to have that global view and put this competency on par with our regional capabilities. And we've got to talk about risk -- the risk of action and, of course, the risk of inaction, and when the U.S. should act in its own defense.

During dinner, Strobe said that when I finished, that we'd have a question-and-answer session. I thought that would be great because I've got a lot of questions. (Laughter.) And he said, "No," he said, "They're going to ask you the questions." So, let's see if I've got any answers. (Applause.)

Question and Answer Session

Q What are your thoughts on procurement and how the defense industry and the defense establishment is or maybe will get better at procuring tomorrow's weapons, and how we, as citizens, can see that progress being made?

GEN. MYERS: Boy, I thought I'd get any question but that as the first question. (Laughter.) But -- it's like that AFLAC duck, you know, you keep hearing, "Iraq. Iraq." (Laughter, off mike comment.)

No, no. I'm not. That's an excellent question, actually.

One of the things that's probably going to help is to look at how we generate our requirements for new material systems. And that process -- I mean, it's really been -- we're going to rewrite that process, and we're going to do it here fairly quickly, I think. That will be -- that will be a major step to allow us to do things a little bit quicker.

We were talking tonight with the secretary on some budget issues, getting ready to submit the '04 budget in January and February to Congress. And a system came up, and somebody said -- I think the secretary said, "Well, when did people first start talking about this particular system?" Well, it was in the early 1980s. And here we are in the early 2000, and 20 years has gone by and we're talking about a system that has not gone into production yet. And you have to think to yourself, you know, whatever started back there, is it still relevant to today? And so we're trying to take apart our requirement system, both from the Department of Defense level, from what we've put on ourselves in the military, and try to help that process along.

We are not, we are not very fast, agile, in bringing new things to the force. And it's a pity. I don't know how to solve all of it, because on top of that, there's another very important consideration, I think, and that's the industrial base. And we've got several big space programs that are multi-billion dollar programs that have great promise to bring real contributions to our national security. At the same time, we have a space industry that is going through some pain; shipbuilding almost likewise.

And so -- I mean, there's some -- it's a really serious question. I mean, there's a lot of different parts of it. I think the part that we can help with is how we generate our requirements and how quickly we can translate those, and the notion that maybe in the first part of this whole process we don't have a perfect solution the first time out, but that we'll develop upgrades or whatever that will continue to improve the product.

And instead of waiting for the -- and we also got to take some risk. We were very risk-averse in the late '80s and the '90s about bringing new systems on board. So we would test them to the point where we would take so much time in testing and so little risk that by the time we got them, I mean, you know, the idea had passed almost. And we've got to do a better job at that. And so there need to be some fundamental decisions made by the department on how we do that.

And those are a couple of thoughts, anyway. I'm happy to discuss it more. It's a very serious question.

Q General Myers?

GEN. MYERS: Yes, sir?

Q You mentioned in your remarks that you thought that -- I think you said we thought faster than our adversaries in the first phase of the Afghanistan campaign, and you were a little concerned that we're not thinking faster now. I wonder if you could elaborate on that and also just what thinking faster than the adversary means to you as you talk about it.

GEN. MYERS: Sure. Well, I think in Afghanistan the plan that General Franks came up with and that was approved by the secretary and, for that matter, by the National Security Council, that was put into motion -- I mean, it was bold. There was a large element of risk in there. And it was conducted in a way that the adversary clearly didn't -- I mean, we were operating inside their -- they were confused. From the moment we went inside Afghanistan -- if you remember, early on we conducted a -- I think it was about a week or 10 -- shortly after it started, about a week after, we put ground forces in, deep into Afghanistan, into Omar's compound -- the leader of the Taliban, if you will -- and we did it for really only one reason, and that was to show the Taliban and the al Qaeda we could do it. And I mean, we came a long way on that raid, and that was the first time we lost anybody. It was in some of the backup helicopters, quick reaction force, where a helicopter had to land at night in the dusty conditions and lost contact with the ground and landed hard, rolled over and killed a couple of great troops. But it was that effort to just -- to show them that we could do that. And I think they were off-balance the whole time.

Well, since then, since the Taliban has fallen, since the al Qaeda has scattered, mainly to the border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and other places in the world, for that matter, in the region -- since then, they've adapted their tactics, and we've got to adapt ours.

And we've got to get back to the point where we can observe what they're doing and make some decision about that, act and assess that business faster than they can do just the opposite to us, they can observe us and decide to take, you know, a counter-action. And that's why I think there's lots of pieces to that. It's the information-flow piece that I talked, in this case, intelligence flow, that has to be a lot more exquisite, if you will, than it's been in the past. And then the ability of our forces to strike very quickly on intelligence that may not be a hundred percent perfect or sure, but to take that kind of risk because the payoff is so important.

And so we caught them off guard, had a pretty successful several months. They have adapted. They adapt the way they talk to each other, the way they pass money. They've made lots of adaptations to our tactics, and we've got to continue to think and try to out-think them and to be faster at it. And we're more or less, you know, good or bad at that depending on the situation. But in general I think that's where we need to improve. And I think in a sense we've lost a little momentum there, to be frank.

Yes, sir?

Q -- as it pertains to the Department of Defense. As you know, I'm sure, over 80 percent of the infrastructure in the homeland is in the private-sector hands. And one of the things that's frustrated us greatly is the inability to get the Homeland Security Department stood up and operational. I was curious if you might speak -- interested if you might speak to the relationship that you would see going forward between the Department of Defense and Homeland Security and how we might deal with this issue of infrastructure.

GEN. MYERS: That's a great question. And I think the real answer to that is, a lot of that is to be determined. But if you imagine, as important as we now realize the mission is to have somebody -- and let's just take the Department of Defense -- somebody that worries about the security of the country, before, it was scattered again. I mean, if you'd call a meeting at the Pentagon and say, "Okay, everybody come to the meeting who thinks they have something to do with the security of the United States," you'd have lots of folks come, but nobody really being in charge of that. We're not very well organized for it. So, as you know, the secretary of Defense has asked that we have an assistant secretary of Defense for homeland security or homeland defense, which is still awaiting the authorization bill to be approved before he can install that person.

And then we did stand up the command, which I think is powerful only because you have one commander and his staff that their sole purpose in life is to try to figure this out and do the planning and decide what kind of training and equipping the force needs to support, like I said, in most cases a lead federal agency in responding to either attacks or natural disasters or whatever the case may be.

The relationship with the Homeland Security Department will probably primarily be done here in Washington. That's where a lot of that work will be done. But clearly, at other levels

there's going to have to be, you know, very, very good coordination in this whole effort. And I think a lot of that is to be determined.

I think it's good we stood up the DOD piece of that. I think it's appropriate it's stood up and has started to work. My opinion is we've got to get on with the standing up of the department as well so we can start working those issues. But you would assume they're going to have a very close relationship, particularly when it comes to sharing information. I mean, they've got to have the same kind of view of the world. And I think -- we can do that legally. There's no legal restrictions, no constitutional restrictions for the kind of sharing that at least I'm thinking about.

But it doesn't exist today. And in many cases it doesn't exist within the department or other departments and agencies. I mean, they don't -- that's not one thing we've had to worry about like we have to worry about now. You know, we've been very satisfied that we have lots of stovepipes of information but not much integration, and what we're talking about here is probably the ultimate in integration.

And then, you can't just think about the United States, you've got to think about Canada and Mexico. And you can't just think about Canada and Mexico, because then you've got to think about our friends and allies who all contribute to this. And so we've got to have these arrangements with Poland and Norway and Finland and England, and on and on it goes; I mean, essentially the whole world.

So, I don't know exactly what that relationship's going to be yet. It's going to be one that General Eberhart, working the Northern Command piece, is going to have to work with whomever it is that's going to take over or be appointed as the new homeland security. Yes, sir?

Q I'll follow up on that, the intercompatibility issues with our allies?

GEN. MYERS: Compatibility issues with -- ?

Q The intercompatibility issues with our allies in light of existing operations and contemplated operations.

GEN. MYERS: Well, it's -- there are a couple of -- probably a couple of facts. One is that the United States military is changing and adapting so fast that we've left a lot of our friends and allies behind. It's probably well understood, and it's something we know we have to rectify. So given that, we've just got to set about doing it.

But one of the problems is, if you look at what some of our allies and friends are devoting to defense and security, sometimes it's a pretty paltry sum compared to their gross domestic product compared to other countries. And I forget what the NATO average is, but it's not very high. There are many countries in NATO that are around 1 percent of GDP for defense. And it's hard to stay modern and interoperable with almost anybody, probably themselves, at those low levels of expenditures.

That will be one of the big issues, I think, when we go to the Prague summit, the NATO summit in Prague here later this month, will be this whole capabilities initiative issue, which is -- has the potential not to be a very proud moment for a lot of NATO nations. And yet it's in our -- all our interest that we stay as interoperable as we can be. So we're looking for lots of ways to do that.

Clearly, interoperability is about many things. One of the things it's about is the technology that enables it. That is not particularly expensive compared to tanks and planes and ships. So you know, we can do this if we do this right. It happens to be one of the things that I think is very, very important towards our own U.S. forces' joint war-fighting, and it translates well to our allies and our partners. So it is a problem.

It is a problem in the Kosovo air war when you cannot talk secure on your aircraft radios with your NATO allies because they don't have compatible hardware. And so then, if you can't talk secure, you talk in the open, and if you talk in the open, people intercept your communications, and then they can -- you're in harm's way because of that. And that was the case in Kosovo.

So we have a long way to go, and all I can say is it's recognized. We're putting a lot of our resources in that very area, and we just have to help our allies to do the same thing.

Q (Off mike and inaudible.)

GEN. MYERS: In the kitchen, back over here to the right. No, I'm just -- (soft laughter).

Q Thank you. General Myers, a question about civil-military relations. A half century ago, under President Truman, it seemed as if civil authorities worked to constrain the ambitions of the military, particularly General MacArthur. Today it seems as if the military at times is trying to constrain the ambitions of the civilian authorities.

Question: Is that an accurate perception? And can you tell us about the state of civil-military relations today?

GEN. MYERS: My personal opinion is that that's not an accurate perception, I don't think. I mean, clearly the Constitution outlines the role of the military pretty clearly, and that is, if the -- you know, the president and the Congress decide what we're going to do, and if it's not illegal, immoral or unethical, the military goes and does it. In between there, of course, are all sorts of discussions.

But I think -- the articles that have been printed in the last month on this issue generally, I don't think, have it right. And I don't -- you know, you see issues that -- gee, if -- in any potential situation where the president orders the military to go into Iraq, there's some that think it ought to be really a small force, and this is being fought by the military -- well, that's not the way it is. I mean, that's just not right that -- and on and on it goes.

But I will say this:

In the Defense Department today, I don't know there's ever been a time when there's been more interaction between the civilian leadership and the senior military leadership than there is now. I mean, it's constant, it's in-depth, it talks about all the issues. If anybody has concerns or ideas or whatever, they're encouraged to bring those forward. So, I think -- my personal opinion -- to answer your question directly -- I think this has been overblown in a fairly significant way. It's an important topic.

Yes, sir?

(Laughter, off-mike comments.)

Sit still, Jim! You'll be the last question. But -- I'm sorry. I didn't see Jim sitting there. He asks hard questions.

Q Yes. I hope they'll be equal time here this evening.

GEN. MYERS: There'll be as much time as we need.

Q The question, General, is that you spoke of the concept of preemption and you, I think, tried to tell us that this is not a very new concept. You cited President Roosevelt. Others have cited President Kennedy and the Cuban missile crisis. And I think it's easy enough to understand that we should not be sitting as sitting ducks and be shot before we respond.

My question is, what is the advantage strategically to enunciating a formal doctrine of preemption, which sets the world's teeth on edge and worries a lot of people here. What is the advantage to the military or to the nation of setting this out formally, understanding that we could just as well carry this out, if we had to, without the doctrine itself.

GEN. MYERS: Well, you're right, we could -- we can, because, I mean, the law of armed conflict in most international laws says we do have the inherent right of self-defense, to include anticipatory self-defense, which, for a land-granter like myself, that's equivalent to preemption, I guess, if you will. So you're going to have to ask that question of somebody besides -- besides me. (Laughter, scattered applause.) That's clearly outside my lane! Somebody like Jim Steinberg, who worked in the National Security Council -- (laughter) -- and actually penned these documents, and probably said, "Mr. President, please sign here." (Laughter.)

That would be the -- there is an important part of this, though, I think that -- when you discuss this whole business of the war on terrorism, and it's the notion that you can build walls high enough or you can develop security systems that are reliable enough, or there's enough barbed-wire or concertina wire in the world to keep terrorists from doing bad things to you. And it's my belief that you can't. I mean, one mad man -- well, we saw what two mad men did in this region not too long ago. But it's really hard to stop those sorts of things.

And so, while you have to try to work the defense piece as hard as you can, you've also got to take the fight to the enemy. And if it helps in that regard at all, I mean, if it helps in that regard at all, then that's an important concept that you have to go out after the terrorists where they live.

And I think we have seen in intelligence that that's been relatively successful, that we have disrupted them --

(TAPE CHANGE.)

Now, to Jim Hoagland, whom I can't see with this bright light in my eye, but I --

Q I'm here, General. Can I play a mopping-up role and ask you to expand, perhaps, on two intriguing things you've said tonight? The first on Afghanistan. Could you sketch for us very briefly what the strategy is now in Afghanistan? What are your goals, and what kind of time frame? Are you shifting from hunting al Qaeda to something else?

And the other is on Europe, you touched on that as well. The rapid reaction force that's going to be discussed in Prague is a very interesting concept that could suggest that we've come to the conclusion that rather than continuing to press the Europeans to do things the way we do, to spend at our levels and to have the kind of military formations we have, we should try to let them do something lower-end; something more within the range of the resources they're prepared to commit.

GEN. MYERS: Good questions. And trust me, we're not going to go into these fully. (Laughs.) (Laughter.) No, I'm --

The Afghanistan piece. We are in a phase of operation there right now which is primarily concerned with hunting down the remnants of Taliban and al Qaeda. We're also involved in reconstruction efforts. We've done a lot of medical readiness exercises for the Afghan people. You know, we're building schools, and helping with all that piece, and helping the non-governmental organizations, private organizations, go in and help the Afghan people.

The issue before us is: Are we ready for the next phase? Which is kind of flipping our priorities and making the next phase primarily the reconstruction piece in Afghanistan and, to a lesser extent, worrying about the remnants of al Qaeda and the Taliban, who are not just a threat to U.S. forces, but a threat to the new Afghan administration, the transitional administration, right now.

And that's what we're debating right now inside government, realizing that there's a couple of pieces to that reconstruction. One is you've got to have a security environment, which in probably three quarters of the country, you have a reasonably secure environment, reasonably secure, where non-governmental organizations are not afraid to go. And another piece of that, of course, is, besides the security, is the reconstruction effort. And the State Department, I think a month or so ago, appointed Ambassador Taylor to go over there and work the international reconstruction effort, which is so essential to providing the kind of progress that the Afghan people need to see to feel that this whole process they've been through is going to be worth it in the end. And so we are discussing exactly that.

There is a substantial -- in terms of intellectual and people and financial resources -- effort from this government going into Afghanistan, and my guess would be, it'll be that way for some

time to come. I mean, I would not predict when we're going to be either out of there militarily or in some other form of help, because it's going to take quite some time.

But you're absolutely right. We're thinking, you know, it is time to shift the emphasis there? And -- at least for three quarters of the country. The piece of the country that's east of Kabul and up and down the Pakistan border is going to be unstable for some period of time, and the primary mission in that area is going to have to be -- continue to go after the remnants or -- it's not remnants so much, it's the al Qaeda that have gone across -- live in the border area, go across to Pakistan, get help from tribal figures that are sympathetic, and then come back in to try either undo the administration or to undo U.S. forces or coalition forces. So that part's going to stay pretty much like it is today probably for some time to come.

But the rest of the country -- we're thinking about changing models there, and we're going to need a lot of help from the international community. This is not going to be a U.S.-only effort.

As you may know, around Kabul we have the International Security Assistance Force being led now by the Turk government, soon to move probably to the German-Dutch government. That will take it for about six months. That'll get us to sometime in the middle of next year, when we'll have to think about who takes it after that. And there may be some NATO play in that, not in the sense of a NATO flag in Kabul but in terms of NATO support to doing the force generation, signing up -- you know, asking for volunteer countries to go be part of that force. So there's probably a NATO role to play -- to be determined, however, not decided yet.

And then you ask about Europe and NATO and this -- what they call the NATO Response Force. And I don't think it's -- it's not based on the premise that you stated, that this would be a way to just accept the fact that some of the European countries are going to have lesser capabilities. It's actually to do just the opposite. It's to try to generate a force that can be responsive to a new command structure, which will be unveiled as well or supported at Prague by the heads of state. This new command structure, which underneath it will have these NATO -- this NATO Response Force that will be a rotational force -- and in a way, we see it as being a way to bring up the capability, interoperability or -- and just pure capability of these forces as they train up to certain standards. And then it's to try to look at countries and say: Well, you know, if you're a small country and you can't have, as we say, a 360-degree military, are there niche areas that you could play in? Maybe it's -- you're the country that organizes strategic lift with several other countries, and you either lease or buy strategic lift aircraft, which is a shortage in NATO, if you don't count the United States. Or reconnaissance assets, or so on; biological and chemical decontamination units. But to try to bring these capabilities and find niches for the smaller countries that just aren't going to have the whole 360-degree military. So it's more of that than it is a recognition that we're going to go with maybe the lowest common denominator. That's not the idea that's out there at all.

I think Strobe says here's the hook. Thank you very much for tonight. It's been great to be with you. (Applause.)

MR. TALBOTT: Dick, on behalf of all of us, I want to not only thank you and Mary Jo for coming out to be with us this evening, but also for what you've done, and that is to take us into your

world, into your thinking, on which our own safety very largely depends. And we wish you all kinds of luck and strength in the days and weeks and the months ahead. Thanks.

GEN. MYERS: Thank you for the opportunity. Thank you all. Thanks. (Applause.)

(END OF EVENT.)