Africa Center for Strategic Studies Senior Leader Seminar
Remarks by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Washington, DC, Monday, February 09, 2004

Thank you. I'm pleased to be able to have a little bit of time to join you and to welcome you on behalf of Secretary Rumsfeld and the Department of Defense for this important conference.

Ronald Reagan had a sign on his desk, I'm told, that said "There's no limit to what you can accomplish in government as long as you don't care who gets the credit for it." And one of the nice things I'm discovering about having been dean of an academic institution is that it works the other way around: you can get credit for anyone who had any connection to your institution. And I'm very proud to claim—though I have no basis for it—credit for Professor Gambari and General Fulford. Their common association with SAIS (Paul H. Nitze School for Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University) is something I'm very happy to take my undue share of credit for. Secretary General Gambari, it's a real pleasure to have you here and we appreciate your attendance.

I very much appreciate what our Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs, Theresa Whelan, has been doing for what seems like ten years, Theresa, but I guess it's more like 18 months. She's done an outstanding job and enjoys the enormous respect of Secretary Rumsfeld as well as myself and keeps reminding us of the important issues in Africa.

And a special thanks to General Fulford, not only for his role in organizing this conference but for his willingness to take on the leadership of the Africa Center at the National Defense University.

There's something about being a deputy that isn't always so wonderful. You get lots of responsibility and sometimes not the authority that ought to go with it. Pete Pace, who is another great Marine who is the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff commiserates with me often that there's that cry that comes out from the Secretary's office, "Give that one to the Deputy," and we know what that means.

So I feel a certain solidarity with General Fulford as he was the number two at EUCOM (U.S. European Command) and I'm the number two in the Defense Department.

I wish I could also claim that other great identity that he has as a former Marine. I was taught a long time ago by George Shultz that there's no such thing as an ex-Marine. There are former Marines. It's quite a credential to have on your resume.

We do have in common, as was mentioned, a loyalty to the National Defense University which is a great institution and it gets stronger every year. Having the Africa Center housed at NDU is, I think, a great piece of institution building, and to have a great American like Carl Fulford taking over the leadership of that center is a very good sign for the future.

Of course one of our challenges, and I'm sure you are all very well aware of it, is that the United States has worldwide interests and worldwide commitments that have grown even more global in scope since the terrible attacks of September 11th and the global war on terrorism which occupies so much of our attention.

But despite our commitments elsewhere, African nations should have no doubt about the importance my country attaches to Africa. Just last week U.S. officials took a leading role at the United Nations, at the Donors Conference for Liberia, helping to work through a solution to that troubled nation's problems. Our goal and that of Liberia's regional neighbors is to consolidate peace in that troubled country.

Department of Defense officials were among the U.S. delegation and my department has been supporting the efforts of African governments to resolve security problems not, only in Liberia but in Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone and Sudan and elsewhere on the continent.

In addition, the U.S. government, through the Agency for International Development, the Department of State, and our own programs in the Department of Defense and many other governmental agencies is supporting efforts to develop democratic institutions, to promote economic growth, to develop peacekeeping mechanisms, to support humanitarian operations, and many other programs in Africa.

There are many reasons for doing so, including humanitarian ones, but we also as a country need to view Africa from a perspective of security—both that our relationships with Africa can contribute to security on the continent and that security in Africa can contribute to security in the United States.

At President Bush's direction, we in the Department of Defense plan with the view that our military forces, both those that are based here in the United States and those that are forward deployed, are just one part of our military capability. We view our real military capability in the context of our partnerships with our many friends and allies around the world. When the United States acts in the world we do not act by ourselves but as part of a community of states, and we see our strength multiplied by the contribution of others and our interests advanced when the interests of others are advanced.

That network of friendships and alliances is a valuable part of this community. Its composition has changed over the years as strategic circumstances in the world have changed, but to surmount such problems as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, failed states, we need to organize differently and increase our capabilities.

The war on terrorism alone has brought us to put together a coalition of more than 90 countries, I've lost count now, around the world working together not just with military forces— this is not indeed primarily a war of military forces —but with intelligence agencies and law enforcement agencies and even the Foreign Ministries of our respective countries to pursue terrorists and to capture them and to get them off the street.

We want to build partnerships that manage concerns and ensure compatibility among our forces. We want to share intelligence with our friends. In some cases American forces will be in a supporting role. In other cases we will be supported by others.

For example, we were in a supporting role when West Africa and ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) forces intervened last year in Liberia—a crucial supporting role, however, as I had the occasion to observe at the time. At the same time in Iraq, some 26 nations are supporting us including the United Kingdom and Poland, who are each taking command of multinational divisions responsible between the two of them for the huge part of the country in southern Iraq that I think has roughly 50 percent of the population of the country.

Our goal as much as possible is to increase the capacity of our friends to provide for their own security. We would like, as much as possible, for our forces to be a force of last resort. There are many things that only American forces can do, I would say unfortunately. Only the United States could have deployed a military, thousands of miles around the world to Afghanistan to deal with the threat posed by the Taliban and to eliminate Afghanistan as a sanctuary for al Qaida terrorists after September 11th. Only the United States, unfortunately, has had the ability over decades to provide the support to the government of Korea to confront the major threat of tank armies in North Korea. I'm happy to say though, by the way, that over the years South Korea has steadily improved its own capacity for self defense and increasingly that burden falls on the shoulders of South Korea.

Africa, I would say happily though it has many problems, does not have the problem of large tank armies threatening one country or another across different borders, and we believe there is a great deal that can be done to strengthen the capacity of African countries to provide for their own security or at least to provide a substantial share of their own security and that of their neighbors with appropriate support from other countries including not only the United States but particularly our European allies.

But we do believe that the militaries of African countries can and must attain a higher degree of professionalism, one that is better suited to the challenges of the 21st Century. Indeed, I think it is part of a broader effort—that I believe I heard the Under-Secretary-General referring to—of building and strengthening African institutions.

If you will permit me a small digression, and I confess that my own career has been focused more on East Asia

and Europe and the Middle East, and I wish I could claim more expertise about Africa, but over 20 years of working with the countries of East Asia one of the things that I have come to be enormously impressed with is the importance of institutions. Indeed, while one can't help as a student of history to recognize the importance of history, and as an amateur anthropologist -- I emphasize the word amateur -- to recognize the importance of culture. I emphatically disagree with those people who apply a kind of historical determinism or cultural determinism to the future of countries.

It was not so long ago, 20 years ago, when I was Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Affairs that I heard people say that Korea had no history of democracy and that Korea was incapable of democracy. I could cite that as just one of dozens of examples from Germany to Poland to Japan to Turkey and now hopefully to Iraq, where people have said that the history of country X or people X had no history of democracy and therefore we could not expect it of them. I don't believe that's true.

I also, while I recognize the power of culture, I remember reading, I hate to say that I'm old enough, but I remember reading in the late 1950s and early 1960s accounts about, again, Korea. This, believe it or not, backward country, a hopeless basket case, it was described as, riddled with corruption and burdened with a Confucian culture -- yes, with a Confucian culture that taught that gentlemen don't work. Indeed, they wear white clothes and grow their fingernails long to epitomize the Confucian ideal that the true gentleman is a scholar who doesn't dirty his hands with manual labor.

Probably most of you aren't old enough to have ever read those things but they said it about Korea 30 years ago. And of course you all know that today it's that same Confucian culture that is said to be the source of all that energy and industry that has produced the South Korean economic miracle; indeed that has produced economic miracles in Taiwan and Singapore and Hong Kong.

The funny thing you start to notice is that where you see the differences in East Asia, it's not differences in history, it’s not differences in culture, it’s differences in institutions. If you look at a satellite photograph of the Korean Peninsula taken at night you see this stunning display of light covering the southern half of the peninsula. You look at the northern half of the peninsula and there's one little spot of light which is Pyongyang. The difference between North Korea and South Korea has nothing to do with history. It has nothing to do with culture. It has everything to do with institutions.

The difference 20-30 years ago between Hong Kong and Taiwan and Singapore on the one hand with their Confucian Chinese cultures and rapidly growing economies and the economy of mainland China which was stagnating in the 1970s, had nothing to do with history, nothing to do with culture, and everything to do with institutions. And indeed it was Deng Xiaoping, I believe, who recognized that if they wanted to maintain stability in mainland China they better get on with changing their institutions. And as the mainland has changed, it has progressed also.

So I believe that strengthening institutions in Africa has got to be the key to moving forward. And it seems to me as an observer at a distance, that Africa is now at a crossroads in political, military and economic terms.

We don't know whether this is a moment of opportunity, a time when gains can be consolidated for sustained development, or whether it may be a moment when failure to achieve progress will mean decades of future difficulty. I think we all recognize that while there is much that's going right in Africa today, there is an enormous amount still to be achieved. On the one hand there are some indicators that are cause for optimism. Cooperative action with an ECOWAS for several years has been a positive force for peace in West Africa and Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, and hopefully now in Liberia.

We see the prospect of peace finally at hand in Sudan even though negotiations are still ongoing. Countries such as Botswana are successfully tackling their economic development problems at the same time that they are consolidating democracy and managing their AIDS crisis.

But we also know that across Africa numerous challenges remain—civil war, insurgencies, “warlordism,” and terrorism among them, and that those conditions feed on ethnic hatreds, a lack of democratic institutions, limited economic opportunities, and corruption. Clearly, that is a cause of desperation for many, leading to population displacements, and attempts to escape the continent, desperate attempts to escape the continent, in search of opportunity elsewhere.

We know that conflict within one country can easily spill over into its neighbors and that breakdowns in governmental authority can create ungoverned areas like Somalia or parts of the Sahel where terrorists can operate and find safe haven and ultimately threaten the whole world.

Our worldwide experience tells us that responding to these challenges and preventing future such situations require cooperation between civilian and military leaders. It cannot be viewed as just one or the other. And as leaders in your countries, you have a tremendous responsibility to help lead your societies in a direction that encourages economic growth and genuine political participation. Too often irresponsible actions by government officials hinder the ability of their people to achieve prosperity.

The challenge for you as national and regional leaders, both civilians and military, is to work together to solve the problems facing the nations and regions that you represent. In our view, in order for the security sector of your governments to contribute effectively to this end, three principles are critical: ensuring civilian control in military reform, developing military professionalism, and building a capacity to serve the nation's military needs appropriately.

During his visit to Gorée Island in Senegal last July, President Bush said, and I quote him here, "Because Africans and Americans share a belief in the values of liberty and dignity, we must share in the labor of advancing those values. In a time of growing commerce across the globe we will ensure that the nations of Africa are full partners in the trade and prosperity of the world. Against the waste and violence of civil war, we will stand together for peace. Against the merciless terrorists who threaten every nation, we will wage an unrelenting campaign of justice. Confronted with desperate hunger we will answer with human compassion and the tools of human technology. In the face of spreading disease," the President said, "we will join with you in turning the tide against AIDS in Africa."

I know that most of the problems the President referred to are longstanding in many nations in Africa, but terrorism has given them a new urgency. The bribes that terrorist organizations and other international criminal organizations pay for sanctuary undermine local and national law enforcement as well as the effectiveness of local government. Weak governments with officials who are open to corruption are vulnerable to exploitation by terrorists. And no country can long withstand the corrosive effects that hush money from these organizations has on stability or on the prospects for democracy and economic growth.

Africa has already been drastically hurt by terrorism. We remember not only the bombings in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi in 1998, but more recently in Mombasa and in Casablanca. The global war on terrorism, in other words, is not only an American concern or a concern of the developed world, it is a growing African concern as well. We are working closely with many of our partners in Africa to combat terrorism. The Pan Sahel Initiative and the East Africa Counterterrorism Initiative are a key part of our efforts in that regard on the African continent. At the same time we continue to work through USAID programs and through the Millennium Challenge Account, to alleviate those conditions of poverty and hopelessness that are unfortunately endemic in developing countries.

The Millennium Challenge Account links economic development assistance to sound policies, to good governance, including financial regulation, to a commitment to the health and education of the people and to economic policies that foster enterprise and entrepreneurship. As the Under-Secretary-General just said, without conditions in which Africans themselves will invest locally, foreigners certainly will not invest.

I hope that you can understand as I do that good governance and democracy, security and economic growth, are as essential to the global war on terrorism as direct action. The United States looks forward to working with African countries on all fronts in this war.

So let me conclude by saying that the programs of the NDU Africa Center are a key part of the Department of Defense's efforts on the African continent to professionalize militaries in Africa, to develop militaries that are subject to civilian control, to educate civilian authorities about the role of the military and of democracy, and to help our department enhance national and regional capacity for peacekeeping and humanitarian relief operations.

That is why we consider this seminar important for us, so that we can help to provide you, key leaders of friendly countries, the intellectual space to think about and discuss the concepts that underpin those efforts.

During the next two weeks I know that you'll be engaging vigorously in the discussion of issues such as, how do military leaders ensure that the ethnic divisions prevalent in their societies do not undermine the performance of their militaries? How do civilian officials determine the proper size and reach of their militaries, particularly given limited budgets and competing demands for funds for education, health, infrastructure and other civilian needs? What is the proper role of the military in your individual societies? And how can a professional military contribute to democracy and economic success for the nation?

Conversely, how can we ensure that militaries remain disciplined, that they do not work to undermine economic security or the political openness that is necessary for a country's growth? Finally, what is Africa's stake in the global war on terrorism?

In addressing those challenging issues you will not only strengthen your countries and their associated regions but you will also help us and those other 90 nations I referred to to defeat the scourge of global terrorism.

I'm told there's an African proverb, but no one told me what country it comes from, this is a contest—I'd like to know. It says, "One hand alone cannot tie a bundle."

Let the United States and the nations of Africa work together to find solutions to the problems we face.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me conclude by once again welcoming you to Washington. I wish you a wonderful exchange this week and next. I want to once again thank General Fulford and the Africa Center for their hospitality, and I applaud their work in helping the United States work toward our common goals in Africa.

Thank you, and may you have a very good seminar.

Q: [In French]

Wolfowitz: Let me go back a couple of years. Right after September 11th I heard my boss, Secretary Rumsfeld, make some comments to the effect that while there were obviously major differences between the war on terrorism and the Cold War, that just as the Cold War had been a very long one, this promised to be a very long one. My initial reaction, I have to tell you honestly, was to think well it can't be decades long. Increasingly it's become clear to me that of course it's going to be decades long. It took decades of misrule, misgovernment, mistreatment in various ways of people of the Middle East to generate the literally thousands of terrorists that we deal with today, and a single victory in Afghanistan or a single victory in Iraq or even the two together, even having literally thousands of terrorists detained and captured not only by the United States but by our European allies, by the Indonesians, a long list of countries, that that's only the beginning of addressing the problem. And in fact as President Bush said in a speech a couple of months ago here and then repeated in his speech at White Hall in London, we think that a fundamental change in direction in governance in the Middle East has got to be part of stopping the process that breeds terrorists.

So it's going to be a long process. You can't make that kind of a turn quickly and you can't make it easily. And if you think about Iraq, which you referred to, or Afghanistan which you might have referred to, those countries have been abused—it's the only word I know of—by their leaders and rulers again for decades—in the case of Iraq for 35 years; in the case of Afghanistan for 20. And those changes don't get undone overnight. Indeed, in Iraq we still face today the remnants of a regime that has many parallels to the Nazis or to the worst of the Communists that continue in a brutal way to fight not only us but their own people. We're defeating them, but it doesn't happen immediately.

In Afghanistan the Taliban were defeated but continue to fight and we are continuing to fight them, again successfully but not overnight.

And even where there is peace these changes don't happen overnight. When I visited Iraq in October, on my second of three trips so far, I met in the town of Babil, the ancient Babylon, with the Polish commander of the multinational division there, and he said when Iraqis come to him and complain to him that there are shortages of electricity in Iraq and there's unemployment in Iraq he points out to them that he comes from Poland which is a country

that has been free of Soviet domination now for 15 years, and which has made enormous progress in those 15 years; in fact most people would tell you Poland is probably one of the most successful Central European countries overcoming the effects of Communism. But he said we still have 10 or 20 percent unemployment in Poland and we still have shortages of electricity.

So there's an old saying, "Rome wasn't built in a day." Countries don't build institutions or grow institutions in a day. It's going to be a long process.

I think the American people understand that. I know President Bush talks about it every day. The point is, however, the stakes for all of us are just enormous. If we don't persevere, if we don't win this battle, then September 11th, as terrible as it was, could be just a very pale shadow of what terrorists could do to the world in the future.

So you're right, the challenges are enormous. No one underestimated them, but we have to keep at it.

Thank you very much.