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TESTIMONY BEFORE  
THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Washington, DC  
November 19, 2003

**“The Bush Administration’s National Security Strategy:  
A Limited View of Leadership”**

Mr. Chairman, Congressman Skelton, Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to talk about the Administration’s National Security Strategy, one year – and one war – since its release.

After the Strategy was published in September 2002, reviewers described it as everything from “a truly eloquent, comprehensive, intellectually cohesive and ground-breaking definition of a strategy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century” to “a declaration of war against the world.” Let me offer a perspective that falls between these extremes.

In some respects, President Bush’s Strategy is similar to those of previous administrations. In emphasizing goals such as encouraging free and open societies... combating the threat of terrorists and rogue nations... and working closely with allies and friends... it is, in part, at least *rhetorically* consistent with the values of past administrations.

But in other respects, the document reflects a different America in a dramatically different national security environment in the wake of 9/11.

And so it should. The war on terrorism and the danger of terrorists gaining

weapons of mass destruction have become our central strategic objective. In al Qaeda and other anti-American jihadists, we face a mortal enemy. Whatever grievances they exploit do not diminish the imperative of destroying them before they destroy us. And, as the President has said, we must keep the world's deadliest weapons out of its most dangerous hands – yet deterrence will not work against suicide bombers who believe they answer only to their God. The Administration is right to underscore the need for active, robust U.S. leadership in the world.

But I believe their vision of American leadership is dangerously limited. Yes, the confident use of military power sometimes is necessary to meet the threats we face. It is not, however, self-justifying or sufficient to assure our security. And today, I think we're seeing around the world a backlash from a policy that assumes the example of our power is mightier than the power of our example. We see it in foreign leaders in friendly countries being elected on anti-American platforms... in our difficulty rallying assistance for the Iraq war and its aftermath... in the polls showing plummeting admiration for America in much of the world.

Critics have raised a number of concerns about the Administration's National Security Strategy. I want to focus on one: its elevation of preemptive military action to a defining doctrine of American strategic policy.

Certainly, every U.S. president reserves the right to act preemptively in unique circumstances of danger. President Clinton acted preemptively to strike al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan where we believed Osama bin Laden was gathering to plan further attacks on U.S. interests. But I believe the Bush Administration's

decision to elevate preemption from an option every President reserves to central doctrine of American policy is misguided. I believe this doctrine of preemption *exacerbates* rather than *alleviates* instability and proliferation – and, in so doing, may make America less secure, not more.

First, the National Security Strategy says *other* nations should not use preemption as a pretext for aggression. But why should we expect others to cede this right to us alone? The more America embraces and endorses a policy of striking first, the greater justification we give other nations, in dangerous regions like the Middle East or South Asia, to use it as a pretext for attacking their own enemies.

Second, let's consider the operational realities. The Strategy declares that “We must adapt the concept of imminent threat to the *capabilities* and *objectives* of today's adversaries.” But that requires a sophisticated understanding of what those capabilities and objectives actually are. Today, the failure to locate weapons of mass destruction in Iraq points up how elusive indisputable intelligence can be. It brings to mind Will Rogers' remark that “it's not what we don't know that hurts... it's what we know that ain't so.”

America cannot afford to be perceived as pursuing a policy of “shoot now, ask questions later.” Our credibility and authority will be completely destroyed.

Finally, I believe a preemption doctrine can be counterproductive even in terms of counter-proliferation. In the name of deterring nations from going nuclear, in particular North Korea and Iran, we actually may be driving them to accelerate their nuclear programs – to draw the conclusion that Saddam's mistake was not

getting his nuclear weapons fast enough. Paradoxically, the more we threaten preemptive military action to stem WMD proliferation, the more precarious our security may become.

So what should we do differently? Let me limit myself to three ideas.

First, we must tackle the threat of WMD proliferation more creatively and comprehensively. North Korea and Iran are serious problems – but they’re not the only ones. As former Senator Sam Nunn has said, right now “tons of poorly secured plutonium and highly enriched uranium – the raw materials of nuclear terrorism – are spread around the world.”

*We thought* we knew what Saddam Hussein had. Well, we *do* know what the former Soviet Union has: more than 120 metric tons of fissile materials still waiting for security upgrades -- enough to build thousands of nuclear weapons. Mr. Chairman, it only takes one.

We need a systematic counter-proliferation policy that deploys all the tools we have – better intelligence, smarter export controls, covert action, focused missile defenses, a dramatic expansion of cooperative threat reduction programs, deterrence, and the option of military action.

Second, we need to rebuild our alliances and view them as an asset, not a liability. “Coalitions of the willing” appear to have become a substitute for enduring alliances. Such coalitions sometimes are necessary, but they are no substitute for established alliances, where regular contact builds a common perception of the dangers we all face. Of course, partnerships must be reciprocal; our allies must do

their part rather than define their role in terms of constraining our actions. But we should all be clear: we only strengthen our enemies when we divide ourselves.

Finally, we must be unrelenting in meeting the central challenge of our time: the fight against terrorist enemies. The first dimension of that fight is offense – to organize ourselves for the long-term – from further reform of our intelligence apparatus to focusing on the military strategy, forces and technology that can better enable us to defeat this enemy. The second dimension is defense, dramatically accelerating efforts at home, from cyber to cargo safety.

But there is a critical third dimension to the war against terrorism that I believe we have neglected, beyond offense and defense. The President has said that the front line of the war on terrorism now is Baghdad. I respectfully disagree. The front line of the war on terror today is where we are, particularly in places where people don't want us to be. And if that is true, it is essential that we define who we are in ways that isolate the extremists, not ourselves. We cannot destroy every potential terrorist. But we can over time reduce the anti-American hostility they exploit.

Particularly at a time when we are using the hard edge of our power to protect ourselves, we also must lead on the broader agenda of shared well-being: energetically working for peace... staying at the table rather than turning our backs on international agreements that matter deeply to the rest of the world... helping to narrow the gap between rich and poor... working to solve environmental challenges. It is these kinds of efforts that earn the moral authority on which our influence

depends.

The United States is at the pinnacle of our power. We saw that in the awesome military campaign in Iraq. We should never apologize for our power. It has far more often been harnessed to good than to ill.

But power without moral authority does not translate into influence. Moral authority derives from things different than our power – what we stand for, how we treat others, whether we lead across a broad, shared agenda.

We must offer the world a positive vision – one to which nations who share our values can join their strength. It is not enough for a great power to be defined by what we are against. To lead in the global age, we must show the world what America is for.

Thank you. I'd be glad to take your questions.