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## PRESIDENT'S FORUM

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IN MANY WAYS THE ONGOING TERROR WAR caught us by surprise. The warning signs were clear, but we simply failed to take adequate notice and action; we didn't understand. We treated events such as the Pan Am Flight 103 crash over Lockerbie, Scotland, the attack on the Marine barracks in Lebanon, the destruction of U.S. embassies in Africa, and the bombing of USS *Cole* in Yemen as discrete events rather than a series of battles in a new kind of war. Now, in responding to a war we did not choose, we must apply serious military power together with our friends and allies to bring this reign of terror to a halt.

### ***Going on the Offensive***

The United States has responded to the 11 September 2001 attacks with commitment and action to root out and punish terrorists and go after those who harbor, facilitate, and finance them. The war against terrorism will be unconventional, broad, and sustained. It has military, legal, financial, and diplomatic dimensions. The Terror War is being fought not only by the United States but also by a coalition of nations offering a variety of assistance.

U.S. military units and a large number of coalition forces in Afghanistan have driven the Taliban from power, allowing the establishment of a transitional government. They have captured hundreds of detainees, who are providing valuable intelligence about al-Qa'ida and other terrorist networks. They have created the conditions that allowed schools and hospitals to reopen, and they have facilitated the airdrop of more than two million humanitarian food rations into Afghanistan.

On any given day, over sixty thousand American service members are deployed around the world in the war against terror—more than seven thousand

on the ground in Afghanistan alone. Others are in the Philippines, Yemen, and the Republic of Georgia, continuing to train and support local forces. Our coalition is strong. More than ninety nations have arrested or detained over 2,500 terrorists and their supporters. More than 150 countries have offered or are providing assistance in the Terror War.

### *Who Attacked Us?*

A year ago, after 11 September, the first question Americans asked was: “Who attacked our country?” We subsequently learned it was al-Qa’ida, which is an Arabic term for “the Base.” Al-Qa’ida is not a single group but rather a terrorist network with operatives around the world. Al-Qa’ida is to terror what the Mafia is to crime. But unlike criminals, the goal of al-Qa’ida is not making money; its goal is remaking the world—and imposing its radical beliefs and its formula for how to live on people throughout its region of influence. People have wondered what kind of a war this is—is it a war for territories, resources, or hegemony? We have learned that this is not a war about religion, nor a religious war. It is a war about freedom, and about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The terrorists’ directive commands them to kill everyone in their way, all who do not believe as they do. Especially, their goal is to kill Americans, and in so doing they make no distinction between military and civilians, including children. We have discovered there are thousands of these terrorists in more than sixty countries. We have learned that they are recruited from their own nations and neighborhoods and brought to camps in places like Afghanistan, where they are trained in the tactics of terror. Then they are sent back to their homes or to hide in countries around the world to plot evil and destruction. The terrorists are traitors to their own faith. The enemy of America is not the Muslim faith; it is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists and every government that supports them.

### *Why Do They Hate Us?*

A year ago, on 11 September, Americans asked, “Why do they hate us?” We have learned that they hate what we see in every community in America. They hate the fact that Americans enjoy and cherish freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of independent thought, freedom of religion, freedom to assemble, freedom to disagree with each other, and the freedom to believe what we want and live as we wish—as long as we don’t impose on others. This is a vastly different philosophy of life than the one embraced by the shadowy forces of terrorism. Instead, their leaders are self-appointed. They want to overthrow existing governments—many in Muslim countries—such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. They brutalized people in Afghanistan. Women were not allowed to attend school. People were jailed for owning a television. Religion could only be

practiced as the terrorist leadership dictated. Men could be jailed if their beards were not long enough.

These terrorists kill not merely to end lives but to disrupt and end a way of life. With every atrocity, they hope that America grows fearful, retreating from the world and forsaking its friends. As President Bush has said, "They stand against us because we stand in their way." Our nation and our values are founded on "live and let live," not on imposing our ways on others. What we are fighting for are our basic beliefs and freedoms as Americans, the freedoms guaranteed us by our Constitution, Bill of Rights, and the democratic rule of law. These freedoms were violently taken away from those who died in lower Manhattan, at the Pentagon, and in the field in Pennsylvania. That is why we must act.

### *How Do We Fight the Terror War?*

A year ago, after 11 September, Americans asked: "How will we fight and win this war?" We need to go after those things that, if we are successful, will cause the enemy to collapse. The president has helped us in defining who our enemies are—not only terrorists and their support networks but, more importantly, "nations that provide aid or safe havens to terrorism. . . . Any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime."

The only successful defense against terrorism is a good offense. President Bush noted last spring that "we cannot defend America and our friends by hoping for the best. We cannot put our faith in the words of tyrants who solemnly sign nonproliferation treaties and then systematically break them. If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long. . . . The war on terror will not be won on the defensive. We must take the battle to the enemy. . . . In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action."

We must not wait until there is another Pearl Harbor-like attack before we defend ourselves, our friends, and our allies. If we know that rogue states or groups have weapons that could kill hundreds of thousands of people, it doesn't make sense to wait until they use them. A growing number of countries are investing enormous sums to develop weapons of mass destruction and the missiles to deliver them.

Hostile powers will soon have the ability to strike U.S. cities with nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. They will have the power to hold us hostage to blackmail and terror.

Some believe that the familiar notion of nation-states doesn't apply in the Terror War. However, history reminds us that pirates, bandits, and others who live outside the law cannot long survive if the states they live in pursue them with diligence. It is safe haven and the support of sympathetic nations that enable the

terrorists to go on. So it really *does* come down to nation-state versus nation-state—those that harbor terrorists versus those that abhor them. Nations that believe in the rule of law cannot rationally support terrorism at the same time. Our president has called for waging war against *any* nation that continues to harbor or support terrorists. The president has said: “We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge.”

This means that we must deal with terror cells wherever we find them. We must confront regimes that sponsor terror, and we must persistently work toward an end state where there is nowhere for a terrorist cell to flourish and grow—*no* money, *no* recruits, and *no* haven. They will be constantly hounded by local authorities. That is the only way we know to end the reign of terror.

We should remember that there are at least thirty-one different foreign terrorist organizations; al-Qa’ida is only one. Each has differing agendas, and each will need different strategies to deal with it. But we are 280 million Americans, who as a society are unbelievably affluent. We enjoy economic, political, racial, and religious freedoms that are the envy of the world. We simply want to protect our rights—our lives and property.

### *How Will We Win?*

We have directed every resource at our command—every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war—to the disruption and defeat of the global terror network. Skillful use of diplomacy is critical. America has a rich past in leading the way in the World War II alliance, holding the Nato partnership together, and orchestrating the coalition to liberate Kuwait. But the challenge for our diplomats in this war is to stay the course in a way that continues to foster unity over time, and help to reduce the inevitable friction among a global community that sees aspects of the world differently. It will be a difficult job indeed.

There are some people who ask how America has changed since 11 September. What have we learned about ourselves since the attacks? We have learned that the terrorists were wrong, that they miscalculated. They thought their attacks would expose us as soft, spoiled, decadent, and divided. Instead, Americans have become united, committed, more patriotic, and determined to stand and fight terrorism to preserve our way of life.

It has been over a year since the 11 September attacks, and it is fair to stop and ask the question: Are we prepared to do what it takes to win this war? In the beginning, the support for the terror war was universal. Following the attacks, the Congress of the United States voted overwhelmingly to authorize use of force in

the Terror War. The United Nations Security Council affirmed its unequivocal condemnation of the terrorist attacks, and the General Assembly agreed. This degree of international support was unprecedented. We need our friends and allies more than ever; the United States cannot go it alone. The lynchpin to our success is working with our counterparts in other countries, shoulder to shoulder. We need a team effort—an international team.

There are indications, however, that the world seems to be growing weary of the Terror War. The voices of dissent in Europe and other places would have us retreat and rest on our successes to date. Even here in America, we are beginning to hear people say we have already won. We drove the terrorists out of Afghanistan, and they are on the run in the Philippines and elsewhere. Some feel that we can afford to relax our security and return to business as usual. But the fact is, the terrorists are not defeated; they have not lost their determination and cunning nor their zeal for suicide attacks.

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"More than any time in recent history, America's destiny is not of our own choosing. We did not seek, nor did we provoke an assault on our freedom and our way of life. We did not expect, nor did we invite a confrontation with evil. Yet the true measure of a people's strength is how they rise to master that moment when it does arrive. . . . The streets of heaven are too crowded with angels, but every time we think we've measured our capacity to meet a challenge, we look up and we're reminded that that capacity may be limitless. We will do what is hard, we will achieve what is great. This is a time for American heroes and we reach for the stars. God bless their memory. God bless you. And God bless the United States of America."

—President Bartlet

The West Wing, "20 Hours In America"  
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Now is the time we Americans—and our friends—must be strong. If we back off, if we turn to other things, if we let our guard down, the terrorists will have won, and attacks will continue. This is virtually guaranteed. We can win this war, if we want to. It will be no easy path, and all of us must adapt. We must endure continued long lines at our airports. We must continue to bear security checks at our major sporting events, our theme parks, and our major historic landmarks and buildings. In fact, domestic security requires a new mind-set. But we will not give up our civil liberties or any of our essential freedoms. To do that would be to let the terrorists win. Those freedoms will not be marginalized for the sake of security. We must be as secure as we can be, but we must retain our freedoms. We need to appreciate right now that the Terror War won't have a victory party. We won't see a ticker-tape parade in New York City. This was and will be a constant struggle, a chronic condition; it may turn out to be very much like the Cold War.

### ***What Can We As Americans Do?***

Ultimate victory can be ours, but it will require America and its allies to demonstrate the following attributes.

***Perseverance and Commitment.*** This will not be a short war. Our history is replete with examples of our citizens and their leaders who underestimated the level of effort required to win. The opening battle of the Civil War at Manassas, Virginia, was witnessed by buggies full of spectators who traveled thirty miles from Washington to see the Union troops quickly send their Confederate brothers running for the hills. Each side thought that the other was weak, untrained, and ill equipped to fight; it took five bloody years to restore peace to the Union. In World War II, over seven million American men and women served in uniform, and nearly three hundred thousand died. In September 1950, the U.S. Eighth Army drove the North Korean army all the way to the Yalu River; General Douglas McArthur said he was going to have the troops home by Christmas. The war went on, with numerous casualties, for three years, and even today, a half-century later, armed forces face each other across a fortified demarcation line. The conflict in Vietnam has been called America's longest war, lasting for a decade. We suffered fifty-six thousand killed and three hundred thousand wounded. The lessons of history are clear: never underestimate the enemy, and always be prepared for a lengthy engagement and many casualties. To what level of effort are we willing to go to win the Terror War and reestablish a sense of peace and security at home?

***Awareness and Vigilance.*** We, as a people, must become more aware of the world around us. This means everything from being aware of threats to local facilities or events to understanding the ebb and flow of world politics and clearly defining radical movements. We must remain on guard and be prepared to deal with attacks on our persons and upon our freedoms. The level of security of our power plants, transportation systems, and computer and telecommunications networks must be increased on a permanent basis. Detecting abnormal activity around us must become second nature. As citizens, we automatically adjust our threat sensitivity when we find ourselves in a crime-ridden area late at night; we must do the same in addressing terrorism. We still do what we must do to conduct our lives, but we do so with a heightened sense of urgency when the environment requires it. Our world has changed; we must adjust our living habits as necessary to address the increased danger that the specter of terrorism brings.

***Tolerance and Understanding.*** This is perhaps the most important attribute of a free society. The American people must redouble efforts to find ways to address the root causes of the hatred we find in the hearts of generation after generation

of impoverished people throughout the third world. The gap between the haves and have-nots continues to widen. We must engage the nearly unlimited resources of our nation (and of our allies) to address the poverty, poor standards of living, and inadequate education that provide fertile ground for terrorism and anti-Western agendas.

Suicide bombings, from airplanes or from car bombs, are signs of desperation. America will not be safe until our would-be enemies see for themselves a future in this world rather than embrace the desperation of martyrdom.

The concept of “America” is one of more than a higher standard of living and resource consumption. We must do more to ensure that the rest of the world has a greater understanding of what America is really all about. We must employ the many tools of the globalized media to tell our positive story about freedom and democracy. We must aggressively seek to counteract the negative teachings about Western society that are breeding ill will and contempt within a whole new generation of young people throughout the developing world. We must mobilize the charitable and relief efforts of both governmental agencies and private organizations to reach out to the needy of the world and assist them with education and means to achieve decent standards of living. We must revitalize our Peace Corps to focus on the areas of the world where Americans are least understood. In the final analysis, killing terrorists is clearly not enough to break this cycle of violence. As the hope of the world, the beacon of freedom, we need to work to help others understand us and what makes America great.

These are challenging times. But what times have not been? The key is to face these challenges without being consumed by them. We must go ahead with our lives. We must make plans for our future. We must love and support our families and our friends. In the final analysis, we will prevail as individuals and as a nation because of the inherent strength of our democratic institutions, our belief in freedom, and our way of life.

RODNEY P. REMPT

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