

Remarks at an Armed Forces Full Honor Review for Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld in Arlington, Virginia

December 15, 2006

Thank you all. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary and Joyce. Mr. Vice President, thank you for your kind words. Lynne and Senator Warner, Deputy Secretary England, Secretary Harvey, Winter, Wynne, General Pace, members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, distinguished guests, men and women of the Armed Forces: I'm pleased to join you as we pay tribute to one of America's most skilled, energetic, and dedicated public servants, the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld.

Don Rumsfeld has been at my side from the moment I took office. We've been through war together. We have shared some of the most challenging moments in our Nation's history. Over the past 6 years, I have come to appreciate Don Rumsfeld's professionalism, his dedication, his strategic vision, his deep devotion to the men and women of our Nation who wear the uniform, and his love for the United States of America.

That devotion began at an early age, inspired by a man in uniform he called dad. His father, George, was 37 when America was attacked at Pearl Harbor. Too old to be drafted, he volunteered for service in the United States Navy. One of Don's earliest memories is of standing on the hangar deck of his dad's aircraft carrier, the USS *Hollandia*, at the age of 11. He was taking in the sights and sounds of the ship as it prepared to leave for the Pacific war.

His father's example stayed with him, and after graduating from Princeton, Don Rumsfeld joined the United States Navy, rising to become a pilot, a flight instructor, and a member of the Naval Reserve for nearly 20 years.

In the decades since he first put on the uniform, Don Rumsfeld has served with distinction in many important positions: Congressman, Counsellor to the President, Ambassador to NATO, White House Chief of Staff, Secretary of Defense. Yet, to this day, the title that has brought him his greatest pride is dad, and now granddad. And so

today, as we honor a fine man, we also honor his family, Joyce Rumsfeld and his children.

Don is the only man—Don Rumsfeld is the only man to have served as Secretary of Defense for two Presidents in two different centuries. [*Laughter*] In 2001, I called him back to the same job he held under President Gerald Ford, and I gave him this urgent mission: Prepare our Nation's Armed Forces for the threats of a new century.

Don Rumsfeld brought vision and enthusiasm to this vital task. He understood that the peace of the post-cold-war years was really the calm before the next storm and that America needed to prepare for the day when new enemies would attack our Nation in unprecedented ways. That day came on a clear September morning, and in a moment of crisis, our Nation saw Donald Rumsfeld's character and courage.

When the Pentagon was hit, Secretary Rumsfeld's first instinct was to run toward danger. He raced down smoke-filled hallways to the crash site so he could help rescue workers pull the victims from the rubble. And in the weeks that followed, he directed the effort to plan our Nation's military response to the deadliest terrorist attack in our Nation's history.

Under Secretary Rumsfeld's leadership, U.S. and coalition forces launched one of the most innovative military campaigns in the history of modern warfare, sending Special Operations forces into Afghanistan to link up with anti-Taliban fighters, to ride with them on horseback, and to launch a stunning assault against the enemy. In Operation Enduring Freedom we combined the most advanced laser-guided weapons with one of the oldest tools in the military arsenal—a man with a weapon on a horse.

History will record that the first major ground battle in the 21st century involving American forces began with a cavalry charge. I guess that's what you get when you bring together a President from Texas with a Secretary of Defense who actually remembers when America had a cavalry. [*Laughter*]

In 2003, on my orders, Secretary Rumsfeld led the planning and execution of another historic military campaign, Operation Iraqi Freedom. In this operation, coalition forces

drove Saddam Hussein from power in 21 days. And in the years that followed, Don Rumsfeld helped see the Iraqi people through the resumption of sovereignty, two elections, a referendum to approve the most progressive Constitution in the Middle East, and the seating of a newly elected Government.

On his watch, the United States military helped the Iraqi people establish a constitutional democracy in the heart of the Middle East, a watershed event in the story of freedom.

As he met the challenges of fighting a new and unfamiliar war, Don Rumsfeld kept his eyes on the horizon and on the threats that still await us as this new century unfolds.

He developed a new defense strategy and a new command structure for our Nation's Armed Forces, with a new northern command to protect the homeland, a new joint forces command to focus on transformation, a new strategic command to defend against long-range attacks, and a transformed U.S. special operations command ready to take the lead in the global war on terror.

He launched the most significant transformation of the Army in a generation. He led my administration's efforts to transform the NATO Alliance, with a new NATO response force ready to deploy quickly anywhere in the world. On his watch, NATO sent its forces to defend a young democracy in Afghanistan, more than 3,000 miles from Europe. It was the first time NATO has deployed outside the North Atlantic area in the history of the Alliance.

He helped launch the Proliferation Security Initiative, an unprecedented coalition of more than 80 nations working together to stop shipments of weapons of mass destruction on land, at sea, and in the air.

He undertook the most sweeping transformation of America's global defense posture since the start of the cold war, repositioning our forces so they can surge quickly to deal with unexpected threats and setting the stage for our global military presence for the next 50 years.

He took ballistic missile defense from theory to reality. And because of his leadership, America now has an initial capability to track

a ballistic missile headed for our country and destroy it before it harms our people.

Most importantly, he worked to establish a culture in the Pentagon that rewards innovation and intelligent risk taking and encourages our military and civilian leaders to challenge established ways of thinking.

The record of Don Rumsfeld's tenure is clear. There have been more profound change—there has been more profound change at the Department of Defense over the past 6 years than at any time since the Department's creation in the late 1940s.

And these changes were not easy, but because of Don Rumsfeld's determination and leadership, America has the best equipped, the best trained, and most experienced Armed Forces in the history of the world. All in all, not bad for a fellow who calls himself a "broken-down ex-Navy pilot." This man knows how to lead, and he did, and the country is better off for it.

In every decision Don Rumsfeld made over the past 6 years, he always put the troops first, and the troops in the field knew it. A few years ago, the editors at Time magazine came to his Pentagon office, and Don correctly suspected they were thinking of naming him "Person of the Year." Without hesitation, Don Rumsfeld told them, "Don't give it to me. Give it to our men and women in uniform." And that's exactly what Time magazine did.

Don Rumsfeld's selfless leadership earned him the admiration of our soldiers and sailors and airmen and marines. And we saw how they feel about him this week when he paid a farewell visit to our troops in Iraq.

Don Rumsfeld's strong leadership has earned him my admiration and deep respect. We stood together in hours of decision that would affect the course of our history. We walked amid the rubble of the broken Pentagon the day after September the 11th, 2001. He was with me when we planned the liberation of Afghanistan. We were in the Oval Office together the day I gave the order to remove Saddam Hussein from power.

In these and countless other moments, I have seen Don Rumsfeld's character and his integrity. He was—always ensured I had the best possible advice, the opportunity to hear and weigh conflicting points of view. He

spoke straight. It was easy to understand him. He has a sharp intellect, a steady demeanor, and boundless energy. He began every day at the Pentagon with a singular mission—to serve his country and the men and women who defend her.

Mr. Secretary, today your country thanks you for 6 outstanding years at the Department of Defense. And I thank you for your sacrifice and your service and your devotion to the men and women of our Armed Forces.

I want to thank Joyce for her poise and her grace and for the example she has set for our Nation's military families. Laura and I will miss you both, and we wish you all the best in the years to come.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, I bring to this podium America's 21st Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:50 p.m. at the Pentagon. In his remarks, he referred to Lynne Cheney, wife of Vice President Dick Cheney; Secretary of the Navy Donald C. Winter; and Secretary of the Air Force Michael W. Wynne. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld.

Message on the Observance of Hanukkah 2006

December 15, 2006

I send greetings to all those celebrating Hanukkah, the festival of lights.

During Hanukkah, Jewish people everywhere honor the liberation of Jerusalem and the great miracle witnessed in the Holy Temple more than 2,000 years ago. After Jerusalem was conquered by an oppressive king and the Jews lost their right to worship in freedom, Judah Maccabee and his followers courageously set out to reclaim Jerusalem from foreign rule. Though their numbers were small, the Maccabees' dedication to their faith was strong, and they emerged victorious. When they returned to their Holy Temple for its rededication, the Maccabees discovered enough oil to burn for only one day. Yet the oil lit the Holy Temple for eight days, and the light of hope still shines bright in Jewish homes and synagogues throughout the world.

Each year, the glow of the menorah is a reminder of the blessings of a just and loving God and the sacrifices made over the centuries for faith and freedom. Laura and I pray that this holiday season will be a time of happiness in every home and a time of peace throughout the world.

Happy Hanukkah.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Proclamation 8091—Wright Brothers Day, 2006

December 15, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

America has a rich history of exploration and discovery, marked by scientific and technological achievements that have transformed the world. On Wright Brothers Day, we remember two aviation pioneers from Ohio whose big dreams and extraordinary accomplishments helped change the course of human history.

On December 17, 1903, Orville and Wilbur Wright completed the first manned, powered flight in history and ushered all of mankind into a new era of possibility and promise. With Orville at the controls, the Wright brothers' small aircraft traveled 120 feet in 12 seconds above the dunes of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. The age of flight had begun, and in the decades that followed, advancements in aviation would enable determined American risk-takers to cross oceans, break the sound barrier, and walk on the Moon.

Today, our Nation follows the Wright brothers' example of innovation as we continue to explore the frontiers of air and space. My Administration has outlined a vision for space exploration that includes a return to the Moon and a long-term human and robotic program to explore Mars and the solar system. By working to expand the realm of the possible, we can gain a better understanding of the universe and continue the journey that the Wright brothers began more than a century ago.