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Remarks by the Vice President at a Bush-Cheney '04 Reception

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THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, good evening. And thank you very much, Doug. I had forgotten that until that moment. That was an interesting orientation session where they take us all down and teach us how to be congressmen for about a week and then give us -- sort of turn us loose in the city of Washington. And it was a remarkable class that included Newt Gingrich, the future Speaker of the House of Representatives; Darrell Campbell (ph), from South Carolina; and Tommy Lefler (ph), from Texas. A lot of them are old friends. Bill Thomas, who is now Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee was a member of that class. It was a good group.

I was -- I loved my time in the House of Representatives. I served for 10 years, had gotten elected to six terms. Of course, Wyoming has a small House delegation. We only have one congressman. (Laughter.) But it was quality. (Laughter and applause.)

But I remember those days very fondly. And I'm delighted to be here tonight, as well, and see my old friends, Governors Ray and Branstad. I remember when Bob Ray and I were running around trying to get Gerry Ford elected President of the United States a few years ago, as well. And Terry did a superb job as governor. It's nice to come back and have a chance to see all of them, as well, too.

It's been three years now since the President asked me to become his running mate. He asked me, first of all, to help him find a running mate. I did my part. I gave him some ideas. (Laughter.) And he rejected all of them -- it was my great, good fortune. But at the time when he picked me, he said he wasn't worried about carrying Wyoming. He got 70 percent of the vote in Wyoming. But I remind him every once in a while those three electoral votes came in pretty darned handy. (Laughter.)

I know in our next campaign -- in the last campaign, we came mighty close to carrying Iowa, some 4,000 votes short. And with your help, Iowa next year is going to be in the Bush-Cheney column. (Applause.)

As congressman, as Secretary of Defense, and now as Vice President, I've had the privilege over the years of working with many fine members of Congress from Iowa. In the early days, as Doug mentioned, it was Tom Tauke, Cooper Evans. My good friend, Jim Leach, from Davenport, who's still in the House, does superb work for Iowa. Jim, of course, today is joined by Tom Latham and Jim Nussle, and Iowa's newest congressman, Steve King. They're all making Iowa proud of the delegation they have in the United States Congress. (Applause.)

Now, the only real job I have as Vice President is to preside over the Senate. When they wrote the Constitution and created the post of Vice President, they got down to the end of the convention and decided they hadn't given the Vice President anything to do. So they made him the presiding officer of the United States Senate and gave him the tie-breaking vote, the right to cast that tie-breaking vote, which I've been able to do three times this year.

But my predecessor, John Adams, also had one other perk. He was allowed to speak on the floor of the House -- excuse me, on the floor of the Senate. He was given floor privileges, and then he used that privilege a few times and they withdrew his floor privileges. (Laughter.) And they've never been restored.

But I do have the privilege of serving as the President of the Senate. I spend a fair amount of time up there, try to get up every week and have lunch with my Senate colleagues. And it is a tremendous pleasure to work with an old colleague from the House of Representatives, and that's your senior senator, Chuck Grassley. (Applause.)

Anyone in Washington can tell you that the farmer from New Hartford is also one of the most influential members of the United States Senate. You'll find no more authoritative voice on agriculture and farm issues. And of course, Chuck is Chairman of the Finance Committee, perhaps the most powerful post in the United States Senate, and brings Iowa's common sense to some of the most complex issues we have to deal with, tax policy and Medicare. The President and I rely on Chuck to get things done, but he also is great because he remembers where he comes from, and he keeps touch with the folks back home. And when he's up for reelection next year, the President and I are proud to be on the same ticket with Chuck Grassley. (Applause.)

With the responsibilities the President and I have, it means a great deal to us that we can count on our Republican partners in the Congress to get things done. Now, we've had two major areas of concern. There are a lot of things I could talk about tonight. I want to touch briefly on the economy, because obviously, that's vital for everybody. And it's occupied a significant amount of our time since we got to Washington.

We inherited a recession. The recession began the first quarter of '01, when we first arrived. We followed that -- that was followed by the significant economic consequences of the terrorist attacks on 9/11. And the combination of events, obviously, dealt a serious blow to the economy. One of the amazing things about our economy is it's been so resilient that it was able to withstand those blows and to keep on going.

We believe we've made significant progress in getting the economy back on track. We had an employment report today that was generally viewed as good news since we added 57,000 net new jobs this month. We've got to do better than that, but that's headed in the right direction.

The combination of the President's tax cuts and the decisions that he made with respect to reforming our tax code, dealing, for example, with such issues as cutting rates, as eliminating the marriage penalty, as doing away with the death tax and cutting the rates on capital gains and dividends, as well as providing expenses to small businesses have all had a significant long-term impact on the economy.

Some of the folks who are running around Iowa these days, out-of-staters, talking about some of these issues seem to be committed to the proposition that they want to raise taxes. We think that's a terrible idea. It's exactly the wrong time now to be talking about raising taxes, given what that would do to the economy and the way in which it would interfere with our ongoing economic recovery.

The second major concern I have that I really want to focus on tonight, and I'll try to be brief. I know you all have got many things to be doing this evening, and we appreciate your support and you're being here. But I want to talk for a few minutes about 9/11.

9/11 in many respects changed everything. When you look at the world from our perspective, when you think about the issues of national security that we have to deal with on a regular basis, about how we defend America, about what the threats are, and how we can secure our nation from further attack, the world looks different after 9/11 than it did before 9/11.

What we learned on 9/11 was that we are vulnerable. We saw a handful of terrorists able to come into our country, who came training here on our commercial aviation schools, and with box cutters and airline tickets, take over airliners and kill 3,000 of our fellow citizens in two hours the morning of 9/11.

We also have learned since that the terrorists are committed to trying to acquire weapons of mass destruction -- chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons. We know that from the training camps that we went through in Afghanistan. We know that from their manuals. We know that from interrogating those members of al Qaeda that we've captured and detained.

One of the most devastating, frightening thoughts you can have is the prospect of a member of al Qaeda, a terrorist organization, loose in our city with a biological or a nuclear weapon. It obviously would result in a far more devastating attack than this country has ever experienced.

We also know, as well, now that we are currently engaged in what I describe, and the President has talked about, as a global war on terror -- not an isolated incident that happened on 9/11, but rather part of a pattern that has, in fact, taken on global dimensions. Since the attacks in New York and Washington on that date, we've seen attacks in Riyadh, Casablanca, Mombassa, Bali, Jakarta, Najaf, Baghdad. Clearly a global problem. And while the United

States is the prime target, we're not the only target.

We also know that thousands of terrorists went through those training camps in Afghanistan in the late 1990s, and that after they acquired the skills, the technical know-how to build bombs and conduct attacks of various kinds, they went back to their own countries and are now actively engaged from North Africa all the way to the Middle East, to Southeast Asia, in plotting new attacks.

You think about that threat, then you think about what we had done to deal with that kind of threat before 9/11, of course, what you quickly discover is there was no strategy before 9/11 for dealing effectively with these kinds of attacks. There was a tendency for the government to look at an attack like that, and treat it as an individual criminal enterprise. It was a law enforcement problem. All we had to do was go out and find the perpetrator, arrest him, put him in jail, and we'd find ourselves then having solved the problem. Case closed.

And that's the way we treated the first attack on the World Trade Center in 1993. We went out and arrested a man named Ramzi Yousef. He's now doing 240 years in a maximum security prison in Colorado. And it's a good place for him to be.

But what we didn't do at the time was to look behind that attack and try to figure out who was behind it, who financed it, who organized it, what kind of ties did the attackers have to a larger global organization or to other governments.

We know now, for example, that that was probably the first al Qaeda attack on the homeland of the United States. We know Ramzi Yousef was, in fact, al Qaeda. He later on participated in an aborted attempt to take down 12 airliners over the Pacific, simultaneously, before he was arrested and prosecuted for the original attack in '93.

We know, for example, that he is the nephew of the mastermind of the attack on 9/11, Khalid Shaykh Muhammad, who's now in custody. They're related. Khalid Shaykh Muhammad is the uncle of Ramzi Yousef, who ran the first attack eight years earlier. We know that one of the attackers -- and we know this from documents that we have uncovered in Baghdad -- one of the attackers, a man named Abdul Rahman Yasin, or Yasin, after the attack, took refuge in Iraq. And we know from documents we found there that he was granted a monthly stipend and safe haven in Iraq, after the attack on the first World Trade Center.

What we have, if you look at those kinds of facts, and clearly, this isn't just a law enforcement problem. It's part of a larger -- a larger network. The Cold War strategy that we pursued in dealing with the Soviet Union doesn't work with al Qaeda. In the case of the Soviet Union, we held at risk those things they cared about with our intercontinental ballistic missiles, so they were deterred from ever launching an attack against the United States. You can't apply that kind of strategy to a terrorist. They don't have anything they care about or that they want to defend badly enough so that they're deterred from an attack that we can hold it at risk. The old Cold War strategies simply don't work where al Qaeda is concerned.

So we needed a new strategy. And that's what we've developed. And that strategy has to include several elements. First of all, defenses. We have to harden the target here at home, which we've done, passed the most massive reorganization of the federal government since the 1940s, when we set up the Department of Homeland Security. But good defense isn't enough. You've got to have it, but it doesn't solve the problem because there's no such thing as a perfect defense. You've also got to have an offensive component to your security strategy. And that's what we've done. You also have to have the objective of aggressively going after the terrorists and destroying the terrorists and their networks before they can launch further attacks against the United States. That's the only certain way to defend the United States.

We know that the other method doesn't work. What we did with respect to offensive strategy was to go after the terrorists, go after their financial networks, which had never been done before, and get very aggressive in working on intelligence efforts worldwide, and one other key component that was essential from the standpoint of what the President has done, and that's what we've come to identify as the Bush doctrine. The President said we were also going to go after those states that sponsor terror.

Before there had always been a tendency to split off the terror-sponsoring states from the terrorists themselves. If you were a terror-sponsoring state, your name went on a list over in the State Department. There might be some kind of sanction applied, but that was the end of it. There was no penalty, no significant penalty for sponsoring

terrorist attacks against the United States.

The President said that's changed. From this day forward, we will hold states that sponsor, provide safe harbor and sanctuary to terrorists just as guilty as the terrorists themselves. And that's what we've done.

One of the difficulties we've had is that we inherited a situation in which there had not been a sustained, effective U.S. effort to go after the terrorists after the terrorist attacks against us, both here and home and overseas.

Think back over the last 20 years, go back to 1983, when our Marines were attacked in Beirut and we lost 241 Marines on a Sunday morning with a truck bombing in Beirut; or 1993, the first World Trade Center attack; 1995 an attack on our military advisors in Riyadh; 1996, the attack on the Khobar Towers; '98, the East Africa embassy bombings that hit two of our embassies simultaneously, killed hundreds, 12 Americans died; 1998 was the East Africa bombings. In 2000, it was the attack on the USS Cole, 17 sailors killed.

It's hard to find, if you think back on that history, a time when we ever responded effectively and imposed a penalty on those who attacked us. We launched a few cruise missiles at empty training camps in Afghanistan at one point. But there was no sustained, effective effort to take down these organizations. As a result, if you were Osama bin Laden or part of the al Qaeda, prior to 9/11, you could think about, contemplate attacking the United States and have some degree of confidence that you wouldn't pay much of price for it. All of that changed with 9/11, and it changed with the election of George W. Bush as President of the United States. (Applause.)

Since 9/11, we've moved aggressively to take down the Taliban in Afghanistan. That government is gone. We've wiped out a large part of al Qaeda in Afghanistan. We've put up a new government there under Mr. Karzai. They'll hold free elections next year. We're making significant progress. But we've still got a lot to do. We've still got about 10,000 troops in Afghanistan. They are engaged periodically in battles with the remnants of the Taliban and al Qaeda there. We need to stay until we finish the job.

With respect to Pakistan next door, a friendly government, they signed on early to help us. And we've wrapped up literally hundreds of al Qaeda in Pakistan, including Khalid Shaykh Muhammad, the man who was probably the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks.

Saudi Arabia, right across the Gulf -- we've had significant cooperation, of course, from the Saudis with wrapping up members of al Qaeda, especially since last May 12th, when they were hit in their own terrorist attack, and a number of Saudis and two Americans were killed in that. And they understand they're right on the target list, alongside the United States.

In Iraq, we went in there very aggressively, as we needed to do. And we think we've made significant progress. We went after Iraq, because if you hark back again to that biggest threat we face, that is a terrorist equipped with a deadly biological or nuclear weapon, a weapon of mass destruction, Iraq is one of those places in the world where you had a dictatorship, a brutal dictatorship, one of the worst in modern times, a regime that had not only produced, but had used chemical weapons in the past, for example, on the Kurds and on the Iranians, a regime that had hosted terrorists. Abu Nidal lived there for years, the Abu Nidal organization that did the Lauro -- USS Lauro hijacking. We had Palestinian Islamic Jihad lived there. Al Qaeda had a base of operation there up in Northeastern Iraq where they ran a large poisons factory for attacks against Europeans and U.S. forces.

The general proposition had to be that we had to deal with the threats that Iraq represented, and that's exactly what we've done. One of the debates you've seen in recent days is this question of, well, maybe Saddam didn't really have any WMD. And there are people out there peddling that notion -- those who are trying to undermine our attack, the decision the President made.

But I have never believed that for a minute. I think the record is overwhelming that he had, in fact, had major investments in weapons of mass destruction. And yesterday, we had a man named David Kay, who is an American scientist, who's been involved before in UNSCOM and in these kind of inspection efforts. He's been conducting an investigation in Iraq now for the last three months. He's had -- still got a lot of work to do, but he gave an interim report yesterday to the Congress. He went before the House and Senate intelligence committees in closed door sessions and told them what he's found so far. It's not definitive. It's not final. It's just an interim, preliminary report because he's got a lot of work.

But it's hard to tell sometimes from what we see in the media what happens out there. I don't mean to be -- I didn't come here today to beat up on the press. It's tempting, but I didn't. (Laughter.) But I sat there last night and read David Kay's report, which was classified then; it's since been declassified, and then simultaneously watched some of the news coverage -- and I didn't recognize that they were the same thing. So I thought I'd share with you today just a few snippets, if you will, from his testimony. And these are direct quotes.

"Iraq's WMD programs spanned more than two decades, involved thousands of people, billions of dollars and was elaborately shielded by security and deception operations, which continued even beyond the end of Operation Iraqi Freedom. . . We have discovered dozens of WMD-related program activities and significant amounts of equipment that Iraq concealed from the United Nations during the inspections."

That's the inspections that began in late 2002.

"The discovery of these deliberate concealment efforts have come about both through the admissions of Iraqi scientists and officials concerning information they've deliberately withheld, and through physical evidence of equipment and activities the ISG" -- and that's the survey group -- "had discovered that should have been reported to the United Nations."

When they didn't report to the United Nations, they violated U.N. Security Council resolutions, they were in material breach. And under the U.N. Security Council 1441, that the U.N. Security Council adopted unanimously, the 17th resolution, by the way the Security Council adopted on the subject, the Council was justified -- members of the Council were justified in taking action.

Let me give you a few of the examples that he just referred to:

A clandestine network of laboratories and safe houses within the Iraqi intelligence service that contained equipment subject to U.N. monitoring and suitable for continuing CBW, chemical, biological weapons research.

A prison laboratory complex, possibly used in human testing, of BW agents that Iraqi officials working to prepare for U.N. inspections were explicitly ordered not to declare to the United Nations.

Reference strains of biological organisms concealed in a scientist's home, one of which can be used to produce biological weapons. New research on BW-applicable agents, brucella and Congo Crimean Hemorrhagic Fever and continuing work on liacin aflatoxin, which had not been declared to the U.N.

Documents and equipment hidden in scientists' homes that would have been useful in resuming uranium enrichment by centrifuge and electromagnetic isotope separation.

A line of unmanned aerial vehicles, not fully declared, that had been tested to the range of 500 kilometers, 350 kilometers farther than allowed by the U.N. Security Council resolution.

Plans and advanced design work for new long-range missiles with ranges up to at least 1,000 kilometers. Missiles of 1,000-kilometer range would have allowed Iraq to threaten targets throughout the Middle East -- Ankara, Cairo, Abu Dhabi.

Clandestine attempts between late 1999 and 2002 to obtain from North Korea technology related to 1,300-kilometer range ballistic missiles, probably the No Dong missile; 300-kilometer range anti-ship cruise missiles and other prohibited military equipment, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

Now, there's no question this guy had invested billions in developing illegal programs of weapons of mass destruction. And don't let anybody tell you that this was not a significant threat. He's used it previously. We knew from past history that it was only a matter of time until he would be in a position to do so once again.

So how are we doing in the war on terror? We think we're making major progress. I mentioned what we've done in Afghanistan, that we're off and running there and standing up a new government.

In Iraq, of course, Saddam Hussein is no more. His government is gone. A major rebuild is under way. There's a

governing coalition composed of Iraqis in place, ministries now are run by Iraqis. Local governments -- over 90 percent of them have their own local councils that have been put in place. Schools are open. The hospitals are open. The universities are open. Oil production is back up to almost 2 million barrels a day. The electricity grid is functioning at a greater rate than at any time since before the war. The economy is beginning to bustle. There are thousands of new businesses created in the streets of Baghdad.

There is a continuing security threat, no question about it. And we need to deal with that security threat, and our troops are doing it every day. I can't say enough good about the young men and women of America's armed forces and what they're doing for us in Iraq. (Applause.)

What's at stake here is our ability to take the basic part of the world, the Middle East, that has been the seed bed from which these terrorists have grown, that have attacked the United States and have been engaged in this war on terror now that goes back for a good many years. If we can successfully stand up good, solid governments, able to control their sovereign territory, representative of their people, that never again become safe havens for terrorists who are involved in producing weapons of mass destruction in Afghanistan and in Iraq, we will have struck a blow at the basic, fundamental foundations of terrorism in the world which they're not likely to be able to recover from.

But if we don't do that, if we don't deal with the problems over there now with our forces, we will find sooner or later, further attacks against the United States right here at home. We know that. That's happened before.

Some people seem to have the idea that U.S. strength and determination is provocative, if we just turn the other cheek, they'll leave us alone. Well, tell me what did we do to merit the attack on 9/11? That was not an attack the United States caused specifically. They come after us, not because of what we do, they come after us because of what we stand for, because of what we believe in: freedom and democracy and individual human dignity. And this is a war that has to be fought to the finish. And we can only succeed if we're successful in going after the terrorists and destroying them before they can attack us again.

So those young men and women who are tonight in Baghdad and in Kabul and in the mountains in Afghanistan and Iraq are taking on the enemy exactly where we ought to take them on, on their home turf instead of here in the United States on our home turf. It's exactly the right thing for us to be doing. (Applause.)

The world will be safer and more secure for our kids and grandkids if we finish the job, if we get it right. And that means standing up a viable government in Iraq. That means having a viable economy there. This is a good investment. This is the time for us to be getting the job done. Because long-term, it will save American lives, both in terms of our military operations overseas, as well as here at home. In the long-term, the United States will be a safer, more secure nation because we follow the leadership and the strategy of President George W. Bush.

Now, you're going to hear a lot of this over the course of the next 13 months, during the course of this campaign. It's important to remind people if they're tempted to listen to the other side to ask the question, well, what's their strategy? How did they deal with this when they were in charge? How do they propose to deal with it now?

I haven't heard, frankly, a strategy from the other side. And all of you who are out there living every day with numerous spokesmen for the other faith, here in Iowa, because they're campaigning here now because of your Iowa caucuses, when you come across one of them, ask him, what's their strategy, how are they going to do it? Is it the sort of turn-the-other-cheek approach there, that unfortunately was all too often the situation previously? Or do they have a plan, a strategy, a way for us to go after the al Qaeda and take them down where they live.

I think the President of the United States has done a fantastic job for us. We're safer tonight because he is President. We'll be safer tomorrow because you're going to reelect him as President. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END 6:42 P.M. CDT

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