

## STRATEGY IN THE WAR ON TERROR

By

**Douglas J. Feith**

**Under Secretary of Defense for Policy**

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There are three categories of action in the U.S. global war against terrorism. First is the disruption and destruction of terrorist organizations. The second, which addresses the flow of people into the ranks of the terrorists, we call the “battle of ideas.” And third is homeland security.

- *Crime or War:* When the September 11, 2001 attack occurred, President Bush promptly recognized it as war. This may look obvious in retrospect, but for the preceding many years, the U.S. Government commonly dealt with terrorist attacks as law-enforcement problems and responded by dispatching FBI investigators, not military forces.
- The September 11 attack forced the United States to devise a comprehensive strategy against an international network of terrorists.
- *Defining “enemy” and “victory:”* Among the first questions we asked: If we are at war, who is the enemy? And what is our war aim – that is, what is victory?
- We think of the enemy not as a fixed list of states and groups, but as *international terrorism and state support for terrorism*.
- We mulled the definition of our war aim with special care. The goal had to be expansive enough to address the threat. But it had to be realistic too. Accordingly, we define victory not as the elimination of terrorism (an impossibly ambitious standard), but rather *the elimination of terrorism as a threat to our way of life*.
- *Trading off defense and civil liberties:* We considered what a defensive strategy would entail. We asked: Can we protect our country by concentrating chiefly on organizing defenses?
- The United States is particularly vulnerable to terrorist attack because we are a free and open society. It is easy to come and go. And it is easy to move people and things around in our country.
- We could limit ourselves to a defensive strategy only if we were willing to transform our way of life, sacrificing our society’s free and open nature, relinquishing wholesale our civil liberties.

- We saw our choice as: Change the way we live or change the way the terrorists live.
- So, we concluded that a solely defensive strategy is not an option.
  - In other words, the United States requires an offensive strategy against the terrorists and their state sponsors – to strike forward against the terrorists’ bases, personnel and other infrastructure.

### ***Disrupting and Destroying Terrorist Networks***

- *Territorial approach.* For terrorists to plan and operate on a large scale over a sustained period, they need the quiet enjoyment of territorial bases.
  - This requires either the cooperation of a state sponsor or the use of territory not under any government’s effective sovereignty.
  - Our strategy is not to try to chase every terrorist rabbit, as it were, down every rabbit hole, but rather to try to deprive terrorists of whole swaths of territory at a time and to eliminate state sponsorship state-by-state.
  - This was the aim of ousting the Taliban in Afghanistan. It is the aim of our counter-terrorist military cooperation with the governments of Yemen, Georgia, and the Philippines. It is a key aim of the US effort to disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction.
- *Broad range of tools; broad coalition.* Our strategy of disrupting and destroying terrorist organizations does not rely on military means alone, or even primarily.
  - Using intelligence, law enforcement and diplomatic channels, the United States is cooperating with scores of coalition partners to target the terrorists, their finances, their communications and supplies.
  - Perturbations of international terrorist networks create opportunities for us to gather actionable intelligence. For example, information collected by US military forces in Afghanistan has led to arrests of terrorists in Southeast Asia, Europe and the United States.
- *Nexus between terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.* As the September 11 attack showed, terrorists have no compunction about killing as many civilians as they can. If they come to possess, for example, smallpox or nuclear weapons, they could kill hundreds or thousands of times more people than were murdered on September 11.

- Terrorists undermine long-standing deterrence strategies against so-called rogue states with chemical, biological, nuclear and missile programs. Such states will not be deterred from using such weapons against us if they can conceal their hand by using terrorists to deliver the attack.
- The large-scale damage that technology now enables terrorist-supporting states to inflict on open societies requires us to re-think traditional concepts of self-defense and sovereignty. To preserve the world's state system and preserve the rights and security of states worldwide, we must build international support for timely action to deal with the connections among terrorist groups, weapons of mass destruction and state sponsors of terrorism.
- *Force terrorists to play defense.* Our goal is to prevent the terrorists from planning and executing operations. We aim to keep pressure on them; compel them to hide and move and remain on the defensive; discover their plans and interdict them.
  - But working on this goal is not enough to produce victory in the war against terrorism. Terrorist infrastructure is relatively easy to replace. If we do not stem the flow of individuals into the terrorists' ranks, we cannot win the war.

### ***The Battle of Ideas***

- Therefore, the other key element of our offensive strategy against terrorism is to wage the battle of ideas to impede recruitment and support.
- Terrorists recruit by teaching young people not merely to hate, but to believe that God permits, indeed requires, the destruction of those one hates.
  - To succeed, this kind of indoctrination must overcome natural human instincts against the killing of children and other civilians.
  - It must counter the standard teachings of all the world's great religions, including traditional Islam.
- Within the war on terrorism, the battle of ideas does not relate exclusively to Muslims, but it rages with special intensity within the world of Islam.
- Extremist terrorist groups – most prominently, al-Qaida – aspire to dominate their fellow Muslims.
  - In fighting Islamist extremists, the United States is not making war on Islam. Rather, we are allying ourselves with the hundreds of millions of Muslims who oppose domination by aggressive, extremist fellow Muslims.

- *De-legitimate terrorism.* We engage in this battle of ideas by working to de-legitimate terrorism: Whatever the political cause, the purposeful targeting of civilians is immoral. Moral clarity is a strategic asset.
  - As our September 2002 National Security Strategy states, the US aims “to make clear that all acts of terrorism are illegitimate so that terrorism will be viewed in the same light as slavery, piracy, or genocide: behavior that no respectable government can condone or support and all must oppose.”
- *Promote models of Muslim success.* The battle of ideas also entails our reinforcing the success of moderate and modernizing institutions in the world of Islam.
  - Hence the US interest in: the success of predominantly Muslim states like Turkey and Indonesia; demonstrating the benefits of political freedom and integration into the world economy; and highlighting the history of Muslim life in America and US help for Muslims in Kuwait, northern Iraq, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo and elsewhere.

### ***US Homeland Security***

- Finally, the third category of action in the global war on terrorism is establishing homeland security.
- We created the Northern Command, the first US combatant command with the United States as its area of responsibility. Its mission is to defend the United States on the land, air and sea. It is responsible for defense missions, such as combat air patrols over US cities, and military support to civilian authorities in the event of domestic crises.
- In addition, the United States, having exercised its right to withdraw from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, is developing missile defenses to protect the United States and our deployed forces, allies and friends abroad from limited missile threats.

### ***Determination to Win***

- The global war on terrorism is complex and novel, radically different from warfare against conventional enemies in the form of states with regular armed forces.
- US strategy is adapting to the challenge.
- President Bush has pledged that, in this war, “we will not waver; we will not tire; we will not falter; and we will not fail.”