



**Remarks by Secretary Michael Chertoff, Department of Homeland Security  
October 17, 2007  
Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri**

### **The Battle for Our Future**

**SECRETARY CHERTOFF:** Thank you very much, Dr. Forsythe, for that very kind introduction. And thank you to all of you for that very warm welcome. I have to say, it's a particular personal honor and privilege to be speaking at the college where Winston Churchill delivered one of the most notable and important speeches of his life and career and perhaps of all time. What a tribute it is to this college that when Churchill was here, he took special note of its reputation. As he himself observed, the name Westminster has a particularly resonant sound to a British politician. It made him feel right at home.

Since Winston Churchill's appearance over six decades ago, a number of world leaders from Ronald Reagan to Margaret Thatcher, have followed in his footsteps to this college. They've had inspiration from Churchill's own appearance to come here themselves and to talk as he did about the big picture that we face in the world; about the nature of the challenges of our time.

And in thinking about my own remarks here, I reflected a little bit about what it is that fascinates so many of us about the life of Winston Churchill and about the particular speech he gave in 1946 at this college. I think for me it is the fact that Churchill was an exceptionally clear-eyed and tough-minded leader. All of his life, he fought complacency. He rejected conventional wisdom and favored conviction rather than conformity.

In the 1930s, in an era when we had finished the "war to end all wars," as people believed the First World War was, during a period of time that the League of Nations were still part of the idealistic vision of the world governed by law rather than force, at a time when England was in such an anti-military movement that university students in Oxford overwhelmingly voted that they would refuse to bear arms to defend their own county; in this era, that thirsted for nothing for more than peace and quiet, Winston Churchill stood almost alone in warning the West of the gathering storm clouds of fascism that emanated from Nazi Germany.

And when Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain met with Adolph Hitler in Munich to carve up Czechoslovakia as a final peace offering, hoping that it would satiate the German dictator, and when Chamberlain returned to gloat that in this peace over

the carcass Czechoslovakia he had achieved peace in our time, Churchill was one of the few who stood up again and denounced the folly of appeasing tyranny in the name of peace.

Rising in a House of Commons that was swelled with adulation for Chamberlain and for his agreements, Churchill observed that the Munich agreement was nothing more than the fact -- and I quote -- that "the German dictator, instead of snatching his victuals from the table, has been content to have them served to him, course by course."

Now, it's easy, of course, with hindsight, having seen what happened in the years after the Munich agreement, to recognize how deeply flawed was Chamberlain's celebration of what he believed to be peace. To all of us today, Churchill's skepticism seems perfectly obvious; hardly remarkable. But if you put your mind in the temper of the times, you recognize that Churchill's skepticism against the throw of optimism driven by wishful thinking was a very courageous step.

The Munich agreement was, in fact, enormously popular with a people that believed that they had fought the last world war a couple of decades earlier. The conventional wisdom among the so-called thinking or intellectual class was that Munich was a triumph for reason over the force of arms. The poet laureate, John Masefield went so far as to write a poem declaring that Neville Chamberlain was "divinely led" at Munich when he sealed that deal with the German dictator.

So in fact, without the benefit of the hindsight we now have, it was no small thing that Winston Churchill stood against Nazi aggression and against the false promise of peace when most of Britain simply refused to stand with him.

Of course, a great war was fought, with Churchill leading the British people as part of an alliance for victory. And then almost a decade later in 1946, shortly after the peace had been won through force of arms, and after Churchill had been turned out of office, with a war-weary England now looking and hoping with the rest of the world that truly the last war had been fought, and with a widespread global hope that it was now the time to turn the page on war forever and to begin the chapter of prosperity, Churchill came to this college and once again broke with the conventional wisdom. He challenged the West to stand firm, this time against the territorial ambitions and the ideology of the Soviet Union and Communism.

Once again the thinking classes pounded on Churchill. They rejected his remarks as war-mongering. They viewed him as simply an old war horse who had not yet accustomed himself to the fact that he'd been turned out to pasture. The famous author, Pearl Buck, called Churchill's speech, the Iron Curtain speech, a "catastrophe." George Bernard Shaw deemed it "a declaration of war on Russia." And Walter Lippmann, the commentator, privately wrote that the speech was "a direct incitement to a preventive war" and an "almost catastrophic blunder."

Newspapers had little better to say about it. The *Washington Post* called it "audacious" -- and I don't think that was meant as a compliment. The *Chicago Sun* denounced Churchill's comments about the Iron Curtain as "poisonous," and Newsweek that the speech had produced "the worst diplomatic storm of the post-war period."

Back at home in the House of Commons, over a hundred members of Parliament introduced a resolution condemning the speech, and Time Magazine reported the United States Congress was equally "cold" to Churchill's remarks. Several members of Congress, in fact, described Churchill's speech on American territory as shocking or reactionary and destructive.

What an unfortunate response on both sides of the Atlantic to what was once again a prescient warning by one of the world's great statesmen about the challenges of our time. But again, I ask you to look at the temper of the times, where war-weary people who believed they had bested a terrible enemy and could now look forward to a generation of peace, and the last thing they wanted to hear was the bad news that peace could not be so easily counted upon, and that only strenuous efforts among friends with dedication to the cause of freedom could save us from perhaps another, even worse, armed conflict.

Of course, Churchill was once again proven right, as we learned during the course of the Cold War. But then, in part because of the steadfastness of Churchill and his intellectual heirs, including Ronald Reagan, there came a time that those of us who grew up in the era of the Cold War scarcely believed could have been possible: the Berlin Wall actually came down, and the eastern European states were liberated from being held in the grip of a dictatorship by the Soviet Union.

And once again, the public and the world basked in the warm glow of believing that freedom had triumphed after a titanic struggle. Some wrote that we were at the end of history; that it was clear that liberal ideals, democracy and freedom, had now captured the entire world. There would be no other ideological contender as fascism and communism had previously been, to dethrone reason, tolerance, democracy and the rule of law from a supreme position in the entire world.

And so again with this optimistic approach to what we viewed as the upcoming future, yet another former British prime minister came to this college to speak at the 50th anniversary and once again to articulate clear principles and convictions and perhaps again some not-so-happy prognostications to the public. With the Cold War over and visions of a peace dividend and the end of history still dancing in people's heads, Margaret Thatcher stood here and warned against complacency; warned against struggles yet to come, including, with remarkable foresight, the rise of a tide which she described as Islamic radicalism. And yet after her speech, her warnings likewise went unheeded by the vast majority of elite intellectuals and opinionators in Western society.

Now, of course, as we stand here in the new century, we know very well that time has vindicated both Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher in their speeches and in their warnings. And we know that in the 1930s, appeasing Nazi Germany did not lead to peace; it led to World War II, the most destructive conflict in history. After the Second World War, containing the Soviet Union did not lead to a Third World War because finally the heirs of Churchill did heed his words before they came too late. And because of the steadfastness of leaders like Ronald Reagan, we saw the collapse of the tyranny of the Soviet Union and its consignment to what Reagan called the ash heap of history.

And I might remind you again that in order to maintain that steadfastness, Ronald Reagan never shrank from giving hard truths to the American people, including his controversial and much criticized remark that the Soviet Union was an evil empire.

And so as we stand here in a new century, in the wake of September the 11th, the lesson we have to carry forward is the fact that downplaying the threat posed by radical Islamism, as articulated by Margaret Thatcher in 1996, also failed to avert the catastrophe of what we experienced roughly five years later in New York and in Washington and in a field in Pennsylvania.

So as we look forward -- and this may seem incredible, after all the people who have come up here and given sobering visions of what the world has to offer -- as we stand here, I believe we still face the kind of weary complacency that Churchill and Reagan and Thatcher confronted in their own time when they had to speak here about the grim world view which we face.

In fact, in recent months we've been treated to a chorus of critics and skeptics who have begun to downplay the seriousness of the threat that we face in a world after September 11th, 2001. Former government officials like Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, who served as National Security Advisor to President Carter, say, as he did in a recent article in *The Washington Post*, that we're hyping the war on terror in order to promote a culture of fear. In his opinion piece in *The Post*, Dr. Brzezinski argued that the use of the phrase "war on terror" itself caused damage -- damage that is "greater than any wild dreams entertained by the fanatical perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks."

And others deny we're at war with terrorism. Some admit that we're at war, but they believe that we can simply unilaterally withdraw from the engagement; we can simply walk away from the field of battle. Again, writing in *The Washington Post*, on our nation's birthday this year, William Arkin suggested that we should declare our own independence from the war on terror. But those who read the newspaper or consume news in any way, shape or form, must know this, that based upon the words and deeds of the terrorists themselves -- not on any classified or secret documents, but on the words of bin Laden and Zawahiri and their fellow travelers themselves, we are very much at war. And this is not a war from which we have the luxury of unilateral disengagement, because it's a war that has been declared upon us and upon our allies and all decent people by those ideological fanatics who

have a dramatically different world view than the view of freedom and human rights which have characterized Western aspirations for the past hundred years or more.

In his fatwa of 1998, bin Laden made an open declaration of war, starting with the false accusation that America had declared war on Islam. Bin Laden's declaration ended with this command, and I quote, "to kill the Americans and their allies -- civilian and military, in any country where it is possible to do it." Nor was this a hollow promise. In the decade that followed, bin Laden and his cohorts did precisely that -- they plotted strikes not only against the United States, but against the entire global system of security, safety and prosperity. Every time bin Laden has spoken again, including in his recent videos, he's made no secret about his intent. He has promised that he will continue to escalate that war.

So I don't see how there could be any doubt that we're at war because the enemy certainly believes it and misses no opportunity to remind us of that fact in word and in deed.

So with what are we at war? Well, I would put it to you that we are at war with an ideology, an ideology that is every bit as fanatical and ruthless and every bit at odds with our civilization as that of fascism or communism. Spread by the sinister network of cult-like entities that span the world, this fanatic ideology sanctifies the torture and slaughter of innocent people; it denies the dignity and the humanity of its opponents as part of the essential message of bin Laden-ism; and it includes among those it condemns Muslims who dare to reject bin Laden's pseudo-religious message of intolerance and bigotry.

From New York to London, from Madrid to Jerusalem, from Baghdad to Bali, this barbarous ideology has torn through nations, carving a bloody trail of death and destruction, leaving orphans and widows in its wake on nearly every continent.

I don't think there is any doubt these terrorists who embrace this ideology do not represent mainstream Islam. In fact, they target Muslims themselves with their bullets and their bombs. May I remind you that two years ago in Amman, Jordan, a groom, his bride, the fathers of both newlyweds, and as many as 10 more relatives in the group were among dozens of Muslims slaughtered in the middle of a wedding celebration in a triple suicide bombing ordered by al Qaeda in Iraq. These were Muslims who were celebrating one of the most important religious rituals in their faith, who were mindlessly killed by fanatics in a perverted sense of what their religious mandate was.

Of course, these terrorists do more than simply violate the sanctity of human life. They seek to destroy human liberty by intimidating free people everywhere into submission. And they seek not only a revolution in their own countries, but they seek to dominate other countries. You may say to me, well, this is an intent that's grandiose, it's delusional; there's no possibility that these terrorists could possibly achieve their aims, no matter how hard they tried. I might remind you that in the 1930s, when Churchill read the book, "Mein Kampf," by Hitler, that book was

written in the early 1920s, when that must have seemed an equally delusional dream by a former house painter.

But in fact, if you look at the historical record over the last 10 years, the intent of bin Laden and his fellow travelers, while admittedly grandiose, is not entirely fanciful. These extremists have proven themselves quite capable of waging the war that they have declared -- helped in part by the fact that in the 21st century, technology gives even a small group of people an enormous capability to do destruction and damage. Radicals affiliated with al Qaeda or the Taliban or other similar extremist groups -- from North Africa to Iraq and South Asia -- are fighting for, and sometimes achieving control of elements of tangible territory in a number of different countries, territory in which they train, assemble advanced weaponry, perform experiments to develop deadly ways of killing their enemies, and from which they impose their own vision of repressive law and seek to dominate local life.

It's clear that al Qaeda and its allies want to reclaim Afghanistan; other similarly allied ideologues of fanaticism want to reclaim Somalia for a radical extreme state. And of course in Iraq, itself, al Qaeda in Iraq has boasted of its desire to create an Islamic republic, a desire that is happily beginning to meet considerable resistance from the population itself, which is voting to reject this kind of hatred and fanaticism.

Nor is al Qaeda simply content to extend its franchise to parts of South Asia and the Arab peninsula, but al Qaeda has looked to North Africa to extend its franchise. And last year -- and this is particularly telling -- bin Laden threatened to fight any attempt by the West to intervene in Sudan in order to stop the mass murder and genocide of innocent people. He viewed Western efforts to prevent genocide as an insult to his brand of fanatic religion.

And finally, as we all know, through atrocities like the 9/11 bombings, the radicals and the ideologues have demonstrated to us that they are quite capable of visiting consequences upon us that are every bit commensurate with the kinds of blows that we felt during the most conventional kind of war in the last century. Clearly, when someone declares war on you again and again, when they proceed to attack you in your financial center, in your seat of government, and in the headquarters of your country's military forces, it is quite clear that the entity is not inviting a dialogue or seeking a new discussion of ideas. In fact, what our enemies want is "the dialogue with bullets and the ideals of assassination, bombing and destruction." These, of course, are not my words, they are words I've taken from an al Qaeda training manual.

So as I stand here in Westminster College, I ask myself -- and I have done this in the past -- what would Winston Churchill say about the nature of our enemies and the ideological threat that we face at the beginning of the 21st century? Well, first and foremost, I believe he would repeat what he said right here at Westminster

about the Soviet Union in 1946: "There is nothing they admire so much as strength, and there is nothing for which they have less respect than for weakness."

Simply put, this is how ideological fanatics view the world. Whether it's Hitler or Stalin, bin Laden or President Ahmadinejad of Iran, for every fanatic weakness is provocation. And that's why we have to remain strong. That's why we must act in strength. That's why we must never fool ourselves into thinking that submissiveness is a path to peace.

After 9/11, had it not been for the actions that President Bush and our country took immediately, striking back against al Qaeda in Afghanistan, deploying our intelligence assets across the globe, capturing or killing terrorists on nearly every continent, partnering with our allies on shared intelligence -- were it not for these vigorous strong steps, do we really believe we might have escaped 9/11-style attacks in this country over the last six years? I don't think any of us could have dared to hope that. But it was because of the (inaudible) of the response -- which I may tell you rocked the enemy and shocked the enemy -- that we were able to put them off balance. But I also hasten to add that that did not put them off balance permanently, because there is another element that is as important as strength, and that is the element of resolution -- a resolution that I'm sorry to say the enemy has had and fostered over decades and a resolution that I believe Churchill would have said we also have to maintain, because I believe if Churchill were standing here today he would instruct us that we have to maintain the will and resolve to resist our enemies.

How then should we resist them? Well, in his own speech here in Westminster, I think Ronald Reagan put it very well: "Not warlike, not bellicose, not expansionist - - but firm and principled in resisting those who would devour territory and put the soul in bondage."

Now, apart from strength and resolve, I suspect Winston Churchill would say something else about what we need to do as we face the challenges ahead. I think he would tell us that we have to act quickly and particularly to prevent our foes from gaining two monumental goals that they seek to achieve. The first of these goals is of course allowing them to obtain possession of a weapon of mass destruction. We cannot allow weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear weapons ever to pass into the hands of a global network of terror.

The second goal of our ideological foes is to actually gain possession and control of nation states. Churchill would recognize that just like the Nazis before they seized power in Germany or the Marxists before they overtook Russia, the enemies of reason are actually looking for countries to conquer because they're looking for platforms from which they can launch other kinds of attacks, much in the way that they used their domination of Afghanistan six years ago as a platform to launch an attack against the United States on 9/11.

As we know, years back al Qaeda ran Afghanistan through their surrogates the Taliban, and that is one of the elements of capability that made 9/11 possible. That's why the terrorists want to overthrow the Iraqi government and create safe havens for themselves in Iraq or in parts of Afghanistan or in Somalia or in other parts of the world. And that's why we have to continue to work hard to make sure they never achieve those platforms.

The final bit of advice I think Winston Churchill would give us if he were standing here speaking to you is that we have to recognize that we are fighting in a battle not only of armaments but of ideas. In our prior battles with Nazism and Marxism, Churchill always made crystal clear this was not only about territory or only about force of arms -- although clearly territory and force of arms were very important -- but the real underlying struggle, as Churchill always knew, was the struggle with the forces of totalitarian tyranny, which seek to displace the institutions of freedom.

But you know, there is something of vital importance that was not within Churchill's experience, but that I think Churchill would recognize that is a striking difference between the ideologies of totalitarianism and tyranny with which he contended and that which we face today. Yesterday's fascists and communists looked forward to a totalitarian future and tried to force the world into embracing it, but today's bin Laden vision, a vision of extreme religious totalitarianism doesn't seek to move the world into the future. It seeks to drag the world back to an oppressive past that is already rejected. Simply put, bin Laden and his fellow travelers are at war not just with America or the West, but with the values and principles, the habits and institutions of modern civilization, wherever they may be found around the world. And of course, they're not limited to the West; they're to be found all over the globe.

What makes this enemy so dangerous is that both in war and his vision of the power that it would like to achieve, these extremist ideologues aim to destroy the modern world by unleashing the tools of the modern world: modern technology. That's why al Qaeda and its affiliated organizations seek to employ engineers, computer scientists and other technocrats to help plan their attacks, to help them develop weapons of mass destruction, and to empower them to achieve a social vision that is reduced to its essence medieval. And if there's any doubt about that, I encourage you to look back to Afghanistan and the Taliban prior to 2001.

We should not be under any illusions about this. Unlike rational foes we've faced in the past, including the Nazis and the Soviet communists, this enemy, if it ever obtains a modern nuclear weapon, has every intention of using it. Driven by their fanatical ideology, we cannot assume that these terrorists will be swayed by reason or deterred by normal fears and concerns about the world's future from actually using these weapons. A belief that we can see in them the operation of the kind of deterrence that has worked on us I think is simply a dangerous and false bit of wishful thinking.

Still I don't want to be entirely gloomy and I don't think Churchill would be either, because I think he would know if he stood here before you that although we in a battle with some very dangerous and alien ideas, what makes our enemies vulnerable in the end is the power and superiority of the ideas that we are seeking to propagate and to defend. Simply put, we believe in the power of reason and they do not. The fact that they don't is something frightening but it also gives us a tremendous asset in this 21st century world.

The triumph of reason is the great legacy bequeathed to us by our intellectual ancestors, including the forefathers of this country who really built the country that was founded on the concept that reason rather than prejudice should govern. In contrast to our enemies, the best of our ancestral thinkers believed that when we look at the world through reason we're not committing a sin, we're not betraying our faith in the Almighty, but we are actually exercising the key faculty that is granted to us by a benevolent Creator.

Those who are our forebears in the age of reason, including the framers of our own Constitution, believed that when we apply the faculty of reason, we're actually obeying a divine call to pursue knowledge and truth wherever they lead, to be honest, to accept differences without prejudice, to be tolerant of different points of view, to resolve disagreements through speech rather than through the force of arms or violence. This is the essence of what our civilization and our Constitution are, and it is the essence of what we defend against an ideological view that sees only way to view the world, a world view that is driven by fanatical ideology in which there is no room for disagreement, in which prejudice is lionized instead of condemned, and in which solving disputes through bombings is viewed as the preferred path to achieving consensus.

Through the liberation and exercise of reason, I believe that our humanity has achieved more in the last three centuries than in all of its history, and I believe that this opportunity ought to be afforded to people around the world. This is not merely something that is peculiar in place and time to the West; it is something that is innate to all humans. It is a gift that God has given to all humans and a responsibility he has placed upon all of us to exercise. And through this faculty of reason we have birthed modern science, we have conquered ancient diseases, we have freed people from poverty and starvation, we have triggered the information age, and we have made the world not a perfect place, but a better place and a brighter place.

So in sum I would say to you that we are heirs to the age of reason and our enemies, our ideological foes are those who are determined to roll the age of reason backward and to bring forward a vision that we left behind us centuries ago. In the end we are locked in a struggle for hearts and minds over this very matter, a struggle whose outcome might well determine the medium- and long-term fate of our civilization and this globe. We dare not walk away from this battle, and in any case I think we have no choice -- we cannot walk away from it. We cannot allow the march of progress to be turned back, we cannot assume that we

should leave parts of the world behind or left in totalitarian or medieval grip. We cannot let fanatics drag parts of the world into a dark age of ignorance and fear, degradation, servitude, disrespect for women, prejudice and contempt for those with whom there's disagreement.

And I want to make this very quick point: We are not in a battle against religion because there is no conflict between reason and faith. Some of the greatest men and women of our age have been people of strong reason and strong faith. It is in fact my belief that it is because of God's gift that we have the faculty of reason and it would be to reject that gift to refuse to exercise it.

So this is a battle for our future to which we must dedicate ourselves. It is not a battle that resolves itself easily. We will not see the armies marching back and forth across a plain so that we can chart the path to victory. It may not end in a sign on the battlefield of Missouri. Like any other great ideological conflict, it will require perseverance, attentiveness, and cherishing our own values, but also never allowing wishful thinking or complacency to overcome the kind of clear-eyed, tough-minded approach that I think Churchill embodied, and that I believe is the reason that today in the Oval Office, Churchill's bust reposes along with the great American leaders in the hallowed place where the American President does his work.

So for those of who go out -- graduating from this college and are going out begin your careers and your family lives, I leave you with this observation: If we keep the lessons and the legacy of Churchill and the approach he took to problems, which is to look them square in the eye and not to kid ourselves about what's really out there, and if we stand for our values and our principles with courage and with confidence, and I don't mean stand on thinking -- I don't mean refuse to question what we do, but I mean ultimately put our faith in the principle of reason, then I believe that we will prevail, ultimately not only to protect and preserve our society but make more of the world into a better place.

So let's stand firm in defense of our society and our civilization and our humanity, and may we see the triumph of reason and freedom, which was in the end Churchill's finest goal, in the hearts and minds of the people of every nation everywhere.

Thank you and God bless you. (Applause.)

**DR. FORSYTHE:** Thank you, Mr. Secretary for those thoughtful, sobering, inspirational remarks. As the Dean of the Faculty of the Liberal Arts College, I also appreciate the clarity and call for the value of a liberal education in the arts and the sciences as it prepares citizen leaders to engage in reason and discourse as they lead the country into the future, and we are grateful. Thank you.

The Secretary has graciously consented to take some questions from our students. And there is a microphone to the left of the stage. Mr. Rob Crouse, who is the

Director of College Relations, will direct students to the microphone in the order in which they come forward. So please come forward at this time if you have some questions for the Secretary. Thank you, sir.

**QUESTION:** Hello. I'm a senior student here at Westminster. I'm a member of (inaudible) International Club on campus. And I have a couple questions for you. My first question is, to what extent do you think the existence of Guantanamo Bay detention camp is justified? And the second question, considering that today is the one-year anniversary of the Military Commissions Act of 2006, to what extent do you think this Act -- how well does it fit with other laws in the United States or conventions, such as Geneva Conventions, that the United States has signed? Thank you.

**SECRETARY CHERTOFF:** Well, I think there's no doubt that Guantanamo Bay has become a symbol of something. But I think I'd like to peel the symbolism away and try to lay out for you what the challenge is. I don't think there's any doubt in anybody's mind that in the course of armed conflict that we've had in other parts of the world, including particularly Afghanistan, we've captured people, and we've captured people who are enemies, enemy combatants.

It's traditional in time of war, of course, and it was certainly true when Churchill was Prime Minister in World War II, that when enemies were captured on the battlefield, they were housed and detained so they could not go back and resume battle. In fact, that was considered a huge advance in humanitarian war, because prior to the rule of taking prisoners, warriors usually just killed their enemies on the battlefield. And so having prisoners was actually a major step forward.

It leaves us with a problem. We cannot be in a position where people who are enemies are free to resume battle. Obviously, we need to find a way through the process, give them some kind of a hearing so we can determine conclusively whether people are a threat or not. We also have to recognize, however, that they don't have a legal process that is readily accommodated to the exigencies of the battlefield. Unlike trying somebody in a civilian criminal court in peacetime, when agents go out and they collect evidence and there's a chain of custody, and you have a clear set of rules and a tremendous number of protections, no one goes out on the battlefield like on one of these television shows with a forensic kit to pick up fingerprints, because that's an easy way to get killed.

So the challenge for Americans and the challenge for the West is this: How do we build a system for adjudicating and determining whether people we capture are a threat to us? And if they are a threat to us, how do we incapacitate them so that they do not go back and resume the battle against us. I think it's an issue which is being struggled with not only within the United States, but within other countries as well.

I don't have an easy answer. I think it's a matter we're dealing with today. But I don't think that we should underestimate the difficulty of the problem; that at the

end of the day, the experience of releasing people and having them come back to kill more Americans would not, I think, be a happy experience, and would be regarded, I think, as pretty much a betrayal of our obligation to protect Americans.

So we've got to reconcile that obligation to protect the country with an obligation to (inaudible) and reasonable without necessarily assuming all of the trappings of what we did in peace time. And I think that we've certainly made progress over time. I'm quite sure this issue is going to get revisited again and again. But in the end, we're going to have to come to a way of balancing these twin challenges.

**QUESTION:** My question has to do with the triumph of reason that you mentioned. I didn't keep a tally, but I heard very little mention of the word "diplomacy" in your remarks. And I'm curious as to how we achieve the triumph of reason without diplomacy, or how you think diplomacy fits into achieving that?

**SECRETARY CHERTOFF:** I think that's a very good question. I think when you achieve the triumph of reason you're using all of the elements of (inaudible). Some of those are hard evidence, like records of war or law enforcement; some of them are soft -- the power of ideas, the power of culture, the power of diplomacy. And I think we all recognize that diplomacy is a critical tool. I think Churchill recognized diplomacy was a critical tool in trying to create a favorable environment for the age of reason.

I guess I would caution you in this respect, and I think Churchill would have said the same thing: Diplomacy should not be undertaken from a position of weakness, but only from a position of strength. Let me bring you back to Ronald Reagan. When Ronald Reagan was -- when his funeral was held a few years ago, there was an unbelievable outpouring of praise for his presidency. And yet I have been around long enough to remember that many people who praised (inaudible) criticized him during his presidency. They characterized him as a war-monger, as being overly simplistic, because he said things like the Soviet Union is an evil empire, or because even as he went to the Soviets and said, I want to negotiate with you to reduce arms, he put intermediate-range missiles into Europe, because he wanted to negotiate from a position of strength and not a position of weakness.

I am not a diplomat. I don't carry any specific wisdom. But I can tell you that over the years as a lawyer, I have negotiated a lot of situations. And I think for those who want to use diplomacy and want to negotiate, it's a critical tool in our national security, but it is a tool that ought to only be deployed with a clear vision, standing on our own two feet, and not on bended knee, and with a quiet communication of strength that makes it clear that we are not negotiating or conducting diplomacy because we have no alternative, but because we seek it as the best way to resolve disputes. I think as Teddy Roosevelt said, speak softly and carry a big stick. (Applause.)

**QUESTION:** My question is, Mr. Chertoff, why should we, the American people, trust and respect your advice for the future when in the past you've defended an untimely and embarrassing federal response to Hurricane Katrina, knowing full well that FEMA is a weak and ineffective organization under your agency, a stark contrast to the previous reputation as a great, collaborative power under the Clinton administration? And two, you co-drafted the Patriot Act, the most controversial and arguably unconstitutional legislative act of this decade. And three, as head of the Justice Department's criminal division you provided legal counsel to the CIA regarding the use of coercive interrogation techniques, a topic that only until recently -- (applause) -- a topic that only until recently has garnered widespread public disgust following the public discovery of secret CIA prisons around the world?

**SECRETARY CHERTOFF:** Well, I can see why you had to write that down, because it's hard to keep a lot of erroneous facts in your head at the same time. (Laughter and applause.)

Let me try to briefly correct the record on all three of those things without consuming all the time. I think we can all recognize that the response to Hurricane Katrina was disappointing. It was disappointing at all levels. This is a classic example of where hindsight is wonderful. For one who has the great good fortune never to have sat in a situation of responsibility, where you are making decisions based on inaccurate information, and particularly the circumstances where the capabilities have never been built to respond, I can tell you that it's much more difficult in the event. The great flaw that this country faced in Katrina was a lack of planning and preparing and building that should have taken place over a number of decades, that could not take place over a number of hours before a hurricane hit.

And I think actually perhaps a great benefit, if there's any benefit to living through a horrible situation like that, is it teaches some very hard lessons which we've put into effect now, including the fact that we do, in this country, have to make some serious investments in our planning and our capabilities against the possibility of any kind of catastrophe, whether it's a natural catastrophe or a manmade catastrophe.

As far as the Patriot Act goes, the most sinister thing about that is the name, which was selected by Congress and actually not selected by the administration. It's the Patriot Act, I might add, that's one of the reasons that we haven't had an attack on this country over the past six years. You may believe it is simply a matter of good luck. You may believe that contrary to the enemy reminding us day in and day out that they want to kill us, that they have really lost interest in us. You may not see the newspapers when they talk about plots in Britain or in Germany or in Bali or in Madrid. You may have forgotten the attack on the USS Cole. You may have forgotten the attack on embassies in East Africa.

I have not forgotten those things. I do not believe the enemy has given up. I do not believe it's merely a matter of good luck. I believe it is the use of tools like the Patriot Act, and all the other legal criteria that we have and legal capabilities that

we have, that is precisely the kind of preparation that puts us in the best possible position to resist and to prevent another attack.

As far as the issue of interrogations, I'm sorry to disappoint you, stories of my involvement in this are greatly overblown. But I do think, again, I suggest to you that you look at the whole issue of whether it's a question of how we collect intelligence information, whether we do it by intercepting communications, whether we do it by questioning people, the lifeblood of protecting this country is information.

Let me go back to the Second World War. What gave the British the ability to win the Battle of Britain was the radar that allowed them to detect planes coming across the English Channel to drop bombs so they could scramble the fighters. If they had not had that radar (inaudible) then they would have first experienced the arrival of the Germans when the bombs dropped. (Inaudible.) If you take the radar down, if out of a sense of delicacy, every captured prisoner is given their Miranda rights and told not to talk, if you do not intercept people's communications in accordance with the law because we find it somehow offensive to open up other people's mail, so to speak, then I guarantee you that the first hint that you'll get of the arrival of the enemy is going to be when a bomb goes off.

And as one who has had the responsibility to look into the eyes of people who lost loved ones to terrorist bombings, and has had to answer to the question they ask, and ask myself the question, have I done everything reasonably possible to prevent this from happening, I can tell you that as long as there is a lawful tool available to protect this country, I view it as my oath, my sacred oath to use that tool to prevent the loss of more lives. (Applause.)

**QUESTION:** My question is, how close are we to catching bin Laden? (Laughter and applause.)

**SECRETARY CHERTOFF:** That's a really good question. And if I knew I wouldn't be able to tell you anyway. (Laughter.) Obviously bin Laden and Zawahiri are two people that we are keenly focused on. The fact that we are hunting for them obviously puts them in a position where they have to hide and worry about their own situation. They do have the wonderful marvels of the Internet which allows them to pass messages and make videos and communicate even from caves in remote parts of the world (inaudible). I guarantee there will be no relenting in the search for them, or for any of their henchmen. And I might add that we have killed or captured quite a number of their henchmen. So I think (inaudible) score card for the U.S. military is quite a good one. (Applause.)

**QUESTION:** My question is (inaudible) our war on terror with a war against Nazi Germany and communist Russia when they were countries that really could be defeated, that had leaders and armies to defeat -- how do you envision it being possible to overall win the war on terror when we're not fighting a real entity, it's just -- how can you really say we're not creating a culture of fear when we're fighting an ideal, as you said?

**SECRETARY CHERTOFF:** Well, I think that is maybe a question that goes to the heart of what a lot of people struggle with when they try to ask the question whether we're really at war. I guess I would say to you, look at the war against Nazi Germany or the Cold War in the following light -- and if you go back and you read Churchill's speeches you'll see he viewed it in this light as well. Nazism was just the most visible manifestation of what was at a certain point in time a worldwide movement, fascism. The Soviet Union was merely the largest country that had fallen under the sway of communism. But the ideologies were actually larger than the countries. And at least at the initial stages of the war against Nazism and the struggle with communism, they were really more ideological movements than simply national movements.

Had we been able to fight against those movements at an earlier stage we might not have contended with what happened when they took root in nation states, and began to then develop all of the elements of national power to serve their goals.

In the end, the Soviet Union (inaudible) it's not that the country was defeated -- Russia obviously is still a very powerful country -- but the ideology was defeated. And in the same way that ideology retreated around most of the world, at least to some degree or another, and I don't think it -- there are many people who believe that communism remains a vibrant ideology going forward.

So I would say to you that there are obvious differences between what we faced in the past and we're facing in the present day because the world has changed. The idea that there is (inaudible) that we are fighting in the end against an ideology is a (inaudible) truth that is shared with what our fathers and mothers dealt with in the last century when they had (inaudible) and were struggling with ideologies of fascism and ideologies of communism.

**QUESTION:** So I mean, I -- (laughter.) You didn't address the culture of fear, though. Say, like the -- using the Patriot Act, like you said, calling it the Patriot Act, that's kind of doublethink. It doesn't really help us and it really hurts us, some would think. You say that basically, history will prove you right in the end. But we can't know that now. So why not just convict them as criminals, just like Nuremberg, what we did with the Nazis, individually (inaudible) war on terror as an idea?

**SECRETARY CHERTOFF:** Well, we have done that. We have tried some of them. But I will tell you this: The Nuremberg trials were conducted after the war was over. There were no hostilities going forward when the Nuremberg trials were held. In the middle of the war -- and it's instructive to read about World War II -- you should not be under any illusions about the very tough and in some ways unpleasant and arguably controversial steps the West took to win the war.

Let me give you some of them. The British and the Americans bombed Dresden into virtually a (inaudible). The United States dropped atomic weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I think those were, and probably are, controversial

steps. They were taken by leaders who, not having the advantage of hindsight so they didn't know what was going to happen in the end, had to make decisions about making some very tough steps in order to avoid losing the war, the consequences of which would have been disastrous.

So one of the charming things about history is that it's backward-looking. It's always easy to pick over what worked right and what worked not so right when you look backwards. And it always seems preordained. It always seems like the good guy wins, and that's been our history over the 20th century, the good guy won. That's the way all the war movies end. But you know, when you're in the war I don't think you know the good guy is going to win, and I don't think it's always clear the good guy is going to win, and I can't tell you that if we were complacent and turned our back on this problem, we wished it away, that good guy would win.

I can certainly -- let me portray this -- I'm not trying to frighten you here, but I just laid out for you, if you imagine a circumstance in which bin Laden got a hold of a nuclear weapon and had the ability to deliver it to the United States, I want you to picture in your mind what the consequence would be if that would detonate in New York or Washington or Chicago or Los Angeles -- the enormous loss of life, the earth-shaking impact on the country's way of life and economy -- the no-doubt serious push at that point to compromise our civil liberties because, in the face of that there would be calls for doing things that are far beyond anything we've ever contemplated here.

And ask yourself whether we shouldn't take some prudent measures to prevent that in advance, as opposed to downplaying the problem and then addressing what would be an unprecedented catastrophe if the event were to come about. And that is -- when you get to the point in your career that you are making life and death decisions and you have to recognize that guessing wrong causes a lot of deaths, I think you'll find it an interesting challenge to weigh those various factors.