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**Testimony to the Congress
Deputy Secretary of Defense
1 November 2001**

Opening Statement: Mr. Speaker, Mr. President Pro Tempore, members of Congress. Thank you for inviting me to testify before the Congress today. The Administration is committed to consult closely with the Congress on our war against terrorism. I am pleased to update you today on the major issues facing the United States, our Allies, and our Coalition partners as we continue to wage Operation Enduring Freedom.

The attacks of September 11 changed the American way of life. They have brought the threat of terrorism -- always a serious one -- to the American homeland. We must now do what we can to protect ourselves from future attacks by augmenting security and being more aware of our surroundings in all aspects of our daily lives. The American people, always resilient, are taking prudent measures while still pursuing their hopes and dreams.

However, more than our personal security is at stake. Over the past 225 years, Americans -- including immigrants from Afghanistan and other Muslim countries -- have fought to preserve the freedoms which have made this country a beacon of hope and a model of progress. To preserve these freedoms, we must root out terrorists where they live. We must end their ability to finance their murderous actions. We must demonstrate that states which sponsor terrorist actions will suffer the same fate.

Our struggle is not just an American endeavor. Leaders from around the world have told me that the U.S. war against terrorism is also their war. Terrorism, they tell me, is an attempt to reverse the gains that have been made by globalization -- growing economies, improved standards of living, and greater inter-cultural understanding. The war against terrorism is a war on behalf of all individuals, American and non-American, to maintain and improve their quality of life. This is why we have launched Operation Enduring Freedom.

As I begin, I want to report to you in several areas. Our progress to date, the importance of maintaining a steady course, the difference between this and past wars, the activities of our SOF forces, why the US is able to fight through the winter, and why it is important to continue operations through Ramadan:

- I. **Summary of Progress to Date:** The first month of US action has established relative freedom of action in the air above small arms and anti-aircraft artillery and has set the stage for the Afghan opposition force, the United Front, to begin moving forward. Despite defections by some

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Taliban troops, however, optimistic hopes for early offensive action by the United Front or early cracks among the Pushtun tribes in the South have not been realized so far. While it is much too early to conclude that this will not eventually happen, we are working diligently to move the strategy forward. As the President advised, we will be patient throughout what will be a long struggle against the threat of terrorism, both in Afghanistan and around the world.

- II. **Virtues of Steadiness:** Press reports of the strength of the Taliban have been greatly exaggerated. The ongoing campaign against Taliban military potential is seeing some results. Taliban logistics, lines of communication and combat forces have been reduced. Taliban troops, who have been portrayed as emboldened by US bombing, are defecting. Also, as in the Gulf, robust and sustained air attacks are necessary to set the stage for a successful ground operation. That is why, after three weeks, it remains necessary to remain steady in the face of enemy opposition and enemy propaganda in order to lay a firm foundation for follow-on phases of the campaign. As the Secretary said in his Press Statement today, "Americans have seen tougher adversaries than this before-and they have had the staying power to defeat them. Underestimating the American people is a bad bet."
- III. **Afghanistan is not Vietnam — and the US campaign in Afghanistan is not like the Soviet Union's:** For the United States, Vietnam was an important — but limited — war for limited objectives. Today, our homeland is under attack. The US public overwhelmingly supports the President's response to the abominable actions of September 11, and the international community has expressed support for coalition military action against al-Qaeda and the Taliban regime that supports it.

As the British rallied around their leaders during the Blitz, the American people have united in spirit as never before. President Bush has said, "the only way to defeat terrorism as a threat to our way of life is to stop it, eliminate it, and destroy it where it grows." We will root out the cowards who attempt to undermine the American way of life, no matter where they might hide, and no matter how long it takes. This is D-Day, not Vietnam.

Neither is this a replay of the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. The United States is not invading Afghanistan. At the most basic level, this war is different because the United States is exercising the most basic national right—that of self-defense—by bringing justice to an enemy who has attacked the United States and killed thousands of our people. At the operational level, our precision weapons and night capabilities give us

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significant operational advantages over mid to late 20th century Soviet forces. To date, we have not lost a single aircraft to combat and our night raid against the enemy was near-flawless. We may very well suffer more losses in the future, but we should be confident in our ability to maintain the operational advantage as we conduct operations against the Taliban and al-Qaida.

- IV. **Use of SOF Teams:** As the Secretary has said, we have a very modest number of uniformed ground troops in Afghanistan. They are there for liaison purposes and have been doing an excellent job of assisting with the coordination for re-supplies of various types, as well as aid in targeting Allied air strikes.

We have worked very hard on getting these troops into place with the opposition. We continue to work very hard to improve our coordination with the United Front. Our forces on the ground have established good relations with Afghan opposition forces and will continue to be valuable in providing the kind of very specific information which is helpful to the air effort as we set the stage for follow-on operations.

- V. **US forces able to fight through winter:** Winter in Afghanistan will pose an operational challenge for U.S. forces, but it will be a challenge that U.S. forces are trained to face. In fact, fighting in the snow provides certain advantages for our forces because the Taliban and al-Qaida will be easier to find and target with heat-seeking forces and weapons.

In addition, U.S. air and ground forces are trained to deal with night and adverse weather. We proved our mastery of the night in the Gulf and in Kosovo. We continue to do so in Afghanistan. In addition, the contested areas in the country are principally on the high plains south of the mountains of the Hindu Kush—where there is milder weather than in the high mountains. In fact, snowfall levels in our cold-weather training areas in Alaska are similar to those on the high plains of Afghanistan.

- VI. **Why we should fight through Ramadan:** The United States is sensitive to the traditions of billions of Muslims around the world. However, we are operating in Afghanistan to root out the al-Qaeda terrorist network and the Taliban regime that supports it. We are defending the security of the United States and the values of all of its citizens, including millions of Muslims who live within our borders.

Responsibility for the conflict, including the human suffering that results, lies at the feet of the Taliban and Usama bin laden – not the United States.

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We have given the Taliban numerous opportunities to end the conflict by handing over Usama bin Laden and his lieutenants, and they have repeatedly refused to meet our demands. The terrorists and their supporters have no plans to stop their aggression during Ramadan, and we have no plans to stop fighting until they are defeated.

It is worthwhile to note that many Muslim armies have themselves fought wars during Ramadan.

- The 1973 attack on Israel by its Arab neighbors was launched during Ramadan and is even referred to in the Arab world as "the Ramadan War."
- The Iran-Iraq war continued during Ramadan for eight years. Iran even launched an "Operation Ramadan" offensive in 1982.
- Mohammed himself fought during Ramadan in a battle to conquer Mecca in 624.
- In recent years in Afghanistan, the Taliban itself has carried out air raids on civilian areas under Northern Alliance control during Ramadan.

We will remain cognizant of the sensitivities of the Muslims in Afghanistan and of countries that are cooperating with us in our war against terror. But we will not provide Taliban forces with an opportunity to regroup – and to organize further terror attacks on Americans – during Ramadan.

Conclusion: In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, we have accomplished a great deal in a short period of time. U.S. forces remain highly trained and motivated to perform their mission. The American people support our efforts to root out these terrorists. We have a strong coalition of friends and Allies who are working with us to wage, as the President called it, a war against our civilization.

As this conflict will require patience and endurance over time, I will be pleased to keep you informed as developments unfold in our campaign against terrorism.

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