

Remarks by  
Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England  
To  
The Navy League Sea, Air and Space Convention  
April 4, 2007  
Wardman Park Marriott  
Washington, DC

**Vivian ... thank you for the very kind introduction and for your great service to the United States Coast Guard. The U.S. Coast Guard is a valued member of our sea services and a key element in the Shield of Freedom.**

**Thanks also to the Marine Corps-Navy team of John Panneton, a great Marine, and Steve Pietropaoli, a Great Sailor, and to Charlie McCullum and the National Capitol Council and all those who have worked so hard to make this event better each and every year. To Mike McGrath, congratulations on your selection as the next National Navy League President.**

**I appreciate the opportunity to be here today. It's terrific to see so many good friends again. For me, it's special to be "back where I belong" ... with the Navy and Marine Corps team and with the Coast Guard.**

**As Yogi Berra said, "this is like déjà vu all over again."**

**I'm 69 now but remember well being a spry and innocent 63-year old when I came to the Pentagon. Since then Admiral Vern Clark, General Jim Jones, General Mike Hagee, Admiral Jim Loy have all retired. Dino Aviles, H.T. Johnson and many others have gone on to work in industry. The good news is I have had the great privilege and honor to serve with many magnificent Americans, and they continue to be replaced with other great Americans.**

**Secretary Don Rumsfeld served during an extraordinarily difficult time and served our Nation with great intellect, wit, honor and distinction.**

**I now have the profound honor to continue to serve with our new Secretary of Defense, Bob Gates. He is a strong leader, a great boss and is highly regarded in the building and throughout the Washington establishment. He has come into a job that is extremely tough, but he has the right skills, energy and instincts for our Nation to succeed in defending freedom and liberty.**

**For 230 years, great Americans have stepped forward to protect this great Nation. President John F. Kennedy said this in his Inaugural Address: "In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger."**

**It was freedom that has triumphed throughout our Nation's history – made possible by the**

**extraordinary men and women in uniform, and by the extraordinary civilian men and women in government and those who were the backbone of our industrial might.**

**On 9-11, terrorists turned civilian airlines into guided missiles, and killed 3,000 people of 60 different nationalities. Do you know why terrorists killed 3,000 people that day? I've concluded that the reason they killed 3,000 was that they didn't know how to kill 30,000 or 300,000, or 3 million. But they would have if they could have – and they are still trying. Anyone who questions our enemies' motives should read the transcripts of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. This enemy is real, this enemy is dangerous and the enemy is determined.**

**Our terrorist adversaries know no national borders and ignore all humane laws of war. All who love liberty and freedom are fair game for them, and the conflict is likely to be a long one.**

**What we are seeing, in Iraq and Afghanistan, is like Korea – the first battles in what will prove to be a very long war.**

**In World War II, Eisenhower said, "The history of free men is never really written by chance but by choice -- their choice."**

**Once again, America and our allies face a choice. America is choosing to help lead the way toward greater freedom – in parts of the world that have known very little of it. President George W. Bush has said, "We will act boldly in freedom's cause." This is not the time for America to pull back from the world. The greater the freedom enjoyed by other countries, the more secure our own Nation, and the world, will be.**

**This is a time for America's bold leadership – and for political resolve.**

**Choosing the path of freedom is no easy task.**

**As President Ronald Reagan said, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We did not pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same."**

**One advantage we have this time is much greater unity of military effort than ever before. The US military does not go to war as just an Army, or an Air Force, a Marine Corps, a Navy or a Coast Guard.**

**The military's Services are now irrevocably interdependent in plans and operations.**

**And the United States is not likely to face adversaries alone. With our friends and allies, we are a formidable force for good, for freedom, and for liberty – as long as we have the collective will, determination and resolve to win.**

**This war will not be lost by our military, but it can be lost in Washington. Ultimately, all wars are about political will. It's not about Democrats, Republicans, liberals or conservatives. Rather, it's about a shared political vision of preserving freedom and liberty – and especially when the going gets tough. That's when the tough get going – they don't withdraw! These are very difficult times, and we are engaged in a battle that is part of a larger, long war to stop fanatics who use terror attacks and aggression to intimidate free people.**

**Some may say it's too hard, too costly and wish to quit or pull back. But we cannot, and we should not retreat. If we do our enemies will not withdraw or disengage ... they will go on the offensive.**

**We need to provide our men and women in uniform, and without delays, with the funds, supplies and weapons they need to get the job done. Importantly, we need to send a clear message of American resolve.**

**John Stuart Mill, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century English economist and philosopher put it well when he said, "War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse. The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself."**

**I know that the men and women who wear the cloth of our Nation understand this. Times like these test our convictions and our character. I think back to the heroes of World War II who fought to ensure that I could live my life. I see the same courage and determination in the faces of today's military who volunteer to come forward and answer the call to duty. I'm confident that those here today also understand Mill's meaning.**

**I ask you to do all you can to ensure that freedom prevails in the current struggle. Help build a world where our children and grandchildren and all who cherish freedom can live their lives in peace.**

**Thank you for your friendship, support and service.**

**May God bless you and your families ... our Nation and especially those magnificent men and women who serve today in harm's way.**