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From: "Wilkinson, Paul" <Paul.Wilkinson@mail.house.gov> ("Wilkinson, Paul" <Paul.Wilkinson@mail.house.gov> [UNKNOWN])
To: Ari_Fleischer@who.eop.gov (Ari_Fleischer@who.eop.gov [UNKNOWN]), James R. Wilkinson (CN=James R. Wilkinson/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
Subject: : Cox Op-Ed On Morning at Pentagon
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CREATOR:"Wilkinson, Paul" <Paul.Wilkinson@mail.house.gov> ("Wilkinson, Paul" <Paul.Wilkinson@mail.house.gov> [UNKNOWN])
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House Policy Chairman Christopher Cox was at the Pentagon this morning, leaving a moment before the building was hit. Working from home today, he wrote the op-ed below, which I wanted to make sure you saw. Call me at P6/(b)(6) if you have any questions. Paul

By U.S. Rep. Christopher Cox

At 9 a.m. EDT Tuesday, as a hijacked Boeing 767 slammed into the World Trade Center, I was in the Pentagon in the private dining room of the Secretary of Defense. Don Rumsfeld, the Secretary, and Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary, and I were discussing how to win votes for the Bush defense plan that is now pending in the House and Senate.

When minutes later, the Pentagon itself was hit by a Boeing 757 loaded with civilian passengers, virtually the entire building was immediately evacuated. I escaped just minutes before the building was hit. Most of those who remained were huddled in the National Military Command Center in a basement bunker of the building. From there, America's military response is being directed even now.

Ironically, just moments before the Department of Defense was hit by a suicide hijacker, Secretary Rumsfeld was describing to me why America needs to abandon its decade-old two-major-war strategy, and focus on the real threat facing us in the 21st century: terrorism, and the unexpected.

"When I worked on the ballistic missile threat commission [the 1998 bipartisan group popularly

known at the Rumsfeld Commission], there was an 'event' every few months that focused the attention of those in denial," he told me. "For example, India shocked the world when it detonated a nuclear device. Then Pakistan. Then North Korea launched a two-stage ballistic missile over Japan.

"Terrorist groups, some state-sponsored, are developing these same missile capabilities as we meet here. They are developing the chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons to go with them.

"They do not have all the pieces yet, but they will. That is why Congress has got to give the President the tools he needs to move forward with a defense of America against ballistic missiles, the ultimate terrorist weapons.

"If we remain vulnerable to missile attack, a terrorist group or rogue state that demonstrates the capacity to strike the U.S. or its allies from long range could have the power to hold our entire country hostage to nuclear or other blackmail," he said.

"And let me tell you, I've been around the block a few times. There will be another event." He repeated it for emphasis: "There will be another event."

Within minutes of that utterance, Rumsfeld's words proved tragically prophetic.

Both he and Wolfowitz emphasized the recent partisanship that has made military planning near impossible. Whereas during the Clinton administration the congressional votes to deploy a missile defense were overwhelmingly bipartisan, now that President Bush has made it clear his commitment is more than rhetorical, there is significant backsliding.

As the Senate armed services subcommittee met in secret to work on details of the defense authorization bill for fiscal year 2002, which begins Oct. 1, Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.) threw down the gauntlet last week, threatening to derail any actual deployment of a missile defense that would violate the 30-year old ABM Treaty with the former Soviet Union. That is tantamount to killing any missile defense that works, as both the President and Secretary Rumsfeld have made clear repeatedly.

In the House, as the defense committee worked in

open session to complete the spending bill for the Defense Department and defense work of the Energy Department, Rep. Ike Skelton (D-Mo.), the Armed Services Committee's top Democrat, said Tuesday he would seek to divert \$860 million from missile defense to other Pentagon needs when the bill hits the House floor. The committee rejected that on a party-line vote last month.

Rumsfeld also implored the Congress to provide all the money the President has requested for his budget -- not just the 2% earmarked for missile defense. "We need every nickel of it," he said.

But not all Democrats have been playing the partisan game. "I saw the attack on Pearl Harbor. I remember June 25, 1950, when the North Koreans attacked," said Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii), the Armed Services panel chairman, at last week's hearing. "There is one lesson I will never forget: If we want to prevent war, we must be prepared for war."

The war for which we must be prepared will not be fought with the Soviet Union, nor governed by the outdated rules of the Cold War. We got the first glimpses of its ugly face in Tuesday's "event." Perhaps now we will listen, and unite.

Christopher Cox (R-CA) is the Chairman of the House Policy Committee.

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