

Remarks by Ambassador David H. Wilkins

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Thanks John (Kringen) for that introduction.

Bonjour! Or where I come from: Bonjour, y'all!

On behalf of all of us at the United States' Mission here in Canada: Welcome to beautiful Vancouver!

Just like most of you – I am a guest in this vast and beautiful country and there is no place else I'd rather be.

I know you will find -- just like my wife and I have found during our more than two-and-half years here -- that Canadians will welcome you with open arms. They'll also welcome you with lots of warmth. And believe me...having survived now my 3rd Ottawa winter, with what they tell me is almost record-breaking snow-fall, I can tell you warm is GOOD.

Vancouver doesn't get nearly as bad a winter as we get up there in Ottawa. So you've come to the perfect place in Canada at a perfect time of the year!

A very brilliant and courageous American, Douglas MacArthur, said: "There is no security in this life...only opportunity."

For all of us I think, these next three days in Vancouver represent a real and tangible opportunity to bring greater security through partnership and collaboration in what is an ever-shrinking world.

I learned a long time ago that in a room full of experts you don't preach to the choir. So I won't stand up here and tell you how to do your jobs better or more efficiently. I can't tell you about the new cutting-edge technology in crime fighting or intelligence-gathering and sharing.

But as a representative of my country and someone who believes we not only should wage, but win, the war on terror on a variety of fronts, there are a few things I can offer that all of you should know:

First: On behalf of the citizens of the United States and my president; thank you.

Each of you is serving on the front line in this war on terror. What you're doing here is important and it is touching the future. You are deeply appreciated. And you need to hear that.

As General Mac Arthur knew long before the age of modern-day terrorism: There is no way to guarantee security. But it is incumbent upon all of us to seize opportunities like this one.

We are very grateful to the Canadian Government for being the hosts of this Global Futures Forum general meeting, bringing together this group of experts from North America, Europe and Asia is a huge undertaking and a tremendous achievement.

I often make the point when talking about the challenging issues confronting the US and Canada that working together will secure our futures better than working separately.

In particular, we want to work together to make our border more secure.

For centuries, folks traveled back and forth across our 5,500 miles of undefended border sometimes carrying nothing more to identify themselves than a friendly wave and an earnest smile.

But September 11, 2001 changed all that.

And change is hard. Especially change between best friends.

Security at our borders is now a top priority for the U.S. It has to be.

We lost not only Americans on 9-11 but hundreds of citizens of the world, including the 24 Canadians who were murdered that day.

So we work to safeguard as best we can every citizen traveling inside our border. And that means making our borders as smart, as common sense, and as secure as possible. Bottom line: it's all about opportunity.

We know you don't get a second chance to stop a terrorist. We have to be right every single time. You are helping us improve our opportunities to be right by keeping us one step ahead of the bad guys.

And you are helping us wage the war on terror on a variety of fronts – fronts most folks never even think of.; Because let's face it...when it comes to fighting this war on terror, most folks would rather disengage. It's just no fun to talk about catastrophe and terror.

But as more and more information comes out of jury selection in the trial of the 8 Britons accused in the alleged August 2006 bombing scheme that would have been the worst terror attack in history had their deadly plot been carried out, I think we're all reminded this is NOT America's war on terror.

Every freedom loving nation is under attack. No citizen of the world is immune. All serve as potential targets. All convenient victims.

So those of us who value liberty must be relentless and ever vigilant in confronting the security threats we face and in seeking new and innovative ways to deal with an enemy that is ruthless.

This is what you will do over these next three days. I wish you much luck in your endeavors here. Your discussions of counter-terrorism measures as well as a wide range of other global security challenges facing our governments will be important for us all.

May this time generate a wealth of opportunities that lead to new and enhanced security measures and common approaches to complex problems. We may never be completely secure.

But together we are far more powerful than those who prey on the innocent and seek to destroy what freedom has built. Thanks in large part to the people in this room... they will not prevail.

Again, thank you all for being here and for what you do.

Enjoy your stay in beautiful Vancouver.

May God bless richly bless you.