



Transcript
2006 FPA Corporate Dinner
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Secretary Norman Mineta: Good Evening everyone, and, Noel, thank you very very much for that very very kind introduction, and thanks to all of you for that very warm welcome. Let me begin by expressing my very deep appreciation to the Foreign Policy Association. I am very deeply humbled to be recognized by this very prestigious organization, and all the more so because I am sharing the honours this evening with Bill Marriott, who has been such a tremendous force in the international business community.

As a pacesetter in the Travel and Tourism Industry, Bill has seen and helped to make possible, what has been described as the, “growing interconnectedness of the world community,” and this may well be one of the defining forces of this new century, and the implications are profound. As this great city knows all too well, the horrific terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001 awakened Americans to a new foreign policy reality. The actions of a repressive regime thousands of miles away can have a very direct impact on our own security, and so today we are engaged with our allies in a global war on terror, a war for which victory is the only option.

But the implications of our interconnected world extend beyond national security. Because the twenty-first century economy is a global economy, President Bush has made expanding trade a priority. And between 2000 and 2004 alone, the value of goods and materials moving through our ports increased over 33%. The globalization of the economy has occurred at a speed that even forecasters were unprepared for, and as a result our industries are starting to face substantial commercial costs from transportation problems. And it is not just a question of the ports themselves, but what happens beyond the gates, on congested highways and the freight railroads, already stretched to capacity. So a principle challenge in the years ahead, will be making sure that our transportation infrastructure can move products and people more efficiently in our growing economy, and this challenge is in no way unique to the United States alone. As I travel and meet with my counterparts around the world, I find a growing recognition that commerce domestically and internationally depends on having a safe, reliable and efficient transportation system.

The Bush administration takes an active role in facilitating development of the world’s transportation network through, for example, the liberalization of transportation markets

using Open Skies and other agreements, and through our support for global road safety initiatives. And here at home, we are determined that transportation not become the chokepoint for our own economic activities. So this last month, I launched a new major initiative to confront congestion, and the Bush Administration's National Strategy to Reduce Congestion on America's Transportation Network will do much to make our highways, seaports, border crossings, and airports more efficient, our products more competitive, and our economy even more vibrant.

My service as both the Secretary of Commerce under President Clinton, and now as Secretary of Transportation under President Bush, gives me a somewhat unique perspective, and I truly believe that America's international standing and competitiveness depends on our ability to keep congestion from choking our commerce and our communities, so I am honoured to accept this medal from the Foreign Policy Association, and heartened to be among the foreign policy leaders who understand that transportation today is not only the backbone of the United States' economy, but that it is also the backbone that supports an increasingly interconnected world. Again, thank you very very much for this honour that has been accorded to me, and for the pleasure to be able to be with Bill Marriott this evening. Travel safely, may God bless each and every one of you, and may God continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you very much.