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A Strong Military for a New Century

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It is wonderful to be back here at the Council. Thank you for having me.

Last year, I had the great pleasure of co-chairing a Council Task Force with Jack Kemp on the future of the U.S.-Russia relationship. For me, that experience served as a powerful reminder of what can be achieved when people of divergent views, bound by a common belief in America's responsibilities as a global leader, can come together to grapple with difficult national security challenges.

Our main conclusions are just as relevant today: that Russia's direction is critically important to America's national security—from non-proliferation and energy security to the spread of HIV/AIDS. And as our report's title made clear, Russia has been headed in the wrong direction, whether in its de-democratization or by bullying its neighbors.

Unfortunately, we have not been able to concentrate sufficient energy on critical issues like getting our relationship with Russia right. Instead, we've been distracted by larger problems created by this president's military and national security policy.

The core of this presidency has been a political doctrine that George Bush calls the "Global War on Terror." He has used this doctrine like a sledgehammer to justify the worst abuses and biggest mistakes of his administration, from Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, to the war in Iraq. The worst thing about the Global War on Terror approach is that it has backfired—our military has been strained to the breaking point and the threat from terrorism has grown.

We need a post-Bush, post-9/11, post-Iraq American military that is mission-focused on protecting Americans from 21st century threats, not misused for discredited ideological pursuits. We need to recognize that we have far more powerful weapons available to us than just bombs, and we need to bring them to bear. We need to reengage the world with the full weight of our moral leadership.

What we need is not more slogans but a comprehensive strategy to deal with the complex challenge of both delivering justice and being just. Not hard power. Not soft power. Smart power.

Nowhere are the problems of this Administration's policies more tragically evident than in Iraq. Iraq's problems are deep and dangerous, but they cannot be solved by the U.S. military alone. My plan calls on Congress to use its funding power to stop the surge and force an immediate withdrawal of 40,000 to 50,000 combat troops from Iraq, followed by an orderly and complete withdrawal of all combat troops in about a year.

The president has played political brinkmanship over the war in Iraq time and time again. He refuses to acknowledge the futility of his approach, disregards the clear message sent by the American people last fall, and falsely claims that the only way for Congress to support the troops is to prolong the war. That's just not true. Congress can support the troops and end the war, which is exactly what the bill they sent the president last month would have done. When the president vetoed that bill, it was the president alone who was blocking support for the troops. Nobody else.

Any compromise that funds the war through the end of the fiscal year isn't a compromise at all, it's a capitulation. As I have said repeatedly, Congress should send the president the same bill he vetoed again and again until he realizes he has no choice but to start bringing our troops home.

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thought it was time we went home.

But Americans like President Harry Truman and General George Marshall saw the truth: that it would require not only America's military might, but our ingenuity, our allies, and our generosity to rebuild Europe and keep it safe from tyrants who would prey on poverty and resentment. Our leaders resisted the imperial temptation to force our will by virtue of our unmatched strength. Instead, they built bonds of trust founded on restraint, the rule of law, and good faith. They were magnanimous out of strength, not weakness.

General Marshall—one of this country's greatest military leaders—was later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his leadership in rebuilding Europe and promoting peace in the world.

In his Nobel acceptance speech, General Marshall said that military power was "too narrow a basis on which to build a dependable, long-enduring peace." As the Marshall Plan demonstrated, the military is only a means to an end; it is only one instrument of our power. It must work alongside—and reinforce—America's moral leadership.

We saw the power of this relationship during the Cold War, when America deterred the Soviet Union from its quest for world domination. We saw it when we established the United Nations and NATO, which have done so much for peace and human rights. After the Cold War, we saw it in Bosnia, where we helped broker a lasting peace. And we saw it again in Kosovo, where we joined our NATO allies to stop a brutal war criminal from perpetrating another campaign of ethnic cleansing.

This is the America where I grew up as a young boy—a strong nation whose moral promise seemed to fill the hearts of almost everyone I knew. We believed that America, like a beacon, could light up even the darkest corners of the world.

As we all saw six years ago, on September 11, America's greatness alone does not protect us from very real threats.

At that moment, the president could have sent a message of swift justice but also moral leadership. He could have told us where destroying Al Qaeda fit into the broader challenges America faces in the new century. He could have asked all Americans to sacrifice in this new struggle, inviting a hopeful new era of citizenship as the ultimate answer to the terrorists' cynical, evil attack.

But he didn't. Instead, he adopted the most short-sighted, ideological policies available. His strategy has put severe strain on our military... tarnished our moral standing in the eyes of the world... and emboldened our enemies.

It is now clear that George Bush's misnamed "war on terror" has backfired—and is now part of the problem.

The war on terror is a slogan designed only for politics, not a strategy to make America safe. It's a bumper sticker, not a plan. It has damaged our alliances and weakened our standing in the world. As a political "frame," it's been used to justify everything from the Iraq War to Guantanamo to illegal spying on the American people. It's even been used by this White House as a partisan weapon to bludgeon their political opponents. Whether by manipulating threat levels leading up to elections, or by deeming opponents "weak on terror," they have shown no hesitation whatsoever about using fear to divide.

But the worst thing about this slogan is that it hasn't worked. The so-called "war" has created even more terrorism—as we have seen so tragically in Iraq. The State Department itself recently released a study showing that worldwide terrorism has increased 25% in 2006, including a 40% surge in civilian fatalities.

By framing this as a "war," we have walked right into the trap that terrorists have set—that we are engaged in some kind of clash of civilizations and a war against Islam.

The "war" metaphor has also failed because it exaggerates the role of only one instrument of American power—the military. This has occurred in part because the military is so effective at what it does. Yet if you think all you have is a hammer, then every problem looks like a nail.

There's an emerging consensus inside the armed forces that we must move beyond the idea of a war on terror. The Commander of the U.S. Military's Central Command recently stated that he would no longer use the "long war" framework. Top military leaders like retired General Anthony Zinni have rejected the term. These leaders know we need substance, not slogans—leadership, not labels.

The question is, what should replace the war on terror? Since the end of the Cold War, folks here at CFR and elsewhere have been engaged in an effort to be the next George Kennan and define the era. As all of you know, we need a new strategy for rebuilding a strong military for a new century.

Any new strategy must include new preventive measures to win the long-term struggle

efforts to lead the fight against global poverty. I've proposed a plan to lead an international effort to educate every child in the world. As president, I would increase foreign assistance by \$5 billion a year to make millions of people safer, healthier, and more democratic, and by creating a cabinet-level post to lead this effort.

Any new strategy must improve how we gather intelligence. From my years on the Senate Intelligence Committee, I know how difficult this can be. We must always seek to protect our national security by aggressively gathering intelligence in accordance with proven methods.

Yet we cannot do so by abandoning human rights and the rule of law. As two former generals recently wrote in the *Washington Post*, "If we forfeit our values by signaling that they are negotiable... we drive... undecideds into the arms of the enemy." And we must avoid actions that will give terrorists or even other nations an excuse to abandon international law. As president, I will close Guantanamo Bay, restore habeas corpus, and ban torture. Measures like these will help America once again achieve its historic moral stature—and lead the world toward democracy and peace.

And finally, a new strategy must have a clear idea of how to rebuild the U.S. military.

For the last four years, the Administration has not only mismanaged the war in Iraq. It has mismanaged the military itself.

We all know the historic irony here. The president and his team held themselves out as stewards of the military. During his campaign in 2000, then-Governor Bush went to The Citadel in South Carolina and said our military power should be used, and I quote, "wisely, remembering the costs of war." His team came into office with decades of experience. They promised that, quote, "help was on the way." They made bold pronouncements about new military doctrines like "transformation" and an "end to nation-building." They held themselves out as saviors, called themselves Vulcans, and cast their opponents as amateurs who should bow down before their slogans and gestures. They even disregarded the advice of highly-decorated military officers themselves.

The results have been a disaster. This Administration's policies have been particularly hard on our military men and women and their families. President Bush could have called on all Americans to sacrifice. But the only ones who have been at war—the only ones asked to sacrifice—have been our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and their families. And that's wrong.

I am here today to announce a new pledge to America's servicemen and women, their families, and our veterans. We will stand by you just as you have stood by us. As president, I will implement a defense policy based on five major principles:

- Ensuring that our military policy is planned and executed to fulfill essential national security missions, not some ideological fancy;
- Repairing the tremendous damage done to civil-military relations;
- Rooting out cronyism and waste and increasing efficiency in the Pentagon;
- Rebalancing our force structure for the challenges of the new century, including improving our capabilities to help weak or failing states;
- And taking a broader view of security throughout our government.

With these steps, we can begin to rebuild an American military for a new century.

First, we must clarify the mission of a post-Bush, post-9/11, post-Iraq American military for the 21st century.

We must be clear about when it is appropriate for a commander-in-chief to use force. As president, I will only use offensive force after all other options including diplomacy have been exhausted, and after we have made efforts to bring as many countries as possible to our side. However, there are times when force is justified: to protect our vital national interests... to respond to acts of aggression by other nations and non-state actors... to protect treaty allies and alliance commitments... to prevent terrorists from acquiring nuclear weapons... and to prevent or stop genocide.

Yet we must remember the complementary relationship between military force and diplomacy. Too often during the past six years, this Administration's diplomatic efforts have left the U.S. with two unacceptable options: do nothing or use force. We must do better than that. We should always seek to solve problems peacefully, preferably working with others. Yet one of the oldest rules of statecraft is that diplomacy is most effective when backed by a strong military. That does not mean, however, that every problem needs a military answer; far from it.

Our military has three important missions: deterring and responding to aggressors, making sure that weak and failing states do not threaten our interests, and maintaining

The first mission is deterring or responding to those who wish to do us harm. I want to make one thing absolutely clear: any American president must be able to act with swiftness and strength against anyone who will do us harm. But by elevating this right to a doctrine of "preventive war," this Administration has only isolated us further. Our goal must be to defeat Islamic extremists and limit their reach, not help them recruit and become stronger.

A second mission is to ensure that the problems of weak and failing states do not create dangers for the United States. We face substantial security threats from states that fall apart. These situations are not only dangerous for these countries' civilian populations; they create regional instability and can strengthen terrorist groups that, in turn, directly threaten the United States.

A third mission is maintaining our strategic advantage against major competitor states that could do us harm and otherwise threaten our interests.

In all of these missions, we must continue to strengthen our great partnerships—whether bilateral relationships with friends from Great Britain to Israel to Japan, or through institutions like NATO, which have done so much good for America and the world. While the U.S. does not need permission to protect its interests, we must realize that our strength lies in standing together with the world, not apart.

Next, we must also re-establish a strong connection with military leadership. The past few years have brought the biggest crisis in civil-military relations in a generation. The mismanagement of the Pentagon has been so severe that many of our most decorated retired officers are speaking out. Our constitutional design is clear, and our military leadership clearly must follow a civilian command. But this does not mean that civilians should be able to ram through their pet military projects.

George Bush's civilian leadership at the Pentagon repeatedly ignored the counsel of their more experienced military colleagues. They disregarded wise generals like Ric Shinseki, who advised that hundreds of thousands of troops would be needed to secure the peace in Iraq.

As president, I will repair this breach. I will institute regular, one-on-one meetings with my top military leadership, so their analysis and advice will not be filtered, and so I will have the best information about what's best for our troops on the ground.

I will also reinstate a basic doctrine that has been demolished by the Bush Administration. Under my Administration, military professionals will have primary responsibility in matters of tactics and operations, while civilian leadership will have authority in all matters of broad strategy and political decisions. As president, I will exercise command, and I will delegate the decision to use force to no one. But I will also remove any civilian or military officer who stifles debate or simply tells me what I want to hear.

The Administration's mismanagement of the military has not only breached the faith at the highest levels—it has led to a very dangerous situation for our troops, their families, and our nation.

The military that is fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan is very different from any that's gone to battle before. Today, active-duty servicemen and women are, on average, 27 years old. Guard and Reserve members are, on average, 33 years old. 60% of those deployed have left families at home, and about 50% of those killed in action have left a spouse or child behind. Alarming high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder are being reported.

These troops are exhausted and overworked, and we have been forced to dig deeper and deeper to find ground forces for Iraq and Afghanistan. This leaves us ill-prepared for the future. Today, every available combat active-duty Army combat brigade has been to Iraq or Afghanistan for at least one 12-month tour. We are sending some troops back to Iraq with less than a year's rest. To make matters worse, the Secretary of Defense just extended tours from 12 to 15 months, which is unconscionable.

And recruiting has suffered. The Army has been meeting its recruiting targets, but only by lowering its standards. Recruits from the least-skilled category have increased 800% over the past two years. And the Army granted nearly twice as many waivers for felonies and other shortcomings in 2006 as in 2003.

Finally, it is clear that Guard and Reserve members will always play an active and valuable role in the total force of the United States. Yet they have been subjected to repeated and lengthy deployments that do not fit their job description. They also need to be available to respond to disasters domestically.

And as the disgraceful conditions at Walter Reed demonstrated, this Administration has failed our servicemen and women not only in Iraq, but here at home. I will never allow our wounded to be housed in dilapidated, rodent-infested facilities. On the contrary, as I will be announcing in remarks later this week, I will make a new pledge to our veterans, our

readjustment programs properly meet their needs. We owe them no less.

The problem of our force structure is not best dealt with by a numbers game. It is tempting for politicians to try and "out-bid" each other on the number of troops they would add. Some politicians have fallen right in line behind President Bush's recent proposal to add 92,000 troops between now and 2012, with little rationale given for exactly why we need this many troops—particularly with a likely withdrawal from Iraq.

The numbers game only gets us into the same problems as the president's approach. We must be more thoughtful about what the troops will actually be used for. Any troops we add today would take a number of years to recruit and train, and so will not help us today in Iraq.

We might need a substantial increase of troops in the Army, Marine Corps, and Special Forces for four reasons: to rebuild from Iraq; to bolster deterrence; to decrease our heavy reliance on Guard and Reserve members in military operations; and to deploy in Afghanistan and any other trouble spots that could develop.

While such proposals are worth close examination, they do not take into account our withdrawal from Iraq—which I believe must occur in about a year. We need to avoid throwing numbers around for political benefit and instead take a broader view. As president, I will carefully assess the post-Iraq threat environment and consult with military commanders to determine the exact number of troops we need and where.

I will also double the budget for recruiting, and I will raise the standards for the recruiting pool, so we issue far fewer waivers than we do today under the president's policy.

I will put substantial additional resources into maintenance of our equipment and to reset the force. We must spend what it takes to reset our force after Iraq. We have seen a rapid depletion in our military equipment. Over 1,000 vehicles, including tanks and helicopters, have been lost in Iraq, and our equipment is being used at a rate of five to six times its peacetime use.

This inadequacy is especially clear when we look at the demands that have been placed on our Guard and Reserve members. They have been sent to battle without the best equipment. Some units slated to return to Iraq recently reported that they still have outdated equipment. This is unacceptable.

The military budget itself also needs substantial reforms. Today, dozens of agencies perform overlapping tasks, and there is no central, overall accounting of all security activities performed by all relevant agencies.

I will create a National Security Budget that will include all security activities by the Pentagon and the Department of Energy, and our homeland security, intelligence, and foreign affairs agencies. This would allow more oversight and would also allow us to more carefully tailor our expenditures to our missions. Today, literally dozens of agencies have overlapping responsibilities, missions, tasks and programs. We don't link these efforts together nearly enough. We have nuclear proliferation programs in the Defense, State, and the Energy departments. We also have more than fifteen different security assistance programs, running out of both the State Department and the Defense Department.

As president, I will send to Congress a National Security Budget that will grow out of a review of our military, our diplomacy, our foreign assistance programs, our intelligence, our global energy, and our homeland security activities. This budget will provide one government-wide strategy for countering nuclear proliferation; a unified strategy for fighting terrorists; a unified strategy for providing security assistance to our allies; and clear guidance for our agencies on how they should set their budget priorities to make these policies work.

The military has gone a long way in making sure that it's capable and prepared to fight humanitarian crises, as we saw when it provided aid to the victims of the Pacific Ocean tsunami. But this aid is often imbalanced. We've got one agency on steroids—the Pentagon—while the civilian agencies are on life support. As president, I will help rebalance the delivery of civilian services throughout the federal government.

Civilians with training and experience need to be involved in stabilizing states with weak governments, and providing humanitarian assistance where disasters have struck. We need bankers to set up financial systems, political scientists to implement election systems, and civil engineers to design water and power systems. As president, I will create a "Marshall Corps," modeled on the military Reserves, of up to 10,000 expert professionals who will help stabilize weak societies, and who will work on humanitarian missions.

I will also take additional steps to put stabilization first throughout the government. I will put a senior official in the Pentagon to implement these programs. I will harmonize the State Department and Pentagon's overlapping efforts at diplomacy and stabilization better from the White House. And I will implement new stabilization programs at war colleges

Just as we need to get our national security budget in order, we must also reform our Pentagon budget. The Bush Administration has funneled an enormous amount of taxpayer money to private military contractors, many run by their political cronies. It's no surprise that we have seen rampant overruns in the cost of many weapons programs.

I will respond to the overruns and cronyism strongly and directly. We need a modern-day equivalent of Harry Truman's famous Truman Committee, which traveled the country in the 1940's to find billions of dollars of waste in military spending. As president, I will direct my Secretary of Defense to launch a comprehensive, tough review of fraud, waste, and abuse—and put an end to it. One example is missile defense and offensive space-based weapons, which are costly and unlikely to work.

We also need fundamental reform of our privatization policies. Almost half of Defense Department contracts are now awarded on a noncompetitive basis, giving companies like Halliburton with millions of dollars. To end this, I will direct my Secretary of Defense to overhaul the rules governing privatization, to punish mismanagement, and to reform DOD bonus policies to reward performance.

Finally, I will challenge the military to continue to modernize for a new century. We need to ensure that the U.S. military is the most modern and capable fighting force on the planet. Modernization will also have other benefits. "Greening the military" will increase innovation, save millions of dollars, reduce reliance on vulnerable supply lines, and help America lead the fight against global warming.

We also must do what we can to prevent these problems before they start. This is why I believe it is so important to address issues like global poverty. The reforms I announced two months ago would help stabilize at-risk nations and spread the dream of freedom across the globe—and enhance respect and admiration for America.

Today we need great principles, moral courage, and, above all, a vision—of a tomorrow that is better than today, of a world where the power of example is mightier than the sword.

We need a strong military for a new century, and we need one based on hope, not fear. As Robert F. Kennedy once wrote, "Our answer is the world's hope." Our answer is the world's hope. We will need imagination and courage to imagine great possibilities, to create a world where terrorism belongs to the past. We must, at the same time, rely on our heritage: a time when we were admired by the world, where we shared, with generosity and good faith, our ideals of truth, justice, and equality.

Like a beacon, America can once again provide a clear light for the world—dissolving the fog of injustice, illuminating the path to a new century.

This is the America where I grew up—and it is the America that Elizabeth and I want again to share not only with our own children, but with the children of America, and of the world.

Thank you so much for being here with me today, and God bless America.

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