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The Care of Freedom

The Honorable Mitt Romney

It is always a pleasure to be with my many friends at The Heritage Foundation, and it's an honor to give the first of the series of speeches Heritage will sponsor as part of its Protect America Month.

I owe Heritage a great debt of gratitude. When I served as governor, I drew extensively on the research and thinking of this foundation. Your scholarship and counsel were invaluable as we dealt with our budget crisis, with marriage and taxation, and especially in the case of health care.

Our program to extend private health insurance to all citizens of Massachusetts has resulted in 440,000 people who were uninsured now having coverage. We proved that government doesn't have to get in the health insurance business to get people insured. The President and leadership of Congress haven't learned that lesson yet, which is why we're going to need the influence of Heritage more than ever in the great health care debate to come.

Extending the Frontiers of Freedom

It is an honor to be here at the United States Navy Memorial. It's humbling to be reminded, in the words of "America the Beautiful," of "heroes proved in liberating strife, who more than self their country loved, and mercy more than life." Our liberty and security have come at a great price. We can never repay those who died for us, but we can honor their sacrifice by defending freedom and extending its frontiers across the world.

More than 180,000 of our people in uniform are still deployed to theaters of war, and any discussion of

Talking Points

- The current leadership in Washington has passed measures that will add almost \$4 trillion to the national debt in the short term and then over \$3 trillion over the next 10 years. None of that money was spent on increasing the defense modernization budget.
- For a fraction of the money that was spent on various domestic and social programs, Washington could have given our servicemen and women the tools they need to defend us for a generation.
- It is essential that Congress fully fund and deploy a multilayered missile defense shield that alone can protect our people from the terrible threat that is gathering around us.
- We cannot allow the economic crisis to conceal the threats to our security from those who would set back the cause of freedom.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:
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America's national security has to begin with those wars and the absolute necessity of winning them. The missions in Iraq and Afghanistan don't receive as much attention as in years past. It wasn't long ago that most politicians and pundits had pretty much decided Iraq was a lost cause, but our former President was undeterred, and instead of retreating he moved forward with a surge of operations.

The astonishing success of our soldiers has silenced the critics, and most importantly, it has preserved freedom for millions of people, denied Jihadists a base from which they could finance and launch attacks, and eliminated the threat Iraq represented to the region. Events have proven the critics wrong, and the coming victory in Iraq will be to the lasting credit of the American servicemen and women who have fought in the finest tradition of the American military.

Just a few days from now, we will mark the 65th anniversary of D-Day. I'm sure many of you have been to Normandy. I have. I saw the beaches. I saw the acre upon acre of crosses and stars that mark the resting place of those who gave the last full measure of devotion to their country's cause. They were sent by an awakened American nation to liberate a continent. In the shadow of World War II's desolation, they resolutely shouldered the burden of defending freedom.

That burden did not end with that war. Since that time, American soldiers have fought in remote places. America sacrificed the blood of its sons and daughters and sent treasure abroad, helping to nurture democracy and human rights all over the world. We sustained a network of alliances and built military prowess that at first contained and then defeated Soviet communism.

Because of what America did in the 20th century, there are hundreds of millions of people around the world who now live in freedom—who, but for the price paid by the United States, would have lived in despair. I know of no other such example of national selflessness in the history of mankind. That is why America is the hope of the Earth.

A Time for Strength and Confidence

That is also why, with all due respect, I take issue with President Obama's recent tour of apology. It's

not because America hasn't made mistakes—we have—but because America's mistakes are overwhelmed by what America has meant to the hopes and aspirations of people throughout the world.

The President also claimed on Arabic TV that America has dictated to other nations. No, America has sacrificed to free other nations from dictators. Britain's *Guardian* newspaper noted that Mr. Obama has been more critical of his own country while on foreign soil than any other President in American history. That would be a most unfortunate distinction at any time, but it is particularly so today: With all that is transpiring in the world in Iran, North Korea, Georgia, Somalia, Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, this is the time for strength and confidence, not for apologizing to America's critics.

I do not believe that the cause of freedom ended with the close of the last century, nor that America can afford complacency in its defense. America is still the hope of the world. We must confront clearly and courageously the threats to freedom, and we must resolutely sustain the capabilities we need to protect our security and sustain the cause of liberty.

Four Competing Strategies

There are four competing nations or groups of nations, representing four different ways of life, that are vying to lead the world before the end of this century.

- One is the world's democracies, led by America. Our strategy is based on two principles: free enterprise and individual liberty. These have led us to become the most powerful nation in the history of the world.
- China represents a different strategy. Theirs is also based on two principles: Free enterprise is one of them. They witnessed the bankruptcy of communism firsthand and have adopted free enterprise like it was their own. As a result, hundreds of millions of their poor have been lifted from poverty. But their second strategic dimension is not freedom; it is authoritarianism.
- Another competitor is Russia. Like China, their strategy is also based on authoritarianism, but unlike China, their economic might is derived not from industry, but from energy. They seek to control the energy of the world, filling their

treasury and emptying everyone else's as we pay for what they have in abundance.

- The fourth strategy is that of the Jihadists. By means of escalating violence, they intend to cause the collapse of the other three competing visions, dragging the entire world back into a medieval dictatorship ruled by mullahs and ayatollahs.

Of these four competing strategies, notice that only one includes freedom. Only if America succeeds will freedom endure. Do not imagine for a single moment that China, Russia, and the Jihadists have no intention of surpassing America and leading the world. Each is entirely convinced that it can do so.

North Korea and Missile Defense

Freedom is threatened not just by those who aspire to world leadership, but also by the rogue and malevolent. North Korea has made it abundantly clear that they are not only intent on perfecting nuclear weapons, but they are contemptuous of the concerns of the United States and the world at large. It was no accident that they launched their missile while the President was addressing nuclear non-proliferation and executed their nuclear test to coincide with Memorial Day.

The message is clear: The on-again, off-again talks and diplomacy and agreements have been nothing but stalling maneuvers. While diplomats celebrate yet another agreement, convinced that all their work has made the world safer, North Korea continues down the nuclear path Kim Jong-Il has long pursued.

Arrogant, delusional tyrants cannot be stopped by earnest words and furrowed brows. Action—strong, bold action coming from a position of strength and determination—is the only effective deterrent.

It is time to apply comprehensive, regime-crippling sanctions to North Korea. Assets should be seized and international financial capabilities terminated. North Korea should be recategorized as a state sponsor of terrorism. And, most importantly, the President should immediately reverse his recent decisions and strongly support completing our ballistic missile defense system.

Missile defense is a non-nuclear, entirely defensive system designed to protect not just America, but the

world from a catastrophic attack. Yet the President plans to cut the missile defense budget by 15 percent, cut funding for missile defense sites in Europe by 80 percent, and reduce the number of planned interceptors in Alaska. That is a grave miscalculation, given the provocations from North Korea, Iran's near-nuclear status, Pakistan's instability, and the complete failure of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Rarely in history has any development carried such awful possibilities as a nuclear-armed missile in the hands of evil men, and rarely in history has any program had the promise to do more good or spare more suffering than a system of missile defense. I know the liberals have opposed missile defense ever since Ronald Reagan proposed it, but this is too big an issue for ideology or politics to prevail over national security. I repeat: It is essential that Congress fully fund and deploy a multilayered missile defense shield that alone can protect our people from the terrible threat that is gathering around us.

Shortchanging the Military

In light of both the long-term challenges to our leadership and the immediate threats to our security, I am also deeply concerned about the President's broader plans for our military. At the most fundamental level, our military might depends on the long-term strength of our economy. The President's planned budgets and multitrillion-dollar deficits, financed by a level of borrowing never before attempted by any nation, put our whole economy in jeopardy. He may take us past the tipping point and create a crisis of confidence in the dollar that would burden us for years.

The President should instead rein in his plans for massive new spending and reform entitlements. But I fear instead that he will look to the military budget to find the biggest cuts and finance his domestic priorities. In real terms, President Obama is planning to shrink the defense budget every year over the next decade; from 3.8 percent of our economy today, he would take it to 3 percent.

Liberals have long complained that we spend too much on defense. When I was on the campaign trail, one of the frequent sights at gatherings was a billboard trailer that claimed defense spending was

more than half of the total federal budget. They knew better, of course. The official budget doesn't include our entitlement spending. When that's added in, defense is about 20 percent of the total.

The argument is also made that our defense spending is grossly disproportionate to that of either China or Russia. In 2007, China's defense budget was reported to be \$45 billion, about one-tenth our own. But we need to look more closely at the numbers. China, for instance, doesn't include in its budget the cost of strategic defense, research and development, or procurement from other countries. When those are added in, you get a budget in the range of \$100 billion to \$140 billion, and if those figures are adjusted for Purchasing Power Parity, the amount continues to climb.

But even then we're not finished. Think about it: A soldier costs China a fraction of what it costs us. China spends about \$25 billion for troops, while we spend \$129 billion for ours, and yet they have one-third more soldiers than we do. That kind of disparity also holds true for the cost of building submarines, artillery pieces, tanks, and other military platforms. Taking into account the difference in costs, our advantage over the Russians and Chinese is not 10 to one; it's more like two to one. They are closer to half our level than they are to one-tenth.

And then consider all the things we expect from our military that they do not expect from theirs. We respond to humanitarian crises, protect world shipping and energy lanes, deter terrorism, prevent genocide, and lead peace-keeping missions. And most significantly, our military is required to maintain a global presence; theirs is not. It is a far more demanding task to keep worldwide commitments than simply to build a force that can accomplish regional objectives.

China in particular is bent on acquiring the capability to exclude American naval and air assets from the Strait of Taiwan. China has bought carrier killer missiles from Russia and is developing its own variant. It has acquired fighter aircraft capable of challenging air superiority even against our F-22. It has built a large nuclear submarine base on the island of Hainan and has commissioned 30 new submarines, bringing its fleet to 62, only nine fewer than the United States. It has the most active ballistic missile

program in the world, adding 150 new missiles every year.

We needn't consider China to be an eventual enemy of the United States. In fact, I hope China can be a true partner for peace and prosperity. But that's the whole point: The stronger China becomes relative to the United States, the more tempted China will be to achieve its national ambitions through aggressive tactics. It is strength, not weakness, that preserves the peace. As Ronald Reagan was fond of saying, "of the four wars that have occurred in my lifetime, none happened because America was too strong."

Supporting America's Defense Missions

The right way to scale America's defense budget is to add up the requirements for each of our missions, beginning with strategic defense. America's nuclear arsenal needs to be modernized. While others have been testing and updating their strategic capabilities, we have done little to maintain our deterrent power.

Russia is also insistent that nuclear reduction talks encompass only strategic nuclear weapons but not theatre weapons. Of course that's what they want—they have many times the number of theatre nuclear weapons that we have. You can count on the Russians to bargain in their own interest, just as you can count on some liberals and politicians to sign any agreement that looks good on the surface, even if it puts us at a severe disadvantage. The President must not fall into that trap.

A second defense mission is to be prepared to fight and win land wars and counterinsurgencies, including the wars we are now fighting. Those who shout "no more Iraqs" should remember that we are still in a counterinsurgency war in Afghanistan. And it was not so long ago that 500,000 troops were needed to fight in Desert Storm. It is not hard to imagine future scenarios that would require America to put boots on the ground, particularly given the developments in Pakistan, or even Russia's apparent designs on its former satellites.

We have a great deal of work to do to prepare for this mission. Much of our military equipment has been destroyed or damaged. It should be replaced as soon as possible. The Army also needs to upgrade all of its tracked vehicles and many of its tanks. And

our ground forces have been seriously depleted. In the Clinton years, the Army was reduced from 18 divisions to 10. As a consequence, the Army, as well as the Marine Corps, has been stretched to the breaking point in Iraq and in Afghanistan. Our Reserves have had to bear a heavy and unanticipated burden.

When our armed forces are short-staffed, the inevitable results are higher casualties, more long-term health impacts, greater risk to our security, and more adventurism by tyrants. These human and national costs are simply too high to bear. In the defense of liberty, there is no substitute for the brave men and women of the United States military—and we should start taking better care of them.

A third mission is to continue to control the commons. Our military is able to move freely on the seas, in the air, and in space. That allows us to protect trade, respond to humanitarian crises, and provide essential support to our ground forces, as well as project our power to restrain the ambitions of tyrants and enhance our credibility as an ally.

Here again, much of the military's vital equipment is old and technologically out of date. The Air Force's main bomber—the B-52—is 50 years old. Much of the Air Force's tanker and cargo inventory is almost as old. The Navy has a stated minimum requirement of 313 ships. It now has only 280. Unless the shipbuilding budget is substantially increased, the fleet will continue to decline. We are headed to a Navy of 210 to 240 vessels, a fleet size that no one believes is consistent with America's security or global responsibilities.

A fourth mission is to provide counterinsurgency support for nations under threat from Jihadists. Our experience in the Philippines has shown the effectiveness of teams composed of intelligence personnel and Special Forces. This is a capability we should greatly expand and rapidly deploy.

Let me note one more priority. We must invest far more resources to defend against military discontinuities—that is, disruptions in communications and other technologies that our forces depend on. China, for instance, is committed to cyberwarfare and space warfare. It has invaded our most secure networks, pirating designs for our advanced weap-

onry. Even more disruptive technologies are all too real, including electromagnetic pulse attack.

While some of these measures may seem unthinkable, they simply are not. It would be a serious error to become so focused on equipping ourselves for the war we are now fighting that we underinvest in our capability to prevent or prevail in wars of the future.

4 Percent for Defense

When I add up the demands of all these defense missions, I do not come up with budget cuts. As a simple matter of budget mathematics, we cannot fulfill our military missions without an increase of \$50 billion per year in the modernization budget. Admiral Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, has repeatedly said that such an increase is necessary.

That is why I support defense budgets, excluding the cost of Iraq and Afghanistan, that are at least 4 percent of GDP, not 3 percent. It's not that 4 percent is a magic number. It's that I can see no reasonable scenario by which America can spend less and still provide our servicemen and women with the modern equipment and resources they need to defend us. The Administration is intent on spending less, but I urge pro-defense Members of Congress—Democrats and Republicans alike—to hold firm and to make the case for a military that is second to none.

The current leadership in Washington is hardly in a position to complain about the cost of the defense budget. Over the last few months, it has passed measures that will add almost \$4 trillion to the national debt in the short term and then over \$3 trillion over the next 10 years. None of that money was spent on increasing the defense modernization budget—a failure that history will never understand or excuse. For a fraction of the money that was spent on various domestic and social programs, Washington could have given our servicemen and women the tools they need to defend us for a generation.

After all, the first and highest duty of government is to provide for the common defense. Backing away from missile defense and depleting the defense budget to fund new social programs, partic-

ularly in the face of global turmoil, would put America and Americans at risk.

Conclusion

We cannot allow the economic crisis to conceal the very real threats to our nation's security. We cannot ignore the intentions of competitors who would replace America's leadership with their own and set back the cause of freedom. Providence has blessed us and trusted us to safeguard liberty; in a time of

confusion at home and challenge abroad, let ours be the voice of clarity and good sense—confident in our cause and faithful in the care of freedom.

—*The Honorable Mitt Romney, former governor of Massachusetts, business executive, and leader of the 2002 Salt Lake Winter Olympics, currently serves as honorary chairman of the Free and Strong America PAC. These remarks were delivered at a ceremony held at the U.S. Navy Memorial in Washington, D.C.*