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Maintaining America's Safety to Build Our Prosperity and Freedom

The Honorable Newt Gingrich

I want to thank all of you for that warm welcome, and I want to thank my good friend, Ed Feulner. I have lots of ideas, and a substantial number of them have come from knowing Ed and knowing the folks here at Heritage and stealing them quite liberally, frankly, all the way back into the mid-1970s. We have had a long and wonderful relationship talking about ideas and trying to apply those ideas to make things better, including welfare reform, about which we had many conversations in this institution before we passed it in 1996.

I also want to thank my good friend Jim Talent, who invited me to come and give this talk and who has been organizing this Protect America Month. I appreciate very much that you are reaching out and giving me this opportunity.

I think our goals are pretty straightforward as a country, even though they get cluttered sometimes. Essentially, they come down to safety, prosperity, and freedom. Sometimes politicians like to avoid those because they are so clear. If you simply measure everything against are we safe, are we prosperous, and are we free, and does the next proposal make us more safe or less safe, more prosperous or less prosperous, more free or less free, that level of clarity often doesn't work to the advantage of politicians in Washington who would like to avoid investing in safety, would like to adopt tax increases that kill prosperity, and would like to centralize power and bureaucracy in a way which limits freedom.

Talking Points

- The United States needs a new strategy for fighting the war on terrorism. Comprehensive reform of the way Americans think about national security is essential.
- The United States must be ready to counter unforeseen developments in the technology and capability of rivals, competitors, and foes.
- The Pentagon needs to trim bureaucratic red tape to ensure fast, efficient decision-making at the highest levels of government.
- Members of Congress should be enrolled in National Defense University courses that teach them to deal with real-world security threats in a rapidly changing environment. Only in this way will a generation of politicians be educated to deal with the evolving landscape of threats that America faces, from Colombian drug cartels to states seeking to exploit the vulnerabilities of our communications systems in space.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:
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In many ways, the conservative movement, going back to Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan and to Bill Buckley, has had a pattern of really resonating with the average American beyond the politics of the day, and I think that is why the conservative movement has grown as much as it has. If you noticed the two Gallup polls in the last month, the first said this is a country which is essentially about 40 percent conservative, about 38 percent moderate, and about 21 percent liberal—not exactly the pattern you would find, say, in the *New York Times* editorial board.

In the second survey, which came out about 10 days ago partly in response to the economy and partly in response, I think, to the new Administration and the new Congress, 40 percent of the American people indicated they have moved to the right in the last year. They are more conservative today than they were a year ago. Even in the Democratic Party, there were 38 percent who had moved toward the right and 22 percent who had moved toward the left. So you see this underlying pattern beginning to build.

I should say, by the way, in the first Gallup poll on your self-identity ideologically, the Democratic Party was 40 percent moderate, 38 percent liberal, and 22 percent conservative. So moderates and conservatives represent almost a two-to-one majority in the Democratic Party, which, if you ever get a moderate Democrat to run for President, will lead to very interesting and confusing primary results that will be astounding to the liberal establishment.

Recognizing the Dangers

In this broad sweeping country, which does want safety, freedom, and prosperity, I think the first argument you have to win is about whether or not dangers are knowable.

I had worked on national security for a very long time, and nothing irritated me more immediately after 9/11 than the people who said, “Why didn’t we think of this?” There had been a Tom Clancy best-selling novel in which a Boeing 747 crashed into the Capitol, something you thought would have been of note to Members of Congress, and it did an immense amount of damage because a 747, in terms of jet fuel, is an extraordinarily big weapon.

There had been a movie with Kurt Russell in which a commercial airliner was hijacked by terrorists who had sneaked a chemical warfare weapon that would have been devastating onto the plane, and they were trying to find a way to fly into Washington.

These are both public, and what you discover is that it is not a failure of the potential to imagine. It is a failure of the ability to translate the imagination into public policy, and the reasons often are either bureaucratic timidity, budget timidity, or political timidity. That is why you get these patterns, for example, in the 1920s and ’30s where, as the world grew steadily more dangerous, the democracies just hid from reality because they didn’t want to have to confront the scale of the danger.

It was not that the danger wasn’t obvious. Virtually everybody in the senior leadership knew the Japanese had invaded Manchuria in 1931. Virtually everybody knew the Germans had reoccupied the Rhineland. Virtually everybody knew the Germans had occupied Austria. None of these were secrets, but people didn’t want to draw the consequences.

So let me start with why I believe national security is about to become a dramatically more important debate, and the only question is whether we have the debate before there is a disaster or afterwards.

The Edge of Catastrophe

I would argue that we are living at the edge of a catastrophe and that we need to understand that that is exactly where we are. What we are faced with is not simply a problem; it is potentially catastrophic.

Nuclear Weapons. The first potential catastrophe is nuclear. We reported this in the Hart–Rudman Commission in March 2001 where we said the greatest threat to the United States was a weapon of mass destruction going off in an American city and called for a serious homeland security department, which we still don’t have, because a serious homeland security department would be sized to be able to deal with three nuclear events simultaneously the same morning.

That would be a reasonable threat. We are not talking about a spasm nuclear war with the Soviet Union, but we are talking about circumstances

where you could literally be faced with a catastrophic loss of life, and none of this is secret. There are novels about it. There are reports about it. There are various studies about it. There was a RAND study three years ago about the impact of a nuclear event in Long Beach, California, and what it would do to the entire Los Angeles Basin and what the scale of dislocation would be.

So these things are all knowable. We don't have the political will to act on it.

EMP. The second is electromagnetic pulse (EMP). My co-author and good friend Bill Forstchen has written a remarkable novel, *One Second After*, in which he takes a town in North Carolina and shows you what would happen with a successful electromagnetic pulse attack.

Electromagnetic pulse is essentially a peculiarly sized nuclear device that becomes a giant lightning strike. It doesn't kill by radiation or by the power of the shockwave, but it knocks out all of the electrical appliances, including the generating system that produces the electricity, including cars that have traditional electrical devices, and all the telephones.

If you look at the size of the electrical generating system, it is not replaceable. The length of time it takes to replace that, particularly in a society which has lost electricity, is staggering. Forstchen accurately describes what the catastrophic consequences would be at a human level if you tried to live in a non-electricity world, given the way we have built our civilization.

He didn't do this out of whole cloth. He started with Congressman Roscoe Bartlett, who commissioned seven nuclear physicists to study what the effect could be. These are all people that had come out of the Cold War era. They had all worked for the Defense Department. They were all experts in nuclear weaponry, and they came back and said unanimously that this is a catastrophic threat waiting to happen and that North Korea, China, and Russia all understand it and are all working on it.

This is why I adopted the position toward North Korea that I would literally not allow them to fire any intercontinental-range missile that we had not inspected. I would just take it out on the site.

The reason is simple. One weapon of this kind that went off over Omaha would eliminate most of the electrical production in the United States, and we are not today hardened against this. It is an enormous catastrophic threat.

Biological Weapons. The third threat is biological weapons, probably the easiest threat to deal with if you watch the Centers for Disease Control when they react. But if you go back and look at the anthrax problem, a genuine serious biological attack, partly because of its psychological effect, is a very disruptive factor.

Cyber Threats. The fourth threat is cyber and the potential of a weapon of mass disruption, which, when you look at modern high civilization, could be about as destructive as a weapon of mass destruction. And there is zero doubt that Russia, China, even North Korea have cyber programs and routinely now wage cyber campaigns. Look at what happened to Estonia not very long ago, where the Russians clearly got angry with them and launched an entire wave of cyber attacks. This is a continuing, ongoing problem worldwide, and it is only going to get worse and more complicated.

Space. The fifth challenge is in space. The Japanese decided in July, and released a report on July 17, that they are now going to militarize space, and as space becomes more important, it is exactly like aircraft were before World War I. The idea that we are going to be able to put huge assets for communications and intelligence in space, leave them unprotected, and rely on all of our competitors to be benign rejects every aspect of human history.

It is just utterly inconceivable that you would design a system this fragile, this lacking in redundancy, and this incapable of defending itself. And if we try to operate with none of our space assets, we degrade our military capability dramatically in the first minute.

Missile Defense. The sixth challenge is national missile defense. There, I think, the decisions of the Administration so far have been remarkably destructive of our future. This is, again, exactly like what happened with 9/11 where one morning, if we get hit with a missile, people are going to look up and say, "But how could that have happened? How could

politicians possibly have been that lacking in foresight and that lacking in seriousness?”

You have to think about a defense in depth. You have to go back and look at the original design in the 1980s, and you have to recognize that we have had a series of very budget-constrained, very policy-constrained efforts. If the alternative is to lose a city, the constraints are absolutely irrational, and the time to have that argument is now, *before* the catastrophe occurs.

Breakouts. Finally, I think you have to worry about breakouts. Our estimate is that there will be four to seven times as much new science in the next 25 years as there was in the last 25 years. I used to say four times as much, but I gave a talk to the National Academy of Sciences Working Group on Computation and Information, and afterwards, the chairman said four was too small, that it had to be closer to seven times as much new knowledge.

I then went to Michael Novacek, who is the chief scientist at one of my favorite institutions, the American Museum of Natural History, and I asked what his estimate was. He said he thought it actually would be a tenfold increase of new knowledge. Novacek is a vertebrate paleontologist, and it is an underinvested area, so they are, to some extent, playing catch-up. So I think seven is probably a reasonable top line.

There are more scientists alive than all of previous human history. They get better computers and better instruments every year. They get connectivity by e-mail and cell phone. They then get connected to the marketplace by licensing, royalties, and venture capital. The result is you are talking about a system which is generating waves of new knowledge.

If you are trying to plan out 25 years, which I think is the right time horizon if you are trying to compete, for example, with China, and you ask what the world will be like in 2034 if we get four times as much change, it is the equivalent of a committee in 1880 trying to understand today. Now, 1880 is pre-automobile, pre-truck, pre-airplane, pre-long-distance telephone, pre-electric light, pre-motion picture, pre-computer. How would you explain the modern world? But if it is seven times as much new knowledge, then you are like somebody

working with Sir Isaac Newton in 1660 trying to discover calculus.

If this is even close to correct, the only correct strategic analysis is to assume that there will be breakouts we don't know about and that we don't understand, because 65 percent of all the scientists in the world will be non-American. They are smart too, and they are working hard too, and you have to assume they are going to do clever things.

If that is true, one of the things we need to build is a method for the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs to have very dramatic capacity to reach out and literally create a counter-breakthrough capability. If a breakthrough occurred this morning, they would need to have contracting authority and organizational authority and budget authority by this evening to be actually operating a real-time response if it is the wrong kind of breakout—for example, a Chinese tactical EMP capability that disables a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier battle group or the launching of a new generation of robotic capabilities.

None of our competitors in 1980 would have projected Predators. None of them would have designed system after system that we now use routinely. None of our competitors were capable of developing theater-wide air warfare based on satellites and on AWACS. Yet we made it normal. You literally couldn't compete with us without that capability. So you have to ask yourself, “What happens the morning one of our competitors has a breakout we are not ready for?”

Bill and I wrote a novel on Pearl Harbor in which we basically tried to show the impact of air power on Japanese thinking and the ability to actually launch the Pearl Harbor campaign, because it is useful to think about what are the breakthroughs that enable people to do things you don't expect. My argument is you are not going to be able to anticipate everything, so what you have to do instead is develop a capability to respond with extraordinary speed once somebody else has made a breakthrough.

Time for a New War Strategy

Let me just put this in context. Seven years after 9/11, we have not won. The President of the United

States said we are at war. The Congress basically said do whatever it takes. They later began to think they didn't mean it. Even President Obama has said pretty clearly that he has shifted the site of the war from Iraq to Afghanistan, but he hasn't said we could get out of the war.

I find it very disturbing that nobody is demanding a fundamental reexamination of the war strategy and where we are now. I am not talking about the argument between Bush and Obama. I am not talking about Iraq versus Afghanistan. I am suggesting something much more fundamental.

We won the Civil War in four years. We won the Second World War in three years and eight months. It is one of the most amazing achievements in history, from Pearl Harbor on December 7 of 1941 to victory over Japan in August of 1945. We mobilized the nation; built a two-ocean Navy; built the B-24, B-17, B-29; mobilized 15 and one-half million people. We launched American power across North Africa, Sicily, Italy, France, Belgium, and The Netherlands and liberated Germany. At the same time, simultaneously, we went across the Pacific, and the Japanese surrendered in August of 1945—three years and eight months.

It took us 23 years to add a fifth runway to the Atlanta Airport.

Frankly, the big troubling thing about Defense Secretary Robert Gates's budget decisions is that, given the cycle time of the current over-regulated, over-red taped, over-bureaucratic defense structure, we are making decisions today that will unilaterally disarm us around 2025 or 2030. Because unless you imagine very dramatic reform of the system, it is incapable of launching new systems of weapons and new systems of capability on a large scale in a short period of time. It is a huge problem.

I am also suggesting something much more profound. We need a national debate about the nature of the war we are in and what we are doing about it, because we have been sending our young men and women to risk their lives, and we have been spending a lot of money, spread across the entire planet. I support it, but I find it very troubling that we are drifting into a belief that this is just a condition we live in rather than a war to be won, and I think that

is very dangerous because it gives your opponents a lot of time to organize against you, a lot of time to think through what you do well, and a lot of time to develop countervailing strategies.

Mark Bowden, who wrote *Black Hawk Down*, recently wrote a book called *Guests of the Ayatollah*. He argues that 1979, the seizing of the American embassy, was the first shot in Iran's war against America. So, in the Bowden model, we have been at war with Iran for 30 years. It is just that they knew it and we didn't.

You can say that is too far back; that doesn't count. We don't want to count Lebanon in the '80s, which was almost certainly an Iranian-funded attack. So let's just start in the '90s, the World Trade Center bombing in New York, Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia, two American embassies bombed in East Africa, an American ship bombed in Yemen, the *Cole*. Would the '90s count? Are those acts of war, or are they just random moments of violence on a planet where sometimes people are unhappy?

They all have the same thread, so you could argue at one level, let's just start with the World Trade Center bombing, which was on our soil, partly organized by a sheikh who was in Attica prison, which is why this whole argument of where you incarcerate terrorists is important. Then you have to say to yourself, all right, so that means we have now been at war for 16 years.

Is anybody really comfortable with our current strategy and our current understanding of victory? I'm not. I think we grossly underestimate how hard this is, and this is why Secretary Gates has a huge problem.

On the one hand, he has a worldwide set of commitments he cannot get out of that involve people who want to kill us tomorrow morning. On the other hand, he has emerging complex competitors of increasing capability. And he has decided, in order to meet a totally artificial budget number, that we will not prepare for the future in order to try to focus our resources in the present.

This may be a legitimate strategy if you believe you are not going to live more than five years and you have no children and grandchildren and you don't care about the future of the country, but it is an

extraordinarily dangerous strategy, which is why I am so strongly supportive of the petition that Heritage has launched and so deeply agree with the premise that we have to set a safety-oriented national security budget, not a budget director-oriented national security budget.

A Program for Reform

I think that the challenge is very, very real. I believe that there are a number of very serious reforms we need. There are seven that would change our entire way of thinking about national security.

First, we need to go back and pick up what we did before World War II and create a rainbow planning process; that is, recognize the world is complex.

You have to be simultaneously aware, for example, that the cocaine dealers in Colombia now build submarines to deliver the cocaine. That is how big the gray world of organized international crime has become. In the jungles of Colombia, there are shipyards that build submarines that bring so much cocaine, they can leave the submarine as a trivial cost. That is a sophisticated opponent.

Look at the current war underway against the gray world of drug dealers in Mexico. Look at the problems of organized crime in Europe. Look at the problems of organized crime in the United States. At the Center for Health Transformation, we just released a book called *Stop Paying the Crooks*, which Jim Frogue edited. It points out that there is between \$70 billion and \$120 billion a year of fraud in Medicaid and Medicare, a good bit of it actually organized crime, such as the five pizza parlors in South Florida that filed as HIV/AIDS transfusion centers and got paid because the federal government is such an incompetent administrator.

So when you look at these sort of things, you have that zone to think about. You have the high end of war to think about, the catastrophes I described earlier. You have the policing process to think about. We have no mechanism today to force the Congress and the President to recognize that unless you have a full-service national security system, you are creating zones of vulnerability for your enemies to exploit. And that is precisely where we are today.

Because we have decided to have a very limited peacetime budget, because you have an Adminis-

tration and a Congress that do not want to take seriously safety for Americans, we are drifting in a world where we are going to end up running very significant calculated risks, which is a terrific model until the calculations fail. When the calculations fail, you pay in blood. That is what happened on 9/11, and that is what happened on December 7, 1941, and I think we have to take very seriously a rainbow planning process.

Second, we have to do far more red teaming of the other side than we do today. There is this assumption that if we decide X, it will happen. No.

I remember being briefed in the last Administration by a very senior State Department official who said, "Well, we are going to just do what we want to, and Kosovo and the Russians have to live with it." The Russians proved in Georgia that they didn't have to live with it, and there is a direct tie, in my judgment, between what they did in Georgia and what we did in Kosovo.

We can make decisions about what we think is going to happen next. That doesn't mean the Iranians are going to make the same decision. You need a lot more thinking about "and then what happens" and a lot more planning for a complex world. We are like a country which plays tic-tac-toe in a world where what you need is an ability to play four-dimensional chess. It is a very serious problem because we consistently underestimate our competitors, who have every right in history to be clever, determined, and tenacious.

Third, we have to get much better at setting the context for what we are doing and explaining what we are doing. The objective fact is that we are dealing in a world in which, if you don't dominate the 24-hour news flow, you don't dominate Facebook and Twitter, you don't dominate the flow of e-mail, and your blogs aren't as good as their blogs, you are eventually going to lose. And when you lose public opinion worldwide, you will start losing the capacity to do things.

We have been successful since 1945 because we have been able to build a worldwide coalition of extraordinary capability. No society in history has had the capacity to recruit and organize allies on the scale that we have routinely done, and I kept trying

to get the last Administration to understand it and to explain it.

We could not have done what we did in Iraq without the active help of Kuwait, of Bahrain, without being able to use the airfields in Saudi Arabia, without being able to transit Jordan. Just go back and look at all the different countries that took the risk of deciding to be with America. We couldn't physically get to Afghanistan today. It would be physically impossible if other countries weren't willing to help us.

And, historically, we have, since 1945, sustained the world market, sustained the world flow of commerce, sustained a growing prosperity for the whole planet and a growing freedom for the whole planet in a way that nobody ever dreamed was possible in the past.

All that required American leadership, but it also required lots of other people voluntarily cooperating. If you don't win the argument, if you don't win what some people have called the struggle over the narrative, you are in deep trouble. All too often, we only pay lip service to it. We need to fundamentally rethink how we win that.

Fourth, we have to budget, and here I want to just say clearly that I am very much for what Heritage is doing with 4 Percent for Freedom. I would be for more. They are a little open-ended in what they are for, but I would be for more. More is better, and there is a practical reason.

The budget for your safety should start with meeting threats, not with meeting expectations. You have to look around the planet and say, "What threatens Americans, and what threatens America? What would it take to overmatch us, not to equal them?" You don't want to live in a world where you are just barely equaling your opponents.

Our security has been based on the fact that, since 1945, we have had overwhelming capability, and the result has been that we have been dramatically safer than any other people in history. I want my grandchildren, who are today seven and nine, to grow up and live their lives out in the safest country in the world. That requires a national security budget and a homeland security budget driven by meeting the capabilities of our opponents, not by meeting their intentions.

We are today running very big risks in the name of saving a few billion dollars that may end up killing several million Americans. The time to fix that is *before* the disaster happens.

Fifth, even if we get a very big budget, we need to fundamentally overhaul the national security system. Our combat arms are very agile. They operate inside an OODA loop of observe, orient, decide, and act. They have a capacity to orchestrate power.

The second you leave the field forces and get into the bureaucracy, even in the Defense Department, it is a mess. We have no capacity to procure that matches our ability to operate in the field. We should take exactly the same standards we set in the field and apply them across the entire national security system, which includes the State Department, intelligence, and some elements of Treasury.

It is extraordinary today, the difference between the capabilities of a young 18-, 19-, or 20-year-old in the uniformed services in the field and the lack of ability to act decisively on the part of a two-star officer in the Pentagon or a senior officer in the State Department or a senior officer in intelligence or an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury. The gap is almost unbelievable.

So this is more than a budget issue, because even if we tripled the defense budget, if you don't fix the slow, cumbersome, bureaucratic decision-making process, you are not going to be able to move at the speed of the modern world, and you are not going to sustain our defense system. This is a very hard problem which we have consistently failed to meet.

Sixth, we have to develop what I described earlier as a counter-breakout system. We are going to get surprised. It is virtually inevitable. There are too many smart people in too many countries, all of them independently trying to figure out how to surprise us, and only one of them has to succeed. The idea that we are somehow impervious to that, that we are going to outthink them, outprepare them, is nonsense.

Sooner or later, there will be a major breakthrough, and the speed with which we can move to analyze and react to that will be a matter, potentially, of life and death, not just for the troops in the field, but for the country. For example, with a cyber

attack, you could get rolled up in a way that the whole country was suddenly defeated.

We should not operate on some assumption that we can be soft in our thinking and strong in our defense. It is not possible, so we need to actively think through what a counter-breakout system would be like and how you could trigger it so it could move in virtually real time.

Seventh, and maybe my most optimistic view, I think we ought to have a robust and continuing war-gaming process at the National Defense University for the Congress.

Under our Constitution, we have to develop better techniques for educating our elected officials, and you are not going to educate them with briefings. The best way to educate them is to put them in problems where they suddenly have to face reality. Give them the problem of a Pakistan that suddenly has 30 nukes missing. Give them the problem of an Iran that acquires an atomic weapon and has decided to dominate the Persian Gulf. Give them the problem of thinking through challenges in Mexico. The process of thinking that through, working it out, could educate a generation of politicians.

The people who built the system that won the Cold War had been educated the hard way in World War I, had had 20 years to think about it, and had been educated the hard way in World War II. By the time they got around to dealing with the Cold War, they were tougher, mentally prepared, and massively experienced.

We do not have that kind of elected leadership today in either party. It is hard business to learn how to defend a nation. If we don't invest in that among our elected officials, they will not be able to make sophisticated decisions; and if they don't, we will pay for it.

Conclusion

I will close with a reference to George Washington. One of the major reasons that the American Revolution was such a difficult war was because the Continental Congress was so incompetent. If you go back and you read Washington's relations with the Continental Congress, it is enough to make you want to cry.

We have no excuse today for the level of relative ignorance that our elected officials manage to retain through an entire career, but that is a systems problem. They are busy, and we have no mechanisms today for them to learn in the process of their career.

In August of 1958, I visited Verdun and stayed with a friend of my father's who had been drafted in 1941, sent to the Philippines, and served in the Bataan Death March. We looked at a battlefield in which 600,000 men were killed in a nine-month period. Then, in the evenings, we talked about the price of defeat in a Japanese prison camp. And I came to the conclusion as we watched the French Fourth Republic die, as we lived in Orléans, that this is all real.

We have been the most fortunate generation in history. We are the richest, freest people. Despite all of our current economic problems, we are still today the richest, freest, and safest people in the history of the world. That will remain true only if we have the courage, the discipline, and the foresight to insist on the kind of changes we need in order to maintain safety as the highest single value of the American people, a base on which you can then build prosperity and freedom.

—*The Honorable Newt Gingrich is former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.*