

Securing Our Future

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Thank you, ladies and gentlemen for that very warm welcome and thank you Midshipman Frederick, for those wonderful words of introduction. And heartfelt thanks to Admiral Ryan for the kind invitation to be with you and to Admiral Roughead, Dean Miller, and Midshipman Nance for your efforts in making this evening possible. What a pleasure it is to be here.

It is a special honor for me to join the prestigious roster of speakers who have stood before you to deliver the Forrestal Lecture. I don't need to tell you how important James Forrestal was, first, in creating the great naval force that helped win World War II, and then, in serving as this nation's first Secretary of Defense.

I was just a child listening to the radio with my mother in February 1945 while my brother John served aboard the original USS Saratoga-CV 3. The ship was supporting the Iwo Jima landing when it was hit, just after dusk, by Kamikaze planes. And I recall learning this news, and hoping...and praying that my brother and his fellow sailors would return safely. These brave men stood strong in the face of enemy aggression. Like you, they believed in duty, honor, and commitment. And they lived those values, helping to make this the strongest nation in the world.

Some people think we've lost those standards today. Yes, we've been let down by people we should look up to. But these past months and years I've been traveling around the nation, talking to people— hearing their concerns and what they want for this great country. And I'm glad to say I've met countless men and women who do believe in our highest values. Men like John McCain whom I truly admire. John has lived the values of this academy—duty, honor, and commitment.

And for eight years I was honored to join thousands of Red Cross workers and volunteers who share these values, who're making a positive difference at home and abroad. I know that many other people from humanitarian organizations—a number of you, here tonight— share that passion for service.

But tonight I'm especially pleased to address the brigade of midshipmen: men and women who've made service and honor really count. In the middle of this demanding Academy program, you've given your time and talents to help your neighbors. I've heard about the Midshipman Action

Group and how you've put in more than 16,000 hours of community service. I know you are an inspiration to the kids you've tutored and the families you've helped. Congratulations! Bravo Zulu!

Tonight, I'd also like to remember the Academy graduates who are serving on ships and stations across the world, upholding our deepest national interests and beliefs.

Right now, at least a dozen members of last year's graduating class are aboard ships in the Adriatic. So tonight, I can't think of a more important group of people to talk to about American leadership— in peace and in war. And I can't think of a more important time.

In recent weeks, in Kosovo, we have seen the terrible consequences of unbridled aggression and ethnic hatred. For years, Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic has carried out a systematic, violent campaign to terrorize and destroy non-Serb communities. To date, more than half a million ethnic Albanians have fled their homes for safety in nearby countries. Behind them, Milosevic's forces have burned and looted homes, shot opponents, force-marched women and children out of cities, and herded fathers and sons to unknown fates.

Tragically, we've seen Milosevic in action before. Seven years ago, as head of the Red Cross, I went to the Croatian-Bosnian border to inspect a transit station for refugees from the Bosnian conflict. The station was a joint Red Cross/UN facility, which provided care for recently released prisoners from Serbian detention camps. Hundreds had come to the station the night before my arrival. They were being treated and interviewed to assess whether the Serb camps were abiding by the Geneva Convention.

Sadly the survivors showed all the physical evidence of months of malnourishment, deprivation and ill-treatment. Refugees reported beatings and torture; brothers and cousins shot; wives and young sisters raped.

Of course, the former Yugoslavia is not the only place we've witnessed the evils of ethnic violence. In 1994, the Red Cross and other humanitarian groups were working to help more than a million refugees from the bloody massacres in Rwanda. Camps were hastily set up in Zaire, now Congo, for survivors. I came in with an inspection team in a small propeller aircraft. From the plane's window, I saw a huge mass of people in the choking dust and heat. I also saw jeeps and trucks with our beautiful red-on-white cross and an enormous US C-141 military aircraft, unloading critical supplies.

To those who question the military's role in such rescue affairs, I'll just say that there are simply times when nobody else can do the job. Even with our help thousands of Rwandans would die of wounds, infection, contaminated water and disease. That day, we literally stepped over dead bodies as we went about our work. The Red Cross and other organizations have had a

long experience dealing with natural disasters. But these were not natural disasters. They were caused by humans and demanded a human cure.

Some people ask, should the United States really get involved in any of this? Isn't it enough that we have groups like the Red Cross to handle humanitarian concerns? Can't the United Nations and regional bodies take care of regional concerns? The answer is simple. Wherever America's national interests and our national values intersect, this nation must lead. That includes using military force when necessary.

This is a particularly appropriate time to be reflecting on that leadership. Last month, NATO—the core of freedom since World War II—opened its doors to three new members: Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Three former members of the Warsaw Pact bring with them a tremendous commitment to freedom, a freedom they value and struggled to win. But their leaders have been the first to acknowledge that they did not do it alone. It was the United States, which kept the faith during four decades of the Cold War, which led to a powerful democratic alliance to keep freedom safe in Europe and elsewhere, and which inspired the struggle for human rights and liberty.

The West's thriving free markets put the lie to Marxist propaganda. Our rule of law shamed dictatorships. Our workers' real rights inspired workers' unions like Solidarity. And our respect for the life of the spirit supported religious believers everywhere, as they kept their faith despite adversity...

As US Secretary of Labor, I found myself in Poland in the summer of 1989, meeting with Solidarity labor leaders. It was August and the Soviet bloc was crumbling. In Moscow, the Communist Party's "perestroika" reforms had failed to halt economic and political collapse. That January, Hungary had voted to allow independent parties. The last Soviet troops had left Afghanistan in February, ending a disastrous ten years of military occupation. By July, floods of East Germans were pouring into Western embassies, seeking to emigrate.

Just as I arrived in Warsaw, the Polish Parliament elected its first non-Communist Prime Minister in more than 40 years. Three months later, the Berlin Wall was down. The elation was incredible. Now ten years later, we know that the challenges of the post-Cold War era have just begun.

Today, in many of the former Soviet nations, democratic and market-place structures remain fragile. In Europe, NATO is struggling to address the Yugoslavia conflict, while Moscow has opposed NATO's action in defiance of world outrage at Belgrade's aggression. In the Middle East, a lasting peace is still under siege. Across the world, terrorists have struck at the West and its allies—from the World Trade Center bombing in New York

City, to deadly sarin-gas attacks in the subways of Tokyo. And as the bombings in Oklahoma City and our embassies in East Africa warn us, terror may strike where we may least expect it.

Meanwhile, weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them are proliferating around the world. North Korean, Chinese, and Russian armaments and technicians are building up the stockpiles of rogue nations. Just this week, both India and Pakistan held new tests of nuclear-capable missiles, the latest steps in an escalating arms race between those countries. In North Korea, people are starving while the communist leadership pours resources into advanced missiles and it is reported a nuclear-weapons program.

All the new computer technologies that work for us are also sometimes working against us. At a recent Washington Roundtable on Science and Public Policy, a defense expert pointed out that "the world is awash in equipment far superior to that used by the United States itself in building its own missiles... The missiles and nuclear weapons that were mainstays for the United States during the Cold War were designed with the help of computers less powerful than today's better desktop models."

And there are new weapons of mass disruption which threaten our critical infrastructure: computer viruses, email attacks, and "Trojan Horses" that aim to disable industry and government services, and potentially, our very defenses... This constellation of new technologies and global crises may tempt us to believe we are in totally uncharted waters. But I believe the lesson of history still holds true: America has always risen to its challenges—we always will. We protect our freedom best when America leads—and when that leadership is clear, credible, and capable.

Clear leadership requires a steady sense of purpose. Our free society and global economy require an environment that respects liberty and individual rights. We are the world's only superpower. More important, we are the world's only superpower democracy. If we are to shape a world that is open to our values and ideals and well-being, we must accept our responsibility to lead.

What does this mean in practical terms? First and foremost, it means staying true to our fundamental values. Two decades of American engagement have helped to build a more open, more prosperous economy in China. That has benefited the Chinese people and strengthened the ties between our nations. Meanwhile, however, China's human rights situation is sharply deteriorating. It's time to press Beijing much harder for reform.

No nation benefits from closed political structures, closed markets, and closed ideas. Washington does not do China any favors when it averts official eyes from Beijing's stagnant human rights situation, or important

questions of trust and national security. I know China and we can talk. As Secretary of Transportation, I represented the United States in tough aviation and maritime negotiations in Beijing. While I was there, I also went with my friends Senator Pat Moynihan and Senator Pete Dominici to attend services in a Beijing church.

We need to support, publicly, freedom of conscience and speech in China. We need to insist on free markets and fair access and respect for intellectual property rights. And we need to stand by our friends in Taiwan. And while we reach out to China as a partner for peace, we need to shut those doors to our military secrets. Global stability demands no less. And that brings me to the important question of credibility.

Friends and adversaries alike must trust our words. Mixed messages send mixed signals. There's a high cost in lives and resources when an adversary doubts your meaning and decides to test your will. Our society's open debates are often misinterpreted by leaders of regimes where speech is suppressed. They think dissent means a lack of determination. Well, we will always have debate and competing interests. That's the American way. But as I've learned from years of experience in international forums, that's all the more reason for the United States Commanders-in-Chief to say what they mean and mean what they say. Credibility counts. And if you have any question about that, look at the UN weapons inspections mess in Iraq or today's tragedy in Kosovo.

When tough deadlines are set and then repeatedly postponed—when the other side appears to break its agreements with impunity—when we accept half-promises: we send the wrong signal about our values and our will. That's especially true when American commitments are caged in hesitation. Long experience teaches that when we've committed military forces to a rightful goal, we should use all the power necessary to achieve it. Categorical refusals to employ ground forces, or vows that the United States won't ever go it alone: this kind of thing simply encourages adversaries to shift strategies, wait it out, or attempt to break our alliances.

Some people ask, do we have a national interest in Kosovo? The answer is, we have an interest in Europe. Our leadership is needed when aggression jeopardizes that region's stability and security and threatens our deepest democratic values. But today we must deal with reality. In Kosovo, we are the only power capable of stopping an immense threat to peace and progress throughout the region. We and our allies should carry out that mission in the swiftest and most effective way possible.

So today, I call on President Clinton to rally our nation, strengthen our international coalitions and build up and deploy the forces necessary to win the war. To secure our objectives, Milosevic's forces must depart from

Kosovo and the refugees must return safely under the protection of a NATO-led force. To accept the status quo is to risk defeat—defeat for NATO and defeat for the humanitarian, and very American, objective of preventing genocide where we can. Does that mean ground troops? If the NATO commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff say that ground troops are required to accomplish our goals, then my answer is yes.

That brings me to the question of capability—making sure that today and in the future, we have the tools we need to bring to the job. Those tools include strong alliances and effective international partnerships. Our leadership in international trade and monetary organizations is essential for upholding our core economic interests and promoting worldwide economic growth. NATO, now celebrating its 50th anniversary, can be a source of security and stability, not only for Europe, but elsewhere. For instance, in 1990, when Coalition naval forces deployed to the Persian Gulf to enforce sanctions against Iraq and later, liberate Kuwait, decades of NATO exercises and interoperability stood behind their success.

America must also preserve its pre-eminent ability to deter threats and defeat aggression. Ten years ago, real budget cuts and defense restructuring were needed to move our military away from the Cold War years. That grew into a perilous 39 percent drop from defense spending levels in the mid-1980s. Today, we are seeing the results in lowered readiness, in aging hardware and in reduced morale. Shortfalls have stripped units of essential equipment and spare parts. Last year, only 50 percent of non-deployed ships were mission-ready. Lack of equipment grounded aircraft and reduced tank training hours. Military budget cuts have turned the Pentagon into a triangle. I want to build it back up.

Perhaps worse are the shortfalls in personnel. Today's Navy recruitment goals are about one-third below Cold War levels; even so the Service recruited some 7,000 fewer sailors than its goals last year. The Air Force is some 1,000 pilots short of its official goals. Last month, Brigadier General John Casey testified to Congress that some Army units train at only 60 percent strength. "It's like trying to train a basketball team with only four players," he said.

Meanwhile procurement spending is so slow that the average ship, tank or aircraft will have to last some 53 years before being replaced. Listen to a report from the Brookings Institution—which is no apologist for military spending. "First-to-fight units may have adequate resources, but other units are suffering." The authors conclude: "[L]eft unchecked, these trends could eventually cut into our ability to sustain a vigorous one-war strategy while conducting missions in places like Bosnia." Should we just ask our adversaries to wait?

When we stripped our defenses like this after World War II, we paid the price... in communist expansion in Europe and Asia, and soon, in war on the Korean peninsula. Forrestal said it best, back in 1947, in his first report as Secretary of Defense: "Our quick and complete demobilization," he said, "was testimonial to our good will rather than to our common sense."

Let's show some common sense. Let's restore our basic readiness, and let's make those essential investments in the advanced weaponry and technologies we'll need in the 21st Century. And no investment could be more important than strategic defense. It's been more than 15 years since President Reagan asked a simple question: "What if? What if we could live free from fear of nuclear missile attack? What if we could intercept and » destroy strategic ballistic missiles? Wouldn't it be better to save lives than to avenge them?" he asked.

Much has changed—but not this. The American people still have no defense against a nuclear missile.

Let me pause a minute to quote a great American statesman, the former Senate Majority Leader, Bob Dole. "The top priority of any President should be to provide for the safety of the American people. It is his greatest responsibility."

Or hers.

Congress has spoken out clearly for a renewed effort to build a national missile defense. The Clinton administration is finally, reluctantly, pursuing a program. But it continues to wait on a deployment decision.

Friends, the debate is over. Missile defense is an absolute requirement to protect our free world, to reduce the threat of rogue nuclear powers to our people, our allies, and our overseas forces. Let's gear our programs up and make the investment we need to bring an effective system into reality.

Are all these defense investments really needed—in a world where we are the only superpower? First, let's keep this in context. National defense is now only 16 percent of the Federal budget, the lowest share in the past 50 years. To look at it another way, we invest only three percent of our gross domestic product in the defenses that keep us secure. This, too, is the lowest share in 50 years.

Second it is true we no longer face a single superpower adversary. But we face something with the same dangerous potential: a world of unpredictable political change and racing technologies, where economic ties and telecommunications bring distant issues to our doorstep, and advanced weaponry puts serious threats in the hands of smaller powers.

It is more important than ever to display the leadership, and make the investments, to contain aggression and preserve global stability. Failing to do so increases the likelihood and the costs of violent conflict.

We can keep the peace and pursue American commitments only with strength. For that, I have to thank you, who have chosen to go in harm's way for your country. I look at you and know that Americans have what it takes to lead. And I believe our nation will do what it takes to make the coming century a great one for humankind.

The road ahead beckons. It leads to a world of limitless possibility. God willing, we will travel it together, with courage and conviction... leaving no one behind, carrying all to freedom. President Theodore Roosevelt had a simple formula for success in adversity. He told Americans, "We are face to face with our destiny, and we must meet it with a high and resolute courage. For ours is the life of action, of strenuous performance of duty. Let us live in the harness, striving mightily. Let us run the risk of wearing out, rather than rusting out."

God willing, we will. Thank you very much.