

**House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence
Chairman Mike Rogers**

***“The Evolution of American Intelligence and
National Security in the Decade since 9/11”***

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Thank you all very much. Thank you to AEI for inviting me to speak today, and to Dany for that kind introduction. I am honored to be here today.

Today, I want to talk about America’s role in the world and where we, as conservatives, should stand on issues of national security.

We have just passed the 10-year anniversary of the attacks of September 11th, a day that Americans should never forget. In the years since that horrible day, our country brought renewed focus to the threats we face. We altered our methods to approach these threats. We transformed our national security and intelligence institutions to help ensure that we would not face another similar attack.

For the past 10 years, much of our national energy has been focused on counterterrorism and the fronts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Our military and intelligence professionals, and their families, have carried a heavy load for all of us, and let me take the time to thank them now. They have devoted themselves to our country, some of them have paid the ultimate price, and for that we all owe them our deepest, eternal thanks.

At the ten-year anniversary of that dreadful day, it is appropriate that we reflect on the changes we’ve made and discuss how we should approach the future. This conversation is especially important given the events unfolding in the world and the disagreements that play out domestically about how to respond to those events. Whether it’s our troop numbers in Afghanistan, our actions in response to the changes across the Middle East and North Africa, or the costs of maintaining a strong defense in a time of intense budgetary concerns, the American people expect and deserve a principled, coherent national-security strategy to answer these questions. Especially when the current Administration has not provided us a coherent approach to national security and foreign policy, it is up to conservatives to provide a strong and viable alternative.

We have achieved remarkable progress on the counterterrorism front in the last 10 years.

We broke down barriers and established new systems to respond to that threat. Despite the change in administrations, most of the counterterrorism structures put in place after 9/11 have endured. They have continued because they worked and because they were consistent with our principles and values. From the expertise of our intelligence analysts to the skill and cooperation of our elite military units, we have spent the last decade honing and perfecting

our counterterrorism capabilities. We must not lose that capability, we must continue this fight, and we must provide the resources necessary to continue it successfully.

Some believe that after the last 10 years, Americans are tired of the burdens of defending America, that the decade has drained our energy for further engagements in the world. I believe, however, that now is not the time to walk away from the rest of the world. We must remember – and we must consistently remind the country -- that America will not remain safe, America cannot remain a force for democracy and freedom in the world, if we refuse to engage around the world.

Some assert that there is a growing sentiment within conservative circles for a minimized role for America in the world. They argue that the future should be focused on the problems only within our borders. I believe this argument is wrong. It ignores the core of the conservative movement. And conservatives believe, above all else, that America is a force for good in the world. Now is the time to remind ourselves of the successful principles at the heart of who we are; the principles that made Americans confident in the leadership of the Republican Party.

We must remind the country of the principles that brought us out of the malaise of the 70s and into the strong posture of the 80s. It was morning in America then and it can be morning in America again. The country turned away from apologetic and confidence-shattering policies, and chose instead to be guided by the strength and principles of President Ronald Reagan.

Reagan sought to restore America's place in the world, and pushed the United States to actively oppose Communism and support our allies in that confrontation. He stressed that we be clear-headed about the threats we face, and proud of American strength and exceptionalism. He stressed that with our power and force we strive ultimately for the preservation of freedom and liberty. And he pushed a bigger defense budget so we could best protect the nation and its interests around the world.

I believe we must have a comprehensive view of the threats in the world, and a principled view of the sources and proper uses of American strength and power. So we must not lose sight of the geopolitical conditions that we face.

Of course, the threat of Al Qaeda and associated terrorist groups still exists. China continues its rise. Iran and North Korea continue their efforts to become nuclear states. And while the Middle East and North Africa are experiencing a significant period of change, the future stability of the region is not without doubt. We hope that this period will bring extraordinary advancements in freedom and stability for the region. But we must not ignore the new challenges that this change may bring. And we must do what we can to help those countries become more stable and free, not more autocratic.

President Reagan eloquently stated those principles. America cannot be passive in the world. The world is a better place with strong American leadership. We cannot lead from behind; we cannot sit back and rely on the power of our rhetoric alone to encourage peace and

prosperity in the world. We need the national will to engage both the threats and the opportunities we face.

We must have the strength of mind and clarity to know our enemies and understand their goals. The world remains a dangerous and uncertain place. Ignoring these threats, or refusing to confront them, will not make them go away. It will only make our opponents stronger and more likely to succeed. But understanding the threats we face is only one element of a strong national defense. We must be prepared to confront those threats.

Future Threats

As I said, America must continue to remain vigilant in a threatening and uncertain world. And we must keep our attention and resources focused on more than just the most immediate threats. China requires our attention. Since 1989, official Chinese defense spending has increased by nearly 13% each year. Although the actual Chinese defense budget is unknown and kept secret, we suspect that they are spending hundreds of billions of dollars in recent years. That investment includes a build-up of conventional and unconventional military capabilities across the board – in land, sea, space, and cyberspace, China is investing and growing.

In addition to its military growth, China obviously maintains an important economic position in the world. It is the world's second largest economy after the United States and has maintained average growth rates of over 10% for the past 30 years. It also holds over one quarter of the U.S. debt offered to the public.

Much has been written and said about the rise of China to superpower status. I don't wish to provide a comprehensive answer to the China question – whether we ought to see our relationship as a partnership or one as adversaries. Much will depend on what the Chinese do, and what happens inside their institutions.

What I do believe is that we must be prepared for the potential threat that a rising China poses. We must recognize the changing nature of the geopolitical regime and give ourselves options in the future. We must build and maintain healthy, clear alliances. We must keep a strong American presence in the region. We must understand the Chinese ambitions, intentions, and capabilities, and how they see their future.

China will only surpass us if we let them. But it doesn't have to happen. If we continue our security investments; if we maintain our leadership around the world; if we allow our market-based economy to flourish once again, China won't surpass us. As Condoleezza Rice recently said: "Too many people ask 'when' China will surpass us; but we should be asking 'if.'"

Unlike China, we have less clarity on Iran's nuclear capabilities. But we already face Iran's malign influence. They arm Iraqi insurgents who are targeting and killing American troops in Iraq. They support terror groups, like Hezbollah. Iran is the leading state sponsor of terror in the world and is a patron of the autocratic regime in Syria. It contributes to the instability of countries across the region.

Iran's leaders have clearly expressed their desires to annihilate Israel. We should take their leaders' public statements and intents seriously. They speak volumes about their desires and how they maintain power and position in their own country.

We must therefore recognize the strategic threat and position that Iran poses. We must not be resigned to a nuclear Iran. The debates about how a nuclear Iran would behave would then become real. Whether it would supply terrorist groups; bomb Israel; become more aggressive in the region. We don't know and we must not become resigned to a nuclear Iran.

Staying power

America's strength comes from many sources: our ideals of freedom and liberty, our economic success, our advanced technology and innovative prowess, and the bravery and training of our armed forces and intelligence professionals.

But maintaining a secure America requires more. America must be trusted by the rest of the world -- trusted to pursue victory without pause or retreat; trusted to have the stamina to fulfill our commitments; trusted to understand that with unique power comes unique responsibilities. In Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Libya, and in the rest of the world, our allies and our enemies must know that when America intervenes, we will not cut and run. We will not leave our allies to face the world's threats alone.

If we cannot be trusted to have staying power, if our enemies and our friends don't trust America's commitment to stay until victory is achieved, our strength is diminished and our defense becomes even harder.

Our enemies must know, without doubt, that when America commits itself, we do NOT commit ourselves to artificial timelines of withdrawal or limits on troop levels. America commits itself to one thing: achieving lasting victory. Without that certainty, our enemies have little incentive to avoid provoking a conflict in the first instance. By making this commitment, we send a clear message—that confronting us will be costly and difficult. And in the end, we are safer – and the world is safer – if our enemies know that we will not retreat.

This is why we must maintain our presence in Afghanistan and Iraq until stability is achieved. And it hasn't always been popular to say, but it's why we had to sustain our effort in Libya. People may disagree on whether engaging in Libya was the right option; but once we committed to the mission, America had to get the job done.

Let me reiterate now: we cannot walk away from Afghanistan. When the Afghans are ready, we can hand over security responsibilities. That will allow us to drawdown our forces in a strategic, coordinated fashion. I fear that President Obama is drawing down our surge forces much too quickly and endangering the progress we have made. And I fear too few are saying what the future will require: which is even after our troops leave Afghanistan, we must stay involved. We cannot leave Afghanistan to its own fate again -- we must support their security; it is both a moral responsibility and a necessity to America's security.

We need leaders who not only understand this reality, but can express it and convince the American public of the rightness of the cause.

Budget Challenges

So this discussion gets us to, of course, our defense and intelligence budgets. We are experiencing a difficult time in American history. The economy continues to struggle to recover, and Americans are rightfully demanding that the government get control of the national debt. But our nation's defense is only as good as the resources we put forward to the effort. We must not only equip our men and women on the front lines today, but we must also invest in the technologies and capabilities of tomorrow. Our nation has invested heavily in our intelligence capabilities since 9/11. There is no doubt in my mind that we got an outstanding return on that investment.

Let me be clear -- while budget growth is unlikely in this difficult fiscal environment, we must hold the line against cuts that endanger key capabilities. Our national defense is not a luxury -- and we must avoid the mistakes of the 1990's when we cut too deep into intelligence and defense budgets. I will do all I can to ensure that our intelligence community has the resources it needs to perform its necessary mission.

America remains the best hope for international peace and security in the world. And it is incumbent upon our country's leaders to consistently make the case for a strong defense.

We must also have a sober understanding of what this role requires of us. September 11th taught us that we cannot expect to pull back from our leadership role every 10 or 20 years -- not if we hope to remain safe; not if we hope to remain the most influential country in the world. We cannot lose sight of the threats the world brings, we must have the will to remain in the fight until victory is achieved. And we must continue to fund our national security at the levels that match our strategic needs.

Americans may have lost confidence in some of their leaders. But they have NOT lost confidence in America. It is time for those who lead this great country to stand up and ensure our continued economic and military strength. It is up to us to make the case for what most Americans know: A strong America is a source of pride and a force for good in the world.

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