

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2017

Remarks on the 2017 National Security Strategy

December 18, 2017

Thank you very much. Thank you. Please. I want to thank Vice President Pence, along with the many members of my Cabinet here with us today. I also want to thank all of the dedicated professionals—military, civilian, and law enforcement—who devote their lives to serving our Nation. In particular, I want to recognize General Dunford and the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

In addition, we are honored to be joined by House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, Homeland Security Chairman Mike McCaul, and Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn. Thank you very much. Thank you for being here. Thank you. Thank you.

Derailment of Amtrak Train 501 Near DuPont, WA

Let me begin by expressing our deepest sympathies and most heartfelt prayers for the victims of the train derailment in Washington State. We are closely monitoring the situation and coordinating with local authorities. It is all the more reason why we must start immediately fixing the infrastructure of the United States.

2017 National Security Strategy

We're here today to discuss matters of vital importance to us all: America's security, prosperity, and standing in the world. I want to talk about where we've been, where we are now, and finally, our strategy for where we are going in the years ahead.

Over the past 11 months, I have traveled tens of thousands of miles to visit 13 countries. I have met with more than 100 world leaders. I have carried America's message to a grand hall in Saudi Arabia, a great square in Warsaw, to the General Assembly of the United Nations, and to the seat of democracy on the Korean Peninsula. Everywhere I traveled, it was my highest privilege and greatest honor to represent the American people.

Throughout our history, the American people have always been the true source of American greatness. Our people have promoted our culture and promoted our values. Americans have fought and sacrificed on the battlefields all over the world. We have liberated captive nations, transformed former enemies into the best of friends, and lifted entire regions of the planet from poverty to prosperity.

Because of our people, America has been among the greatest forces for peace and justice in the history of the world. The American people are generous. You are determined, you are brave, you are strong, and you are wise. When the American people speak, all of us should listen. And just over 1 year ago, you spoke loud, and you spoke clear. On November 8, 2016, you voted to make America great again. [*Applause*] Thank you. You embraced new leadership and very new strategies and also a glorious new hope. That is why we are here today.

But to seize the opportunities of the future, we must first understand the failures of the past. For many years, our citizens watched as Washington politicians presided over one disappointment after another. To many of our leaders—so many who forgot whose voices they were to respect and whose interests they were supposed to defend—our leaders in Washington negotiated disastrous trade deals that brought massive profits to many foreign nations, but sent thousands of American factories and millions of American jobs to those other countries.

Our leaders engaged in nation-building abroad, while they failed to build up and replenish our Nation at home. They undercut and shortchanged our men and women in uniform with inadequate resources, unstable funding, and unclear missions. They failed to insist that our often very wealthy allies pay their fair share for defense, putting a massive and unfair burden on the U.S. taxpayer and our great U.S. military.

They neglected a nuclear menace in North Korea; made a disastrous, weak, and incomprehensibly bad deal with Iran; and allowed terrorists such as ISIS to gain control of vast parts of territory all across the Middle East. They put American energy under lock and key. They imposed punishing regulations and crippling taxes. They surrendered our sovereignty to foreign bureaucrats in faraway and distant capitals.

And over the profound objections of the American people, our politicians left our borders wide open. Millions of immigrants entered illegally. Millions more were admitted into our country without the proper vetting needed to protect our security and our economy. Leaders in Washington imposed on the country an immigration policy that Americans never voted for, never asked for, and never approved, a policy where the wrong people are allowed into our country and the right people are rejected. American citizens, as usual, have been left to bear the cost and to pick up the tab.

On top of everything else, our leaders drifted from American principles. They lost sight of America's destiny. And they lost their belief in American greatness. As a result, our citizens lost something as well. The people lost confidence in their Government and, eventually, even lost confidence in their future.

But last year, all of that began to change. The American people rejected the failures of the past. You rediscovered your voice and reclaimed ownership of this Nation and its destiny. On January 20, 2017, I stood on the steps of the Capitol to herald the day the people became the rulers of their nation again. *[Applause]* Thank you. Thank you. Now, less than 1 year later, I am proud to report that the entire world has heard the news and has already seen the signs. America is coming back, and America is coming back strong.

Upon my Inauguration, I announced that the United States would return to a simple principle: The first duty of our Government is to serve its citizens, many of whom have been forgotten. But they are not forgotten anymore. With every decision and every action, we are now putting America first.

We are rebuilding our Nation, our confidence, and our standing in the world. We have moved swiftly to confront our challenges, and we have confronted them head on. We are once again investing in our defense, almost \$700 billion, a record, this coming year. We are demanding extraordinary strength, which will, hopefully, lead to long and extraordinary peace. We are giving our courageous military men and women the support they need and so dearly deserve.

We have withdrawn the United States from job-killing deals such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the very expensive and unfair Paris climate accord. And on our trip to Asia last month, I announced that we will no longer tolerate trading abuse.

We have established strict new vetting procedures to keep terrorists out of the United States, and our vetting is getting tougher each month.

To counter Iran and block its path to a nuclear weapon, I sanctioned the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps for its support of terrorism, and I declined to certify the Iran deal to Congress.

Following my trip to the Middle East, the Gulf States and other Muslim-majority nations joined together to fight radical Islamist ideology and terrorist financing. We have dealt ISIS one devastating defeat after another. The coalition to defeat ISIS has now recaptured almost 100 percent of the land once held by these terrorists in Iraq and in Syria. Great job. Great job. Really good. Really good. [Applause] Thank you. Thank you. We have a great military. We're now chasing them wherever they flee, and we will not let them into the United States.

In Afghanistan, our troops are no longer undermined by artificial timelines, and we no longer tell our enemies of our plans. We are beginning to see results on the battlefield. And we have made clear to Pakistan that while we desire continued partnership, we must see decisive action against terrorist groups operating on their territory. And we make massive payments every year to Pakistan. They have to help.

Our efforts to strengthen the NATO alliance set the stage for significant increases in member contributions, with tens of billions of dollars more pouring in, because I would not allow member states to be delinquent in the payment while we guarantee their safety and are willing to fight wars for them. We have made clear that countries that are immensely wealthy should reimburse the United States for the cost of defending them. This is a major departure from the past, but a fair and necessary one: necessary for our country, necessary for our taxpayer, necessary for our own thought process.

Our campaign of maximum pressure on the North Korean regime has resulted in the toughest ever sanctions. We have united our allies in an unprecedented effort to isolate North Korea. However, there is much more work to do. America and its allies will take all necessary steps to achieve a denuclearization and ensure that this regime cannot threaten the world. [Applause] Thank you. This situation should have been taken care of long before I got into office, when it was much easier to handle. But it will be taken care of. We have no choice.

At home, we are keeping our promises and liberating the American economy. We have created more than 2 million jobs since the election. Unemployment is at a 17-year-low. The stock market is at an alltime high and, just a little while ago, hit yet another alltime high, the 85th time since my election. We have cut 22 regulations for every one new regulation, the most in the history of our country. We have unlocked America's vast energy resources.

As the world's watches—and the world is indeed watching—we are days away from passing historic tax cuts for American families and businesses. It will be the biggest tax cut and tax reform in the history of our country. [Applause] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

And we are seeing the response we fully expected. Economic growth has topped 3 percent for two quarters in a row. GDP growth, which is way ahead of schedule under my administration, will be one of America's truly greatest weapons.

Optimism has surged. Confidence has returned. With this new confidence, we are also bringing back clarity to our thinking. We are reasserting these fundamental truths: A nation without borders is not a nation. A nation that does not protect prosperity at home cannot protect its interests abroad. A nation that is not prepared to win a war is a nation not capable of preventing a war. A nation that is not proud of its history cannot be confident in its future. And a nation that is not certain of its values cannot summon the will to defend them.

Today, grounded in these truths, we are presenting to the world our new National Security Strategy. Based on my direction, this document has been in development for over a year. It has the endorsement of my entire Cabinet. Our new strategy is based on a principled realism, guided by our vital national interests, and rooted in our timeless values.

This strategy recognizes that, whether we like it or not, we are engaged in a new era of competition. We accept that vigorous military, economic, and political contests are now playing out all around the world. We face rogue regimes that threaten the United States and our allies. We face terrorist organizations, transnational criminal networks, and others who spread violence and evil around the globe. We also face rival powers, Russia and China, that seek to challenge American influence, values, and wealth. We will attempt to build a great partnership with those and other countries, but in a manner that always protects our national interest.

As an example, yesterday I received a call from President Putin of Russia thanking our country for the intelligence that our CIA was able to provide them concerning a major terrorist attack planned in St. Petersburg, where many people, perhaps in the thousands, could have been killed. They were able to apprehend these terrorists before the event, with no loss of life. And that's a great thing and the way it's supposed to work. That is the way it's supposed to work.

But while we seek such opportunities of cooperation, we will stand up for ourselves, and we will stand up for our country like we have never stood up before. [*Applause*] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

We know that American success is not a forgone conclusion. It must be earned, and it must be won. Our rivals are tough; they're tenacious and committed to the long term. But so are we. To succeed, we must integrate every dimension of our national strength, and we must compete with every instrument of our national power.

Under the Trump administration, America is gaining wealth, leading to enhanced power—faster than anyone thought—with \$6 trillion more in the stock market alone since the election—\$6 trillion.

With the strategy I am announcing today, we are declaring that America is in the game and America is going to win. [*Applause*] Our strategy—thank you. Our strategy advances four vital national interests. First, we must protect the American people, the homeland, and our great American way of life. This strategy recognizes that we cannot secure our Nation if we do not secure our borders. So for the first time ever, American strategy now includes a serious plan to defend our homeland. It calls for the construction of a wall on our southern border; ending chain migration and the horrible visa and lottery programs; closing loopholes that undermine enforcement; and strongly supporting our Border Patrol agents, ICE officers, and Homeland Security personnel. [*Applause*] Thank you. Thank you.

In addition, our strategy calls for us to confront, discredit, and defeat radical Islamic terrorism and ideology and to prevent it from spreading into the United States. And we will develop new ways to counter those who use new domains, such as cyber and social media, to attack our Nation or threaten our society.

The second pillar of our strategy is to promote American prosperity. For the first time, American strategy recognizes that economic security is national security. Economic vitality, growth, and prosperity at home is absolutely necessary for American power and influence abroad. Any nation that trades away its prosperity for security will end up losing both.

That is why this National Security Strategy emphasizes, more than ever before, the critical steps we must take to ensure the prosperity of our Nation for a long, long time to come. It calls for cutting taxes and rolling back unnecessary regulations. It calls for trade based on the principles of fairness and reciprocity. It calls for firm action against unfair trade practices and intellectual property theft. And it calls for new steps to protect our national security industrial and innovation base.

The strategy proposes a complete rebuilding of American infrastructure: our roads, bridges, airports, waterways, and communications infrastructure. And it embraces a future of American energy dominance and self-sufficiency.

The third pillar of our strategy is to preserve peace through strength. We recognize that weakness is the surest path to conflict and unrivaled power is the most certain means of defense. For this reason, our strategy breaks from the damaging defense sequester. We're going to get rid of that.

It calls for a total modernization of our military and reversing previous decisions to shrink our Armed Forces, even as threats to national security grew. It calls for streamlining acquisition, eliminating bloated bureaucracy, and massively building up our military, which has the fundamental side benefit of creating millions and millions of jobs.

This strategy includes plans to counter modern threats, such as cyber and electromagnetic attacks. It recognizes space as a competitive domain and calls for multilayered missile defense. This strategy outlines important steps to address new forms of conflict such as economic and political aggression. And our strategy emphasizes strengthening alliances to cope with these threats. It recognizes that our strength is magnified by allies who share principles—and our principles and shoulder their fair share of responsibility for our common security.

Fourth and finally, our strategy is to advance American influence in the world, but this begins with building up our wealth and power at home. America will lead again. We do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but we will champion the values without apology. We want strong alliances and partnerships based on cooperation and reciprocity. We will make new partnerships with those who share our goals and make common interests into a common cause. We will not allow inflexible ideology to become an obsolete—and obstacle to peace.

We will pursue the vision we have carried around the world over this past year, a vision of strong, sovereign, and independent nations that respect their citizens and respect their neighbors; nations that thrive in commerce and cooperation, rooted in their histories and branching out toward their destinies. That is the future we wish for this world, and that is the future we seek in America. [*Applause*] Thank you.

With this strategy, we are calling for a great reawakening of America, a resurgence of confidence, and a rebirth of patriotism, prosperity, and pride. And we are returning to the wisdom of our founders. In America, the people govern, the people rule, and the people are sovereign. What we have built here in America is precious and unique. In all of history, never before has freedom reigned, the rule of law prevailed, and the people thrived as we have here for nearly 250 years.

We must love and defend it. We must guard it with vigilance and spirit, and if necessary, like so many before us, with our very lives. And we declare that our will is renewed, our future is regained, and our dreams are restored.

Every American has a role to play in this grand national effort. And today I invite every citizen to take their part in our vital mission. Together, our task is to strengthen our families, to build up our communities, to serve our citizens, and to celebrate American greatness as a shining example to the world. As long as we are proud—and very proud—of who we are, how we got here, and what we are fighting for to preserve, we will not fail.

If we do all of this, if we rediscover our resolve and commit ourselves to compete and win again, then together, we will leave our children and our grandchildren a nation that is stronger, better, freer, prouder, and yes, an America that is greater than ever before.

God bless you. Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:03 p.m. at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. In his remarks, he referred to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., USMC. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization; and H.R. 1.

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