

## **Memorandum**

To: The National Security Community

From: Rand Beers

Re: National Security Agenda

As the United States approaches the fifth anniversary of September 11, those of us who have dedicated our careers to the protection of the American people do not have much about which to be confident.

The President and the Congress have had five years to learn, educate, propose, and put plans into action to defeat the terrorists and make America safe. They have failed. As our security currently stands, no representative from this Administration can honestly look into the eyes of the families of the victims and say: "We have well and faithfully done the best we could do." They have relied on rhetoric and ignored reality. The President and the Congress have failed to carry out their basic constitutional duty "to provide for the common defense."

Most of us have not been in positions to make policy for a number of years, but we know what needs to be done. As leaders of the national security community, we must put the dialogue about national security at the center of public debate and do so in a way that encourages achievement. We cannot allow the crisis we face in the world to deepen. We cannot permit the desire for a historical legacy to take precedent over the security of this country.

### **WHAT LIES AHEAD:**

The political discourse on security for the next few weeks will be nothing short of abysmal. Congressional leaders intend a series of legislative initiatives aimed at manipulating American voters, not at making us safer. Political posturing will abound with votes on recycled issues designed to portray a strong President backed by a supportive Congress. The issues will all be declared "critical" to national security, but will, in fact, be "critical" to preserving the current leadership. Seeking to influence the election in this way is inexcusable. It displays disrespect toward our citizens and dishonors those who have sacrificed in the service of this country.

Those in opposition to the President's policies must refrain from similar posturing. Criticizing the current policies and proposals by the Congressional leadership will be useful, if they are constructive. Better alternatives must be put forward, and the proposed alternatives should represent reasonably unified views. Unless the politicization of the security of this country changes, the American public will emerge from the next few months with less faith in their government than ever in this country's history. And they will be right in this assessment. Callous attempts to make one side appear to be on the side of the terrorists or against our troops speak to the inability of the Congressional leaders to have an honest dialogue

with the American people. Change is long overdue.

#### WHAT WE MUST DO:

Over the past five years, America has turned its back on a tradition of global leadership. Today, our standing in the world is diminished, our alliances are strained, our military is dangerously overstretched, and our enemies are emboldened. Instead of maximizing American power, this Administration is weakening our nation and placing our national security at risk. If the American people are to be protected, this country must return to the bipartisan legacy of strong and determined American leadership. This should be the mandate for every elected official, and every public servant.

We've wasted these five years pursuing false goals and reckless objectives. It's time to focus on the real 9/11 enemies and pursue the real 9/11 objectives. The positive path forward starts with these:

#### Strong Plans to Address Iraq Do Exist.

"Stay the Course" failed as a policy long before it failed as a talking point. Iraqis must control their future with realistic solutions which the various groups can support. American troops cannot be more committed to Iraqi security than its own people. By keeping our forces there without a clear plan for the transition to local security, the Administration is creating an Iraqi culture of dependence. By failing to involve Iraq's neighbors and key international players, the Administration is maximizing the U.S. burden and undermining Iraq's long term stability. U.S. combat forces must begin to drawdown by the beginning of 2007. Our military mission must shift to "advise and support." This approach is our best path to success; the Administration is leading us to unending failure.

#### Completing our Mission in Iraq Will Make Us Safer Everywhere.

The current reality is that the Administration has lost control of our national security. The quagmire in Iraq is impeding our ability to take on other threats such as North Korea and Iran. It is degrading our efforts to reduce unguarded fissile material in Russia and elsewhere. It is diminishing our focus on Afghanistan, now threatened by a resurgent Taliban funded by an uncontrolled explosion of opium cultivation. Preoccupation with Iraq is denying us the opportunity to work more effectively with others to curb the carnage, reduce recruitment, and destroy the infrastructure of the terrorist movement. It is preventing us from reconstituting our overstretched military. Only by recalibrating our strategy and focusing on these other challenges can we make America more secure. As long as our leadership remains fixated only on Iraq, we will not make meaningful progress at home or around the world. "Staying the course" is making us less secure not only in Iraq but around the world.

### To Defeat Terrorists: Build Upon the Constitution, Don't Destroy It.

The Administration has presented the American people with a false choice between our security and our core values. It has overreached on wiretap authority, wrapping its justification in a mantra of fear and insecurity. It has ignored calls to build strong guidelines to help our soldiers deal with enemy combatants in the field, instead forcing Congress to modify rules that legitimize questionable interrogation tactics. It has jailed individuals as enemy combatants with no process to correct for false information or mistaken identity and no constitutionally-grounded system for determining their legal status. They've only shown willingness to act when political control is threatened. The terrorists must be stopped, but our Constitution is strong enough for that to happen in a way that Americans can support. .

### When it comes to Iran, Urgent and Important Are Two Different Things.

Preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons is critical to our security, but we need to pursue that goal in a way which maximizes our chances for success. As Iran is still several years from achieving a nuclear weapons capability, time remains to use diplomatic means to shift the balance in the region and bargain from a position of strength not weakness. Time remains to gather more intelligence and fully understand the nature of the threat. Time remains to marshal international support. A military strike against Iranian nuclear facilities without good intelligence risks failure; an invasion will create a situation far worse than Iraq. Either choice will provoke widespread opposition in the Islamic world and make things more difficult in Iraq. Most importantly, however, given its performance in Iraq, do we trust this Administration to undertake any military action against Iran and do it right?

### Americans Know Their Country Is Not Secure.

Every day we read and hear about another homeland security program that has failed to meet its objectives, failed to deliver needed technology on time, failed to look at obvious vulnerabilities, or failed to produce the plans and guidelines critical for our protection. Yet we are told we're safer than we used to be, even though we're not safe enough to carry toothpaste on airplanes. Americans know we need to spend more money, but we need to spend it wisely and demonstrate success. The security gaps have been identified. We must close them. Metropolitan areas should be the major focus of domestic security and they must have the tools they need. Chemical plants, ports, and airports must be safer. If the private sector isn't willing to do it, then the federal government must step in. Intelligence must be improved and given to the people who need it. Five years after 9/11, we should be better protected. The Bush Administration's rhetoric should not be confused for real security. We must end the politics of fear.

As professionals in this field, we have discovered time and again that it is not

only our duty, but the best practice, to level with those who employ us—the American people. The current agents charged with protecting us have spent the past five years recklessly misrepresenting reality, creating false and simplistic choices, and acting more as neo-crusaders than the keepers of the Constitution. We must now act and call for change. I encourage each of you over the next several weeks and months to write and speak about the need to move away from failure and forward with policies and programs that protect the American people and American interests, preserve American values, and restore American leadership in the world.