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Revitalizing America's Armed Forces *Fred Thompson's Plan to Strengthen the Long Term Security of the United States*

The threats to the United States today are more complex, dispersed, and opportunistic than ever before. Terrorists and terror states observe no rules and have no restraints of conscience. The enemy understands only the language of power. While the central front in the war against Islamic extremism is in Afghanistan and Iraq, it is clear that our enemies extend far beyond those borders. The gravest danger is terrorists or terrorist states acquiring weapons of mass destruction. But other, more traditional, more conventional challenges await us as well. To overcome these dangers, we need a clear and consistent strategy to address them, and the means to be successful.

With the fall of the Soviet Union, many falsely assumed that unquestioned American military superiority was unneeded. Indeed, many Democrats saw the 1990s as an opportunity to take a holiday from history, and as a consequence, our government began one of the largest unilateral reductions of military power in history. Our Armed Forces were cut 30 percent on average. Army combat power was reduced by nearly half, the Air Force down-sized considerably, and the Navy could not maintain 300 ships, much less the 600-ship Navy that President Reagan once envisioned. We are still feeling the effect of these reductions today.

No one will ever doubt the quality of those who serve our nation in the Armed Forces. The brave men and women who comprise our military have answered every call to duty and defended our freedom with honor. During my days in the Senate, I had the privilege to spend time with them as I traveled abroad to meet with world leaders, visit global hotspots, and gain a better understanding of events on the ground in far-away places. Whether at an outpost in Kosovo with U.S. Army troops; watching flight operations with the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps aboard an aircraft carrier in the Indian Ocean; meeting at a darkened Afghan airfield with special operations forces shortly after 9/11; or flying aboard a cargo aircraft with the U.S. Air Force in South America and South Asia. I am always inspired by the courage, competence, and commitment of our men and women in uniform.

But we are fighting a war in two theaters today, against an enemy not bound by borders, using 20th century equipment in a 21st century war. And our material support for our troops has not matched the demands we have placed on them. Their readiness and capabilities could soon be in doubt. We simply have been asking too few troops to do too much for too long.

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It is time for real change, not half measures. As we consider the threats we face today, and the ones we may need to confront tomorrow, we must re-evaluate how we look at our priorities. The first responsibility of the federal government must be the security of the American people and the defense of our nation. This should be reflected in everything we do in the federal government, including, most importantly, the budget. Defense spending declined significantly at the end of the Cold War to levels approaching 3% of GDP, despite the fact that America has historically spent well over 5% of GDP on defense. Over the last several decades our economy has proven strong enough to enable 5.1% spending during the Gulf War, over 6% during the Reagan build up, and over 8% during the late 1960s. As a nation, we must be prepared to spend more on defense than what we do today - and have done in the past 15 years - in order to revitalize the military and develop the capabilities necessary to promote peace, security and stability for future generations of Americans.

To address the problems and challenges faced by our Armed Forces today, the following initiatives will put us on the path to revitalizing our all-volunteer military over the coming years, enable the United States to advance its interests abroad, and ensure the long-term security of our nation for decades:

- **Be prepared to increase the core defense budget up to 4.5% of GDP to support the expansion, modernization, and increased readiness of U.S. military forces**
 - *We must be prepared to increase defense spending, phased in over time, in order to build the forces and develop the capabilities outlined in this plan.*
 - *Spending increases would be calibrated to economic conditions, the nation's ability to access additional troops and modernize the military's equipment, and the Armed Force's ability to absorb these capabilities in the most effective manner.*

- **Build a "Million-Member" ground force capable of handling peacetime and wartime tasks without wearing out the troops and increasing U.S. vulnerability.**
 - *Increase Army end strength to 775,000 organized into 64 Brigade Combat Teams.*
 - *Increase Marine Corps end strength to 225,000.*
 - *Provide for the rotational, readiness, basing, and training needs of an expanded force.*
 - *Modernize training, tactics, doctrine, and organizations to meet future challenges.*

- **Increase the pay and benefits of our Military Personnel, and the care of our Veterans, to enhance recruitment, retention, and quality of life.**
 - *Improve healthcare and housing for service members and their families.*
 - *Pass a modern GI Bill that provides service members with ample educational assistance to help recruit and retain our nation's finest.*

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- *Ensure that returning wounded veterans have the best healthcare available, that their families are fully supported, and that bureaucratic red-tape is eliminated*
- *Improve the Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense systems by implementing many of the recommendations of the Dole-Shalala Commission and the Veteran's Disability Benefits Commission.*

- **Enhance the capabilities of America's Special Operations Forces (SOF) to conduct counter-terrorism, counter-proliferation, and other "special" operations**
 - *Enhance SOF's command, control, and force projection capabilities as the lead for the nation's irregular warfare and special operations efforts.*
 - *Expand SOF end strength as necessary, without compromising standards.*
 - *Improve Psychological Operations and Civil Affairs capabilities.*

- **Increase the U.S. Navy fleet to at least 325 ships to increase mission capability across the full spectrum of operations and maintain the ability to project power globally.**
 - *Add a carrier strike group to sustain forward presence in key areas' Persian Gulf and East Asia - to promote stability and deter conflict.*
 - *Improve the Navy's ability to conduct coastal and riverine operations.*
 - *Increase the number and capabilities of our submarine fleet.*

- **Complete the modernization of the U.S. Air Force to ensure continued tactical air dominance over all potential adversaries and the ability to project power globally.**
 - *Ensure tactical and strategic air/space superiority over every battlefield and the U.S.*
 - *Develop new long-range tanker capabilities that can support U.S. military operations worldwide, 24/7.*
 - *Invest in new technologies and systems to support advanced Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, long-range strike capabilities, and extended global coverage.*
 - *Upgrade the full spectrum of lift capabilities to improve the mobility of U.S. forces.*

- **Develop robust Missile Defenses to protect the homeland, deployed forces, and allies against ballistic missiles of all ranges in all phases of flight.**
 - *Field a layered, multi-tiered missile defense architecture that includes land-, sea-, and space-based components.*
 - *Support the development and testing of advanced missile defense technologies to address the complexity of foreign ballistic missile inventories.*
 - *Promote international collaboration in all missile defense efforts, to include cooperation in joint development and production with friends and allies.*

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- **Increase U.S. intelligence capabilities to ensure the nation's leaders, and our Armed Forces, have the best information possible in a timely and accurate manner.**
 - *Improve intelligence collection, especially human intelligence.*
 - *Ensure analysis is comprehensive, exhaustive, and properly "red-teamed."*
 - *Continue to improve intelligence sharing and coordination across the government.*
 - *Increase the Intelligence Community's focus on terrorism and proliferation.*

- **Enhance Counter-Proliferation, Counter-Terrorism, and Cyber Security efforts**
 - *Develop new tactics and technologies in each of these areas.*
 - *Bolster targeted intelligence and law enforcement resources and work closely with the private sector to ensure national advanced technology assets are protected by state-of-the-art warning and response systems.*
 - *Safeguard the security of our network centric and information technology driven weapons and systems as a top priority.*

- **Maintain U.S. leadership and dominance in Space**
 - *Make investments necessary to ensure the nation has assured access to space.*
 - *Develop advanced satellites for surveillance and communications.*
 - *Be able to defend our space-based assets from radiation, cyber, or direct attack.*
 - *Integrate space-based systems with our ballistic missile defense system.*
 - *Develop the capability to swiftly defeat the offensive space capabilities of potential adversaries.*

- **Ensure the U.S. maintains a safe, effective, and credible strategic deterrent**
 - *Maintain complementary land-, sea-, and air-based weapons delivery platforms to ensure the survivability of our nuclear deterrent.*
 - *Modernize our existing nuclear weapons capabilities, as appropriate, to deal with 21st Century threats and challenges.*
 - *Maintain the lowest level of nuclear capabilities compatible with our national security needs and our international commitments.*
 - *Revitalize the nuclear weapons complex so that it is responsive and adaptable to unanticipated threats.*

The U.S. military is at a strategic crossroads. Years of neglect, conflict, and long deployments are reducing the readiness, effectiveness and flexibility of the greatest military force in history. It is time to restore President Reagan's promise of "peace through strength" by making the investments and hard decisions necessary to safeguard the nation's long-term security. The fact is, we can and must do this.

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The world - friends and foes alike - is watching. We cannot afford to allow our forces to wither and risk conflict. The latter is far more expensive in the long run and much more dangerous. The weaker we become, or appear to become, the more our enemies will be tempted to challenge us and our allies. These are risks we cannot afford to take. Whether we act in time to prevent the worst from happening will be the final measure of America's leadership in the world for years to come. With 9/11 still fresh in our memory, it is for America to shape events, and not be left at their mercy. Wherever dangers appear, we must be prepared to meet them with clarity and resolve. Doing so will take leadership, vision, and a commitment to restore our nation's military strength.

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