

PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee Bob Stump, Chairman

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OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BOB STUMP

FULL COMMITTEE HEARING ON U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

Today, the committee meets to hear testimony regarding America's national security strategy for the next decade and beyond. Because budgets must flow from and support strategy, this hearing is intended to begin laying the groundwork for the committee's upcoming consideration of the fiscal year 2002 defense budget. This will be the first defense budget prepared by the new Administration and will reflect its views of how best to prepare our military forces to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Ten years after the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, we are still grappling with how to characterize this period in history. Most analysts continue to refer to it as the "post-Cold War" period. I believe this reflects uncertainty regarding the nature of today's threats and how to deal with them.

The last Administration's national security strategy was characterized by the terms "engagement" and "enlargement." In implementing this strategy, the U.S. military was called upon to keep the peace in many volatile regions of the world. U.S. military deployments abroad increased dramatically, while the size of our armed forces declined. The resulting strains on our military's warfighting ability led to significant shortfalls in readiness, deferred equipment modernization, and declines in the quality of life for many of our nation's best and brightest.

Currently, the Bush Administration is conducting a strategic review of U.S. defense policies and programs. There has been much speculation about what that review will conclude. One thing, however, is certain: The results of that review, and the policies and programs that it recommends, will play a major part in reshaping America's proper role in the world.

America's role in the world - and the circumstances in which we should use military force to accomplish our strategic objectives and protect our national interests - will remain the subject of considerable debate. Should our strategy be expansive - should we use our military might to keep the peace and foster freedom and democracy around the world? Or should we focus our efforts on defending our homeland and allow allies and friends to carry more of the burden of managing crises abroad?

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Some analysts have referred to this point in history as a period of “strategic pause” that gives us the opportunity to accept more near-term risk in order to transform and adapt our military to future challenges. There has been talk recently about skipping a generation of technology. In light of the uncertainties in today’s international security environment and the growth of new threats, is this a realistic option? Do we need to retain the capacity to fight two nearly simultaneous major theater wars?

This committee will need to debate these issues as we consider the adequacy of the Administration’s defense budget request.

To help us grapple with these issues, our witnesses this morning are:

- Newt Gingrich, the former Speaker of the House and Member of the U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century;
- Gary Hart, former Senator and Co-Chairman of the commission;
- John Hamre, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Center for Strategic and International Studies; and
- William Kristol, Chairman of the Project for The New American Century.

Gentlemen, welcome. The committee looks forward to your presentations.

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