



Weekly National Security Working Group Update

Congressman Jim Jordan (R-OH), RSC Chairman
Congressman Trent Franks (R-AZ), NSWG Chairman

18 January 2012

The National Security Working Group (NSWG) is comprised of Trent Franks, 2nd, AZ; Connie Mack, 14th, FL; Duncan Hunter, 52nd, CA; Allen West, 22nd, FL and John Fleming, 4th, LA. We look forward to providing RSC members updates on national security issues and matters using this forum. We welcome your inputs.

- Iran Threatens Arab Neighbors (Rep Franks)

The Persian Gulf remains a hotbed of turmoil as Iran responded to international sanctions levied on its economy by turning its attention to its oil-producing neighbors. In an effort to intimidate them, Tehran announced a veiled threat directed at surrounding Arab nations that cooperate with an oil embargo aimed at further weakening the Iranian economy. Mohammad Ali Khatibi, Iran's OPEC governor, said Sunday, "If our southern neighbors collaborate with the adventurous states [the U.S. and Europe] by substituting their oil for Iran's oil, these countries will be considered as accomplices in future events." Tehran is facing increasing pressure from multiple sources focused on curbing their pursuit of nuclear weapons. However, despite a crippled economy, including mounting inflation and a declining currency, Ahmadinejad and Khamenei continue to relentlessly pursue weapons of mass destruction.

These warnings come on the heels of Iran's threat to close the Strait of Hormuz. Furthermore, analysts continue to warn that the potential for conflict between the U.S. and Iran increases daily. All of this has occurred in conjunction with President Obama's release of his strategic guidance for the Department of Defense. This "guidance" is less of a strategy and more of a blueprint for transforming the world's strongest army into a regional power. President Obama is content to derive a military strategy from the budget instead of developing a plan from objective analyses of current and future threats to our national security. By ignoring these threats and indiscriminately downsizing our armed forces, President Obama is creating an environment where our national security, including our economic security, is unacceptably vulnerable. As a Congress, we must ensure that our national security remains robust. Without strength of defense, our nation's financial security, prosperity and peace are all in jeopardy. With Iran already using their pursuit of nuclear weapons as a threat to their neighbors, what will they do when the world definitively discovers they actually have them?

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- President Obama's Budget-Driven Military Strategy (Rep Fleming)

On January 5, 2012, President Obama and Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta announced the downsizing of the U.S. military and the downgrading of our ability to fight two wars simultaneously. A legacy of the fight against Germany and Japan in WWII, the two-front strategy ensured for 65 years that the United States could still defend our interests and our allies, even if we were engaged in another major conflict at the time a crisis broke out. The President's strategy, which will decrease the size of the Army and Marine Corps, reduce our presence in Europe, and further marginalize our deterrent capability, is both naïve and dangerous. There has been no major change in the geopolitical security environment that justifies such a drastic shift in strategy: Islamists are poised to control several Middle Eastern governments, Iran is getting closer to developing nuclear weapons and the ballistic missiles to deliver them, North Korea is as unpredictable as ever, and Venezuela's Hugo Chavez continues to foster security relationships with our rivals while giving cover to terrorist organizations.

According to the *Washington Post*, the Administration plans to cut our conventional and nuclear capabilities while investing more in special operations forces, drones, and cyber security.^[1] Although we need to increase our investment in these areas, they alone will not suffice for confronting the range of challenges we may face in the future. The strategy

^[1] Craig Whitlock and Greg Jaffe, "Obama announces new, leaner military approach," *The Washington Post*, 5 January 2012.

guidance declares that we will be “able to regenerate and mobilize for an unpredictable future, preserving our industrial base.” However, we cannot recruit and train soldiers overnight, and we cannot reopen a shuttered defense factory and rehire the engineers, craftsmen, and skilled personnel that have moved on to disparate careers. The real world economy and long-term defense planning do not work that way. The legacy of this budget-driven decision could be a strategy of decline that diminishes America’s place in the world and takes us years to reverse. All too often, we forget that our strategic capabilities are ‘used’ everyday to assure allies and friends, dissuade opponents from seeking to rival us, deter attacks, and defeat adversaries if deterrence fails. By maintaining a strong and capable force, we protect our interests without inviting aggression.

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- Unaddressed Threats In Our Hemisphere; Issues for 2012 (Rep Mack)

The National Security Working Group (NSWG) was created to draw attention to, and educate fellow colleagues on, threats to America’s national security. Over the past year I have pursued necessary policy responses to threats coming from within our Hemisphere. While the current administration has discussed some of these issues, President Obama’s lack of leadership in foreign policy has left many of these threats unaddressed and made America less safe. While the list is long, I want to reiterate my call for action on three main issues that, if ignored, will be a greater threat to the national security of the United States in 2012:

- **Mexico** – Drug cartels in Mexico have evolved by diversifying their illicit activities and using terrorist and insurgent tactics to undermine the Government of Mexico. The United States must secure the border, combat money laundering, and evolve U.S. strategy to counter the Mexican drug cartels;
- **Keystone XL** – By delaying the Keystone XL pipeline, this administration has jeopardized American jobs, economic growth, and energy security. The Keystone XL pipeline, if approved, will immediately provide energy security and needed jobs to Americans while reducing U.S. reliance on hostile countries like Venezuela; and
- **Organization of American States (OAS)** – The OAS has consistently failed to uphold its Democratic Charter. Instead, the OAS is fostering the degradation of freedom throughout the Hemisphere, directly threatening U.S. long term interests. The United States must hold the OAS accountable, possibly through funding limitations, for failing to discuss members’ violations of the Charter.

I call on every Member of Congress to focus on these issues that threaten our national security and to hold President Obama and his Administration accountable for action.

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Each NSWG Item reflects the position and view of the authoring office.

Questions or comments regarding the RSC National Working Group can be directed to Ja’Ron Smith at Ja’Ron.Smith@mail.house.gov