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February 25, 2008

Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton's Remarks on Foreign Policy at George Washington University

Thank you. It's a great personal honor for me to be here with extraordinary leaders of our nation's military forces and to thank them for their long and dedicated service to our country. I am grateful for their confidence in my ability to lead our nation in difficult times.

I want to thank my long time friend General Clark who served with such distinction and success. I want to thank another long time friend Secretary Togo West, who not only served the Army but also served the Veterans Affairs Department and gave great devotion to our men and women in the military and then when they become our veterans. I want to thank Admiral Dave Stone, General John Watkins, General Joe Ballard, and I want to thank General Antonio Taguba who showed extraordinary courage in the face of very difficult challenges when he accepted an assignment to lead the investigation into what happened at Abu Ghraib. I also want to thank all the other veterans, former officers, noncommissioned officers who are here with me and I want to also express my appreciation to all who are supporting me in this campaign.

We are here at such an extraordinary moment in American history. The stakes have rarely been higher. I've had numerous historians tell me that America's point in our arch of destiny, today is perhaps most similar to the situation confronting President Truman when he became our president and commander in chief.

Dramatic events during this past week have reminded us how volatile our world has become and how essential it is that we have sound strategy and strong leadership. From Kosovo to Cuba, from Iraq to Pakistan, to our embassy being burned in Belgrade, these are some of the most challenging spots on our global map. The world is being transformed with enormous risks and possibilities that we must meet with confidence, optimism, resolution and success.

The next president will inherit all of these global challenges and more from a president who failed to handle them well. A war in Afghanistan and a war in Iraq. America's reputation at an all-time low. Countries rushing to acquire nuclear weapons. Crushing poverty that stymies economic and political progress in too many regions of the world. Global warming and global health pandemics. Genocide in Darfur. A rise of borderless, stateless criminal cartels. And the continuing real threat of terrorism here at home and abroad.

But while these stark realities carry dangers, they also bring unprecedented opportunities if we act wisely, if we have the right kind of leadership. There isn't any doubt in my mind that we will not only navigate through these uncharted difficult waters but emerge stronger than ever, reasserting both our leadership and our moral authority.

The vision I have for America is one that is rooted in those values. Values that have served us well but have been temporarily sidelined because of this administration's approach to the world.

Over the past seven years, we've seen what happens when the president presents the American people with a series of false choices and then is indifferent about the consequences: force versus diplomacy, unilateralism versus multilateralism, hard power versus soft. We've seen the tragic result of having a president who had neither the experience nor the wisdom to manage our foreign policy and safeguard our national security. We can't let that happen again. America has already taken that chance— one time too many.

The symbol of our presidency – the American Eagle – holds arrows in one talon and an olive branch in the other. Both are symbolic tools of what we need to keep our democracy strong and our nation safe— tools that a President must know how to use in the daily course of events, but also when that 3 a.m. phone call comes to the White House because an unforeseen crisis has erupted without warning. In that split second the president has to respond and make a decision that could affect the safety and lives of millions of people here in our country and around the world. Whoever sits at that desk in the Oval Office on January 20th, 2009 needs all the tools available, all the resources at our disposal, and the wisdom to know how to use them.

I propose a new American strategy to restore our moral authority, end the war in Iraq, and defend and protect our nation.

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We need a president who understands there is a time for force, a time for diplomacy, and a time for both, who understands that we enhance our international reputation and strengthen our security if the world sees the human face of American democracy in the good works, the good deeds we do for people seeking freedom from poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, and oppression.

With me, this is not theoretical. This is very much who I am, what I have done, and what I will do. The American people don't have to guess whether I understand the issues or whether I would need a foreign policy instruction manual to guide me through a crisis or whether I'd have to rely on advisers to introduce me to global affairs.

I'm lucky to have had a pretty good inside view, over eight years in the White House and now over seven years in the Senate, of what the president goes through day in and day out dealing with all of these challenges. Obviously the work that I have done on human rights, democracy, international development gives me a deep appreciation of the importance of winning the hearts and minds of those in societies whether or not they are for us today. I believe that we can seed democracy and create new strong alliances overseas.

And I also know from my years serving on the Senate Armed Services Committee that our military power is absolutely essential but it cannot be viewed as the solution to every international problem. Yes, we must use force when necessary but as a last resort, not a first resort. As one piece of a comprehensive strategy to defend our nation and promote our values.

I've been honored to travel to more than 80 countries representing the United States. In sessions with foreign leaders, with influential citizens from the world of business, academia, human rights and so much else. I have traveled to Iraq and Afghanistan three times. And I've seen and have said repeatedly that we must revise our strategy in Afghanistan. When I first went to Afghanistan in 2003 I was met by a soldier who said "welcome to the forgotten front lines in the war against terrorism." I regret to say that those front lines are still largely forgotten.

It will take a new policy toward Pakistan – one that builds on the democratic yearnings expressed by the Pakistani people in elections last week and recognizes that the border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan are among the most important and dangerous in the world. Ignoring these realities of what is happening on the ground in both Afghanistan and Pakistan has been one of the most dangerous failures of the Bush foreign policy.

I have been to Africa and have seen how disease —HIV, AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria — undermine progress across an entire continent. I pushed our government to start battling the global AIDS epidemic because this affects our security too. I'm very hopeful that we will make progress in Africa dealing with the multiplicity of challenges that the continent faces. It was my great honor to go to Africa in the mid 1990s as a precursor to my husband's trip and I applaud President Bush and Mrs. Bush for going back. We need a consistent coherent strategy in dealing with Africa and that is something that I will promote.

I'm also very proud that the United States Joint Forces Command invited me to be the only senator to serve on the Transformation Advisory Group, which studies and proposes ideas to modernize and strengthen our military, to meet new and emerging global threats. That experience reinforced my commitment to looking at every single challenge we face not through a narrow prism but a broad overview because it is all interconnected – what kind of military we need, what tools we provide our men and women who serve us is directly related to what it is we are trying to accomplish and how best to utilize those resources effectively. I know very well that in exercising foreign policy you have to know both how to find common ground and how to stand our ground.

Dealing with the rising power of China provides an example. I went to Beijing in 1995 and spoke out for women's rights and human rights. The Chinese government wasn't happy; they pulled the plug on the broadcast of my speech. But I took that as a compliment. Because it was important for the United States both to be represented and to make absolutely clear that human rights is an integral part of our foreign policy and that women's rights is key to that. What we have learned is that where women are oppressed and denied their basic rights we are more likely to have regimes that are more adversarial to American interests and values.

Today, China is most obviously the world's largest and one of its fastest growing economies. It's become a global superpower that needs to be convinced to play by the rules in the global marketplace. Here again, the Bush administration has failed. One third of our trade deficit is with China and over the course of the last seven years Bush policies have allowed the Chinese government to become our banker. Today, China's steel comes here and our jobs go there. We play by the rules and they manipulate their currency. We get tainted fish and lead-laced toys and poisoned pet food in return. That will change when I am in the White House because I know we have got to take a consistent approach towards China.

I've co-sponsored legislation to compel the Administration to take aggressive steps to stop China from manipulating its currency, to make our goods look more expensive. I'm the original co-sponsor of the Foreign Debt Ceiling Act which really means that we would require any administration to begin reversing our trade deficit and start breaking our reliance on China for not only what they provide to us in terms of the way they buy our dollars and buy our debt but also to be held to higher standards for what they import into our market.

We have to make sure that American companies have a level playing field when it comes to trade. We're

far from reaching that goal. And I think it's imperative that we move because what is happening is that our standard of living in America is deteriorating. That has direct and serious implications for our capacity to operate effectively on behalf of our strategic interests in the world. It's very difficult to persuade the American people that we must continue to lead, that yes, there will be occasions when we have to sacrifice in furtherance of our values and interests if the standard of living, the family income here at home is deteriorating. So this is something that has to be seen as a whole. Our fiscal irresponsibility over the last seven years has undermined our ability to be the leader we need to be in the world. You cannot talk about our military and our other objectives strategically and have mired ourselves in debt and dependent upon foreign countries to keep us afloat.

That also goes hand in hand with our continuing refusal to have an energy policy that is in line with our strategic objectives. So when we talk about foreign policy, we have to talk about fiscal policy, energy policy and so much else besides just the narrow view that has been primarily driven by the Bush Administration over the last seven years. So, in order to address these new challenges we do have to set a new tone both here at home and around the world. That requires that we start with the most basic of duties. A commander in chief must protect and defend our nation.

On my first day in office, I will announce, as I have repeatedly in this campaign, that the era of cowboy diplomacy is over. That includes the doctrine of pre-emptive war. I have been against that for many years. I believe it led us into a blind alley and I don't think I need to remind the retired flag officers here today how difficult the choices made by the president have been for American military. We need a new national military strategy that employs military power wisely instead of squandering it.

That requires us to begin to bring out troops home from Iraq within 60 days of the new president taking office. I believe we can redeploy one to two brigades a month but I also believe it will be dangerous. There's been a lot of talk about withdrawal and redeployment and I think it needs to be put into an appropriate context. Withdrawing troops is not easy. One does not wake up in the morning and say let's bring them home. It requires planning that looks at every possible contingency. That's why last spring I began pushing the Bush administration to tell us what planning had gone on, whether they were ready to bring our young men and women home. They didn't want to talk to us about it, as is their usual response. We finally were able to secure a briefing which although classified, I can tell you was cursory. It did not inspire confidence in our readiness to do this important task of withdrawing our troops and equipment. I think it is also important that we look at what else needs to happen simultaneously. We have 100,000 or so American civilians in Iraq. They work at the embassy and other government agencies, for businesses and charities. We need a plan for them as well. And we also have Iraqis who sided with us. One of the young officers who spoke in the pre-program is someone I have known a long time, Someone I've known quite a long time. Marine Captain Iscol who began talking to me about the need to take care of those who take care of our troops, translators and drivers. When Captain Iscol was leading his men in the battle that retook Fallujah, he has said, as I've heard other young marine officers who were part of that battle tell me, they would not have survived had it not been for their translators. Honor is important. It's important to our country. We are an honorable nation therefore we must do more to take care of those who sided with, protected and saved the lives of young Americans in Iraq.

If I am entrusted with the presidency, America will have the courage, once again, to meet with our adversaries. But I will not be penciling in the leaders of Iran or North Korea or Venezuela or Cuba on the presidential calendar without preconditions, until we have assessed through lower level diplomacy, the motivations and intentions of these dictators. Raul Castro, for example, has a stark choice. He can continue to stifle human rights and economic freedom in Cuba, or he can chart a new course toward democratic reform. We need to engage with our allies in Latin America and Europe to encourage Cuba on to the right path. But we simply cannot legitimize rogue regimes or weaken American prestige by impulsively agreeing to presidential level talks that have no preconditions. It may sound good but it doesn't meet the real world test of foreign policy. I have traveled to so many countries working on issues involving some of the most intractable challenges we face. And as we see people respond to their own conditions, we have to be ready to act.

The clearest example of that is what just happened in Pakistan. The Pakistani people essentially repudiated the Bush administration's policies and created a new dynamic that could lead to greater freedoms and democracy or to a greater crisis with implications for the war in Afghanistan.

One thing the American people can be sure of, I will not broadcast threats of unilateral military action against a country like Pakistan just to demonstrate that I am tough enough for the job. We have to change our tone and change our course.

So let's begin by reviving old fashioned diplomacy. One of my criticisms of the Bush administration is that they have such a narrow circle of people advising the President. Apparently there is only one diplomat the President will send anywhere and that is Secretary Rice. So if Secretary Rice can't get to the Middle East or get to Pakistan or get to Africa or get anywhere, you don't get the feeling that the President is engaged. I think that is a terrible failure.

The president needs to have a broad circle of advisers calling upon distinguished Americans both in and out of government to serve as presidential envoys, something that I urged when I came back from Pakistan and Afghanistan last January. I urged the White House to send a high-level presidential envoy. I said there is a lot of misunderstanding between President Musharraf and President Karzai and it is going to cause us problems. That was not accepted by the White House and instead, full support continued for

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President Musharraf as he moved further and further away from democracy, as his strategy for battling Al Qaeda, the Taliban and other extremists proved time and time again to be inadequate.

We have a new opportunity now. We need to be supporting those in Pakistan from the middle class, from the professions who are our natural allies in order to give American approval to the changes that have taken place in the elections. The more we have people invested in their own futures, the more likely they are to work with us to protect our future. That is what I will attempt to do. It is also important that we revive our commitment at a very public level to human rights and individual freedom.

Let's close Guantanamo. Let's make it clear that we will never sanction torture and we will stand for the rule of law. Let's build a real coalition of allies to defeat terrorists in Afghanistan and other countries that provide a safe haven for al Qaeda. Let's make it clear that any terrorists who attack the United States, who have safe haven in any country, are putting that country at risk. That is one way for us to demonstrate that we will not be the aggressor, we will not engage in pre-emptive attacks, but we will defend our nation.

We need, also, to begin to be serious about Darfur. Everyday we fail to act, the betrayal of fundamental values. The peace keeping force has not been deployed for reasons many of you know— objections by members of the security counsel among others. The United States has to be pushing much more aggressively to get that done.

We also do need to lead the world toward a sound energy policy that treats global warming as the crisis it is and not science fiction. I have said that I would meet with the countries that are the biggest emitters of greenhouse gas emissions until we hammered out an agreement, hopefully within a year that would China and India who have to be part of the solution.

We also need to be moving quickly toward a coming to terms with our oil companies and our oil producing country allies. We need to demonstrate our commitment to home-grown energy. We can't do that, I know, until the two oil men leave the White House but as soon as they do, we have to be ready aggressively. We will lead the world in combating AIDS. I was proud to sign a pledge to invest \$50 billion by 2013 to combat AIDS across the globe.

We will lead the world in standing up for women's rights and I know that this is an issue that goes to the heart of who we are as a nation. Because when women continue to comprise the majority of the world's unhealthy, unfed and unschooled, the global community cannot prosper or make progress. When women continue to be raped as a tactic of war, trafficked by criminal cartels, and subjected to violence both in and out of their homes, that compromises the dignity and humanity of the entire human family.

We will also lead in providing opportunity to the world's children. When 100 million children in the developing world don't attend school and 150 million more drop out before finishing the first grade – that is a recipe for poverty, instability and extremism. That's why I have introduced the bipartisan Education for All Act; \$10 billion over five years for the goal of basic education for every boy and every girl around the world.

Now, that is the beginning of the security agenda that I would begin implementing within the first 100 days. We all know that we have a lot of work to do to repair the damage that we will inherit. In this campaign people are offered clear choices. Senator McCain is a friend of mine. He is to be commended for his courageous service to our nation during the Vietnam War. But in terms of foreign and security policy, in the calamitous wake of President Bush, Senator McCain can't seem to budge from Bush approach that insists on using military force when diplomacy is needed. He has said he wants to keep our troops in Iraq. It would be fine with him for 50 to 100 years. I will start bringing them home within 60 days.

It's also important that we combine all of our tools, economic aid, humanitarian aid, focusing on issues like disease, children's schooling and women's place, something that I believe I will be much better able to do.

Senator Obama, meanwhile, represents another choice. He wavers from seeming to believe that mediation and meetings without preconditions can solve the world's most intractable problems. To advocating rash unilateral military action without cooperation from our allies in the most sensitive region of the world.

Electing a president should not be an either/or proposition when it comes to national security. We need a president who knows how to deploy both the olive branch and the arrows, who will be ready to act swiftly and decisively in a crisis, who will pursue strategic demands of hard diplomacy to re-establish moral authority and our leadership. In this moment of peril and promise, we need a president who is tested and ready, who can draw on years of real world experience working on many of the issues that we now confront, who knows when to stand ones ground and when to seek common ground, who has the strength and fortitude to meet the challenges head on without fear and without sowing fear.

I believe I am the candidate most ready today to be that kind of president and commander in chief.

I will never let America's good name be disgraced. I will always protect and defend our nation and I will always advance the traditions and values that have made our country, as President Lincoln said, the last best hope on earth. Thank you all very much.

I also want to recognize Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown, an Iraq War veteran, the lieutenant

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governor of Maryland. I'm proud to have his support.

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