A month ago at the University of Colorado, I delivered remarks about America's role in the world in the new century. I acknowledged a spirit of optimism that energized the discussions of the Cold War era. I encouraged America to be a nation that leads the way to a more hopeful future. I made clear that America's strength -- military and economic -- would remain a vital asset in the 21st century. I also underlined that America's strength would be measured, not just by its power, but by its influence, as well. And I encouraged America to seek a new vision of American leadership that would help define our role in the new century.

In a speech today in Denver, I made clear that we are faced with a new threat, and that we must lead the world to address that threat in a global, comprehensive fashion. I was referring to the growing danger of a nuclear arms race that could spread to new nations with new intent. We are at a critical moment in the new century, when we must take decisive action to prevent nuclear proliferation.

I was concerned that this was an issue that had been pushed aside during our recent history. I was hopeful that we could build on our successes to create a new vision of American leadership that would indeed return the world to a more hopeful future. I was hopeful that we could work together to build a new vision of American leadership that would help define our role in the new century. I was hopeful that we could work together to build a new vision of American leadership that would indeed return the world to a more hopeful future. And I was hopeful that we could work together to build a new vision of American leadership that would indeed return the world to a more hopeful future.
Our highest priority must be to reduce the danger that nuclear weapons will ever be used. Such weapons, while still important to deter an attack with weapons of mass destruction against us and our allies, represent the most abhorrent and indiscriminate form of warfare known to man. We do, quite literally, possess the means to destroy all of mankind.

We must seek to do all we can to ensure that nuclear weapons will never again be used.

While working closely with allies who rely on our nuclear umbrella for their security, I would ask the Joint Chiefs of Staff to engage in a comprehensive review of all aspects of our nuclear strategy and policy. I would keep an open mind on all responsible proposals. At the same time, we must continue to deploy a safe and reliable nuclear deterrent, robust missile defenses and superior conventional forces that are capable of defending the United States and our allies. But I will seek to reduce the size of our nuclear arsenal to the lowest number possible consistent with our security requirements and global commitments. Today we deploy thousands of nuclear warheads. It is my hope to move as rapidly as possible to a significantly smaller force.

While we have serious differences, with the end of the Cold War, Russia and the United States are no longer mortal enemies. As our two countries possess the overwhelming majority of the world's nuclear weapons, we have a special responsibility to reduce their number. I believe we should reduce our nuclear forces to the lowest level we judge necessary, and we should be prepared to enter into a new arms control agreement with Russia reflecting the nuclear reductions I will seek. Further, we should be able to agree with Russia on binding verification measures based on those currently in effect under the START Agreement, to enhance confidence and transparency. In close consultation with our allies, I would also like to explore ways we and Russia can reduce – and hopefully eliminate – deployments of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. I also believe we should work with Russia to build confidence in our missile defense program, including through such initiatives as the sharing of early warning data and prior notification of missile launches.

There are other areas in which we can work in partnership with Russia to strengthen protections against weapons of mass destruction. I would seriously consider Russia's recent proposal to work together to globalize the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. I would also redouble our common efforts to reduce the risk that chemical, biological and nuclear weapons may fall into the hands of terrorists or unfriendly governments.

I believe we should also begin a dialogue with China on strategic and nuclear issues. We have important shared interests with China and should begin discussing ways to achieve the greatest possible transparency and cooperation on nuclear force structure and doctrine. We should work with China to encourage conformity with the practices of the other four nuclear weapons states recognized in the Non-Proliferation Treaty, including working toward nuclear arsenal reductions and toward a moratorium on the production of additional fissile material.

I believe we must also address nuclear testing. As president I will pledge to continue America's current moratorium on testing, but also begin a dialogue with our allies, and with the U.S. Senate, to identify ways we can move forward to limit testing in a verifiable manner that does not undermine the security or viability of our nuclear deterrent. This would include taking another look at the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to see what can be done to overcome the shortcomings that prevented it from entering into force. I opposed that Treaty in 1999, but said at the time I would keep an open mind about future developments.

I would only support the development of any new type of nuclear weapon that is absolutely essential for the viability of our deterrent, that results in making possible further decreases in the size of our nuclear arsenal, and furthers our global nuclear security goals. I would cancel all further work on the so-called Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator, a weapon that does not make strategic or political sense.

Finally, we cannot achieve our non-proliferation goals on our own. We must strengthen existing international treaties and institutions to combat proliferation, and develop new ones when necessary. We should move quickly with other nations to negotiate a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty to end production of the most dangerous nuclear materials. The international community needs to improve its ability to interdict the spread of nuclear weapons and material under the Proliferation Security Initiative. And we need to increase funding for our own non-proliferation efforts, including the Cooperative Threat Reduction programs established by the landmark Nunn-Lugar legislation, and ensure the highest possible standards of security for existing nuclear materials.

In 2010, an international conference will meet to review the Non-Proliferation Treaty. If I am President, I will seize that opportunity to strengthen and enhance all aspects of the non-proliferation regime. We need to strengthen enforcement of the so-called "atoms for peace" bargain by insisting that countries that receive the benefits of peaceful nuclear cooperation must return or dismantle what they receive if they violate or withdraw from the NPT. We need to increase IAEA funding and enhance the intelligence support it receives. We also need to reverse the burden of proof when it comes to discovering whether a nation is cheating on its NPT commitments. The IAEA shouldn't have to play cat-and-mouse games to prove a country is in compliance. It is for suspected violators to prove they are in compliance. We should establish a requirement by the UN Security Council that international transfers of sensitive nuclear technology must be disclosed in advance to an international authority such as the IAEA, and hopefully eliminate that undisclosed transfers be deemed illicit and subject to interdiction. Finally, to enforce treaty obligations, IAEA member states must be willing to impose sanctions on nations that seek to withdraw from it.

We need to enlist all willing partners in the global battle against nuclear proliferation. I support the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Accord as a means of strengthening our relationship with the world's largest democracy, and further involving India in the fight against proliferation. We should engage actively with both India and Pakistan to improve the security of nuclear stockpiles and weapons materials, and believe construct a secure global nuclear order that eliminates the likelihood of proliferation and the possibility of nuclear conflict.

As we improve the national and multilateral tools to catch and reverse illicit nuclear programs, I am convinced civilian nuclear energy can be a critical part of our fight against global warming. Civilian nuclear power provides a way for the United States and other responsible nations to achieve energy independence and reduce our dependence on foreign oil and gas. But in order to take advantage of civilian nuclear energy, we must do a better job of ensuring it remains civilian. Some nations use the pretense of civilian nuclear programs as cover for nuclear weapons programs. We need to build an international consensus that exposes this deception, and holds nations accountable for it. We cannot continue allowing nations to enrich and reprocess uranium, ostensibly for civilian purposes, and stand by impotently as they develop
The most effective way to prevent this deception is to limit the further spread of enrichment and reprocessing. To persuade countries to forego enrichment and reprocessing, I would support international guarantees of nuclear fuel supply to countries that renounce enrichment and reprocessing, as well as the establishment of multinational nuclear enrichment centers in which they can participate. Nations that seek nuclear fuel for legitimate civilian purposes will be able to acquire what they need under international supervision. This is one suggestion Russia and others have made to Iran. Unfortunately, the Iranian government has so far rejected this idea. Perhaps with enough outside pressure and encouragement, they can be persuaded to change their minds before it is too late.

I would seek to establish an international repository for spent nuclear fuel that could collect and safely store materials overseas that might otherwise be reprocessed to acquire bomb-grade materials. It is even possible that such an international center could make it unnecessary to open the proposed spent nuclear fuel storage facility at Yucca Mountain in Nevada.

This is a long list of steps we need to take. It is long because there is no single answer to this crisis, and there are no easy answers. It is long because no nation can meet this dire challenge alone and none can be indifferent to its outcome. The United States cannot and will not stop the spread of nuclear weapons by unilateral action. We must lead concerted and persistent multilateral efforts. As powerful as we are, America's ability to defend ourselves and our allies against the threat of nuclear attack depends on our ability to encourage effective international cooperation. We must strengthen the accords and institutions that make such cooperation possible. No problem we face poses a greater threat to us and the world than nuclear proliferation. In a time when followers of a hateful and remorseless ideology are willing to destroy themselves to destroy us, the threat of suicide bombers with the means to wreak incomprehensible devastation should call the entire world to action. The civilized nations of the world must act as one or we will suffer consequences once thought remote when the threat of mutually assured destruction could deter responsible states from thinking the unthinkable.

Americans have always risen to the challenges of their time. And we have always done so successfully not by hiding from history, but by making history; by encouraging a sometimes reluctant world to follow our lead, and defend civilization from old mistakes and old animosities, and the folly of relying on policies that no longer keep us safe. I want to keep the country I love and have served all my life secure in our freedom. I want us to rise to the challenges of our times, as generations before us rose to theirs. It is incumbent on America, more than any other nation on earth, to lead in building the foundations for a stable and enduring peace, a peace built on the strength of our commitment to it, on the transformative ideals on which we were founded, on our ability to see around the corner of history, and on our courage and wisdom to make new and better choices. No matter how dangerous the threats we face in our day, it still remains within our power to make in our time another, better world than we inherited. And that, my friends, is what I am running for President to do.

Thank you.