TALKING POINTS
International Relations Council of Kansas City
2007 Distinguished Service Award for
International Understanding and Statesmanship
Dinner and Award Ceremony
October 19, 2007

Introduction

• Thank you, Gary, for that kind introduction. I appreciate the leadership you have provided the International Relations Council (IRC) here over the last decade.

• I also want to thank and commend Dianne Hofner Saphiere (sa-FIRE) for her guidance and leadership at the IRC and for bringing this remarkable event together.

• I want to recognize a few of my colleagues that have taken time out of their own busy schedules to be here tonight – Congressman Dennis Moore and Congresswoman Nancy Boyda. I admire your leadership in the House and am grateful that you are here tonight.

• I also want to recognize Dr. Richard Derman who you honored with the International Academic Leadership Award this evening. His work on behalf of those in developing countries that have been largely left behind by the rest of the world is heroic. His efforts will save thousands of lives, and I am humbled to be sharing the stage with him.

• I am honored, today, to accept the DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD FOR INTERNATIONAL STATESMANSHP. To share this award with such a distinguished list of past awardees is something I am very honored by.

• Your past awardees have all contributed enormously to American foreign policy over the years, and I am grateful and flattered to be considered in the same light. Thank you.

• What the IRC is doing is relevant and important. The IRC’s efforts here in Kansas City and throughout the country do have a deep and lasting impact and influence on our nation’s foreign policy, and I want to praise your work.

• Your focus on promoting international dialogue and expanding understanding between cultures and countries could not have come at a more critical time for our country and for the world.
The challenges America and the next Administration will face in the coming years will be unlike any we have ever faced. The challenges of the 21st Century will require energy, thought, and power.

However, American power must be more than simply our military. It is economic. It is cultural, social, scientific, and diplomatic. This is really where American power lies. We will need to draw from all of these sources if we are to help bring stability and peace to the 21st Century world.

We can start by looking at our foreign policy, but the challenges cut across all spectrums of our society—economic, health care, entitlement reform, and banking issues are all pieces of this large puzzle.

One of the greatest challenges Americans face today is the need to reintroduce the U.S. to the world.

**Reintroducing America to the World**

- We are living through one of the most transformational times in American history.

- The world is losing confidence in America's leadership. It no longer understands our intentions or trusts our purpose.

- The developed world is increasingly in the minority. While the United States and Europe grow older, the rest of the world is getting younger.

- Approximately 2.4 billion people, or nearly 40% of the world's population, are 19 years old or younger.

- Two-thirds of Iran's population is under the age of 30. Over half of Vietnam's 74 million people are under the age of 25. Sixty percent of Pakistan's 134 million people are under the age of 25.

- That means that a great majority of the world has never known Americans or the sacrifices we have given in the past. Their frame of reference for America and Americans is about torture, Abu Ghraib, black prisons, military invasions, and overseas spying.

- Most of the world has no recollection of our sacrifices in World War II or our efforts to rebuild the world after the war.
• A World Public Opinion Poll in June 2007 found that majorities in ten of fifteen countries polled did not trust the U.S. to act responsibly.

• A BBC World poll of 25 different countries from January 2007 revealed that one in two people polled says that the U.S. is playing a mainly negative role in the world.

• We can no longer live off of the reputation of the “Greatest Generation.” There is a new generation here now, and they no longer trust us. We can no longer lead based on our past – we have to once again get the world to trust us and our intentions.

**The Human Condition and Human Dignity**

• Not only does the rest of the world not know us, but more often than not, we Americans have little knowledge of the rest of the world. We must not forget that throughout the last several decades, some nations have been left behind. We cannot forget those who have gone unnoticed.

• We must pay attention to the human condition. The human condition is what drives events in the world more than any other single issue. The human condition, unfortunately, has largely been forgotten by those of us in the developed world.

• For the rest of the world, endemic poverty remains a tragic fact of life. More than one billion people live on less than $1 per day.

• More than one billion people do not have potable drinking water. Two billion people lack proper sanitation, and another two billion people do not have electricity.

• The human condition is at the core of greater stability and security.

• If we allow crushing poverty to persist in Africa, South America, South Asia, the Middle East...and in our own country...and elsewhere...we give extremism and radicalism greater opportunities to thrive.

• People chained to the cycles of despair and poverty are easy prey for those who would use religion or ideology to harm the world.
- Ending poverty is not a Democratic or Republican issue. It is the human interest for America to fight poverty here and abroad.

- We, as Americans, have fallen out of step with the rest of the world.

- The Middle East is the most glaring example of this fact.

**Regional Middle East**

- Today, the Middle East is more combustible and dangerous that any time in modern history. Iraq is the most important piece to this issue, but it is not the only piece.

- The U.S. must approach the Middle East with a clear understanding of the complexities of the region and a recognition that there are limits to our power and influence.

- We are going to need much more than military power to help bring stability to this region.

- We are going to need effective diplomacy, substantive communication, cultural exchanges, and various other avenues of dialogue if we are to understand them and if we are going to get them to trust and understand us.

- Our strategic policies must be regional in scope – we must integrate all of the players in the region – Iraq, Syria, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and Iran...

- However, once again, we cannot play a leading roll in bringing all of these players to the table unless the world and the region trusts us and understands our intentions.

- We cannot have a clear understanding of the region without dialogue.

- Dialogue and diplomacy are going to have to be the centerpiece of our strategy in the Middle East and in the rest of the world if we are going to create a stable, peaceful world.

- The situation in Iraq directly lends itself to the problem of a lack of dialogue, understanding, or strategic, regional thinking.
Iraq

- The war in Iraq has been going on for five years. We are spending $10 billion a month there. We will be debating another $190 billion emergency funding request for the war there – which, when passed, will mean we have spent over $800 billion.

- We have had more than 3820 killed and 28,000 wounded. We are destroying our military force structure.

- For what? We continue to hear that we are buying time…buying time…for what?

- There is no military solution. All of our generals have said that.

- What we need is a political reconciliation between the Iraqis. That will require a political accommodation. It is high time that they begin to step up and take responsibility for their country. We cannot do that for them.

- Because the only solution is political in nature, we must have a new political strategy…with diplomacy at the center…that will further invest the region and the rest of the world in helping to stabilize Iraq.

- Reversing Iraq’s slide into chaos is a goal shared by nations around the world.

- That is why I have called for a UN-mandated international mediator who can engage all of Iraq’s leaders and who is supported by an established regional framework that engages all Middle East states, including Iran and Syria.

- How much longer can we ask less than 1% of a population of 300 million shoulder all of the burden and sacrifice of a war?

- We should be moving now to unwind our military involvement in Iraq and get our men and women in uniform out of an Iraqi civil war.

Iran

- Iran is another great example of the need for expanded diplomacy and increased dialogue.

- Iran is a country with a three thousand year history, governed by a complex and opaque political structure, burdened by a stagnating economy, and located in a geo-strategically unstable region.
• We have not had relations with Iran for nearly 30 years. As a result, two-thirds of Iran’s population, or 44 million Iranians, have had limited or no direct contact with the American people or American ideals.

• This unfamiliarity, distrust, and lack of understanding risks producing disastrous consequences.

• It is time to reintroduce ourselves to the Iranian people and to the people of the Middle East in general. Just as important, it is time for American policy-makers and policy-shapers to develop a deeper understanding of the people in the region.

• The dialogue would go both ways – we too have little understanding of the factors that drive dynamics inside Iran.

• Iran is a complex, opaque country. It is not monolithic. It is governed by a number of competing powers. We know little about the internal workings of the Iranian government, and we understand much less.

• Our current strategy is slowly grinding down. Where has there been actual progress, on the ground, to slow, halt or reverse Iran’s nuclear program or its harmful actions in Iraq?

• I am concerned where the Administration’s strategy might take us in six or eight months as the pressure continues to be ratcheted up on Iran.

• What is the release valve? How does this growing pressure channel Iran’s behavior into a more constructive direction?

• The United States should put on the table the offer of unconditional, direct dialogue with Iran on all issues.

• Until we do so, our strategy stands little chance of finding a sustainable and acceptable outcome with Iran.
Conclusion

- I have only begun to touch on the challenges that the United States will face over the next decade and beyond.

- The challenges are varied, complicated, intertwined, and convoluted. But there is one indisputable dynamic to them all – and that is the human condition.

- The human condition drives everything in the world today. It drives our cultures, our economies, our politics, our thoughts, and our hopes.

- Though Iraq and Iran will continue to be important pieces of this puzzle – they are only parts of a very large mosaic.

- We need to move beyond simply crisis management. We have to tackle the big issues. The big issues require us all to look to the human condition and get underneath to the source of our problems in the world.

- Human dignity should be the focus of these efforts – education, jobs, human rights – these are what constitute the human condition, and these will be the centerpiece of a future peaceful, stable, and thriving world.

- Thank you again for allowing me to speak with you tonight, and thank you for honoring me with this distinguished award.

- I would be happy to take your questions.