

Senator Allard Speech

Speech on Center for Space and Defense Studies

Senator Wayne Allard

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Thank you for your kind introduction. It is my privilege to be able to speak at the first annual Space and Defense Forum, and I hope my appearance here today will be the first of many in the years to come.

I first heard of the Center for Space and Defense Studies six months ago during a meeting of the Air Force Academy's Board of Visitors. As a member of the Board of Visitors, I have taken a keen interest in the activities at the Academy.

However, at this particular meeting, Vice Superintendent Halter announced that the Academy had decided to establish the Center for Space and Defense Studies. His announcement really caught my attention. It caught my attention because I immediately recognized that this center would have the potential to be a key component in the Air Force's space professional development program.

The Air Force Academy has a long history of producing outstanding astronomical engineers. Over the last five decades, cadets at the Academy have conducted ground-breaking research, made scientific discoveries, and even built their own satellites.

Many of the Academy's cadets have gone on to serve our nation in building America's significant advantage in space.

Yet these cadets sometimes have left the Academy without fully understanding the reasons why space is so important, or the reasons why policymakers have urged the Air Force to continue to pursue specific space-based systems.

It is certainly easy to say that America needs such systems in order to protect our national security. But what does the concept of national security truly mean in the context of space?

This line of thought extends far beyond the algorithms and complex mathematical formulas taught at the academy; it goes to reasons of state. Unfortunately, these reasons are not always clearly understood by military leaders, much less articulated.

Military officers are often in the middle of their careers before they are fully exposed to the concept of

political objectives and how these objectives impact our country's national security strategy. Even fewer are aware of how the Air Force's decisions are tied to our country's national security strategy.

That is not to say that concepts of political objectives and a national security strategy are too complicated to understand. On the contrary, these can be learned like any other academic subject.

The tough part is connecting the political objectives to real-life activities of a military leader. This is much harder to perceive and much more difficult to comprehend.

Let me use an example. The decision by the United States to withdraw from the anti-ballistic missile treaty was very controversial.

For those unfamiliar with our country's national security strategy, it would have been very easy to criticize the United States for what was perceived as "unilateral" action that had the potential of touching off a nuclear arms race.

What some failed to recognize, however, was that the decision to withdraw from the ABM treaty was entirely consistent with our national security strategy.

How was that so? Our national security strategy was drafted in accordance with several principles deemed important by President Bush.

These included defeating terrorism, promoting democracy, and safeguarding human rights. Another key principle is taking measures to prevent attacks against the United States.

Many in the Bush Administration and in Congress, I being among them, had argued for years that several nations with hostile, or at best ambiguous, intentions toward the United States were building ballistic missiles that could cause our country and our allies irreparable harm.

Therefore, in order to prevent an attack against our nation, the President believed our country needed to build new missile defenses. The ABM treaty prohibited such missile defenses, and thus became an obstacle to preventing attacks against our nation.

Some might question whether this was the right decision or whether other options existed. Yet one thing was clear: the President's decision was consistent with our country's national security strategy and fulfilled one of his key political objectives.

Let's look at another area that military leaders sometimes may not understand, and that is national security decision-making. If there is one thing I have learned in my fifteen years in Congress, it is that

decision-makers in a democracy like ours almost never make policy decisions in isolation.

Such decisions are always debated, discussed and mulled over by a multitude of actors within the executive branch, the Congress, and even the judiciary.

Sometimes this process can take years to complete and the end result often reflects some form of compromise.

And, even after the decision is made, a new round of debate often ensues on whether the decision was the correct one. Some might call this second-guessing, but in reality it introduces a level of accountability and protects the decision-making process.

Consider President Bush's decision to invade Iraq.

After receiving authorization from Congress, the President decided to use that authority to liberate Iraq from Saddam Hussein's tyrannical rule. This decision has had consequences far beyond the expectations of most policymakers, including even those of the President.

Sadly, we have suffered the loss of more than 2,000 soldiers, airmen, sailors, and marines. But, at the same time, we have removed a long-standing threat to the international community and have been privileged to witness millions of Iraqis experience freedom for the first time in decades.

As you know, there are those who have questioned the wisdom of the President's decision. They believe his decision has led the United States into a quagmire and believe the best possible solution is to pull out as soon as possible. While I strongly oppose this line of thinking and firmly believe that we are making a positive difference in Iraq, the debate on whether liberating Iraq was the right decision has proved to be beneficial to the national security decision-making process.

We needed to understand the implications of this decision, particularly as we prepare to confront new threats to our security.

We needed to see where we made mistakes and take action to make sure such mistakes do not occur again.

Now, let me add a disclaimer here. Unfortunately, some have gone much further than just question the President's decision to liberate Iraq. They have cast aspersions as to the President's motivations and even suggested that the President somehow manipulated the intelligence that supported his decision.

Let me be clear: it is one thing to question the policy; it is quite another to question the decision-maker's

integrity or values without evidence to support such accusations.

These types of politically motivated attacks are harmful to policy debate and only serve to add considerable distrust to discussion.

Let's change gears and turn to our nation's future for a moment. It is clear that U.S. dependence upon space will continue to grow. Our military depends upon space. Our civil society depends upon space. And, as a result, America has become a space-faring nation whose security is becoming increasingly tied to our success in space.

This does not mean that the United States should be the only player in space. This is unrealistic and counter-productive. We should not attempt to deny access to space. Space does not belong to our nation alone.

However, we must be clear that the United States will defend its interests in space should it prove necessary. Our advantages in space are significant, but they are not without vulnerability.

It is my belief that at some point in the future an adversary will attempt to exploit this vulnerability. Thus, whether we like it or not, space has the potential to become a battleground, no different than land, air, or sea.

I think the Air Force is starting to understand this imperative and is beginning to look at ways to address it.

And, we shouldn't be shy about looking for ways to protect our vulnerabilities in space.

Dr. Peter Teets said it best when he testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee this past year. He stated that, "...our intent is to use diplomatic or other non-lethal means to preclude hostile use of space, but if these measures fail we reserve the right under international law to take defensive action against an adversary's space capability."

My good friend and colleague, Senator Jeff Sessions, put it this way, "We can't be squeamish about space control...when you have soldiers at risk on the battlefield, pilots at risk in the air, or sailors at risk on the sea...we can't allow political correctness to deflect us from thinking clearly about where we need to go and what we need to do."

Do these statements mean that the Air Force is about to embark on a massive program to acquire space weapons? Not hardly. I think the Air Force is justifiably more worried about getting its traditional satellites into space than putting new weapons in space. Our troubled acquisition programs are certainly a more immediate danger.

We must also keep in mind that while technology has grown by leaps and bounds over the last decade, we still have not overcome some of the more basic hindrances in space. Power, weight and size all remain significant barriers. Even the cost of getting to space is exorbitant. At \$22,000 per kilogram, and with current satellites in Low Earth Orbit weighing as much as 4,000 kilograms, the cost of even our most modest satellites easily runs into the hundreds of millions of dollars.

So why is the issue of space control important to our discussion tonight?

I brought it up because I want you to understand that the United States has become a space-faring nation that must be able to protect its vulnerabilities in space.

And, what we need even more than weapons in space are space professionals who understand this imperative.

I have the highest confidence in the military personnel who currently perform space missions for the Air Force and the other military services.

Yet, given our country's future in space, I don't believe we have yet the cadre of dedicated, well trained, well educated space professionals that we are going to need. I know the Air Force realizes this as well.

Three years ago, under the leadership of General Lord, Air Force Space Command developed a strategy for developing space professionals. Since then, the Air Force has built on this strategy.

The Air Force has created a space professional development database, which for the first time, tracks individuals with skills specific for space.

The Air Force has established the National Security Space Institute and the Space Education Consortium. It has authored the Space Career Guidance to help those in the Air Force seeking to build their career in space. And, hundreds of Air Force officers and airmen have already graduated from the Space 100 and 200 courses.

These are all significant steps in the right direction. However, I believe we are still missing a critical component.

What we are missing and what I hope we find in the Center for Space and Defense Studies is an intellectual hub where our space professionals can begin to understand the importance of policy and how

it relates to decisions impacting acquisitions, operations and doctrine.

Our space professionals need to understand what our nation's political objectives are and recognize the imperatives laid out in our national security strategy. And, they need to appreciate the fact that national security decision-making does not take place in a vacuum.

Space is the future for our nation. We need to have the best trained, best educated space professionals in the business. I think we are getting there, and the Center for Space and Defense Studies is another step in the right direction.

As this forum winds down tomorrow, let me be the first to commend each and everyone of you for your contribution to the Center for Space and Defense Studies so far.

I understand that you have been tackling some of the toughest issues facing the space community. I know these issues have no easy solutions.

But, please know that it is the intellectual growth that results from the discussion on these issues that gives this forum meaning and significance.

The Center for Space and Defense Studies stands to benefit from your dialogue during the few days as will our future space professionals.

And, it is my hope that this dialogue will be expanded in the future so when we can look to the stars, we can do so without worry or apprehension, but with greater understanding and appreciation.

I greatly appreciated the opportunity to speak with you tonight. Thank you for your interest and look forward to answering your questions.