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From: Samuel Berger [redacted]
Sent: Saturday, May 29, 2010 2:08 PM
To: H
Subject: FW: SRB op-ed in Wash Post Outlook section Sunday

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HRC: Below is an oped on the National Security Strategy I wrote for tomorrow's Outlook.

Unfortunately, they give it a horrible title, but I think the piece turned out alright.

Best, Sandy

By Samuel R. Berger

Samuel R. Berger, chair of the global strategy firm Albright Stonebridge Group, served as national security advisor to President Clinton from 1997 to 2001.

President Obama's National Security Strategy, released by the White House on Thursday, tackles a delicate but unavoidable question: How do we respond to new and old security challenges in an era of financial distress at home and a reordering of political power abroad?

For some time now, it has been clear that the definition of U.S. national security strategy needs rethinking. The September 11 attacks, global economic crisis, cyber-terror threats and even the environmental catastrophe in the Gulf underscore that the challenges America faces in 2010 have changed even from just a decade ago. And while America's military supremacy is certainly not at risk, new international arrangements - such as the shift from the G-7 club of powerful nations to the G-20, which incorporates emerging nations from China to Brazil - are needed so that the costs and benefits of a stable international order are shared. The United States cannot solve most global threats without others, nor should we bear the burden alone.

Enter the National Security Strategy. In my experience, these congressionally mandated documents can easily become laborious and impenetrable, or mere compendiums of bureaucratic pleading from various parts of the government. (Make sure you do right by Japan! Don't step on the Pentagon!) The challenge, which President Clinton insisted upon to me and his other advisers, is to provide a strategic framework that is clarifying to the rest of the world and informs administration decision makers up and down the line. It's not a blueprint for action, but a means to convey the president's principles and priorities.

In Obama's case, the new sober and comprehensive 52-page strategy incorporates the new realities and breaks with past strategies in several key respects. But it also reflects an understanding that we face enduring challenges - nuclear proliferation, terrorism and regional conflicts - for which the best response is a return to fundamentals.

One such fundamental is the strength of our economy. At a time when the after-effects of a financial crisis and the fiscal burden of two long wars have raised fears of an overextended America, the administration makes a case for economic and technological renewal as a crucial underpinning of U.S. security. The president made this case in his West Point speech last weekend. "At no time in human history," he said, "has a nation of diminished economic vitality maintained its military and political primacy."

Another fundamental challenge is arms control and nuclear proliferation. By seeking strategic arms cuts with Russia, the president has returned to a long bipartisan tradition that languished during the prior administration. And by convening a

global summit on securing nuclear material this spring, Obama has given new urgency and global purchase to the effort started in 1991 when Sens. Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar first initiated a program to lock down nuclear materials.

On terrorism, the strategy builds on the past, but breaks with it as well. Presidents Clinton, Bush and Obama each have deployed all of America's tools: military power, homeland defense, law enforcement, sanctions, intelligence and vigorous efforts to cut off terrorist financing. But the critical difference in the Obama strategy is that it rejects the Global War on Terror lens through which the prior administration viewed the challenge. "This is not a global war against a tactic - terrorism - or a religion - Islam," the new strategy says. "We are at war with a specific network, al-Qaeda and its terrorist affiliates."

This sharper focus avoids alienating many in the Muslim world, ensures the support of key allies who never accepted the broader construct and avoids the overreactions that led us to forsake the fight against al-Qaeda fight in Afghanistan and turn our efforts to the unrelated threat from Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

In perhaps the most dramatic departure from the strategy of its predecessor, the Obama administration has restored a less provocative policy on the use of military force. In the 2002 national security strategy, President Bush articulated the rationale for preemptive war just weeks before seeking a U.N. resolution to invade Iraq. The new strategy restores the principles that have guided administrations for decades: the use of force should be a last resort, should weigh all the costs and benefits, and should have as much international support as possible. The administration reserves the right to act unilaterally - for example against al-Qaeda and its allies - but resurrects the principle President Clinton often described as "together where possible, alone where necessary."

President Obama's critics have focused on his diplomatic engagement with hostile states like Iran and North Korea. The President sets forth his rationale: "to create opportunities to resolve differences, strengthen the international community's support for our actions, learn about the intentions and nature of closed regimes, and plainly demonstrate to the public within those nations that their governments are to blame for their isolation."

In the case of Iran, Washington's outstretched hand has not resulted in Iran's compliance. But attempts to engage have helped ensure that the world's attention is focused on Iran's intransigence rather than Washington's refusal to negotiate.

Without a doubt, there are gaps between principle and practice. Despite the Obama administration's stated goal of doubling exports in the next five years, it has not put its muscle behind trade agreements with South Korea, Panama and Colombia. And the clarity of its call to respect human rights has at times been muted in the face of tough realities. Sixteen months into this administration there has been much progress, but many of the true tests of this strategy lie ahead.

In the strategy's conclusions, the Obama administration evokes an even earlier era, calling for both political parties to restore the cooperation and common purpose so crucial to our success during the dark days of the Cold War. Despite the intense debates at the time over nuclear arms control, Central America and détente, nearly all American supported the containment of communism.

In that same spirit, the administration's framework deserves broad bipartisan support. We can and should argue out our differences over detention of prisoners, methods to disarm dangerous states, how hard to push for democratic rights, or the costs of climate change legislation. But at the same time, we can rally around the overriding U.S. foreign policy goals spelled out in the strategy: renewing our economy at home to ensure leadership abroad; defeating al-Qaeda; succeeding in Afghanistan; preventing nuclear proliferation; curbing climate change; and promoting an international order of enlightened self-interest, economic prosperity and the fundamental values upon which America is based.