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## HIGH NOON

by

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*The following remarks were delivered by Mr. Augustine on June 7, 1994, before the National Press Club in Washington, DC. They are reproduced here because they include insights regarding the future of our national defense which will be of interest to the AUSA audience.*

Let me acknowledge at the outset that my comments issue from the perspective of one who has spent a decade in five different assignments in the Pentagon under presidents of both parties and who has spent a quarter of a century in the defense industry. Over the course of these assignments, I have seen enormous changes in our industry — but nothing like the tectonic shifts we are facing today, with our industry seemingly located firmly astride the fault lines. I would like to use this opportunity to offer some recommendations about how we as a nation might cope with these new circumstances.

To do that, it is helpful to return to the reference point that for several weeks has been the focus of countless newspaper, magazine and broadcast media stories: the 50th anniversary of D-Day, a day which was pivotal not just for our armed forces but for the subsequent course of American and world history. The reporting has focused on the meticulous planning that preceded the landings, the significance of the invasion on the course of the war, and the extraordinary bravery of those who fought and died. The coverage has been somber, reverent, and very moving — one cannot visit Normandy and the cemeteries there or look down the cliffs at Omaha Beach without being profoundly moved.

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But there is, I believe, a larger issue that often gets overlooked. And that is the recognition that, in the words of *Newsweek* columnist Robert Samuelson, “World War II was a preventable tragedy, and in this sense, its occurrence represented an immense political failure.” He went on to state, “Hitler could have been stopped many times before he unleashed history’s greatest slaughter { in which an estimated } 55 million people died.”

D-Day became necessary because the Western democracies were slow to recognize the danger at their doorsteps and equally slow to stop it. Mr. Samuelson’s observations were made in discussing Professor William O’Neill’s masterful book, *A Democracy at War*, which chronicles America’s involvement in what some have called the “last good war.”

In fact, it was, of course, not a “good war.” The term itself is an oxymoron. No rational person could regard a conflict of wholesale death and destruction as “good.” But there can be no question that it was necessary to preserve our way of life — and in this sense, the war reflected an all-too-recurring pattern of American behavior. It is a behavior driven by what might be called “America’s *High Noon* complex.”

Americans have generally been reluctant warriors, and the desire to avoid even preparing for the possibility of war has been prevalent throughout our history. Despite George Washington’s assertion in his first address to Congress that “to be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace,” the size of America’s Army was reduced from about 11,000 in 1778 to the grand total of 80 soldiers some six years later.

Even our cultural icons reflect this basic aversion. Like the townspeople in the movie *High Noon*, we strenuously avoid conflict, are slow to react to obvious danger, and rise to defend ourselves and our allies only when it becomes unavoidable. But unlike the movie, we don’t have a Gary Cooper to call upon to fight our battles for us.

One might ask why we are so reluctant to defend our interests in a sometimes brutal world. Perhaps it is because we are a nation whose heritage is of immigrants fleeing persecution and violence, or perhaps because we have considered ourselves protected by two vast oceans from the troubles of Europe and Asia. Harry Truman characterized America as “not a warlike nation. We do not go to war for gain or for territory; we go to war for principles.”

And yet, time after time, despite our best efforts, we have found ourselves at war. The pattern is quite predictable:

Step One — The United States wins a conflict, having fielded a superior force usually with the most numerous and occasionally most capable equipment. Our country stands as a leader of the world’s democracies, setting terms for the peace to follow.

Step Two — The prospect of enduring peace causes us to disarm to a point where our military capabilities become incompatible with our ambition to influence international events or to deter certain of those events.

Step Three — Growing tensions among other peoples, leading to conflict, create frustration as we try, through moral suasion or economic pressure, to mediate disputes and change deep-seated attitudes.

Step Four — Belatedly, we respond to the increased international danger, only to be shocked by unexpected violence, such as the surprise attack at Pearl Harbor or the invasion of an ally, as in Kuwait or Korea.

Step Five — Finally roused to action, the country mobilizes to meet the now-unavoidable threat and, after the loss of precious lives, emerges victorious — thus beginning the pattern yet again.

By this analysis, D-Day was preordained. Throughout U.S. history, our reluctance to recognize the need for a sustained, viable military has severely handicapped our fighting forces. In World War I the majority of American troops reached Europe in British transports, fought with French and British artillery pieces, fired French ammunition, flew Allied planes, and manned French tanks. Of the 23,000 U.S. tanks on order, only 76 had been completed by the time of the armistice — **after** we had sloggged our way from trench to trench across Europe and lost 117,000 lives in the process.

Following World War I, we reduced our military capability drastically, believing that we had fought the “war to end all wars.” The fledgling aircraft industry saw 90 percent of its capacity disappear almost overnight. The country was eventually assured that through political maneuvering and diplomacy we would enjoy “peace in our time.” This, of course, proved tragically incorrect as World War II unfolded against a backdrop of broken promises and repudiated treaties.

After losing more than 400,000 lives in World War II, we yet again slashed our forces. And barely five years later, we were nearly chased off the Korean Peninsula by a third-rate military force. Historians have noted that our obsolescent projectiles simply bounced off the advancing enemy tanks. We had a new generation of armor on the drawing boards, but very few tanks of any generation in inventory. In the scramble to find something to repel the North Korean invaders, decommissioned M-26 Pershing tanks sitting on concrete pedestals around Fort Knox were actually taken down from their mounts and shipped directly into combat! By the end of that war the cost was 54,000 lives.

Today, the familiar pattern appears to be happening once again. Step One was the demise of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and the victory over Saddam Hussein and his forces in the Persian Gulf. Step Two was the precipitous cutting of the defense budget, which has caused procurement dollars to plummet by 67 percent in real terms since the mid-1980s — almost 80 percent in the case of the Army — and brought defense spending, as a percentage of GDP, to its lowest level since just before Pearl Harbor. Step Three was recently suggested by *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, which counted 27 military conflicts, 12 flash points and 31 areas of tension in the world.

Step Four — the half-hearted buildup to overcome earlier excessive reductions in order to deal with an emerging threat — is not yet here, but a call for our forces to enter combat could come at any time. A month ago, Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sam Nunn {D-GA} publicly suggested three possible threats: a Libyan attack on the U.S. Capitol with canisters of anthrax spores smuggled in by diplomatic pouch; a nerve gas missile assault by a resurgent Iraq on Kuwait; or, after

the ascension of Kim Jong Il in North Korea, a nuclear attack on our 37,000 troops in South Korea. According to Senator Nunn's scenario, this action would be met by the threat of massive U.S. retaliation, which in turn might provoke then-Russian President Vladimir Zhirinovskiy to cite treaty obligations with North Korea and threaten the United States with his own, still-massive ICBM force.

A haunting reminder of the nature of the world we are entering was suggested by the Indian Minister of Defense, in his comment that the real lesson learned from Desert Storm is: "Never fight the Americans without nuclear weapons."

Some dismiss these and other hypothetical events as sufficiently remote that they should be disregarded — and they may even be right. But who among the world's leaders could have predicted the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, the invasions of Korea, Kuwait, Afghanistan or the Falklands, the attack on Pearl Harbor, or a host of other unexpected eruptions over the last century? As General H. Norman Schwarzkopf recently wrote, "If someone had asked me on the day I graduated from West Point where I would fight for my country during my years of service, I'm not sure what I would have said, but I'm damn sure I would **not** have said Vietnam, Grenada, and Iraq."

Yet the *New York Times* recently ran an editorial urging billions of dollars in additional cuts in the U.S. defense budget, saying, "{ After the success of Desert Storm, it's obvious } U.S. weapons systems are unrivaled, so production of new tanks, planes, and ships can be put off for a decade or more." Ironically, these are the same weapons we had been told for many years were too complicated, too expensive, and too poorly designed to perform in battle.

What is so often overlooked is the fact that in today's era of the "come as you are" war, where outcomes can be decided in a matter of days, the only equipment available to our troops will be that which was planned for and acquired during the decades before. The systems that performed so well in the Persian Gulf largely represented the technology of the 1960s, the development of the 1970s, and the production of the 1980s — all utilized by the people of the 1990s. That is, the decisions of the 1970s to a considerable extent determined the casualties suffered in the Persian Gulf.

We have espoused a strategy of minimizing casualties as well as offsetting a smaller force — America's Army is now tied with Pakistan's as the eighth largest in the world — by fielding the most modern military equipment. In actuality, our military hardware is now on a replacement cycle of about 54 years — this in a world where technology typically has a half-life from two to 10 years. Think back to the civilian products in use 54 years ago — when radios still had vacuum tubes, commercial airplanes had propellers, television was a novelty, the principal "computer" was a slide rule, and space travel was the province of science fiction writers.

Today, as America seemingly repeats its *High Noon* cycle, three key paradigm shifts further complicate our national security planning. The first of these is the interconnectedness of the world economy. While the threat of a full-scale military assault on Main Street remains highly unlikely, targeted assaults on Wall Street and other key economic resources are a good deal more plausible. In my personal opinion, the principal threat in the years ahead is posed by a renegade nation holding a city hostage with a nuclear weapon. Another would involve attacks on the world's energy, monetary, or transportation systems or, as a variant, abuse of our humanitarian instincts to such an

extent that we could no longer remain detached. In each of these latter two instances, we might also be faced with nuclear weapons, which would drastically raise the price of any response we may wish to consider.

The second key difference is, in fact, the potential ability of many more countries to field weapons of mass destruction. As former Defense Secretary Elliot Richardson recently observed, "There are so many unemployed Soviet nuclear engineers and scientists { some earning as little as \$30 a month } who are now potentially available to other countries seeking to develop a nuclear capability, we are certain to see a migration of that expertise."

A recent *Wall Street Journal* article noted that such engineers were "quitting their jobs for the more lucrative profession of street peddler." Lest we assume that only individuals are tempted to play the nuclear card, Vice Prime Minister Igor Yukhnovsky of Ukraine at one point threatened to sell any nuclear warheads on his soil "to the highest bidder." Just this past weekend, India tested a new ballistic missile, and the North Korean government is reportedly developing a new missile with a range of 1,800 miles, which would be capable of reaching most of Japan and parts of China and Russia.

The third key difference today is the telecommunications revolution, which has made instantaneous news a way of life. On the one hand it brings the promise of freedom into places where tyranny has dominated. On the other hand, it has become an effective intelligence and publicity resource for Third-World despots. Last fall, we had the spectacle of a Somali warlord eluding United Nations forces while he calmly gave interviews to CNN. Meanwhile in Haiti, the rogue regime running that country apparently also tuned in. The regime was presumably emboldened by the Somali episode, believing that no one would stop it from renegeing on its agreement to return the island to democracy.

So what does this all add up to? Obviously the world is still a dangerous place. And this may seem to be a lead-in to the predictable call from a defense industry executive that we are not spending enough on defense. But I would be the first to argue that the end of the Cold War has fundamentally changed the nature of the threat and further that America should not spend money on defense simply to preserve jobs. It's clear that in the post-Cold War world, America can afford to safely shrink its defense posture. And we are doing that, with the one-millionth defense worker, by my calculations, due to lose his or her job on or about July 4th this year.

This reduction in defense expenditures has made it possible for our nation to reap a long-sought peace dividend. One measure of this dividend is that more than \$400 billion in real purchasing power has already been diverted from defense budgets to other purposes since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Disappointment over what some have characterized as the seemingly modest impact of this reduction stems from the fact that nondefense federal spending is now growing at a rate which far outstrips any plausible reductions in defense spending. The entire defense budget is now roughly equal to the **interest** on the national debt or about one-third of the cost of health care. America should, of course, spend no more on defense than it needs, but America **can** afford whatever defense it does need. Today, we spend more on legalized gambling than we do on defense, more on beer and pizza than we do on the Army, more on tobacco and soft drinks than we do on the Navy.

But I believe that an equally important question that needs to be asked is: “How are we shrinking defense?”

There was a statement a few weeks ago from Senator William Cohen (R-ME) that the Pentagon spends \$2.3 billion on administrative costs to process travel vouchers of only \$2 billion. This obvious inefficiency was considered newsworthy — but it shouldn’t have been. According to Vice President Al Gore’s National Performance Review, “{T}here are roughly 700,000 federal employees whose job it is to check up on or audit others.” My own research a few years ago noted that the defense procurement process is governed by 30,000 pages of regulations issued by 79 different offices with direction provided by 29 congressional committees and 55 subcommittees — all monitored by a force of overseers the size of an Army division. As a result, everyone is responsible for everything and no one is responsible for anything.

Another example of flaws in the system was recently highlighted by the Congressional Research Service, which noted that the defense budget is being used as a checking account for programs that have nothing to do with national defense. Such worthy programs as AIDS research, prostate and breast cancer research, museum support, broad environmental compliance, and even the Goodwill Games are now wards of the defense budget, consuming more than \$40 billion over the past five years alone. General Dennis Reimer of the U.S. Forces Command recently told a Senate subcommittee, “We spend more on environmental programs than we do training the 1st Cavalry Division.”

What America should spend on defense depends upon the national objectives we wish to seek — and, importantly, forgo; what risks we are willing to take; and what resources we are prepared to devote to national security. I would note with some concern that we seem to be in the process of inventing a **new** type of hollow military force ... one whose funds for modernization are so out of balance with the size of that force that it will ultimately find itself ill-equipped ... just as in the past we have built forces that were ill-trained or ill-supported. But choices regarding national objectives and risks are the province of government policy makers acting on behalf of the American public, not of defense industrialists.

Thus, I would like to address in my remaining few minutes not **what** we devote to national defense, but **how** we spend it. In particular, given the basic aversion of Americans to think about and plan for conflict, and given the reality of a sharply constricted defense budget, and given the growing turmoil among nations, how do we avoid another *High Noon* ... and, more specifically, what can those of us in the defense industry do to prevent it?

In that regard, I would like to send an urgent message to my industry colleagues that we must **reinvent the defense industry** in the same manner that the administration has called for reinventing government.

First, we must get on with the job of building a newer, smaller, more efficient, but still effective industrial base. Too many companies continue to practice “rear view” forecasting. If we want to achieve the critical technological advancements that will be needed as well as avoid the burdensome costs of half-filled factories, we will have to speed up the process of consolidation and downsizing; we will have to decide whether our companies best serve the nation, our stockholders and our

employees by being buyers, sellers, consolidators or independents. These are tough emotion-evoking decisions not without risk. But they are decisions best made in anticipation of, not in response to, market pressures and national security needs. The “muddle of the road” approach is simply no longer viable.

Second, the industry must display the discipline and courage to make substantial investments in research and development, even in the face of smaller contracts, growing cost pressures, and impatient markets. Every breakthrough in the history of warfare, from the stirrup to the crossbow, from the jet engine to stealth, has spawned newer technologies to counteract the original innovations. Given the long lead-time of developing new defense technologies, industry must not limit its long-term vision by a short-term focus.

And third, while we modernize equipment and products, we must also modernize our management. We have to empower our employees to give them the authority to make operations more efficient while continuing to improve quality. We must ensure that, despite the loss of so many experienced workers, we do not lose the most precious resource we have — the irreplaceable human skills and expertise that provide our technological edge. And we must find ways to more rapidly transfer technologies both to and from the commercial marketplace.

Now, if industry is to accomplish these objectives, it will need some assistance from its principal customer, the government. Among the needed steps are: First, escalate the current effort to fix the \$100 billion acquisition process, which everyone knows is needlessly complex and inefficient. Let me add, in that regard, that a bill {S-1587, Federal Acquisition Streamlining} addressing some of the worst inefficiencies is being considered this afternoon on the Senate floor and will hopefully move on to the House in short order. It is a tribute to the efforts of Defense Secretary William Perry and key lawmakers that we are finally beginning to see some progress on this long-standing issue. But this progress is only a starting point.

Returning to the list of needed steps: Second, we must continue to push for revision of the antitrust laws to foster greater industry consolidation while preserving at least a minimum level of competition wherever possible. Third, our government should be prepared to share with companies willing to make investments that produce savings to the government a portion of those savings. Fourth, we should not cut funds for defense-related research, exploratory development, and prototyping — particularly high-risk/high-payoff pursuits of the type which helped make American technology the best in the world and which is key to all of our defense strategies. Fifth, we need to restore “truth in funding” so that the American people can be assured that funds included in the defense budget are actually spent on defense. Sixth, we must stop the *de facto* nationalization of the defense industry that has occurred in recent years as more and more maintenance and repair operations are being expropriated by the armed forces at the expense of the private sector and as greater regulatory burdens are imposed. And finally, we should build on the recent effort to “level the playing field” with our international competitors, which have traditionally enjoyed highly favorable relationships with their own governments.

There is also a role for the average citizen to play in redefining our national security posture. The American people need to better understand the dangers that lurk today throughout the world, posed by people who would do us grave harm if given the opportunity. We are no longer — if we ever were — an island unto itself, removed from the turmoil of other nations. It is no longer acceptable, for example, for two-thirds of the American public to believe we are protected by ballistic missile defenses when in fact we have none. We must be vigilant to see that our national security interests are addressed, while at the same time exercising great discipline in assuring that our commitments and interventions are never allowed to exceed our realistic military capabilities.

I would close my comments on a message of hope. I do believe we can break the *High Noon* cycle we have been caught in throughout the two centuries of our nation's history. But to do so requires dedicated efforts by my own industry, by our government, and by the American people.

Coming back to D-Day, which has so dominated our recent thoughts, I can think of no better advice to give defense reformers than General Dwight D. Eisenhower's order that launched the most massive military action in history: "OK, let's go."

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