

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB NEWSMAKER LUNCHEON WITH  
SENATOR RICK SANTORUM (R-PA)

TOPIC: AMERICA'S WAR AGAINST ISLAMIC FASCISM

MODERATOR: JERRY ZREMSKI, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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MR. ZREMSKI: Good afternoon and welcome to the National Press  
Club. My name is Jerry Zremski, and I'm national correspondent for  
The Buffalo News and vice president of the National Press Club.

I'd like to welcome club members and their guests in the audience  
today, as well as those of you watching on C-SPAN.

Please hold your applause during the speech so that we have time  
for as many questions as possible. And for our broadcast audience,  
I'd to explain that if you hear applause, it may be from our guests  
and members of the general public, rather than from the working press.

The video archive of today's luncheon is provided by ConnectLive  
and is available to members only through the National Press Club

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can call us at 202-662-7511.

Before introducing our head table, I would like to remind you of a few future speakers and events. On July 25th, Senator Richard Lugar of Indiana and Congressman Mike Pence of Indiana will be here to discuss federal media shield legislation. And on August 7th, New York Governor George Pataki will be speaking to us.

I'd also like to remind you that on September 9th, the National Press Club will host its 9th annual 5K run and walk and silent auction benefiting the Ellen Persina Scholarship for Aspiring Journalists of Color. For more information about the 5K or to register, again, go to our website at [www.press.org](http://www.press.org).

If you have any questions for our speaker, please write them down on the cards provided on your table and pass them up to me. I will ask as many as time permits.

I'd now like to introduce our head table guests and ask them to stand briefly while their names are called. Please hold your applause until all the head table guests are introduced. From your right, Tom Winter, editor of Human Events; Laura Litvan of Bloomberg; Betsy Fischer, executive producer of NBC's "Meet the Press;" Cliff May, president of the Institute for the Defense of Democracy and a guest of the speaker; Jonathan Allen, Senate reporter for the Hill; Ira Stoll, managing editor and vice president of The New York Sun and a guest of the speaker.

To my right, we have John Hughes, the chairman of the National Press Club speakers committee and a reporter for Bloomberg News. Skipping over our speaker temporarily, we have Melissa Charbonneau, White House correspondent for CBN News and the speakers committee member who organized today's luncheon. Next, Zainab Al-Suwaij of the American Islamic Congress, also a guest of the speaker; and Brett Lieberman, White House correspondent for Newhouse News Service. (Applause.)

Some of the views of today's speaker strike at the core of our nation's most heated policy debates. To many of his supporters, Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum is a champion of compassionate conservatism, but opponents are more likely to call him the poster child of the radical right. Of course, such harsh terms are not used in the U.S. Senate where Santorum serves as the chairman of the Republican Conference.

He's the party's chief messenger in the Senate on issues ranging from North Korea and the war in Iraq to HIV/AIDS and abortion. He is the Senate's number three Republican, the youngest member of the

Senate leadership, and if he wins a third term in this fall's elections, he's a likely bet to be the GOP's next Senate whip.

Rich Santorum is the top target of Democrats as they seek to gain control of the Senate. Santorum has been labeled the most vulnerable Senate incumbent this season and he trails in the polls behind Democratic contender Bob Casey, Jr. In other words, Rich Santorum is battling for his political life.

Not surprisingly, then, some liberals, enraged by Santorum's

views on homosexuality and abortion and his ties to K Street lobbyists, keep kicking him while he appears to be down. For example, Democratic Chairman Howard Dean recently said Santorum is one of the most mean-spirited and corrupt politicians in Washington.

Now, I'm a native Pennsylvanian and I will tell you that there are many people in the state who don't agree with that.

Meanwhile, Republicans laud him for his coalition-building skills and Time magazine listed Santorum among the nation's 25 most influential evangelicals, calling him a trailblazer among values voters.

A devout Roman Catholic who attends mass daily, Santorum has been a driving force in Congress for President Bush's faith-based initiative. But the Senator has also teamed up with leaders from across the political spectrum on issues such as poverty and AIDS in Africa. And as a result, he's even been recognized at a U2 concert by Irish rock star Bono.

Rich Santorum was born in Winchester, Virginia and raised in Pittsburgh. He attended Penn State and later earned an MBA and a law degree. He then practiced law in Pittsburgh, where in good preparation for a career in Congress, he once represented the World Wrestling Federation. (Laughter.) Santorum, admittedly not a wrestler, is an avid tennis player. He and his wife, Karen, a former nurse and attorney, home-schooled the couple's six children.

Senator Santorum began his congressional career when he was elected to the House at the age of 32, defeating a seven-term incumbent. In 1994, Santorum was elected to the Senate, defeating Democrat incumbent Harris Wofford. A strong backer of President Bush and the war in Iraq, Santorum stresses that this is not just the president's war, but America's war. America's enemy, he says, is radical Islam. And Senator Santorum is here today to talk about engaging America's worst enemy.

Senator Santorum, welcome to the National Press Club.  
(Applause.)

SEN. SANTORUM: Thank you very much, Jerry.

It is a real pleasure for me to be here and have the opportunity to speak for my first time before the National Press Club at an official Press Club event. And I want to thank all of those who organized it and everyone who took time out of the day to attend.

I wanted to come today to address serious issues. And one of the things about being the national spotlight is that when you have that spotlight on you, you want to take the opportunity to say things that you think are important for the future of your country.

I remember when I came here to Washington in 1990, Karen and I were expecting our first child. And America at that time, you know, was worried about a slowing economy and competition from Japan and the deficit -- the high deficit numbers.

But we were also relieved because during that same time the Cold War had ended and we were talking about a peace dividend. You know, in the 1990s when I worked here, I thought that, you know, the job that I was doing representing the people of Pennsylvania was very important and the issues were very important. But in retrospect, the issues confronting us were not as important relative to what they are today.

Sixteen years have passed. I've worked on a lot of issues. Karen and I have been blessed, as you mentioned, with six incredible children that we've had the privilege to raise. And I think, like most Americans, we see a little different world in front of us, a world with more concern about the future and what our children are going to be faced with.

Now I think that most of you at this point would expect me to launch into what you like to write about -- my speeches about the culture or the family or children -- but not today. Today, the biggest issue facing our children's future is a war -- not as so many like to describe it, the war on terror -- no; not the war in Iraq, the war in Afghanistan, but the world war, which is at the heart -- which at its heart is just like the three previous global struggles.

In those wars, we fought against European tyrants and their allies from the Kaiser to Hitler. We fought Lenin and Stalin and their heirs. We fought them because we knew that our survival was at stake. The tyrants would never stop attacking us until they had defeated us or we had defeated them. Our only choices -- choices imposed on us, not chosen by us -- were either winning or losing, because there was no way out. We're in the same kind of conflict today.

Some say we're fighting a war on terror. That's like saying World War II was a war on blitzkrieg. Terror, like blitzkrieg, is a tactic of war used by our enemy. It is not the enemy. In World War II, we fought Nazism and Japanese imperialism. Today we are fighting against Islamic fascism.

They attacked us on September 11th because we are the greatest obstacle in front of them to their openly declared mission of subjecting the entire world to their fanatical rule. I believe that the threat of Islamic fascism is just as menacing a threat as Nazism or Soviet communism. Now, as then, we face fanatics who will stop at nothing to dominate us. Now, as then, there is no way out. We will either win or lose.

Too many people talk about this war as if it were simply an attempt to create fledgling democracies in Iraq and Afghanistan or promote democracy around the world. But Iraq and Afghanistan are only battles in a much broader war, which now includes every continent except Antarctica. Ask the Indians, the Thais, the Egyptians or the Argentines. Ask the Australians, the Indonesians, the British or the Spaniards. All have seen Islamic fascism at work and have mourned their innocent victims.

Islamic fascists have been waging this war against us for a very long time. It didn't arrive that sunny day on September 11th. Al

Qaeda and other such groups have been attacking American targets for decades. A group of Islamic fascists attacked the United States directly at the World Trade Center, a month into Bill Clinton's first term.

So why is it so hard for so many Americans to see the nature of this war? It's not because the enemy is keeping their hostile objectives a secret. Every major Islamic leader from heads of state to al Qaeda has openly identified the United States as their prime target and repeatedly promises the creation of a new global caliphate where Islamic fascism will rule mankind.

This language comes from both Sunni and Shi'ite, whether Arab, Persian, Indonesian, American or British. And yet, we are foolishly reluctant to come to terms with this terrible reality. It's an old sad story. Over and over again, our enemies announce their intentions to attack us and we just simply refuse to believe them.

Hardly anyone took "Mein Kampf" seriously. And when Nikita Khrushchev pounded his shoe at the United Nations announcing that, "We will bury you," it was widely treated here in the United States as comic relief. If we've learned anything from the 20th century, it should be this lesson: When leaders say they are prepared to kill millions of people to achieve their goals, we must take them at their word, particularly in this case, when the enemy sees dying for their cause as a desired objective instead of a tragic consequence. But we have not learned that lesson.

I submit as evidence of that fact the recent publication of top-secret intelligence programs. If we really believed Islamic fascism was a real threat to the future of our country, we would not be screaming and hollering about how our government is tracking terrorist money and monitoring their telephone conversations. Instead, we'd be screaming and hollering that these programs are being compromised.

So why do we choose not to recognize and respect the threat our enemy poses? I think, in part, it's because it makes us feel vulnerable. This is not just happening some place miles away to people in uniform. It's happening to us. The enemy is doing their utmost to kill us simply because of who we are, wherever we are, at home or abroad.

That's why we urgently need good intelligence. The best way to protect us is to know where and how the enemy is planning to strike. That's hard enough, but we also want to do it without unduly compromising our cherished freedoms, including our right to privacy.

We've worked very hard to provide security without compromising liberty. Some leaders, unfortunately, saw political advantage in disputing that very fact. The result: for one thing, a four-year misinformation campaign directed against the Patriot Act. The Patriot Act gave federal agents who investigate national security threats like terrorism the same types of legal authority FBI agents have had for decades.

Along with improved intelligence and military successes in the Middle East, the Patriot Act is a huge factor in why we have not had

another 9/11 attack in this country. And yet, we who supported the Patriot Act had to fight tooth and nail to get these powers simply extended.

Even worse, there's been a war against the war, a joint campaign by some people inside the government, and allies in the media, to undermine critical national security programs. To their shame, the bureaucrats have broken the law, dealing classified information to some in the media. And also to their shame, some in the media have put American lives at greater risk by publishing these secrets.

Before 9/11, we were fighting with 20th century tools. Our national security surveillance activities were governed by a law that was enacted in 1978, before even anyone in this room knew what e-mail was. It did not permit the speed and flexibility to identify and quickly survey previously unknown threats, and we paid a price in thousands of American lives lost. And so America in 2001 said that had to change.

So we designed a program to intercept our enemies' international communications, including those that crossed into and out of our country. The country didn't monitor all Americans or calls wholly inside the U.S. It involved only people reasonably suspected of working with the enemy. It was a valuable program. The program may well have prevented many terrorist attacks, but it was leaked to the press and the press published it. The enemy was thereby given important insights into our capability.

That story has made it more difficult for us to gather precisely the kind of information we have to have if we're going to thwart future attacks against civilians in America and our soldiers in the field.

The same thing happened with financial intelligence. In Belgium, there was a little-known hub for international money transfers, a sort of clearing house known as SWIFT, overseen by major national banks in Europe, Japan and our own Federal Reserve. We got this cooperation to track terrorist transactions. This was a very well-designed program. The terrorists had come to believe that whenever we discovered bundles of their money, we seized it. But in this case, we were -- (inaudible) -- patient. We were watching the funds, rather than grabbing the funds. I'd like to think the money we didn't seize is an investment in good intelligence and it was working. We were mapping the tentacles of the terrorist financial networks. The information helped nab a guy named Hambali in Thailand, one of the world's most notorious terrorists and helped us identify an al Qaeda facilitator here in the U.S. who was later convicted of providing material support for terrorists.

The program was completely legal. And the administration, like the previous program, notified Congress appropriately, and agreed to extraordinary auditing to make sure that the information was only used to pursue the enemy. The details of this excellent program were published despite entreaties of government officials and private citizens with great expertise, such as two ranking members of the 9/11 commission, while again a vital intelligence tool was compromised.

It will be hard to win this war if people inside the government violate their oaths and provide information to irresponsible members of the media who then provide our enemy with the information that hurts our country.

But as important as these are, intelligence and legal issues are only a part of our challenge. There's a bigger problem: our fear of speaking clearly, publicly, and consistently about our enemy. It's unfashionable in some quarters to speak about Islamic fascism, because of the misguided cultural reflex here in America that condemns anyone who speaks critically of others' practices or beliefs. Therefore, we can't say or do anything that might offend Muslims. That's backwards. The real offense to Muslims is to remain silent about an ideology that produces the systemic murder of innocents -- mostly Muslims innocents. They are the first victims of Islamic fascism, and the enemy directly targets them, and we have heard once and again -- as we've heard once and often in Osama bin Laden's videotapes.

Those who refuse to criticize Islamic fascism undermine the cause of freedom -- freedom of religion -- because if Islamic fascists win this war, there will be no freedom of religion. Paradoxically, when we refuse to criticize anybody, we end up patronizing everyone, which is offensive to everyone and it's also self-(dealing ?). It makes a mockery of freedom of speech and traps us in a discredited nonsense of moral equivalence. This war is not between two morally equivalent sides. It is a war between brutal, totalitarian fascism and freedom -- our freedom; not just freedom for Iraqis and Afghans and people in the Middle East. We are the fascists' prime target. And they intend to impose their brutal tyranny on those -- (inaudible) -- who survive their onslaught.

Islamic fascism is the great test of this generation.

When we fail to fully grasp the nature of our enemy and the urgency of our victory, our own people become confused and divided, as we have seen. And the fascists are encouraged to believe that we're afraid of them. This has to stop. We have an obligation as leaders to articulate exactly what this threat is, and defeat it. The American people have always rallied to the cause of freedom, once they understood what was at stake.

You know, we had no problem branding communism as the evil empire, because it was. We had no problem understanding that communism and fascism were evil, racist empires, because they were. We must now bring the same clarity to the war against Islamic fascism.

I recently had the great pleasure of sharing a podium with Natan Sharansky, who refused to be silenced in the face of Soviet communism and eventually celebrated its downfall. He told me about a surge of hope that went through the Soviet gulags when President Reagan delivered his "evil empire" speech, because the dissidents locked in the terrible gulag realized that the leader of the United States understood their plight and was determined to bring down their oppressors. Brave men like Sharansky understand far better than politicians or journalists or college professors the importance of a proper, moral calculus and the paralyzing effect of misguided moral equivalence.

If we don't recognize that it is right and proper for us to defend our freedom against Islamic fascism, we may well lose this war. The terrorists know that they cannot win on the battlefield against our armed men and women, so their strategy is aimed at you. With every IED and with every suicide bomber, they seek to break our will to fight, to get us to hang our heads and simply say "enough." And they will not stop coming after us until we stop them.

This is truly a modern war, a war fought not just on the battlefield but on the Internet; a war (decided?) less by armies and warplanes than individuals making individual choices. Individual Iranians like Akbar Ganji had defied the regime of the mullahs and spoken out for freedom and democracy in Iran at the risk of their lives, as have other Muslims throughout the Middle East. Brave Iraqis like Mita al-Luci (ph) have suffered the murder of their children as they spoke out for peace and democracy and reconciliation.

Terror plots are defeated every day. One was just foiled in Toronto because patriotic Western Muslims volunteer to penetrate terror cells and protect us all. But individuals also make bad choices. Journalists made bad choices when they decided to betray our secret of terrorist surveillance programs and our financial tracking program and the locations of prisons in which al Qaeda's most senior leaders were held. Democrats in Congress have made bad choices when they urged the president to withdraw our forces in Iraq before victory is won.

And as you all know, this fall the voters of our country will have to make a choice. One vision sees the role of Congress as raising objections, finding reasons not to do things, and punishing those who take risks to defend our nation. I have a different vision. I want Congress to contribute to victory, not just complain about how long things are taking. And I believe that a member of Congress, especially United States senator, has the duty to think independently, to speak clearly, not to evade, not to mumble.

As you may know, I'm running for reelection. My opponent says that a senator should ask tough questions. But I don't think how soon we can quit is a tough question. I believe a senator has the responsibility to lead with positive solutions, and I've done that with the Syria Accountability Act and the Iran Freedom and Support Act.

Which brings us to Iran. The fastest regimes in the jihadist organizations disagree about some things, but they have a common theme: destroy the West and its leader America.

They comprise a mosaic of different entities and countries. But the largest piece of this mosaic, the piece that reaches out and touches all the other pieces in the Islamic-fascist structure is Iran. Iran not only supports these other organizations which it touches. It created Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad, and is the driving force behind Hamas. But it's a threat to the civilized world all by itself. This is no secret. Iran is at the top of the State Department's list of countries that support international terrorism. And we -- Americans know with great sadness the accurate assessment that that is.

Right after the Islamic Revolution in late 1979, a gang of thugs assaulted the American embassy in Tehran and held our diplomats hostage for a year. In April 1983, Iran supported suicide terrorists, killed 60 people in our embassy in Beirut; six months later 241 U.S. Marines were killed in a similar attack. Former FBI Director Louis Freeh has been explicit about the Iranian role in the savage attack on the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia. And although it's not often noted, Iranian so-called U.N. diplomats are regularly asked to leave New York City when they are found photographing subway stations and railway bridges.

Indeed, in 1998, an indictment of Osama bin Laden -- the government was very, very clear and said, quote, "Al Qaeda forged alliances with the National Islamic Front in Sudan and with the government of Iran and its associated terrorist group Hezbollah for the purpose of working together against their perceived common enemies in the West, particularly the United States," end quote.

It's no surprise to see Iran actively engaged as a result in support of terrorists in Iraq, Gaza, and Lebanon. The well-known accounts of Iranian activity in -- (word inaudible) -- Iraq extend from the recent reports of captured Iranian terrorists and intelligence officers to the stories from American and British military officials of especially lethal mines and roadside bombs of Iranian origin.

We've seen Iranian missiles fired at Israeli ships off Lebanon and at Israeli citizens in their home. Iran reaches into Latin America to form a strategic alliance with the Venezuelan tyrant. It also shows us the ease in which Islamic fascists work with radical leftists. We see this in the anti-American demonstrations in Europe. We see this in the cooperation between North Korea and Iran with their rocket and nuclear programs.

Just think about that for a minute. Fanatical Muslims working hand in glove with fanatical leftists bound together by one thing: they hate us. The current public face of Iranian fascism is of course its president, Ahmadinejad. This is a man who recruited thousands of Iranian children to march to their death by detonating mines in advance of Iranian troops during the Iraq-Iran war. He is truly representative of the face of Islamic fascism in Tehran.

When he speaks of destroying Israel and the infidels, his voice is not a lonely voice. In such a regime, no one speaks without the approval of the ruling mullahs. So when Ahmadinejad speaks, his words are canonical. He has told us over and over again that he believes in the imminent arrival of a Shi'ite messiah, the so-called 12th iman, who Shi'ites believe will return at the end of time. What will cause this arrival? According to Ahmadinejad, a victory of extremist Islam over the infidels and crusaders. That would be us.

He is working to hasten that final confrontation, and he along with other Iranian leaders openly declare their first step is to remove the state of Israel from the face of the earth, and then defeat the United States.

They have also made it quite clear that Iran intends to use atomic bombs in this confrontation. In fact, his predecessor, the "moderate" President Khatami, made similar statements.

In other words, the spokesmen for the central piece of the Islamic-fascist mosaic are working to bring about the end of the free world just as fast as they possibly can in order to subject mankind to the slavery of a new caliphate.

These messianic Shi'a see this as an opportunity to accomplish this long-desired mission for radical Islam. Remember, Islamic extremists fought the West for over the course of a thousand years to a high-water mark at the gates of Vienna. The siege of Vienna lasted until September 1683 -- September 11th, 1683. The next day the united -- (word inaudible) -- triumphed.

Centuries have passed in relative peace, but now with the combination of oil revenues, off-the-shelf weapons technology and other high-technology equipment, and terror as a tactic, a virulent alliance of extremists now have a strategy to defeat their enemy.

A few weeks ago I spoke with the leader of the Independent Student Movement who escaped from Iran to America, and he told me that every young person admitted to college in Iran today must volunteer, sign an agreement to be a participant in acts of suicide. Nowadays every university student in Iran must attend courses on how to strap on and detonate a suicide bomb.

In a recent speech Ahmadinejad said "martyrdom not freedom is the greatest virtue of the Islamic republic of Iran."

Islamic fascism is truly evil. Such a regime cannot be permitted to build an arsenal of atomic weapons, and I don't expect that we're going to convince them to abandon their nuclear program at the negotiating table. You can't reason people out of something they didn't arrive at reasonably in the first place.

That's why I believe the only way to change the policy of the Islamic republic of Iran is to change the regime itself. The people of Iran, who overwhelmingly wish to live in a free society, have now for 27 years of horror, they want the chance to elect and choose their own leaders and have their own policies. They, not the fanatics, should be our negotiating partners.

I think President Bush believes that, for it's implicit in almost every statement he makes with respect to Iran. Even a nuclear-free Iran, though, would still be a driving force behind Islamic fascism. And it would continue its murderous policies toward us and all the others who will not submit to the dictates of the supreme leader.

I'm sadly convinced that sooner or later we'll have to confront this regime. This is not yet, though, the policy of the United States. In fact, the Iran Freedom and Support Act, which I mentioned earlier, which seeks to increase our communications with the Iranian people I mentioned earlier and will show the world the seriousness of our opposition to this evil regime in Iran, has been vigorously opposed by our State Department. The Iran Freedom and Support Act has

61 co-sponsors in the United States Senate and its companion bill passed the United States House of Representatives with over 350 votes.

The legislation has two prime objectives: first is to put the Senate on record in support of freedom and democracy for the Iranian people; second is to enable our government to effectively broadcast and work with these pro-democracy groups in Iran. In addition, it punishes countries who contribute to the Iranian nuclear program by imposing sanctions on countries and companies who trade with Iran in nuclear and dual-use programs.

I want to have them choose, these countries and these companies, between doing business with the United States and doing business with Iran. I think they'll have an easy choice.

When I recently proposed to attach the basic elements of the Iran Freedom and Support Act as an amendment to the defense budget, Secretary Rice wrote to oppose it. She said it would hamper her ability to negotiate (alongside allies ?) in the recent talks. I respectfully disagree with Secretary Rice, and I regret that a majority of senators, including some who were co-sponsors of the actual bill, voted against the amendment. I think the diplomats and my colleagues have it wrong.

When we pass the Iran Freedom and Support Act its major diplomatic effect will actually be to strengthen our negotiating position, for it spells out the consequences if Iran does not comply and it shows that the Congress is behind the administration.

I'm sure the president will sign it when it passes. The language of the State Department opposition to the Iran Freedom and Support Act has -- (word inaudible) -- the same type of language that was used several years ago when they wrote to oppose the Syrian Accountability Act, which I authored. Yet the president not only signed it, but to the surprise of many, implemented sanctions.

And still we see -- though Syria is a critical element of this Islamic mosaic, we have to see that Iran is the indispensable piece. Iran is at the center of this war. We have seen it clearly in Lebanon and Gaza in recent days where Hezbollah and Hamas, Iran's proxies, gratuitously attacked Israel. During the fighting in Lebanon, we learned that Iranian missiles had been fired into Israel and at Israeli and Egyptian ships and have seen the Iran Revolutionary Guard officers at their controls. Lebanon cannot survive as a free country if Hezbollah operates from its territory and uses stockpiles of Iranian weapons and gives operational space to Iranian Revolutionary Guards. It's intolerable to allow more than 10,000 terrorist-controlled rockets and missiles aimed at Lebanon -- excuse me -- in Lebanon aimed at Israel.

Iraq will never have the security it deserves so long as Islamic fascists are in power in Iran. I believe we must fight for a strong Lebanon, a strong Israel and a strong Iraq. That requires effective action against Iran. The longer we wait the more people will be blown up, tortured, incarcerated, intimidated and assassinated.

In 1979 Iran declared itself our enemy, and for 27 years it has

proven the truth of those words.

A democratic Iran may not end the war on Islamic fascism, but without it this war will last to be our children's war, not just our war. We owe it to them. It's our watch. It's the challenge of our generation.

Historians may write of this time in American history that we were not the "greatest generation," that we fell short on many fronts. But I hope they also write that like our ancestors, we too fought for freedom, that we too confronted the evil of our day, that we too endured a great trial, and won a great victory for the future of mankind.

Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Thank you very much, Senator.

All right, we have a lot of questions, and I want to get going on asking them.

First of all, Senator, by discussing a war on Islamic fascism, are you implying that the Bush administration made a mistake by labeling this a war on terror? And if so, what are the ramifications of that mistake?

SEN. SANTORUM: I think it's important to identify the enemy. I think that the speech is very clear about that. The president has repeatedly, as we all know, given speeches about Islamic fascism, has repeatedly talked about the enemy and who they are. I would just suggest, as I have, that -- I'm the communications person at the Republican Conference -- that's my job as the Republican Conference chairman. I'm in charge of communications. And I would say that we have a messaging problem, and that we in this country for a variety of different reasons have chosen not to identify the enemy and do it with consistency.

It's not that the president doesn't say it. The president does say it, but when you hear anyone in the administration -- frankly, anyone in Congress; there may be a couple of exceptions -- when they talk about this war, they refer to it -- and you turn on the television, any of the news stations: "war on terror." That's the handle it's been given because it's safe. But it's not right. It's not accurate, and it misleads the American public to just label it as that. It is a much -- we need to be much more direct about it if we are going to be successful.

MR. ZREMSKI: Many conservatives have criticized the Bush administration foreign policy in recent weeks for going soft and turning towards diplomacy rather than confrontation. Is this criticism justified? Why or why not?

SEN. SANTORUM: No, I would say that the administration is pursuing the options that are available to them -- not all of them. Obviously one that they are not pursuing is what I just talked about, which is the passage of bill that would send a very clear message to Iran and to the Middle East. The administration decided to engage in

negotiation with our European allies with Iran. I do not believe that they will be the least bit fruitful. I think it will simply delay the inevitable, which is that we have to begin to ramp up actions against Iran. And if there's any question about that, I think the actions of the last couple of weeks are fairly clear, whether it's the report that we just -- I just -- came over my BlackBerry that we had Iranian scientists in North Korea for the July Fourth rocket launches, to Iranians present in Iraq, clearly in Lebanon, clearly in Gaza, clearly.

This is not a country that looks to me to be in a negotiating posture. It looks to me to be someone who wants to try to find resolutions to problems but wishes to expand their influence. You'd have to believe, as I do, that one of the keys for them to be able to have that influence is to have the ability to deter any attack on them. And that means the development of nuclear program -- of a nuclear program.

MR. ZREMSKI: How many Islamic fascists are there? Where are they? And how will we know when we've beaten them?

SEN. SANTORUM: Well, I think you can safely say there are several nation-states that have been very clear about their intentions. One, I should say, principally is, of course, Iran.

But all of these other terrorist organizations, jihadist organizations, from al Qaeda to Hezbollah to Hamas to Islamic Jihad -- there's a long, long laundry list that work together to push forward this effort. There are other countries that are sympathetic or tolerant of activities within their country or support the theology behind extremist Islam, all of whom I believe are complicit in -- whether they do it as a stalling tactic to delay the effects of any kind of insurgency within their country or they do it because they truly believe in it and simply want other people to do their bidding, the bottom line is that there are nation-states and there are organizations -- I'm not going to stand up here and tell you I can quantify it. I think if you stood up and asked that question of any war that we're involved in, it's hard to quantify the extent of who's actually on our side and who's on the other side. There's always a difficulty in doing that.

But I think it's certainly clear that Iran is the key and that there are several nation-states as well as many other organizations who are working in coordination with them.

MR. ZREMSKI: Do you support the prosecution of journalists for reporting on secret antiterrorism programs? And why or why not?

SEN. SANTORUM: This is a -- it's a tough question. You know, I certainly respect freedom of the press. I just wish the press would respect our freedoms to be here too and to have a country that is not more threatened because of them. And I do believe that that is the case. We should have mutual respect for our freedoms, and it appears to me that many in the press don't. And so I would suggest that a prosecution -- look, I'm not -- I've never been a prosecutor. I couldn't even tell you what I would prosecute someone under. All I would suggest is that their behavior certainly deserves scrutiny, and

in my opinion, as you've seen, direct criticism.

MR. ZREMSKI: Are you concerned that the Senate might be spending too much time on side issues such as gay marriage and flag burning and not enough on Islamic fascism?

SEN. SANTORUM: The role of the Congress is -- I think you've seen just from my speech, you know, what I said -- from my perspective, our response is by definition somewhat limited. We can assist the president, as I believe the Iran Freedom and Support Act does, in trying to show our support. We can pass resolutions, we can actually pass laws to try to help the president influence behavior.

But you know, the role of the Congress, as you know, is not, as the president has told me on many occasions, not to do foreign policy. He told me that when I brought up the Iran Freedom and Support Act, when I brought up the Syrian Accountability Act, he was very clear that he wasn't sure that this was the -- he wanted Congress meddling in foreign policy. You know, read the Constitution; this is the job of the executive.

So I think the role of Congress is limited. And certainly we have a lot of other issues that are of concern. I think I alluded to that, that there are important issues with respect to the culture and the economy and where -- you know, how we compete in the world.

So no -- I mean, that's a false choice. The fact of the matter is Congress has an obligation and has a constitutional duty to pay attention to things here at home. That's our primary purview. And so no, it's not a distraction to talk about something that is foundational to the American experience, foundational to the country that we are.

So no, I think it's not a distraction; I think it's essential.

MR. ZREMSKI: Why did we attack Iraq if Iran is the problem?

SEN. SANTORUM: You know, again, it's -- that's -- I would suggest that question sort of strikes me again as a question from someone who doesn't understand that this is not an organization, this is not a problem, a country; that Iraq -- Afghanistan was a threat, Iraq was a threat. Iran is a threat. Southern Lebanon is a threat. There is more than one threat. And it is a growing threat. It is a global threat. And to suggest that, you know, the problem that we were attacked by al Qaeda is just -- I just -- is fundamentally a narrow view of what the problem is. They act and work in loosely confederations, but they act together with a common goal and a common purpose.

So Iraq was an important threat to the United States based on all the information that we had at the time, much of which turned out not to be true but much of which has. And so we made a decision at the time of the immanency of that threat and we, as a result, have made -- in my opinion, without question -- the world a safer place as a result of it. And we have created an opportunity for us, a beachhead in a place where this war is centered. And to suggest somehow or another that this is not -- this was not a necessity I just think

misunderstands the information that we had at the time we made this decision and is a misunderstanding of the war that we're engaged in.

MR. ZREMSKI: Has the United States inflamed terrorists and created a bigger terror threat through its presence in Iraq?

SEN. SANTORUM: I don't recall being in Iraq on September 11th, 2001. I don't recall being in Iraq in 1983 when our Marines were attacked, or 1979 when the embassy was taken over, or when Khobar

Towers was bombed, or when the USS Cole was -- I mean, look, this is the classic choice. We can simply sit back and choose to ignore the fact that this movement exists, that it's a developing capability, and that capability is a threat to the world. We can say that by confronting them we've made it worse. Well, we've confronted them. How do we know whether -- I mean, it's a great thing to pose, because we don't know what would have happened had we not confronted them.

I can tell you what we do know. In five years we have not had another attack on the United States of America. I will tell you that I don't know of any journalist in this room or any American who would have predicted that on September 12th. It's not a coincidence. I mean, it's always nice to (pass ?) off because it didn't happen that there was no consequential link between the fact that we have been safe for five years in this country and the fact that we have had a policy of aggressive intelligence and giving law enforcement more tools and protecting our infrastructure in a better way as well as going out and going on the offensive against the people who attacked us.

It is not a coincidence. And so to suggest that we might have made it worse is an easy question because we certainly don't know what would have happened had we not done that. All I can tell you is most people would have suggested it would have been a far different world. I would suggest that given what we're seeing in Southern Lebanon and what we're seeing in Iraq today, Iran would not (have ?) sat passively by. Islamic fascists, in whatever form, would not have sat passively by because they weren't sitting passively by. We need to come to terms with that.

MR. ZREMSKI: Do you support a military strike against Iran to achieve the regime change that you seek?

SEN. SANTORUM: No. I think that there are many other avenues to pursue. I have great hope when I talk to dissidents out of Iran that there is -- as I'm sure many of you know, Iran is a very young country. It is a country that, you know, gets information from a variety of different sources, including the United States and our State Department and our radio transmission, television transmissions, the Internet. And this is without question a country of young people yearning to be free. It is -- it's a country that we need to encourage that -- talking to student dissidents and others, they're not -- they're talking about a change in the regime similar to what we saw in the Soviet Union or what we saw in some of the other Soviet bloc countries -- for the regime because of its evilness, because of its corruption simply collapses.

Unless we send clear signals about how evil they are, how corrupt they are, how abuse they are to their people, and that we stand in solidarity with those who fight for freedom and want freedom in that country, then I fear that we will not spark the kind of changes in Iran that will keep us from actions that no one in this room would like us to take.

MR. ZREMSKI: What kind of a threat to the morality of American foreign policy is posed by Guantanamo Bay?

SEN. SANTORUM: You know, I would say that what we are doing at Guantanamo Bay is treating enemy combatants, treating people who are not dressed in uniforms who were seeking to kill Americans through terroristic activity with more civility than any -- most prisoners are treated in the United States or anywhere in the world. I think it says a lot for us as a country that we give people the kind of living conditions and type of accessories that they need to live their lives while at the same time trying to gather information from people who are bent on destroying the United States of America.

I think what it says is that we treat our enemies, the worst of our enemies, the lowest form of enemy, much better than any country in the world would treat them. So I think it says a lot for America as to how we treat those prisoners.

I also think it says a lot (about ?) people who question how we treat those prisoners and focus on that as opposed to the evil that we're confronting and choose to posit America as the evil instead of the evil that is before us.

MR. ZREMSKI: What role do prominent Muslim political groups such as the Council on American Islamic Relations play in encouraging or -- (word inaudible) -- criticism of radical Islamism within the United States.

SEN. SANTORUM: I mean, I mentioned in the speech several people, several Muslims who have stepped forward with great courage to assist in this battle, a battle not just between our countries but in respect to Muslims within their own faith. And they play a vitally important role, a role that should be supported and nurtured, a role that is -- I don't know how we're successful. I don't know how we could be successful ultimately if those who see the corruption of this great religion for what it is have the courage to stand up and do what needs to be done to make sure that horrific consequences don't occur for many Muslims all over the world.

MR. ZRMESKI: How many voices are there in the House or the Senate who share your views on the importance of speaking publicly against Islamic fascism?

SEN. SANTORUM: I haven't polled my colleagues. I don't know. All I know is that I've had this conversation in various forums at -- and meetings with my colleagues, as well as at White House, and -- you know, in front of my colleagues -- I'm not going to suggest how the White House reacted, but in front of my colleagues I've had these conversations, and I think there are certainly a number of my colleagues who share the point that I've made today of the importance

in defining this war correctly. It's an important mission for our country, and glad to have had the opportunity to try to do that today.

MR. ZRMESKI: The top human rights official at the U.N. and the International Red Cross have declared that Israeli attacks in the Middle East constitute war crimes. Should the U.S. continue to support these attacks?

SEN. SANTORUM: I generally -- when the United Nations says anything about the state of Israel, I generally discount it. (Laughter.) I have -- as what it is. (Applause.)

I mean, you know, I -- I would just -- I would just say that if a country on our border had done what a country on their border had done to them -- did to Israel, I should say -- we would be reacting with at least as much force, probably have a lot more force, than what Israel is doing.

So this is -- this is one of the unfortunate things about the international debates these days. They -- in the United Nations in particular. This is not a forum where you see a lot of clarity of thought and a lot of reflection of reality of the situation in this very heated area of the world. And that's why it's important -- vitally important -- if the international community is going to look at the Middle East through at best opaque glasses, then the United States has even a more important role in seeing this issue clearly.

MR. ZRMESKI: All right. We're down to our last question, and it's not about Islamic fascism. But before that, we have our typical presentation: our plaque, our National Press Club plaque; and the Senate is often called the saucer in which legislation is poured into to cool, we now have a mug -- the National Press Club mug -- to accompany the saucer. (Laughter.)

SEN. SANTORUM: Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. ZRMESKI: And lastly, if you are reelected, what is the most important thing you want to accomplish in your next term?

SEN. SANTORUM: Well, I mean, I think I've talked about what I think the great challenge faces us -- I mean, the wonderful gift I've had in the 12 years I've represented the people of Pennsylvania is, we're such a diverse state, I'm involved in a lot of diverse issues, and -- everything from work on seniors issues, which is a vitally important thing for our state -- we have a high population of seniors -- to work on -- continuing work on improving the quality of health care and, as you know, my work on Social Security.

I'd like very much -- I mean, I think coordinated on the domestic side with what I talked about here today is the issue of energy independence. Increasingly -- it's increasingly frustrating to me to see more and more American dollars going to a region of the world that simply cranks it back around to harm our country. That has to stop. I am -- I -- my staff sometimes gets a little nervous -- I talk more radically about, you know, we need to -- we need to do a lot more dramatic things across the board on the issue of both energy -- on the issue of energy independence, but with respect to developing new

energy as well as conserving energy. And to me, this is -- this is an important economic issue, but it's also an important national security issue for this country.

And the bottom line is that many of these countries I believe feel the urgency in this war. Many of these countries feel the urgency of the Islamic fascist assault because they know that one of the key elements that I described as the reason for this assault, oil revenues, is not indefinite. The clock is ticking, and they realize that they may not have those resources 20, 30, 40 years from now to finish what they started. So this is not something that we can run the clock out, in my opinion, because they understand the clock is ticking. So I think to the extent that we can do things on the domestic side here to reduce the global demand for oil and to improve our energy efficiency is a high priority for me.

Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

MR. ZRMESKI: Thank you, Senator. Thank you for coming today. I'd also like to thank -- (applause) -- thank you, Senator. Thank you for coming.

I'd also like to thank NPC staff members Melinda Cooke, Pat Nelson, Joanne Booze and Howard Rothman for organizing today's lunch. Also thanks to the NPC Library for their research. We're adjourned. (Sounds gavel.)

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