Lugar says Trump policies harm U.S. national security

April 11, 2017
Press Contact
T: 202-816-3333
nick@thelugarcenter.org

Washington--Former Sen. Richard G. Lugar said today many of President Trump’s stated foreign policy goals are “simplistic, prosaic and reactive,” and are characteristic of “a selfish, inward looking nation that is being motivated by fear, not a great superpower with capacity to shape global affairs.”

In remarks prepared for a Washington event hosted by the Foreign Policy Association, Lugar, a former chairman and ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said that if Trump fully followed through on his current policies for trade, immigration and international alliances, “the net effect…would be an economic and geopolitical disaster.”

Lugar, a Republican from Indiana who served 36 years in the Senate, said the president is relying too much on beefing up the military while “squandering America’s international leverage.”

“We cannot bomb our way to security,” Lugar said.

Lugar, currently president of The Lugar Center, a D.C.-based think tank focusing on foreign policy issues and bipartisan governance, emphasized that, for the benefit of the country, he wants Trump to succeed as a world leader. And he dismissed many of the administration’s early foreign policy missteps as the result of an incomplete foreign policy team and a new chief executive who “has not yet found his footing.”

What worries him more, Lugar said, are Trump’s “campaign-driven foreign policy themes that are fundamentally contradicted by centuries of world history.” For instance, Trump’s protectionist trade agenda ignores the powerful impact of technology on job displacement, Lugar said, and “attempting to isolate a nation from trade competition is a self-defeating strategy that will hurt those at the bottom of the economic ladder before anyone else.”

“On immigration, we are mired in a debate of distraction,” Lugar said. “In a world where dampening the rise of new terrorists is as important as dealing with existing ones, the ban on entrants from Muslim countries represents the most obvious recruitment tool against the United States since Abu Ghraib…The ban has been a steep net loss to U.S. national security.”
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Lugar, a strong supporter of NATO throughout his Senate career, also expressed concern about Trump’s willingness to question U.S. commitment to our allies as he seeks to wring more contributions from them. “Such ambiguity is not clever,” Lugar said. “It is dangerous and can lead to deadly miscalculation.”

Lugar’s speech to the FPA was in honor of David Hamburg, a distinguished physician, educator and scientist and a former president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, who added to the philanthropy’s mission a focus toward arms control and conflict prevention. This included funding the study that became the basis for the Nunn-Lugar program to dismantle and control the nuclear weapons of the former Soviet Union.

The Lugar Center, founded in 2013, is a non-profit organization that serves as a platform for informed debate on global issues. It focuses its efforts on nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, global food security, foreign assistance effectiveness and global development, and enhancing bipartisan governance. A copy of Sen. Lugar’s prepared remarks may be found here.