



Chris Christie Delivers Foreign Policy Address At The Hudson Institute

Transcript of Full Remarks

Speaker: Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests. Colleagues. Governor. Welcome to the Betsy Wallis Stern Conference Center here at Hudson Institute. I am John Walters, President CEO of Hudson. Today with great pleasure, we welcome Governor Chris Christie, the fifth candidate to join Hudson's presidential speech series. Governor Christie's career took him from a successful legal practice to the New Jersey State Assembly and later to the role of U.S. attorney for New Jersey, famous for his prosecutions to this day. In 2009, he was elected New Jersey governor, becoming a national Republican leader in the traditionally Democratic state. Governor Christie chaired the Republican Governors Association in 2014 and he ran for the presidency in 2016. After leaving the office of Governor, he founded a business and public policy consulting firm, opened a law firm, and worked as a senior legal and policy commentator for ABC News. If some of my colleagues would do a tenth of that, they would be very productive. He did all these things until he announced his candidacy for president in 2024. Hudson Institute has invited all major presidential candidates from both parties to present their views on national security at the Institute. So far, we have heard from Vice President Mike Pence, Senator Tim Scott, Governor Doug Burgum and Vivek Ramaswamy. We are very pleased today to have Governor Chris Christie join us to speak about his views on national security after just coming from his visit to the state of Israel, as I'm sure you all know. Please join me in welcoming Governor Chris Christie.

Christie: Well, good afternoon to all of you. Thank you for coming today. I appreciate the invitation and am happy to be here. Although when I heard the list of people who've been here already, I'm wondering if you guys are a jinx. Pence is out. Scott's out. Burgum was never really in and Ramaswamy's crazy. So, you know, I'm hoping to break your streak here, John. Thank you, in all seriousness, for all of you being here today.

I can't start a discussion of national security in light of the events of the last month or of the events in my life for the last five days without starting in Israel. I was honored to be invited by the Israeli government to come, and I was overwhelmed to be there this weekend and to see firsthand and hear firsthand about the horrors of October 7th. Let there be no doubt, that in Israel, October 7th will forever have the same importance as December 7th and September 11th have for the people of this country. More than 1200 innocent Israelis were slaughtered, women raped and babies burned to death, and

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bodies dismembered in kibbutz all over southern Israel. And more than 200 people have been taken hostage, some of them also American citizens, remain held in captivity today. We know that this kind of barbarism can't be justified and it cannot be ignored either. I just want to give you a couple of vignettes from what I saw. I was accompanied for most of the day by the speaker of the Knesset and he asked me where I wanted to go. And I told him that I wanted to go to Kfarza, to the kibbutz that is closest to the Gaza border. I saw a video of it, what it looked like before October 7th and it was a beautiful small community of Israelis farming and supporting each other and not only economically, but morally. The place I walked into was a disaster. Every home was now vacated. Many of them were completely charred and gutted from being set on fire. One home that I walked into, the home of a 24 year old recently married couple, was of course now vacant because both of them had been murdered. The terrorists came in the front door of their home. The wife was on the couch reading a book. Her blood still stained the entire couch where she was murdered. Her husband was in their bedroom and when he heard the intruders, he came out and he was shot dead in the doorway of their bedroom and his blood still stains the floor of their entire bedroom. I counted, there were 140 bullet holes in the walls of their small three room home. 140. I saw a video that many of you have probably read about smoking put together by the Israeli government purely from raw footage. Raw footage from the body cams and dash cams of the terrorists themselves captured after the IDF killed them. And from the cell phones of victims, some who survived and some who didn't. I'll tell you three quick vignettes from that video, which is the single most disturbing bit of video I've ever seen in my life. The first is, to listen to an intercepted cell phone call from a Hamas terrorist back to his family in Gaza and this is what he said. He said, Mom, your son has just killed ten Jews with his bare hands. Your son is a hero. He's a hero. His mother and father cheered him on the other end of the phone. I saw a video of a couple surrounding their two young children, ten and eight years old in a hug when they heard the terrorists coming. They shot all four of them and murdered them and then doused them with gasoline and burned them to the point where the bodies were melted together. And finally I saw, in the kibbutz that I visited, closed circuit television cameras in both the backyard and inside the home of this family and saw a father holding his eight year old son and his six year old son in either arm running out when he heard the shots, he and his two sons getting into their bomb shelter in the backyard and closing the door to lock it. 15 seconds later, the terrorists came into the backyard, they shot open the door of the bomb shelter and threw a grenade into the bomb shelter. The next thing you see is the father diving onto the grenade to save his children. He was murdered. And his children then came running out. Both covered with blood. The six year old blinded in his left eye

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from the shrapnel, they ran back into their home, sat at their kitchen table, sobbing and rocking back and forth and the eight year old telling his younger brother, you know, daddy is dead. Daddy's dead. And the six year old saying, I can't see. I can't see. And the terrorists then coming into their home, seeing these two children injured and sobbing. They went into their refrigerator and took out cokes and sat down and drank them, as if they were invited guests for a fall picnic. It's not just the inhumanity that's obvious to everyone. But what I saw there, was the joy that Hamas got in visiting that inhumanity on every one of its victims. And believe me, I could spend the rest of the time here telling you stories just from that video.

Now, there is no moral equivalence. No moral equivalence. Between Israel's response to that attack and that attack. I want you to remember that there was a ceasefire for every person out there on every street and every college campus in this country calling for a cease fire. There was a ceasefire on October 6th, and it was Hamas that broke that cease fire. And secondly, that kibbutz 600 yards from the Gaza border, where I continued to kick spent shell casings still on the ground from all of the automatic weapon fire that they visited on these people. Where the IDF would not let me get any closer to the border because they said there were snipers still there that had 500 yards of range to shoot. How do you expect the Israeli government to tell those families, the ones that are left, that they can go back to their homes as long as Hamas still has a military force in Gaza? It's impossible. And not only do we need to protect and stand for Israel's territorial integrity and the safety and security of its people, but we need to stand with them for them to eliminate the military capability of Hamas in Gaza. If we don't, the first two objectives cannot be met.

IDF is making significant progress in rooting this out, and they've now struck 15,000 targets and they've seized over 6,000 war items, which I'll talk about in a minute. And they've killed thousands of Hamas terrorists, But there's thousands more to kill. We need to ensure that they have the time and the resources to do this before there's any discussion of a cease fire of any kind. Now, look, we all understand that the loss of any innocent life, whether it be Israeli or Palestinian, is tragic. But I want you to remember the Israelis care more about the innocent Palestinians than Hamas does. They are placing their people intentionally forcing their people to be in harm's way. After hundreds of thousands of leaflets and messages have been sent to Palestinians in Gaza by the Israeli government, asking them to move away from the areas that are going to be attacked. And it is Hamas, who is forcing those people to stay in place, so they can win some type of propaganda war around the world against Israel. What Israel is facing

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today is not new. It's just the latest crisis in a world that is increasingly falling into chaos. And the reason it's falling into chaos is the lack of American leadership.

Putin in Russia is engaged in a war of aggression, as we know, against our ally in Ukraine. Xi Jinping is moving ever closer to trying to attack Taiwan, and the Iranian regime is the banker for terrorism in the world. Supporting its terrorist proxies who are now attacking American military sites in the region with regularity, with timid and weak response from the Biden administration. But let us not just limit it to the Biden administration, it's also the weak leadership that's been shown by Donald Trump during his presidency that's led to this aggression. Let us not forget that over his four years, he constantly threatened to walk away from our alliances and our commitments around the globe. Undermining our closest friends around the world, while also sending an open invitation to our enemies to be aggressive, because they knew if they did, he wouldn't respond. Donald Trump's foreign policy is reminiscent of the 1930s. But Joe Biden's feels like it's out of the 1970s. His disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan. His mixed signals prior to the invasion of Ukraine, including saying out loud, "Maybe a small invasion wouldn't be so bad." And his attempts to cozy up to Iran, first set out by his mentor, Barack Obama. And with the same staff that made those horrific errors is now being exploited. In less than three years, any deterrence we have left in Asia, Europe and the Middle East has been diminished by this weakness.

So with that as a prelude, I think it's fair to say that these are extraordinarily serious times and even more serious than they were six weeks ago, and they call for serious experienced leaders. Too often we've heard from other candidates in the Republican primary. I heard them spout fundamentally unserious talking points, fundamentally unserious as a substitute for strong leadership. Now, most people at this point would give you some of those examples, but not use their names because somehow that would be seen as discourteous. Well, I'm from New Jersey, so we're not worried about being discourteous. We're born that way. When Ron DeSantis thinks it sounds tough by saying he's going to slit the throats of bureaucrats or shoot immigrants stone cold dead at the border, and use the United States Army to invade Mexico. This is fundamentally unserious. This is TV tough guy talk, which he learned from his mentor, Donald Trump.

When Donald Trump compares his domestic political opponents to vermin. Language that those of us who know history is equated with the worst of Nazi Germany. And suggests that they pose a greater threat to our nation than China or Russia or Iran or North Korea and this is hardly making news today. He is fundamentally unserious.

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When Nikki Haley believes that just saying over and over again, finish them in regard to Hamas is a foreign policy. She can't be taken seriously. We need to know the next four sentences after that.

And when Vivek says that our goal in Ukraine should be for Putin not to lose. Seems to me that someone who's not fit for American business, let alone American leadership.

So in this moment of global turmoil, we cannot afford to hand power to those people who think that wielding it is a game. That they can be taught by political consultants who tell them how to come up with a line at a debate that might get applause for some stupid people in the audience. The fight for freedom in Ukraine and the fight for security and survival of Israel come as the world's most menacing authoritarian regimes are drawing closer together. We know that Iran is the global banker of terrorism and that their goal is nothing short of the eradication of the state of Israel and the extermination of the Jewish people, not just in the Middle East, but around the entire world. At the same time, we know that Iran is now supplying Russia with many of the weapons it's using to wage its war in Ukraine. And after Vladimir Putin's recent meeting with Kim Jong Un, we learned this month that North Korea is now believed to be sending short range ballistic missiles, anti-tank missiles and portable anti-air missiles to Russia to be used in Ukraine.

And most troubling of all, Putin and Xi have repeatedly made clear that there are no limits to the cooperation between China and Russia. So today, as President Biden is meeting with President Xi in San Francisco, it's important that America put communist China on notice. There was a time when we welcomed China's economic rise as the policy of reform and opening up, held the potential to lift a billion people out of poverty. And we had hoped that this greater economic dynamism and connectivity with the free world would ultimately translate to political reform. Those policies were well-intentioned, but they were wrong, it isn't what it's like to. Xi has crackdown on dissent at home, he sought to promote Chinese style authoritarianism abroad. It's become increasingly clear that China's rise represents the most serious threat to liberty, not only around the world, but here in America, since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. And like all dictators throughout history, Xi is not content to dominate just his own people. Increasingly, he's moving towards expanding his empire, readying his armed forces for a potential invasion of Taiwan. So that's why American resoluteness in all this is incredibly important when it involves Russian aggression against Ukraine. If Xi chooses

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aggression in the Taiwan Strait. He must know that it will come at a great cost and that the truce will not be worth the squeeze.

Taiwan recognizes the necessity to support Ukraine. Because one of the most popular slogans today in Taiwan is Ukraine today, Taiwan, tomorrow. Taiwanese feel the hot breath of the Communist Chinese on the back of their neck. Putin's invasion is now just a proxy for spreading authoritarian aggression all over the world.

Now, let me just stop for a second here and tell you what I saw in Israel about this unification. I went to a military installation where there was a cache of seized weapons from the Hamas terrorists who had been killed. It'll be no surprise that there were dozens of Russian AK 47. But also, there were anti-tank missiles with the markings of the government of Iran and there were RPGs, Rocket propelled grenades with the markings of the government of North Korea. If you do not believe after all of this that China, Russia, Iran and North Korea are not only working the Ukraine war, but the Hamas war against Israel, you're painfully and hopelessly naive.

Until recently, our party has always been the party that's understood that maintaining peace requires strength, strength from the American leadership. We understood that America was the indispensable country for peace, with alliances at the heart of that strength. But we have short sighted isolationism running rampant in the House caucus, because all of them are following the siren song of Donald Trump. They can't run fast enough to kiss his rear end. It's absolutely the truth. Ron DeSantis also wants to ignore Putin's aggression and he says that what's going on in Ukraine is nothing more than a territorial dispute and that the solution to it is for Europe to do more, even though as a percentage of GDP, Europe is already supporting the Ukrainians at a much greater rate than the United States. But I guess that briefing didn't get as far south as Tallahassee.

Vivek says these canned one liners about the war in Ukraine and has laid out his plan for solving it. Give the Russians all the land they've already seized. Give them an assurance that Ukraine will never be in NATO and in return, Putin will no longer deal with President Xi. That certainly had to have come from his education at Harvard. Meanwhile, Donald Trump claims that he'll resolve the conflict in Ukraine in less than 24 hours. We know what that means. He will just turn Ukraine over, lock, stock and barrel to his brilliant, as he calls him, friend Vladimir Putin. It was great to hear President Zelensky say recently that he'd invite Donald Trump to Kyiv, where I've been, and Trump's too much of a coward to go and to explain to him in 24 minutes why that wouldn't be possible. Remember something about Donald Trump, harm's way for him is

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having his second shot in the rough at a golf course. You'll never see him in Jerusalem. You'll never see him in Kyiv or anyplace else where he could even break his fingernail because he is fundamentally not just a policy coward. He is a personal coward, who wouldn't ever take a risk with what he considers to be the single most precious life in America, his own.

Putin's invasion threatens the peace and stability that generations of our fellow citizens have fought and died for. You hear often spewing out of Capitol Hill and Mar a Lago, America first. I suspect if I pulled this room, no one else in this room is for America last. Let's say maybe Belgium first, Luxembourg second and let's get a nice bronze medal for the United States. We all believe in America first, but Donald Trump and the isolationists on Capitol Hill in our party, believe in America alone. I know that America can never be first if America's alone. Our strategy in Ukraine is driven by a principled commitment to support Ukrainians fighting and dying for their country. And while I would have provided more weapons sooner than what President Biden has done and certainly wouldn't have blackmailed them for those weapons for dirt on Joe Biden, as Donald Trump did. I've been to Kyiv, I've met with President Zelensky, and he's told me to pass on to every group of Americans that I see these two messages. First, Thank you, he said, "without American help, Ukraine would now be occupied by Russia and they will never forget the help we've already given." Secondly, that he will never permit one American soldier to enter Ukraine, that it is a point of national pride for them. He joked with me that we were occupied by Russia and it wasn't so great and we don't want to be occupied by them again, but with all due respect, we don't want to be occupied by you either. Just give us the weapons we need and the Ukrainians will win this war for our own freedom and independence. We've done that, but with less than 4% of one year's military budget. And with that, the Ukrainian army has degraded 50% of the Russian military capability without one drop of American blood. Seems to me that's a pretty good return on investment for us and one that we should double down on.

You know, I went there and I saw the war crimes that have been committed by the Russian army. And I won't detail them now, except to tell you this. I went to a place called the Ukrainian Center for the Civil Rights of Children and you should know and remember, the 20,000 Ukrainian children have been kidnapped by the Russian army and returned to Russia. Parents of those 20,000 children have not seen them for the better part of 12 to 18 months. They don't know whether they're dead or alive, whether they're being cared for or what has happened to them. This is not a territorial dispute. A territorial dispute, you know, is when the surveyor comes to your house and does the

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survey, when you get ready to sell it, they say bad news, your fence is eight inches on your neighbors. That's a territorial dispute. The kidnapping of 20,000 children, ripping them from their parents arms is not a territorial dispute. If America does not stand up against that type of authoritarian barbarism anywhere in the world, that we are not the country that we have been and that at least I hope we continue to be. This is nothing more than head in the sand isolationism, everybody. And while it may make you feel good for a moment. It will make the world a fundamentally unsafe place. Many of our fellow party members in my party are failing to meet the moment with the moral clarity it requires.

But for too many Democrats, blind ideology has obscured that clarity as well. We're told that there is somehow a moral equivalence between Hamas's grotesque inhumanity and regrettable civilian casualties caused by Israel's necessary and justified actions in its own self-defense. There is no moral equivalence, as I said before.

Let's remember that Hamas are not freedom fighters for the Palestinian people. They are enslavers of the Palestinian people and now they are their murderers. President Biden, initially, stood very strong in support of Israel, and I complimented him for it. But the fact is we cannot leave the defense of our allies in the hands of a party that has members that see Hamas terror and Israel defending itself as two sides of the same coin.

This is not just fringe leftist voices on college campuses. We've heard Democratic leaders in Congress call for a cease-fire that would do nothing but allow Hamas to continue their campaign of terror indefinitely. We've heard President Obama say there is fault on both sides. This is just as offensive as when Donald Trump said that there are good people on both sides of the Charlottesville incident. That is two sides of the same coin, and Barack Obama should be ashamed of himself for saying that.

These Democrats seem to believe that Israel should find an accommodation with Hamas. How do you find an accommodation with the terrorists who I just described to you earlier in this talk, who would call home to their parents to claim hero status for killing ten Jews with their bare hands?

Sadly, the unseriousness of both Republican and Democratic policies in certain corners of our country and the lack of resolve for the US to be a global leader are not new. For more than a century, every generation of Americans has been called upon to confront

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tyranny and to defend the cause of freedom. While we always ultimately carry this burden with resolve, it has not always been a straight line.

When Hitler began his blitzkrieg through Europe, there were those in this country who said it was not our fight, that we were in no position to carry the burden and that we should find some type of accommodation with Adolf Hitler. There are even those who tried to argue that somehow there was a moral equivalence because of the aftermath of World War One between Nazi Germany and the Western democracies.

Not until the threat was at our doorstep, executed by the Japanese government, did we rise to the occasion. But we did, and in ridding the world of Nazism, we learned, at least I thought we learned a costly lesson, that America could no longer count on oceans to protect us, but the only thing that truly protects us is our strength and the alliances that we form around the world to support that strength.

We learn that every fight for liberty is our fight. The threats to peace and democracy and global stability always threaten our vital national interests and our values. After World War Two, I remember that was the last time we turned our back on a shooting war in Europe. It costs us 500,000 American lives. We then went about building alliances to collectively share the burden of defense while building our own military into the strongest force the world's ever known.

When the Iron Curtain descended and the Soviet Union rose, American presidents like Dwight Eisenhower and Ronald Reagan helped to lead our country with moral clarity. But evil must always be faced down by good. That America and its allies represent the good. It is often the case that time and the comfort of living in the richest and freest country the world has ever known lead to these once-dismissed isolationist theories to creep back into the mainstream of our politics.

Navel-gazing by people who think that they're protecting America by filling up the moat and pulling up the drawbridge. It never has worked and it never will. Three decades after the fall of the Soviet Union, we've had three decades of relative peace. Now is the moment that we face a serious reckoning. And we do not need smallness from our leaders, continuing to divide us into smaller and smaller groups and pitting us against each other and somehow claiming small victories as somehow representing American

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leadership. But now that smallness, our times in the recent decade, has been bemusing and head-shaking, with politicians claiming victory laps for not closing the government.

That smallness now is dangerous, very dangerous. The peace and stability that has been provided over these decades by America's strength has also been provided by America's moral clarity. We now have complacency about that, and that's threatening to undermine everything we've done before.

So let me be clear. As president, I will lead with purpose and strength and continue to tell the truth. You see, if you lie about what's going on inside the country, you have no credibility when you try to communicate what's going on around the world and why that calls us to sacrifice. If you lie fundamentally about the menace that Donald Trump is, then you have no credibility in describing the menace that Vladimir Putin or Xi Jinping or Kim Jong-un or the mullahs in Iran are.

If you are unwilling to stand up to someone in your own country, in your own party, if you're willing to call them the right president at the right time, if you're willing to say that, I'd be inclined to pardon him, if you're willing to stand on a debate stage in front of millions of Americans and raise your hand and say, I support him even if he was a convicted felon, what credibility do you have to talk to the rest of the world about moral clarity?

It's the fourth quarter of this game now, everybody. And that is the time for unserious people to get the hell off the stage. It is now the time for us to decide whether America is going to continue down an isolationist, self-absorbed, narcissistic, compromising path, or whether we're going to stand up and show the steadfast resolve that this country has always stood for.

So I'm in this race. Believe me, it's not fun. But what it is is brutally important. More important than I even knew when I got into the race on June 6th. And so it's time to stop now worrying about who the soup of the day is. It's time to stop worrying about having titans of Wall Street tell all of us that they figured out who the next nominee or the next president is going to be. I would suggest to you, if you look at their track record, it stinks. They've never been able to predict it.

I'm still waiting for President Fred Thompson. I'm still waiting for President Rick Perry. I'm still waiting for President Rudy Giuliani. It's time for us to look at the seriousness of the problems we face around the world and decide that we want someone experienced

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and tough and serious enough to confront those problems in a way that history will judge that America to a next generation of greatness and security and stability, not only for ourselves but for the rest of the world.

As we get ready to end this year and turn into the election year, those are the stakes. Time for fun and games, TV's tough guys, and entertainers on the stage is over. It's time for the serious men and women of this country to stop worrying and whispering and start to stand up has come. That's why I'm here. That's why I'm running. And when I'm elected president, that's exactly what I'll do. Thank you all very much.

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