MR. PETER HUESSY: Thank you all for being here this morning. We’re honored to have Trent Franks. I was saying that Trent, as you know, is one of the senior members of the House Armed Services Committee, and probably the single strongest proponents for missile defense and particularly dealing with some of the threats that face our country not only with missile defense but in terms of EMP. He’s just returned from England where he was attending a major meeting on EMP threats that the British minister of defense was discussing.

Trent, as you know, is from Arizona. He has been a speaker at our series for the last, I think, six years. I just want to mention a few things about next week, if I could, please.

Ken Myers, who is head of DTRA, will speak on the 22nd. Mark Schneider and Tom Schieber from Keith Payne’s group will talk about missile defense and nuclear deterrence in so far as what the Russians are up to, and the Chinese. General Chambers is the senior member of the Air Force on nuclear deterrence issues. He’ll speak on the 24.

And let me make another point, please remember it’s going to be at the Reserve Officers Association, which is on the other side of the Capitol across from the United States Senate. So please, make sure you go there and not here. And then finally on the 25th of May we’re going to have Larry Welch. We’re also going to be joined by Admiral Benedict, who’s going to be attending as well.

And those are the four seminars we’re going to do prior to Memorial Day. Please let Rachel or I know down at the Air Force Association if you’re going to be attending. I know that sometimes people have a hard time navigating the web site. If you can’t, just send me an email and say you’re going to attend.

Trent, I want to also thank your staff, Drew, who’s been very helpful in helping set this up. And I want to thank you for coming over here to discuss with us and share with us your views on some of the critical military issues facing this country. Would you give a warm welcome to our friend from Arizona, Trent Franks?

(Applause).

REP. TRENT FRANKS: Peter, thank you very much, and I appreciate getting to be here with all of you. You know, it’s kind of nice to be in a friendly environment. And as you know, there’s some unfriendly sectors of this city that a person doesn’t want to venture into at night alone. And I’m talking in the political realm, of course.
And I just really do appreciate being in a friendly place because I realize that a lot of times this vast national defense coalition gets beat up a lot. Somehow you guys – you’re the military-industrial complex, I think, something like that. And people don’t realize that most of the people in this area are those that have defended our country in the past, or those that have been committed to the protection of this whole cause of human freedom. And I think you’re heroes and I just want you to know I’m just really grateful to be here among you.

If it’s all right, I’m going to talk a little bit about – primarily about missile defense, EMP and what transpired, to some degree, in the trip to England. I just got back yesterday morning, and it probably looks that way. But I suppose I should start off with a short story that Mike Huckabee told me. I tell you that he told it to me so you don’t get nervous, at first.

(Laughter).

It’s a story about a gentleman who was a professor at Harvard and every year he would give his literature class a test where they had to write an essay that counted for half their grade. And the rule was that you had to write as concise and precise and compelling an essay as possible covering four subjects altogether. And that was: religion, royalty, sex and mystery. You had to take those things and put them together and cover all those subjects in a precise, concise, compelling way, as precise as you could.

And only one student ever got an “A.” And his essay went like this, on religion, royalty, sex and mystery. “My God, said the queen, I’m pregnant. I wonder who did it.”

(Laughter).

And that’s kind of what I feel like this morning. I’ve got some eclectic things to try to pull together here, and they don’t seem to connect too much.

But if you will, I’m going to say that the EMP conference – it was really called the World Summit on Electric Infrastructure Security. And I have the privilege of chairing that event each year and we’re going to do it in Washington next year. It will be the fourth one, that we do in Washington next year. And in a sense, the people in that room either represented or were the primary principals of the people in this world – almost, I want to say the United States, but they were from all over the world -- that are tasked in their own hearts with trying to make sure that we protect civilization against the potential dangers of EMP.

Now I know when we talk about some of these things people say this is just another guy worried about something like Y2K. And I laugh at that a little bit because I remember years ago when Y2K was a big deal, I was the village atheist because I thought, you know what, we change operating systems all the time. We go from Unix to Windows to Windows 95 to Windows XP. I mean, you remember all those old platforms.

And these were dramatically different operating systems that had a fundamentally different architecture and mathematical structure. It’s a wonder the (bios ?) in any computer could recognize the
difference because they were as completely different as they could be. And yet we make that transition all the time because computers are – if you’ve ever been to a candlelight service, a guy lights a candle and then the guy next to him he lights his and they begin to fan out. It begins to be geometric rather than just symmetrical. And the reality is in just a few moments the whole room can be full of candles. What’s that old saying they have on the Library of Congress that says, “As one candle lights another, so nobleness enkindleth nobleness.” The point is that you can multiple this very quickly.

And so I thought that’s the same thing that we would do with computers. People said it’s just too vast a problem to fix. But it was something I wasn’t worried about at all.

And I give that to you in context because I think EMP is something to worry about, at all. And it was interesting because the discussions today, primarily driven from unfortunately some of the industry or some of the people that don’t want to face some of the realities there, they begin to pooh-pooh it in general. On the one hand they say, well, we shouldn’t worry about nuclear – a couple of years ago nuclear EMP, high altitude EMP was not a big deal. We should worry about GMD, geomagnetic disturbance, because that’s inevitable and that’s real, right?

Well today that equation has shifted because they’ve had so much conversation about GMD. And so now they’re trying to suggest that the sun is not that big a deal, that we can handle that. So the point is, there’s always been this issue, whether its missile defense – as you know, the left has always tried to play that down.

They said, oh that’s ridiculous. That’s like hitting a bullet with a bullet. You’ve heard all that. And even today, I hear some of those arguments that I heard 20 years ago. And those have been completely debunked, but that’s what we deal with.

The Defense Department had, I thought, a very good witness there at the conference in London, and this is Paul Stockton. He’s a Democrat, and I’ve forgiven him for that because his testimony was just excellent. But the main point was that, as he said, as someone that’s in charge of making sure that we can deliver on our defense mission, we are dependent on the civilian grid for 99 percent of our electricity needs. He said, we try to have some redundancy on base, but in general in a very short period of time we have to have 90 percent of our electricity needs met by the civilian grid.

And he said, and yet I have no influence over that at all. And without that, we can’t fulfill our mission. We had two years ago one of the Defense Department officials – I won’t mention his name because I don’t think this was on the record – because he said, this is the one problem that could defeat us. This is the one threat that could defeat the Department of Defense. And I thought that was significant.

The discussions also pointed out that when we went into Iraq one of the first things that we did was to use EMP technology to take out Iraqi transformers. Well that’s significant, in my mind. One of the first elements of any nuclear exchange protocol would be to do an EMP lay-down first. So at least the military thinks EMP is real.
They spent billions and billions of dollars hardening our missile defense apparatus, hardening our nuclear triad, hardening nearly every component in jet aircraft that they can. Even though these are very robust electronics already, we spend billions of dollars hardening our systems. And I can tell you as someone who’s had the privilege of going to a lot of our missile defense facilities, whether it’s Vandenberg or Fort – whatever it is – I can tell you the effort that they have put in to defending against EMP, to protect against EMP, is profound.

So with that said, we’ve got a decision to make here. And that is, do we think EMP is a problem or not? If it’s not, let’s quit spending billions of dollars protecting against it. If it is and we do indeed depend on 99 percent of our electricity needs for the Defense Department from the civilian grid, and the civilian grid being butterfly delicate in the scatter controls and things of that nature, then we should protect the civilian grid. We’ve got to make up our mind one way or the other.

Now it’s interesting because in the military complex, the defense world, you don’t really have much argument about EMP. They now it’s real, both natural and man-made. But in some of the private sector you have that difficulty.

So, I guess in times of sudden crisis we should remember that we don’t rise to the occasion most of the time. We default to our level of preparation. And from my perspective, there’s a moment in the life of every problem – nearly every problem – when it’s big enough to be seen by reasonable people and still small enough to be addressed or solved. And when it comes to weaponized EMP that could potentially threaten the mechanism of civilization, I think we’re seeing the window start to close on that potential danger.

All of you have probably read about Iran – they’re not so secret – their prognostications on how to use EMP against the West and about how they think that this could be devastatingly effective. You’ve heard about Russian generals in moments of anger threatening those things, privately. So it is something that I think that we have to be very diligent about and we have to be assiduous as a people to study and to know what we have to do. But in the midst of Iran’s belligerence continuation and even acceleration of its nuclear program, while other countries like China, North Korea continue to develop and test missile technology that are consistent only with an EMP attack, where they detonate their dummy warhead at apogee, and it just seems like when terrorists are citing EMP as one of their best ways to attack the West, it’s something that we need to realize that that window is closing.

And I believe that our first and most important protection against a state actor is still missile defense because it does a couple of things. Obviously everyone understands that the ability to be able to interdict an incoming ICBM that could detonate over our country from long range, that’s important, especially with some of the things that North Korea is doing even. And there will be more information on that, I think, that is shortly to come into the public domain that I think is very significant.

But missile defense also does something else, and that is that it devalues these assets in the hands of state actors like Iran because they already know that they’re this close to Israel or someone in the world saying we just cannot abide a nuclear Iran. And I can’t even begin to express to you my own intensity of feeling on that front. But they know that they’re really in a dangerous position. So if
someone is able to have a missile defense capability that can completely mitigate their threat, in terms of a missile-borne threat, then it begins to take away the value of having that and offset against the danger of pursuing it. It changes the equation.

But if we don’t have that ability, and Mr. Obama certainly taking out our missile defense site in Europe, in my judgment that was a terrible mistake; not because there isn’t some wonderful elements of the Phased Adaptive Approach that they suggests should replace it, but because most of the Phased Adaptive Approach elements were already on the books. They were already going to be done anyway. And the missile defense site in Europe did a couple of things for us.

First of all, just to consider the rudimentary, if you draw a line between Tehran and New York you go right over the planned missile defense field in Poland. The telemetry is just impossible to ignore. So it was something that was a redundant protection for the homeland, the United States, and it was saying to Iran if you send something over we will knock it down and then we will come knocking on your door. And you won’t like what we have to say.

The point is, that’s no longer the equation. We’re not going to have any redundant protection for the homeland, given the administration’s plans, probably until 2021. That’s my guess.

And the way they keep building down, I was talking earlier about some of the motors built for GBIs. They projected, they used logic, and I expressed that that was their mistake in this town. Logic is not something that you want to aspire to.

But they have an abundance of motors for these GBIs because they thought we’re going to build more as we go. It just seems like we begin to slow our advance and our trajectory and our missile defense capability more and more. So the point is that we will not have redundant protection either for Europe or for the homeland because of the administration’s commitment to stop the missile defense site in Europe.

And I just have to tell you, to be political for a moment, you have to grant me diplomatic immunity if you will, I think that there are three elements that we need to consider when we impact in whatever way we intend to, the elections this fall. We have to understand that if this president maintains his place in office that we will probably see our economy being politically driven for a long time. And the directions that we will go in are going to be hard to extricate ourselves from in the future. We’re going to be in more of a European socialist model that will be extremely difficult.

If you talked to Maggie Thatcher today, she will tell you that the biggest challenge she had in being able to implement almost all of her policies, defense and otherwise, was the huge healthcare unions that were of a totally different persuasion than she was on almost everything. They had gained tremendous power. And once the economy is so – forgive me, I’m trying to find a better word, but socialized – then those who are so dependent on the economy or part of the government architecture, become the dominant political force. And unfortunately, that takes us in some directions on two other fronts that I think are very dangerous.
One, is what we talked about today, and that’s just our defense mechanism in general. We will see our defense mechanism built down to where I’m afraid – and I don’t think it’s an exaggeration – that in a decade America could begin to be considered more of a regional power than the unipolar superpower of the planet. And that is not good news for even the economy.

Because one of the things that makes this economy so powerful is that we’re able to keep shipping lanes open. We’re able to have a presence in all the world. We’re able to offer investors all over the planet the safest environment for productivity on earth. And people look to us as the place, the last bastion of safety, as it were, on the planet; the safest place in the world because we’re the ones that have the defense capacity that is superior to all others.

But the final thing, of course, is the people who will be on the Supreme Court. They will re-write our Constitution. We’re one vote away.

I had a case in the Supreme Court. I wrote a bill years ago in Arizona that I consider to be one of the most significant contributions I’ve made to the future, and it’s on parents being able to have a right to control the destiny and education of their children, to choose the schools their children go to. The way this was written, we should have won nine-to-zero.

We won five-to-four. It was a wonderful victory, but it meant that four of the Supreme Court justices were willing to say the money in your pocket, Lou, before you ever spend it or fill out a tax return, is just the same as government money in terms of what government can tell you to do with it or not do with it in educating your child or helping to get someone else to educate their child. I won’t get into esoteric details, but it was very significant. And yet, we won by one vote. And so if we see this president appoint two, maybe three more justices, we will have almost a tectonic shift in our Constitutional foundations.

Now I’m getting a little off track because I’m chairman of the Constitution Committee here in the Congress, and so it is something that is of consequence. But it has every implication for national defense, whether it’s our terrorist policies or whether it’s our engagement policies. It has every significance to us. And so while I’m in that neighborhood, I pray you all consider that because this next election, upon it, depends pretty much everything that some of us have fought for our whole lives.

All of us here share the immense privilege and burden of leadership in a critical moment in mankind’s history. And I think it’s incumbent upon everyone of us, regardless of party, to do everything in our power to bring about a day when our children will no longer be threatened by a future that could be darkened forever by a single moment in which a natural or malicious EMP or some other attack can occur.

And as someone once said, great societies finally come when old men plant trees under whose shade they will never sit. And if we’re successful in our endeavors there may actually be a time or day that comes when someone says look, you built this massive defense mechanism. You build this huge missile defense capability, and you hardened your whole grid, and you didn’t need to do it. It was all nonsense.
And I’ll be the first one to stand at the front of the line and apologize for that, if that day comes. I’ll be happy to do that. I know the motivations in our hearts were sincere.

But god save us from a day when we might have to, in the aftermath of some major tragedy, especially something like a continental EMP attack that would devastate our society – I have the faces of my two little three-year olds that come to mind when I say that – and we have to apologize to the survivors for not doing the things that we could have done that was in our power to do. And so I guess that would be my final thought to you. I hope that we would remember that life is pretty short and you and I find ourselves in a critical moment in history.

And we are maybe not the elected and maybe not even the appointed and maybe not even the chosen, from our own perspective, leaders of this area, but we find ourselves here in this room. We find ourselves in this place. And I think we have a responsibility to do everything that we can to make sure that the children and generations of the future walk in the sunlight of freedom.

And I often quote Ronald Reagan because he was one of my great heroes. And it’s interesting because apart from the picture on the wall here, I don’t think that we would be talking about missile defense – we probably wouldn’t be talking about it because he had the courage at a time, when we didn’t have anything like we have today, to believe that it could come. And so we owe him a great deal.

And he said, you and I have a rendezvous with destiny. And you remember he said, you and I have a rendezvous with destiny. We can preserve this, the last best hope of mankind on earth for our children, or we can sentence them to take that very last step into 1,000 years of darkness.

If we do fail, at least let our children and our children’s children say of us that we justified our brief moment here. We did all that could be done. And I just hope that future generations look to this one and say we did all we could do.

I’m going to stop right there. And if there’s time for questions, Peter, that’ll give us time to do that.

(Applause).

MR. HUESSY: Let me start with two questions. Could you review some of the missile defense issues or even nuclear issues you think are going to occur up on the floor on the House in consideration of the HASC bill? And second, would you relay to us, to the extent you can, the comments of the British minister of defense on how – from the perspective of the British government – how they see EMP?

REP. FRANKS: Well I appreciate two very good questions. Let me take the first one first. The primary focus of our august opposition on the Armed Services Committee, which is probably going to be played out and extrapolated on the floor, that seems to be – they’re just going to try to repeat that effort on the floor.
And it was essentially two main areas, to build down GMD. They want to cut hundreds of millions of dollars out of GMD. And, of course, we reminded them that this is the only tested system that we have that protects the homeland against ICBMs. And to me, that’s a significant issue.

(Laughter).

And it’s astonishing that they don’t hear that. And interestingly enough, the second area is the East Coast site, of which I obviously am very strongly for. And they have gotten – the administration has a few generals that will say we don’t need the East Coast site because we can reach Iranian missiles, if they should come, with our GBIs on the West Coast and in Alaska.

And technically, that may be true. But we are going to have increased redundant protection by having a site on the East Coast. That’s unavoidable. There’s 2,000 miles difference.

They don’t travel at the speed of light. I suppose Boeing wishes that we had a few more lasers that do, that travel at Mach 870,000. That’s pretty cool when you can do that. Then you can ignore 2,000 miles of continental reality. But when you’re on the East Coast, you do have some second looks, so additional opportunities. And that seems pretty important when you’re talking about potentially devastating attacks from an enemy that wants to see us not exist anymore.

And so I will tell you that we won pretty much all of those debates pretty handily and I think we will on the floor. But that seems to be the main effort, to stop any effort to do anything on the East Coast, and to build down our missile defense capability. And I’ll tell you, I guess I’ll never understand why they can’t figure out something that’s not crucial.

It seems like that – that we’re debating the things that are most important. That’s their focus of their cuts, and I’ll never understand that. The sequestration, of course, is of profound concern to all of us.

To answer your second question, they call him, I think, the secretary for the defense ministry, or something like that, in England. It’s a little different than the secretary of defense. But on the one hand he emphasized that the best protection against EMP was a good deterrent. And nobody believes in deterrence more than I do, but this seemed to be his answer to it.

But at the same time, he was very explicit that he realized that it was a clear and present danger, that it was real. The only thing that I would have disagreed with the gentleman, was that his primary emphasis was not hardening the grid, but was telling the potential enemies of England or the West that if you hit us with EMP, even if it’s not over our actual coast, over our homeland, we will consider it the same as if it were a nuclear attack on our country and our response will be accordingly. And I think that’s not a bad idea.

I mean, probably some wise heads have to think through all of the idiosyncracies of it and figure out just how we articulate it. But I think it’s an important thing to do that because I do believe that there’s a possibility that with some of the super EMP weapons now, some of the enhanced gamma ray weapons that are out there that could be much smaller and be very significant in terms of their EMP
capability, that there’s a possibility that they may launch something perhaps on the east coast of the
Atlantic at high altitude and never even come over our shore, never even come over our homeland and
still devastate a lot of our infrastructure on the East Coast. So I think he’s right in that regard that we
need to have a very clearly articulated military response to EMP.

But there’s no substitute, in my mind, for hardening the grid, and I’ll give you a couple of
reasons why. First of all, it takes that plum that’s just sitting there, that low-hanging fruit for terrorists
that think this is the way to get them, this is an on/off switch for America, this is a way we can really nail
them. We only need one nuclear warhead and we need to go out and spend about $20 on a Scud.
That’s an exaggeration, but the point is they don’t need a great deal of sophistication to do it. They
don’t need – if it’s Iran, they’ve got Shahab 3, they’ve got anything that they need to make the delivery.

And we need to take away that incentive, because if they know that they could potentially bring
America to its knees by one attack, can you imagine the motivation there? And what concerns me is
that anybody that looks at this honestly will say that that is a genuine, genuine vulnerability. And if you
look throughout history, in the military journals, you will almost find without doubt that every time,
every time our vulnerability was the one the enemy figured out, that they did try to exploit it. They
didn’t just look at it, they tried to exploit it.

And it’s like Sun Tzu said, know your weaknesses, because by god – that’s my addition – your
enemy will. And they will know your weaknesses and they will try to exploit it. And so I think that we
need to take that off the table so that there’s no doubt about it.

And then the other issue here, and this is a little sensitive, if we had some sort of mid-range or
medium-range missile – it still goes exo-atmospheric and we could still reach it with GBIs – but if we had
something that was pretty close, like a smaller boxer inside the reach of a bigger one, we could have
some difficulties in being able to get our systems off in time to interdict a mid-range or a medium-range
or even a short-range missile, and find ourselves – maybe if they had like a fuse on the warhead to
where if there was anything fired at it that it detonated it – where we could actually precipitate EMP on
our own country by our defense response. And so we need to make sure that we are hardened in case
we do have EMP and so that we take away that incentive for a potential enemy. I think it’s absolutely
vital.

We have a bill. I want to tell all of you – you already know about it. But let me say this to you,
and I have to be somewhat careful because I don’t know what potential political opposition there is in
the room, but we think we’re going to get a vote on the bill. We have every reason to believe that. And
if there are any of you that have any influence on – whether it’s the administration, the Senate is a really
important one, but we even think there’s some amenability there, if that’s a word, that they’re
amenable – and we think that we’re going to get Democrat support in the House. And essentially this
bill would start us down the road.

It does a couple of three things. And I don’t want to take advantage of the time here, but it
would certainly protect us against geomagnetic disturbance because it would put neutral phase blockers
or some hardware capability in the grid to where if there was a surge it would be protected. And I want
to deal with that for just a second because it’s very, very important. And then the second thing, it would deal with nuclear EMP by beginning to now build hardening into the (scatter ?) controls and the control systems that would be probably the most significant vulnerability from a nuclear EMP.

But let me just for a second give you a one dynamic that I think is important for insurance companies and for people concerned about liability and people concerned about the private sector power grid operators. If you’re a power grid operator and somebody calls you up and says, you know what? We have a major CME here. It looks like we’ve got a corona mass ejection that’s aimed right at us and it’s a monster. And we’ll be able to tell you tomorrow about this time that you have less than an hour to make a decision to shut down your power station, your grid, the parts that you control. And then you’ll just have a few minutes to get it done.

But we’ve also got to tell you, in the interest of full disclosure, that if we say that there is a definite problem, that two out of three times we’re going to be wrong because we have some polarity issues with the earth that can change and we don’t know whether this is going to be 500 or 5,000 nanoTeslas. We don’t know exactly what, but it’s going to be a big one. It could be dangerous. And if it does hit, it’s going to take out your grid and thousands of people are going to die in your area.

So now you’re the grid owner and they come and say shut it down. And you know when you shut it down that people are going to die because they always do. Think when Quebec – eight or nine people died just the time that it was down, that short period of time. And yet, if you don’t, you know a lot more people are going to die if it’s real. But two out of three times it’s not going to be real.

Isn’t that a tremendous paradox to be in? Do you understand the liability? Do you understand the insurance companies look at that and they say if it’s a false alarm and people die they’re going to sue this power company into the medieval age. And then if they don’t, my god, you don’t even know how to wrap your brain around the liability that comes after an EMP attack that people got warning for and didn’t shut down. So it is very important.

And this is the thing different about the Shield Act rather than the old Grid Act. It calls for hardware based solutions that says it’s great to have all these procedures but we want to make sure that there’s hardware there that doesn’t have to guess whether there’s going to be a major GIC or not, that it’s going to react if there is. And it’s kind of like a lightning rod. You don’t move your house out of the storm, you have a lightning rod there in case it strikes, that you’re protected.

It’s a long answer. I’m sorry, Peter. Do we have time for another one? I’ll try to be – he just asked the right questions.

MR. : Congressman, you mentioned sequestration, and I applaud the attempts of your committee to try to solve it, maybe only in the short term, but anyway trying to do something. But it doesn’t appear, by my calculations that the authorization bill will be passed before the election, kicking it into the lame-duck. I’m not sure you’re aware of this or your colleagues are aware of this, but industry is going to have to start issuing war notices in some cases 60 days out, in others 90 days out, depending on the state. And this is not an issue that can be kicked down the road. Somehow,
something has got to give. And I understand the politics and the posturing with the election and all that, but –

REP. FRANKS: Yeah, I appreciate it. I want you to know this member totally embraces what you’re saying. I absolutely – I wish I didn’t, but I totally believe you are right. I’ll just take two things.

Number one, and maybe this is just self-defense, I don’t know, but you know I didn’t vote for the bill that created the possibility of sequestration. And I was beaten to a pulp for that. And my one reason, one, was that I believed that our Democrat opponents would in fact try to go ahead and say we’re going to create the stalemate and create the sequester.

I looked at that equation and I – first of all, on the Medicare side, the Medicare cuts, they are draconian. But there’s some created caps in there that kind of mitigates the damage. And then it also presupposes that Republicans want to push all the old folks off the cliff, you know, which is kind of an unfair thing. But that’s the way it was juxtaposed to the world.

And I believed that they probably would do exactly what they’re doing. And it wasn’t arrogant on my part to say that to you. I truly believed that it looked to me like that’s what they would do and that’s what they’ve done. But I had to go against my own leadership, both on the committee and the House, to vote against this. And now we’ve got a real problem.

The second thing, of course, that I would say, is that the president has said that he would veto any effort to end the sequestration. And I believe that probably we have two – again, diplomatic immunity still invoked here, you understand that. We have two things that we have to do to save this country’s defense apparatus.

We have to change presidents and we have to stop this sequestration, and we have to do it as soon as we can. And I want you to know I’ve suggested – last year I said we’re going to have to do everything to stop this sequestration, including creating a mechanism in our defense authorization because that’s the bill that we have the strongest push to get through because we can leverage the other side for not doing what’s necessary for our national security. And sequestration, the ending of that, was so important to our national security that we should do that.

And they have proceeded to do that, but I don’t know if it’s going to be successful. It looks very iffy to me. And so my question to you, and I mean this sincerely, there’s no rhetoric here, what do you all think that can be done? Because some of us are willing to jump off the Capitol if that would help. But I don’t know what can we – we really messed up here. And I don’t know what can be done, but do you think that we’re pursuing the best strategy we can or do you think that there’s something else that we can do?

MR.: I’m not sure about the strategy, because it changes day-to-day on both sides.

REP. FRANKS: Yeah.
MR. : But I listened to a briefing by one of your colleagues, who is pretty far right, and he suggested that there was going to have to be a compromise. And the compromise might include raising taxes, which I’m not in favor of, but if that’s what it takes to get this solved, there’s going to have to be give and take on both sides. And unfortunately in this environment, that doesn’t exist. So I don’t have an answer.

REP. FRANKS: I don’t disagree. Let me just say this, because it’s important. You hit on a subject and I want to be very open about this. It’s true that I’ve never voted for a tax increase in my life. And it’s true that I don’t want to change that.

But this is a matter of national security. I don’t want to regulate the electric industry, but my bill does that. When you’re talking about a national security issue you’re talking about something that supersedes the other considerations.

And if it was a matter of raising taxes, and I thought that that would save our defense capability, I would do it. But there are two things. Right now, the way this thing is structured, the tax increases that the Obama administration tried to put in place ignore defense. They go right past it. They don’t do anything for defense.

Secondly, it’s been my experience, and if you look back at the Bush tax cuts – and that’s a monster on the horizon in January – that thing is going to come at us like an economic sledgehammer. But if you look at that, when those cuts went into place we increased our revenues by over $100 billion a year because ultimately, productivity is the sum and substance of all economy. And when we have economic activity that truly is productive, then we have something to tax, something to create revenue. And I’m finding a smaller piece of something is worth more than a larger piece of nothing.

So that’s my concern. But I’m willing to hear anything like that, especially if we could say this could only go to – or at least enough of it goes to defense to save defense. I’m hoping. And I am to the right. Let me tell you something, people that are to the right of me, I get nervous about being around them.

(Laughter).

So you understand where I am on that.

MR. : I want to thank you for the Shield Act – outstanding. Just last year, I believe, correct me if I’m wrong, Emprimus brought a 75 foot piece of operation that cost something in terms of research and development, $4 million. Can you comment on how you think that piece of equipment – and I’m not a scientist.

REP. FRANKS: No, that’s okay. That was a neutral phase blocker. That was the technical name. And essentially – in fact, to reproduce this on a mass scale would be $200,000 to $250,000. It’s not terribly expensive.
They had it out here on the West Portico of the Capitol and I climbed around on it. It’s an amazing piece of equipment. It’s about the size of a tractor trailer without the tractor, just the trailer part.

And this would go into the main lines going into a transformer. It would be very in-obtrusive, given the superstructure of these sub-stations. And it would go on the neutral phase.

And for those of you that don’t play much in the whole electrical engineering area, you’ve got hot phases and one neutral phase usually. And, of course, it can go up to enormous voltage. But in the neutral phase, if it’s interrupted – if the neutral phase is interrupted it doesn’t arc.

I mean, it’s easy to interrupt. If you interrupt one of the hot phases, you know, you can create a giant welder right there. I mean, it’s a very serious thing, and it takes a lot of energy to break that connection.

On a neutral phase it doesn’t. And this neutral phase blocker would, if there was any sort – it’d be almost like a GIC in your house. If there’s any current disturbance, if it looks like there’s a short or if it looks like the electricity is going to ground, it would immediately open that circuit and stop the transformer from being cooked.

It’s really that simple. It’s really just almost like a super-fast breaker in the neutral phase going into the transformer. And I want to say this. I don’t have any connection to any of those technologies. I don’t have any – I don’t even have any political connection that I know of. I don’t care what the industry uses to protect the grid as long as it works.

I’ve always said that government shouldn’t pick the method. They should just say this is what the outcome needs to be when it comes to national security. How to protect it, how to do it – as long as we can say that this works, that it is a viable, plausible, workable mechanism -- great. I think this is one of them. And I think something like that – there are capacitors and other things that can be put on the transformers that I’m told are very significant, very workable, very efficacious.

So, Lou, I saw the thing. I was terribly impressed with it. But it just shows me that we can fix this. And interestingly enough, we have about 300 critical, critical transformers in our 750KV corridors. And we’re talking $250,000 a piece to protect those. Do you realize, given the size and the cost and the amount of money that we spend every day on electricity – and we have 1,000 transformers that would be semi-important, that’d be pretty important – we could protect the whole thing and add about $.20 a year to the average electric rate payer.

Now to me that seems like good insurance for something that can prevent the meltdown of civilization. I don’t know, that’s just me. But the thing about this thing is it seems reasonable. It seems reasonable to do that, so I appreciate your bringing it up. This can be fixed, easier than Y2K could have.

MR. HUESSY: Trent, let’s take one more question.
MS.: Sir, forgive me for coming in late and you may have already covered this. I hope I’m not making you repeat something. But I understand the nuclear power plant in Arizona, the Palo Verde Nuclear Power Plant, is at the forefront of protecting themselves against a long-term power outage. Is there any way that could be -- that what they are doing could be regulated across the nuclear (industry ?)?

REP. FRANKS: Well I was there at the Palo Verde Nuclear Power Plant. It’s one of the largest – I think it may be the largest one that we have now. And it’s an incredible facility and I was there about a year and a half or two years ago. And we discussed this, and they have taken some tremendous steps in, I think, a very important direction.

The thing to remember with nuclear power plants – and it’s vital that we protect them – but they cannot cold start. They can’t do it. They’ve got to have -- you know, we can cold start up at the Hoover Dam. The old guys can cold start, but the new guys can’t.

So it’s going to be important not only to protect them but also to make sure that we protect enough of the grid to where we don’t have to cold start or where we have the ability to where we don’t completely lose the grid in order to be able to black start or cold start, however you want to use that phrase. But they are going in the right direction, and that’s very gratifying to me. But we’re so far away from where we need to be.

Right now, if a significant 80 to 100 kiloton warhead went off over the center of our country at maybe 70 to 100 kilometers – that’s not a big weapon, that’s a Chevrolet Impala in the car world, it’s just a standard everyday nuclear weapon – and for that to go off at that altitude would take out our grid in a very serious way. It would be devastating to our country. And it just seems to me, as long as that exists, I think it may be our most significant short-term national security threat.

And I hope somebody -- I would be just tickled to death -- if somebody could say no, the guy is crazy and here’s why. That would just make me happy because those little three-year olds I talk about all the time do mean a lot to me. I waited a long time for them and I want to make sure that they get to sit at tables like this when they grow up.

And god bless you all. Thank you very much, and I appreciate the questions.

(Applause).