

SECURING THE GRID

A Case Study in the Center for Security Policy's Return on Investment

The Center for Security Policy's Founder and President, Frank J. Gaffney, became concerned about the vulnerability of the U.S. electric grid during his service as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear Forces and Arms Control Policy under President Reagan. He first wrote publicly about the grounds for such concerns in a column in the *Washington Times* on August 19, 2003 entitled, "The Blackout Next Time." It discussed how the widespread blackout of that month – in which Americans from Michigan to New England lost power for two days – should be a wake-up call to the nation and inform the nation of the work of the Congressional Commission on the Threat of Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) Attack.

The Commission subsequently produced its first report in 2004, providing a blueprint for 1) calibrating the threat posed to the grid by EMP or other attacks and by naturally occurring intense solar storms and 2) protecting both U.S. military forces and the homeland from such events. Its chairman assessed that, should there be a nationwide power outage for a year or more, *nine out of ten* Americans are likely to perish.

The Center has, consequently, worked tirelessly ever since to secure implementation of the Commission's recommendations. For example, it highlighted them in a chapter in the 2006 book, *War Footing: Ten Steps America Must Take to Prevail in the War for the Free World*. The chapter's co-authors were the two preeminent leaders on electromagnetic pulse in Congress, then-U.S. Representatives Curt Weldon and Roscoe Bartlett. They entitled their contribution, "Counter the Mega-Threat: EMP Attack."

Four years later, the EMP Commission published a second unclassified report. It was the subject of "An Avoidable Catastrophe," a *Washington Times* column by Mr. Gaffney published on July 20, 2009, and another that appeared on September 7th entitled "EMP and You." The latter described the first-ever public conference which the Center inspired and co-sponsored in Niagara Falls, New York to raise awareness about EMP and the inherent resiliency of that region's critical hydroelectric plant.

In 2011, frustrated by the continuing failure of official Washington to heed the EMP Commission's warnings, the Center for Security Policy formed the Secure the Grid (STG) Coalition – a classic example of its "Special Forces in the War of Ideas." This distinguished group of national and energy security practitioners has as its honorary co-chairmen former House Speaker Newt Gingrich and former Clinton Director of Central Intelligence R. James Woolsey. Coalition members include prominent subject matter experts, think tanks, business executives, and staff members of the Congressional EMP Commission. The STG Coalition has also established an adjunct, state-level advisory group comprised of activists, mechanical engineers, defense and space contractors, emergency planners, grassroots volunteers, National Guard members and local intelligence and FBI analysts.

Since its founding, the Secure the Grid Coalition has engaged in a wide variety of activities aimed at highlighting threats to the nation's electric infrastructure and pressing for them to be addressed. These have included the following:

- Using multi-media platforms and congressional testimony to **connect the proverbial dots** between the grid's vulnerability and such events as: a July 22, 2012 "Carrington-class" solar storm – a potential major EMP event – that narrowly missed the Earth; Superstorm Sandy which struck the Eastern seaboard, leaving 8 million customers in 17 states without power – more than one million of whom did not get service back for a week or more; North Korea's suspected plans to use satellites to deliver an EMP attack and its apparent 2013 dress rehearsal for employing a tramp steamer in the Gulf of Mexico to launch such an attack via a short-range missile; and, on April 16, 2013, a highly professional act of sabotage on a major transformer substation close to San Jose, California, which nearly destroyed the power transmission system that supplies electricity to much of northern California and Silicon Valley.
- Conducting **four National Security Action Summits** in early primary states to expose presidential candidates and voters to the urgent need to make the grid resilient. One of the speakers at the Center's Iowa NSAS was Donald J. Trump, who asked for and received a private briefing on the grid, among other topics, prior to his remarks.
- Supporting **federal legislation** to increase grid resiliency. While a number of these initiatives have been thwarted due to adamant opposition from the electric utilities and their powerful lobbyists, the Coalition did play a decisive role in getting one enacted at the end of 2016: the Critical Infrastructure Protection Act (CIPA). CIPA requires the Department of Homeland Security to assess the grid's vulnerability against all hazards and prepare a plan for mitigating that vulnerability.
- Recruiting and working with activists in **twenty states** to create awareness of the threats to their electric infrastructure and enlist the help of their states' leaders and citizens to secure the grid. To this end, the Coalition has co-sponsored and/or participated in briefings for governors and their staffs, adjutants general, lawmakers, public utilities commissions, corporate executives, media and other influential figures in what might be called the "grasstops" in a number of these states.

Opinion research indicates that sizeable majorities of Americans across the country now have an appreciation of the implications of a grid-down situation for their own well-being and are willing to pay more for their electrical bills in order to have it prevented. The STG Coalition takes real pride in having contributed to this level of awareness, which is contributing to the sort of sea-change evident in recent legislative actions in Texas in which overwhelming majorities in both houses of the state legislature voted for steps to begin "hardening" the grid.

- Holding **federal regulators** accountable for adopting standards for the electric utilities that are wholly inadequate to the task of ensuring that the grid is resilient against sabotage,

cyberwarfare, EMP attacks and intense solar storms. Coalition members have: testified before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission; submitted expert analyses to inform the FERC's deliberations; used multi-media platforms to expose malfeasant decisions; and recommended to the Trump administration grid-savvy candidates to fill FERC commissioner vacancies.

- Publishing through the efforts of Secure the Grid Coalition members half-a-dozen invaluable **books** – including the Center's *Guilty Knowledge: What the US Government Knows about the Vulnerability of the Electric Grid, But Refuses to Fix* – and scores of **op.eds. and news articles**. These have illuminated: the magnitude of the danger posed by a non-resilient grid; the factors contributing to the needless vulnerability of America's electric infrastructure; what can be done to protect the grid; and how individual citizens can help, both through their own preparedness and through effective public advocacy.

These examples illustrate how the Center for Security Policy uniquely, skillfully and creatively makes a difference – and *provides return on investment*. Its Secure the Grid Coalition has been instrumental in the transformation of the issue of grid vulnerability from the insulated preoccupation of a small group of experts into what it must be: a priority public policy issue. As a result, it now seems increasingly likely that action will shortly be taken at the federal and/or state levels to neutralize what would otherwise be a nation-ending menace by rendering the grid resilient. With the help of those who invest in the Center, we are determined to make a redoubled effort to ensure that such steps are taken *in time*.