

FINALLY! OUR DECLINING MANUFACTURING BASE BECOMES A NATIONAL SECURITY ISSUE

I have long argued that the way to address the big problems our government is currently all-but-ignoring, not least jobs and climate change, is to talk about how our current policies put us at significant national security risk. If nothing else, by demonstrating how these are national security issues, it'll provide a way to reverse fear-monger against the Republicans trying to gut our country for profit.

Which is why I'm happy to learn that the intelligence community is assessing whether the decline in manufacturing in the US represents a national security threat.

The U.S. intelligence community will prepare a National Intelligence Estimate on the implications of the continuing decline in U.S. manufacturing capacity, said Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) citing recent news reports.

Our growing reliance on imports and lack of industrial infrastructure has become a national security concern," said Rep. Schakowsky. She spoke at a March 16 news conference (at 28:10) in opposition to the pending U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement. The Forbes report referenced by Rep. Schakowsky was "Intelligence Community Fears U.S. Manufacturing Decline," by Loren Thompson, February 14. The decision to prepare an intelligence estimate was first reported by Richard McCormack in "Intelligence Director Will Look at National Security Implications of U.S. Manufacturing

Note that Schakowsky is a member of (and until January, was a Subcommittee Chair on) the House Intelligence Committee. It's possible her own requests generated this concern.

But the concern is real. As our manufacturing moves to places like China and (significantly for this context), Korea, we've lost certain capabilities. Indeed, when Bush slapped tariffs on steel in 2002, a number of tool and die factories moved to Korea where they could still access cheap steel while still supplying the US market. And in recent years, the loss of highly-skilled manufacturing process capabilities has meant we face challenges in sourcing some of our key military toys.

While it shouldn't be the primary reason to invest in manufacturing in this country, ultimately if we keep losing it we're going to have problems sustaining our military machine.

Most of the folks running DC may not much care that our middle class has disappeared along with our manufacturing base. But convince them that our declining manufacturing base might imperil their cherished military might, and they might finally wake up.