

BARACK OBAMA: THE AMERICAN MOMENT

“I believe that the single most important job of any President is to protect the American people. And I am equally convinced that doing that job effectively in the 21st century will require a new vision of American leadership and a new conception of our national security – a vision that draws from the lessons of the past, but is not bound by outdated thinking. In today’s globalized world, the security of the American people is inextricably linked to the security of all people.”

[Speech in Chicago, IL, 4/23/07]

OBAMA’S VISION OF AMERICAN SECURITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

1. ENDING THE WAR IN IRAQ

“Thus far, the Iraqi government has made very little progress . . . in part because the president has refused time and again to tell the Iraqi government that we will not be there forever. The president’s escalation of U.S. forces may bring a temporary reduction in the violence in Baghdad, at the price of increased U.S. casualties – though the experience so far is not encouraging. But it cannot change the political dynamic in Iraq. A phased withdrawal can.”

Barack Obama opposed the war in Iraq before the American invasion, at a time when most politicians and voters supported it. His courageous stand, detailed in a speech in Chicago in October 2002, showed vision, foresight, and judgment. Today, Obama, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, is one of the leading voices on Iraq policy. His legislation to bring a responsible end to the war in Iraq, S.433, helped form the basis of the bill passed by the Senate. Obama’s plan:

De-escalates the War with Phased Redeployment. Commences a phased redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq not later than May 1, 2007, with the goal of removing all combat brigades by March 31, 2008, a date consistent with the expectation of the Iraq Study Group. This responsible redeployment will be both substantial and gradual and will be planned and implemented by military commanders. The plan makes clear that Congress believes troops should be redeployed to the United States; to Afghanistan; and to other points in the region. A residual U.S. presence may remain in Iraq for force protection, training of Iraqi security forces, and counter-terrorism operations.

Enforces Tough Benchmarks for Progress. The Obama plan sets 13 benchmarks for Iraqi security, political accommodation, and economic progress. If these are met, Congress could pause the phased redeployment for a limited period. Their purpose is to encourage Iraqis to make the tough political compromises necessary to end the civil war and avert a worst-case scenario.

Emphasizes Regional Diplomacy. Launches a comprehensive regional and international diplomatic initiative - that includes key nations in the region - to help achieve a political settlement among the Iraqi people, end the civil war in Iraq, and prevent a humanitarian catastrophe and regional conflict. Recommends the president appoint a special envoy for Iraq to carry out this diplomacy within 60 days. Mandates that the president submit a plan to prevent the war in Iraq from becoming a wider regional conflict.

Focus on the Broader Middle East and Central Asia. Barack Obama would refocus our efforts on the challenges in the wider Middle East, where Hamas and Hezbollah feel emboldened and Israel's prospects for secure peace seem uncertain, while U.S. diplomatic engagement has been sporadic; on preventing Iran, which has been strengthened by the war in Iraq, from acquiring nuclear weapons; and on Afghanistan, where more American forces and resources are needed to defeat a resurgent Taliban, finish the battle against al Qaeda, and stop that country from continuing to backslide toward instability.

2. RESTORE OUR MILITARY

"We must maintain the strongest, best-equipped military in the world in order to defeat and deter conventional threats. But while sustaining our technological edge will always be central to our national security, the ability to put boots on the ground will be critical in eliminating the shadowy terrorist networks we now face. This is why our country's greatest military asset is the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States."

The military is being severely strained by repeated and lengthy deployments and not given the support it deserves by the civilian leadership. We owe our men and women in uniform the best equipment, training and post-combat support our country can provide.

- 1.4 million servicemen and women have served in Iraq or Afghanistan; more than 420,000 troops have deployed more than once. All but one of the Army's 44 combat brigades have served in Iraq or Afghanistan, and a quarter of these fighting units have already deployed three or more times.
- According to General Peter Pace, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 40 percent of Army and Marine Corps equipment is either in Iraq, or being repaired. In addition, the Army National Guard has just a third of its required equipment on hand today in non-deployed units due to war losses, and wear and tear.

As president, Barack Obama will rebuild and reshape America's military for the challenges of the 21st century. He will:

Rebuild and Repair the Military. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have demonstrated the consequences of underestimating the number of troops required to fight two wars and defend our homeland. Barack Obama supports plans to increase the size of the Army by 65,000 troops and the Marines by 27,000 troops. Increasing our end strength will allow units to retrain and re-equip properly between deployments and decrease the strain on military families. Barack Obama also will invest in an equipment reset for the Armed

Services, including the National Guard, which has seen its readiness for homeland security missions decrease significantly.

Transform the Military to Meet 21st-Century Threats. Barack Obama will ensure the United States Armed Forces maintain their technological edge, but will also invest in our warfighters to ensure they have the skills and training to fight and win the 21st century's complicated conflicts. That includes counterinsurgency and intelligence expertise as well as language skills and cultural literacy. Obama supports incentives such as foreign language proficiency pay for high-demand languages.

Use Armed Forces Wisely. Barack Obama will never hesitate to use force, unilaterally when necessary, to protect our vital interests and confront imminent threats to U.S. national security. But when using force in situations other than self-defense, he believes the U.S. should make every effort to garner the clear support and participation of other nations. When sending troops in harm's way, Obama believes the U.S. must clearly define the mission, seek out the advice of our military commanders, evaluate the intelligence, and ensure that our troops have the resources, support, and equipment they need to protect themselves and fulfill their mission.

3. SECURE AND STOP THE SPREAD OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

"America must lead again . . . by marshalling a global effort to meet a threat that rises above all others in urgency – securing, destroying, and stopping the spread of weapons of mass destruction. . . . As President, I will lead a global effort to secure all nuclear weapons and material at vulnerable sites within four years – the most effective way to prevent terrorists from acquiring a bomb."

America is facing a dangerous new nuclear era. Terrorists are seeking nuclear weapons, and there is little doubt that if they acquire them or the materials to make them, they will use them. Iran and North Korea's nuclear programs are a threat to global security and could provoke a nuclear arms race that results in many more nuclear states. With the rising interest in nuclear energy, many countries are seeking to acquire civilian nuclear technology that could allow them one day to develop nuclear weapons.

There are still approximately 50 tons of highly enriched uranium at civilian nuclear facilities in over forty countries – some of it poorly secured. In the former Soviet Union, there are approximately 15,000-16,000 nuclear weapons and stockpiles of uranium and plutonium capable of making another 40,000 scattered across 11 time zones. People have been caught trying to smuggle nuclear materials to sell them on the black market.

As George Shultz, Bill Perry, Henry Kissinger and Sam Nunn have warned -- the actions we are taking now are not adequate to the danger. With the right kind of presidential leadership, this threat can be dramatically reduced.

Secure Materials in Four Years. Barack Obama will lead a global effort to secure all nuclear weapons and material at vulnerable sites within four years – the most effective

way to prevent terrorists from acquiring a catastrophic bomb. Barack Obama will work with Russia to make sure its nuclear weapons and every cache of nuclear material is secured. He will work with other countries to develop and implement a comprehensive set of standards to protect nuclear materials from attacks and theft. He also will increase the pace at which nuclear security detectors are placed at key border crossings.

Ban the Production of Materials to Make Nuclear Weapons. Barack Obama would negotiate a verifiable global ban on the production of highly enriched uranium and plutonium for use in nuclear weapons.

Stop Nuclear Smuggling. Barack Obama would fully implement the Lugar-Obama legislation to help our allies detect and stop the smuggling of weapons of mass destruction throughout the world.

Address Threats Posed by North Korea's and Iran's Nuclear Programs. Barack Obama would use a combination of diplomacy and pressure to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and to eliminate North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Obama will assemble an international coalition that will exert a collective will to convince these regimes that it is in their own interest to verifiably abandon their nuclear weapons efforts. He will provide the leadership essential to ensure the full implementation of the recent agreement with North Korea. With Iran, Obama will pursue intensified diplomacy and be prepared to talk directly with Iran. At the same time, he will build on recent actions by the U.N. Security Council to restrict the supply of nuclear technology and freeze the assets of Iranian leaders. Obama would also expand this effort by working with our key European trading partners and the Gulf States to increase economic pressure on Iran. Obama also would keep all other options on the table, including the use of force.

Prevent New Nuclear States. Countries should not be able to build a nuclear weapons program under the auspices of developing peaceful nuclear power. Toward that end, Barack Obama would create an international fuel bank to back up commercial fuel supplies so there is an assured supply of fuel and no more excuses for nations like Iran to build their own enrichment plants. The Nuclear Threat Initiative has offered \$50 million in funding to create such a bank provided it is matched 2-1 by government contributions. Obama would get the fuel bank started with a \$50 million investment by the United States and urge other nations to contribute to it, starting with Russia.

Lead by Example. To reduce global nuclear dangers, it is essential for the United States to lead by example. U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons remain in Cold War postures, increasing the risk of accidental or unauthorized launch. Barack Obama would work with Russia to take as many nuclear weapons off Cold War hair-trigger alert as possible and negotiate reductions in United States and Russian nuclear arsenals. With these changes, he will maintain a strong nuclear deterrent to protect America's security. And he will do so without rushing to produce a new generation of warheads that will send the wrong signal to the world.

4. REBUILD OUR ALLIANCES

“Today it’s become fashionable to disparage the United Nations, the World Bank, and other international organizations. In fact, reform of these bodies is urgently needed if they are to keep pace with the fast-moving threats of today. But real reform will not come . . . by bullying other countries Real reform will come because we convince others that they too have a stake in change – that such reforms will make their world, and not just ours, more secure.”

As president, Barack Obama will restore America’s leadership abroad, reform and enhance international organizations and strengthen our alliances.

Strengthen the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. For nearly 50 years, NATO was oriented to fighting the Cold War. NATO needs to continue its evolution to meet the emerging threats of the 21st century, including terrorism and weapons proliferation. Barack Obama will close the gap between NATO’s expanding missions and its lagging capabilities. He will rally members to contribute more troops, and increase NATO’s ability to deploy forces rapidly over long distances, and sustain high intensity operations for extended periods of time. He will work to streamline decision-making processes, and give commanders in the field more flexibility. And he will urge member states to invest more in reconstruction and stabilization.

Build Framework for East Asian Cooperation. In Asia, the emergence of an economically vibrant, more politically engaged China offers new opportunities for prosperity and cooperation. Barack Obama will forge a new and lasting framework for collective security in Asia that goes beyond bilateral agreements, occasional summits, and ad-hoc arrangements like the six-party talks. As president, he would work to develop a more effective regional framework with the countries in the region to promote stability and confront transnational threats.

Combat Global Climate Change. Climate change is an unprecedented man-made threat to the environment. While American lives, property and natural habitat are at direct risk, the destabilization and conflict that will be caused by potential droughts, migrations, border disputes, and food and water shortages around the world also pose serious threats to U.S. national security. In a report released April 16, retired Marine Corps General Anthony C. Zinni said, “We will pay to reduce greenhouse gas emissions today, and we’ll have to take an economic hit of some kind. Or, we will pay the price later in military terms. And that will involve human lives.” As the largest producer of greenhouse gases, America must lead by capping and reducing greenhouse emissions across the economy, and replacing more of our fossil fuels with clean-burning renewables and biofuels. Barack Obama would work towards binding, enforceable commitments from developed nations to reduce carbon emissions and provide more assistance to developing countries to help them fuel their growth with greener energy.

5. EXPAND SECURITY AND OPPORTUNITY ACROSS THE GLOBE

“The true desire of all mankind is not only to live free lives, but lives marked by dignity and opportunity; by security and simple justice.”

From the resurgent Al Qaeda presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan to the spread of avian flu in Asia and elsewhere, what happens in countries around the world can adversely impact U.S. national security. Barack Obama believes that strengthening weak states at risk of collapse, economic meltdown or public health crises strengthens America’s security. As president, Barack Obama will:

Double U.S. Spending on Foreign Aid to \$50 Billion a Year by 2012. Barack Obama would target this new spending towards strategic goals, including helping the world’s weakest states to build healthy and educated communities, reduce poverty, develop markets, and generate wealth. He also would help weak states to fight terrorism, halt the spread of deadly weapons, and build the health care infrastructure needed to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS as well as detect and contain outbreaks of avian influenza.

Demand More in Return. Obama believes that for developing countries to succeed and U.S. assistance to be most effective, they must take concrete steps to improve the rule of law, build transparent, accountable government institutions and renew respect for human rights. He would help developing countries invest in the pillars of a sustainable democracy – a strong legislature, an independent judiciary, the rule of law, a vibrant civil society, a free press, and an honest police force.

Work to Eliminate the Education Deficit. Worldwide, an estimated 100 million children are not attending school, according to Human Rights Watch. Barack Obama would invest part of increased U.S. assistance to establishing a \$2 billion Global Education Fund that spurs the world to join together to eliminate the global education deficit.

Reduce Debt of Developing Nations. Developing nations are amassing tremendous amounts of foreign debt that limit their economic development and make investments in public health, education, and infrastructure extremely difficult. Debt in Sub-Saharan Africa stands at \$235 billion, 44 percent of the region’s gross domestic product and an increase of 33 percent since 1990. Obama would work with other developed nations and multilateral institutions to cancel remaining onerous debt while pushing reforms to keep developing nations from slipping into fiscal ruin. Obama also would better coordinate trade and development policies to use the full range of America’s economic power to help developing nations reap the benefits of the global trading system.

Reestablish U.S. Moral Leadership. Obama would restore America’s standing, reputation and authority in the world by respecting civil liberties; ending torture; restoring habeas corpus; making the U.S. electoral processes fair and transparent and fighting corruption at home.