

OBAMA'S SPEECH...continued

got us into the Korean mess; Eisenhower supported CIA overthrows of democratically elected governments in Iran and Guatemala, and numerous other incursions around the globe. Yet, as his administration drew to a close, he saw where our recklessness was leading and warned this country. John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson drew us into Vietnam. Again and again, we've acted as if the world is ours to conquer and control. It is Manifest destiny gone global.

Well, my fellow Americans, it's time for this global hegemony to end. First, it's wrong. Whatever our "national interests" might be, we do not have the right to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries. The policy of pre-emptive war is done. And besides, right or wrong, we simply cannot afford to be the world's police.

So, enough of this. Tomorrow morning I will meet with the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the leaders of both parties in Congress. At that time I will set forth a plan to initiate the withdrawal of the vast majority of our overseas military commitments. At long last, the Iraqi and Afghan and Libyan Wars are OVER. We would not tolerate their military presence here; why should we expect them to tolerate ours there? So we are out of there.

This will, of course, delight my liberal friends and infuriate the conservatives. But let me propose something that will help balance the outrage. Calls from my own party to strip the military budget have been a major part of the ongoing budget crisis talks. Their points are well-taken. I also acknowledge that to retire millions of American service men and women will have a devastating effect on our economy. So I propose this: as we shut down overseas military operations, those personnel will be transferred to domestic assignments stateside. For the immediate future, we will NOT close any bases stateside and we will set out to re-define the mission of our military. We have an opportunity for our service men and women to really help their fellow countrymen. In natural disasters, in nationwide service projects—yes, even to augment the protection of our borders. We will put this great pool of talent to great use, with rewards we cannot even yet imagine. And

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by removing vast numbers of our overseas forces, the savings to our national budget will be enormous.

Our civilian economy also depends on the employment of almost 5 million Americans in the defense industry. These hard working skilled citizens build everything from uniforms to tanks to fighter jets to aircraft carriers. It's time we re-direct those skills to a task from which we can all benefit. Many of you have lamented the end of our manned space program, at least for now, with the final flight of our shuttle, Atlantis. Again, I bear much of the responsibility for this decision. Let me reverse myself. Today I am re-activating the shuttle; John Glenn is right. Our shuttle fleet still has many good years ahead and there is no point in sticking them in a museum. And I am ordering a full-scale re-examination of our manned space priorities with the goal of putting humans on the planet Mars by 2022. It's time we started dreaming BIG again. And it's time we recognized

this "final frontier" as something more than a future tourist destination for rich people and a place to exploit natural resources.

For those of you who believe this is folly, that our problems are too great here on Earth to spend money exploring the black void of outer space, let me remind you what John Kennedy said:

"We set sail on this new sea because there is new knowledge to be gained, and new rights to be won, and they must be won and used for the progress of all people. For space science, like nuclear science and all technology, has no conscience of its own...Many years ago the great British explorer George Mallory, who was to die on Mount Everest, was asked why did he want to climb it. He said, 'Because it is there.' Well, space is there, and we're going to climb it, and the moon and the planets are there, and new hopes for knowledge and peace are there. And, therefore, as we set sail we ask God's blessing on the most hazardous and dangerous and greatest adventure on which man has ever embarked."

Like President Kennedy before me, I believe it is time we began to think and dream beyond the confines of our own lives. To dream, as Robert Kennedy once said, "of things that never were, and say, 'Why not?'" We can do this and much more.

Right now, our men and women aboard the International Space Station can look down upon this beautiful blue watery globe, this place we call Earth. What a beautiful planet we live on. What a gift. It's our home and it is all we have; the survival of our home depends on the way we, the tenants, treat it. And yet, even from a height of more than 250 miles, our astronauts and cosmonauts can see the damage we humans have inflicted upon our home.

I've talked to you about our economy, about our excesses as a species. I've spoken of our vast military presence around the world and the imposition of our will on the other 7 billion humans that live here. But if we connect all the dots, it all leads "back to the future," the future of this tiny blue planet; ultimately this is what this conversation is about. It's about ALL of us and every living creature. We live on the threshold of catastrophe, my

fellow Americans. We must act now.

The evidence is irrefutable. Climate change is real. It's happening much faster than even our best scientists expected. Still many Americans reject the science and cling stubbornly to the notion that we can continue to live this gluttonous lifestyle that has already inflicted so much harm. Even I have turned my back on the science. A few years ago, during the 2008 primary season, I was vocal about my concerns. I said then that we must "lead by example." I also said, "We can't drive our SUVs and eat as much as we want and keep our homes on 72 degrees at all times ... and then just expect that other countries are going to say OK...That's not leadership. That's not going to happen,"

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But it did happen. I got spooked by a bad economy and rising unemployment and, worst of all, political considerations, and decided to put the biggest issue ever to face the human race on a back burner. But what's the point of having good jobs if we don't have a decent planet to work in? Why sweat banking reform or gay rights or debt ceilings or balanced budgets or overseas wars or predator drones if we are collectively, albeit slowly, killing ourselves?



Two years ago I noted, “The issue of climate change is one that we ignore at our own peril. There may still be disputes about exactly how much we’re contributing to the warming of the earth’s atmosphere and how much is naturally occurring, but what we can be scientifically certain of is that our continued use of fossil fuels is pushing us to a point of no return. And unless we free ourselves from a dependence on these fossil fuels and chart a new course on energy in this country, we are condemning future generations to global catastrophe.”

But since then, I’ve practically walked away from the issue. My performance at the Copenhagen Summit was an embarrassment to me. It’s time I lived up to what I know is the Truth. And let me say this: anyone who believes Climate



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Change is a hoax—well, my fellow Americans, those people are either greedy to the point of being delusional or just hiding their head in the sand.

So where do we go from here? This is ‘honest speech’ number one. Others will follow soon. But I realize I can talk too long and lose you in the process. So let’s make this a starting point. We all need to re-examine our own lives and look closely at the things we treasure most. We need to ask ourselves just how much “stuff” we need to make us happy. If we set aside all the superfluities of life, just what would we need to feel enriched and satisfied? Could we see our Gross Domestic Product shrink and feel better for it? And, finally, are we willing to do what it takes to save this jewel of a planet? This extraordinary gift? These are questions for us all.

Finally, for any of this to matter, you must believe I am not speaking as a politician, running for re-election. And yet, so little time remains in this administration and I have squandered much of it. So here is what I propose:

I will stand for re-election. But do NOT expect this to be the “feel good” rhetorician’s dream campaign of 2008. This is a wake up call, America—for you and for me. It will not be a campaign where I tell you everything will be fine. Honestly, I don’t know if we can change the world or not. But our only hope of saving this planet, and us in the process, is to start telling the Truth. If you re-elect me and I fail you again, I will resign the Presidency on the second anniversary of my second inauguration. I want to succeed. I want us to succeed. Together, with hard work, with dedication to the ideals we once held dear, we can finally try to ‘make a difference.’

I only hope and pray that it’s not too late.

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