

Speeches

Governor Mitt Romney's Remarks at the George Bush Presidential Library Center

Tuesday, Apr 10, 2007

Rising To A New Generation of Global Challenges

Thank you for that welcome, and thank you President and Mrs. Bush for this invitation to speak at Texas A&M, a proud university with time honored traditions. I've only been here for a few hours, but spending that time with students here, I understand why you chose this place for your library.

You are all lucky to have a national treasure here in this library. I'm not talking about the memorabilia and records – I'm talking about President and Mrs. Bush.

Once they led a nation - today they inspire a nation.

The Navy's youngest pilot became the nation's Commander-in-Chief. And now, he comforts the wounded from Hurricanes and Tsunami.

His 16 year old dance partner became the mother of 6 - including a President and a Governor - the nation's first lady, and the love of their 62 married years.

Inspired by them both, their grandson, George P. Bush, has joined the Navy Reserve.

Their accomplishments changed global politics. Their character changed our hearts.

Let me also add a word of thanks to the Texas A&M community for allowing the Federal government to "borrow" Secretary of Defense Robert Gates.

Mr. President, I am told that you have objected to calling your generation the greatest generation. You prefer to add others to the list, including the brave men and women who fought to protect us in Desert Storm, and those who are in harms way today.

I wholly agree with your characterization of our armed forces as the bravest and most patriotic in the world. But I still line up with Tom Brokaw on this. Not due to any deficiency in bravery. But because of what your entire generation of American's sacrificed, and because of what you accomplished.

Frankly, what your generation achieved, for America, and for the world, was so astounding that historians may have a difficult time convincing future students that they are not grossly exaggerating.

Mid century, a menacing madman had captured the wealth and land of all continental Europe. His rantings of genocide had been dismissed as hyperbole, but they were appallingly real. Allied with Japan, Hitler was poised to conquer one last European island and her most famous former colony - us. You stopped them both - your blood washing the beaches of the Atlantic and the Pacific.

And then, another threat, just as horrific. The Soviet Empire hung an Iron Curtain, and spread its leaden weight around the world. The peril of nuclear holocaust was reminiscent of the holocaust that the world had just seen in Europe. This time, the holocaust threatened the entire human race. And again, your generation won.

And the victor was truly an entire generation, not just those, like yourself, who served in the armed forces. In the 40's, you rationed and saved. Your mothers and daughters enlisted to work in factories, just as you did Mrs. Bush. And in the 60's and 70's and 80's, you relentlessly pursued learning and innovation to lead the world in space, in technology, in productivity - you out-competed the Soviets. You drove them to the economic bankruptcy that matched their moral bankruptcy.

Today, we face a new generation of challenges, globally and here at home. We will do as American have always done: we will rise to the occasion.

We have all that we need. We have technology, technology that would have been beyond the imagination of our grandparents. We have national wealth. And most important, we have the heart and passion of the American people - always the greatest source of our strength as a nation.

We need leadership. We are fortunate today to have a President who loves America, who acts solely out of a desire to protect her and to promote liberty around the world. We have a President who leads.

But I think most Americans look at Washington and are appalled at the divisiveness, the bitterness, the smallness, the disunity. Senator Arthur Vandenberg once famously opined that "politics stops at the water's edge." But last week, the Democratic chair of House Foreign Affairs said that we have two foreign policies, one for each party. And then the Speaker of the House helped dignify a state sponsor of terror. At this time of war, her action stands as one of the most partisan, divisive, and ill-considered of any national leader in this decade.

United we stand. United we have stood the test of time and tyrants. Divided is not the American way.

Today, the attention of the nation is focused on Iraq. All Americans want our troops home as soon as possible. But walking away from Iraq, or dividing it in parts and then walking away would present grave risks to America. Iran could seize the Shia south, Al Qaeda could dominate the Sunni west, and the Kurds could destabilize the border with Turkey. A regional conflict could ensue, perhaps even requiring our return into far worse circumstances. The troop surge has a real chance of working, and early signs are encouraging. It is time for Congress to follow the lead of the commanders in the field and the Commander-in-Chief.

What do you see beyond Iraq, into the coming decades? I see what America can be for our children, if we stand united, and if we finally act to honestly face the new generation of challenges that confront us. It is an America that is safe and that is prosperous, even more prosperous than today. It is an America that is respected and appreciated by the nations of the world, because they too will have been blessed with the gifts we enjoy - freedom, security, and prosperity.

I am often asked whether I am a neo-conservative or a realist. Sorry, those terms are too confining. In my view, our objective is a strong America and a safe world.

We should always remember that those two things are connected. As Ronald Reagan observed: "Of the four wars in my lifetime, none came about because the U.S. was too strong."

A strong America requires a strong military and a strong economy. You can't be a military superpower if you are a second tier economy. The weakness of the Soviet economy was the vulnerability that Presidents Reagan and Bush exploited to bring down the Evil Empire. I have previously addressed action we must urgently take to preserve our economic lead - smaller government, lower taxes, better schools and healthcare, greater investment in technology, free trade.

But there is further action we must take if we are to remain strong and if we are to build a safe world, with peace, prosperity, freedom and dignity. This action will be controversial. It will be strongly resisted. Because this action requires change.

Change in and of itself is difficult. And in the absence of a clear and convincing crisis, it is even harder to garner the will necessary to set a new course. Look at how long it took us to confront the reality of Jihadism. They bombed our embassies, they bombed our Marines in Lebanon, they bombed the USS Cole, they even set off a bomb in the basement of the World Trade Center. But we failed to truly see the threat, and to change. After September 11, 2001, our President led us from denial to action.

I think many of us still fail to comprehend the extent of the threat posed by radical Islam, by Jihad. Understandably, we focus on Afghanistan and Iraq. Our men and women are dying there. We think in terms of countries, because we faced countries in last century's conflicts. But the Jihad is much broader than any one nation or nations. Jihad encompasses far more than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For radical Islam, there is an over-arching conflict and goal - replacing all modern Islamic states with a caliphate, destroying America, and conquering the world.

It sounds insane. It is insane. It is just as insane as Hitler and Stalin. But it is also just as real.

Their methods are entirely different than those of the World Wars and the Cold War. Rather than armies, they employ sleeper networks and indiscriminate terror. Their soldiers include children, as do their victims; among their generals are radical clergy. They communicate by Internet. They recruit in schools and in houses of worship and in prisons. And now, they pursue nuclear weapons - they even contemplate using them.

What we face is different, different than what we have faced before. And that means we will have to change if we are to defeat it. And the change will require sacrifice from the American people. I believe America is ready for the challenge.

Today, I'd like to discuss four changes among those I believe are needed.

First, we need a stronger military.

I propose that we sharply increase our investment in national defense. I want to see at least 100,000 more troops. I want to see us finally make the long overdue investment in equipment, armament, weapon systems, and strategic defense.

After President Bush left office in 1993, the Clinton administration began to dismantle our military, in what some called a peace dividend. They took the dividend, but didn't get the peace. It seems that we had come to believe that war and threats and evil men were gone forever. As Charles Krauthammer observed: we took a holiday from history.

Simply look at the neglect of our military

We purchased only a small fraction of what was needed to maintain our strength. Instead, we have lived off the assets that had been purchased in the prior decades. The equipment and armament gap continues to this day.

We wring the useful life out of old and inadequate equipment, starving our budget for

purchasing modern and ample armament.

What is the right amount to spend? Secretary Gates has proposed a 10% increase for next year. Bravo. But we will need at least an additional \$30 to 40 billion per year over the next several years to modernize our military, address gaps in our troop levels, ease the strain on our National Guard and Reserves and support our wounded soldiers.

A look at our military spending over time is instructive.

Based on my analysis, we should commit to spend a minimum of 4% of GDP on our national defense.

But increase spending must not mean increased waste. If I am fortunate enough to become President, I will convene a team of private sector leaders and defense experts to carry out a stem-to-stern analysis of military purchasing. First, I want to hear about spending on equipment and programs that is more about making a politician's home district happy, than about protecting our nation. That's worse than pork-barrel spending, and it's got to stop. I will work with Congress to install strict lobbying rules and new sunshine provisions to keep a far more watchful eye on self-serving politicians, current and past. And second, I want my team to see if and where we are being fleeced by contractors and suppliers. There will be no sheep allowed in the military purchasing department!

So number one: a stronger military.

Number two: America must become energy independent.

Our economic and military strength require it. I'm not just talking about symbolic measures, I mean that we must finally take the necessary steps to actually produce as much energy as we use. This may take twenty years or more. Of course, we will continue buying fuels from our friends, but we will buy AND sell. We will end our strategic vulnerability to an oil shut-off by nations like Iran, Russia, and Venezuela. We will stop sending \$1 billion a day to other nations, some of whom are using that same money against us. And we will rein in our emissions of greenhouse gasses at the same time.

True energy independence will require employing technology to make our use of energy more efficient, in our cars, in our homes, and in our businesses.

Energy independence will also mean pursuing our ample domestic sources of energy: more drilling offshore and in ANWR, nuclear power, renewable sources like ethanol, biodiesel, solar, wind, and full exploitation of coal - solid and liquid. In some cases, we may need to guarantee floor prices to stimulate private investment. In others, shared investments or incentives may be required.

I will initiate a bold and far-reaching research initiative - an Energy Revolution. It will be our generation's equivalent of the Manhattan Project or of the mission to reach the Moon. This will be a mission to create

new, economic sources of energy, clean energy. We will license our technology to other nations and we will employ it here at home. It will be good for our national defense, for our foreign policy and for our economy. It will also be good for the world. And while scientists are still debating how much human activity impacts the environment, we can all agree that alternative energy sources will be good for the planet. For any and all of these reasons, the time for true energy independence has come.

Three: we must transform our international civilian resources, to enhance our influence for peace, for security, and for freedom.

Following World War II, America created structures designed to meet the demands of the Cold War. It worked. During the Reagan-Bush years, it became clear that the bureaucratic boundaries in the military between the branches were getting in the way. So the Goldwater-Nichols Act removed barriers to unify efforts across the services. This included establishing "joint commands" with individual commanders fully responsible for their geographic region. Those theaters of responsibility are as shown here.

Our non-military resources enjoy no such jointness, no such clear leadership, no such clear lines of authority and responsibility. Too often we struggle to integrate our military and civilian instruments of national power into coherent, timely and effective operations. When facing the need to strengthen the democratic underpinnings of a country like Lebanon, our education, health, banking, energy, commerce, law enforcement and diplomatic resources are in separate bureaucracies, all under separate leadership, all protecting their own powers and their own prerogatives. So while we watched, Hezbollah brought healthcare and schools to the Lebanese. Guess who the people followed when conflict ensued? The same thing happened with Hamas and the Palestinians.

The problem was just as evident in Iraq. While the military moved in rapid order to topple Saddam Hussein, many of our non-military resources moved like they were stuck in tar. They fight over which agency will pay the \$11.00 per diem cost of food at the same time that we are spending over \$7 billion a month and taking human casualties.

It is high time to truly transform our civilian instruments of national power. We need to enable joint strategies and joint operations. Just as the military has divided the world into common regions for all of its branches, so too the civilian agencies should align along consistent boundaries. And one civilian leader, a Deputy lets call him or her, with authority and responsibility for all agencies and departments, must be fully empowered, just like the single military commander for CENTCOM. These Deputies of our civilian resources must have sufficient authority over the activities in their region. They will be heavy hitters, with recognized reputations around the world. They must be given objectives, budgets, and responsible oversight. They will be measured by their success in their region in improving such things as healthcare, education, and economy, and for their progress in promoting peace and democracy.

The wonders of America - like our healthcare technology - can be powerful tools to promote the foundations of liberty. It is time that we apply these American wonders to make the world, and in turn to

make America, a safer, freer, and more prosperous place.

Four. we need to strengthen old partnerships and alliances, and we need to inaugurate a new one.

I don't need to tell you that the failures of the UN are simply astonishing. Consider the infamous work of the UN Human Rights Council.

The infamy of the UN has made a number of people understandably cynical when it comes to multinational and multilateral institutions. Some of us will be tempted to retreat to American isolation. Others will favor American unilateralism. But America's strength is amplified when it is combined with the strength of other nations. Whether diplomatic, military, or economic, America is stronger when we have friends standing with us.

That may be even more true tomorrow than it is today. The world will look quite different in the future than it has in the past.

The Middle East is facing a demographic crisis. Today, over half the region is under 22 years old. But the combined GDP of all Arab nations, including oil, is less than that of Spain. With the growing populations and lack of jobs, the ground for radical Islam will be increasingly fertile.

I agree with former Prime Minister Aznar of Spain that we should build on the NATO alliance to defeat radical Jihad. He has called for greater coordination in military, homeland security, and non-proliferation efforts. He is right. We should look to expand and deepen this and other alliances.

Today, I want to take his recommendation a step further. As one of my first acts as President, I would call for a Summit of Nations. In addition to the United States, the convening countries would include moderate Islamic states and other leading developed nations. The objective of the Summit would be to create a worldwide strategy to support Muslim nations and peoples, in their effort to defeat radical, violent Jihad.

I would envision that the Summit would lead to the creation of a Partnership for Prosperity and Progress. This Partnership would assemble the resources of all developed nations to work to assure that threatened Islamic states had public schools, not Wahhabi madrassas, micro credit and banking, the rule of law, human rights, basic healthcare, and competitive economic policies. The resources would be drawn from public and private institutions, and from volunteers and NGOs. And policies would favor expansion of free trade and investment.

Merely closing our eyes and hoping that radical Jihad will go away is not an acceptable answer. And American military action cannot change the hearts and minds of hundreds of millions of Muslims. Only Muslims will be able to defeat the violent radicals. But we can help them. And we must help them. For the consequences - for America and for all nations - of a radicalized Islamic world, possessing nuclear weapons, are unthinkable.

Conclusion

I know that the new generation of challenges that we face seems daunting. But confronting challenges has always made America stronger. And the heart of the American people is good. And it is willing. When called to rise to the occasion, the American people will be just as valiant as those of you in the Greatest Generation.

The world awaits our leadership.

On the wall of your library are these words: "Let future generations understand the burden and the blessings of freedom. Let them say we stood where duty required us to stand." We do understand. We stand in duty today. And we are ready stand again, for the future of America.

Thank you.

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