

Speeches

Governor Mitt Romney's Remarks at Yeshiva University

Thursday, Apr 26, 2007

As Prepared For Delivery

"Thank you so much. It's an honor to be with you this evening. Oliver, thank you for your introduction. I want to thank you for the opportunity to address you tonight, and for letting me share in the 20th anniversary of the Syms School. Thank you to Sy Syms and his family. To the supporters, the professors, the administrators, the alumni, and all the students: congratulations on this great event.

"As you heard, I spent most of my life in the private sector, first by consulting the major corporations, and then by starting and acquiring companies. It takes chutzpah I believe to buy a company from somebody else, someone who knows the business inside out, someone who has decided that now is the best time to sell, someone who has hired an investment banker to hawk it to everybody in the world, and then to think that you, having paid more than anyone else in the entire world, you somehow think you are going to make a profit on your investment.

"It's truly an improbable way to make a living. But it worked, and far better than I ever imagined. During the fifteen years that I was the proud partner at Bain Capital, our compound rate of return on our investments exceeded 100% a year. Not bad.

"Now, what was the secret? There really wasn't a secret. What we did is done every day by you in the private sector. We started off with good people-highly intelligent, intellectually curious, driven people. We gathered extensive data and carried out rigorous analysis before we made our decisions. And then we used all that information to develop a highly focused strategy to make the enterprise more successful.

"I found that the same approach works in the public sector as well. Good people, data, analysis, focused strategy. It's not the way government usually does things, but it's the way government should do things.

"Today, America faces a number of critical challenges. In my view, at the top of the list is the threat of radical, violent Jihad and the associated threat of nuclear proliferation.

"I think many of us, including some of our leaders, fail to comprehend the extent of this threat.

Take former President Jimmy Carter. President Carter thinks that Israel's security fence is the thing that keeps peace from coming to the Holy Land.

"Having just been to Israel, I came to the opposite conclusion: the security fence keeps peace in Israel - it's helping - that fence is helping prevent bloodshed and terror and violence.

"What Jimmy Carter fails to understand is what so many fail to understand. Whether it's Hamas or Hezbollah; Al Qaeda or Shia and Sunni extremists, there is an overarching goal among the violent Jihadists - and it transcends borders and boundaries. That goal is to replace all modern Islamic states with a religious caliphate, to destroy Israel, to cause the collapse of the West and the United States, and to conquer the entire world.

"Jihadism - violent, radical, fundamental Jihadism - is this century's nightmare. It follows the same dark path as last century's nightmares: fascism and Soviet communism.

"The September 11th Commission reported that al-Qaeda had been trying to acquire or build nuclear weapons for well over a decade. Former CIA Director George Tenet said that Osama bin Laden sees the acquisition of WMD as a 'religious obligation.' Jihadist clerics have issued fatwas authorizing the use of nuclear weapons to... 'defeat the infidels.'

"We are faced with the horrific proposition that those who speak of genocide are developing the capability to carry it out.

"Radical, nuclear Jihad is the greatest threat that faces humanity. It cannot be appeased. It can only be defeated.

"In my view, there are several steps that America has to take.

"First, we have to sharply increase our investment in national defense. I want to see at least 100,000 more troops in our military. I want to see us finally make the long overdue investment in equipment and armament, weapon systems, and strategic defense. That's going to require that we spend at least 4 percent of our GDP on defense.

"Let me show you, by the way, a little history here. Let's see if I can make this work. This shows the history as a percentage of GDP of the U.S. military. And you'll see that over time, we've made some pretty significant investments in protecting our country. In the Korean War, 11.7% of the nation's economic activity was associated with the protection of this land. During the Reagan years, it reached approximately 6% of our GDP. Today, it's down to 3.8% and I believe that we have to increase at least by 40-50 billion dollars a year our spending on military strength.

"Second, America has to become energy independent. Our economic and military strength require it. We use 25% of the world's oil. On this chart, you see where the oil comes from. The United States has approximately 1.7% of the world's crude oil reserves. We obviously have to become energy independent for strategic purposes and I'm not just talking about symbolic measures, I mean that we finally have to take the necessary steps to actually produce as much energy as we use.

"Third, we have to transform our international civilian resources, to enhance our influence for peace, and for security, and for freedom. Just as the military in our country has divided the world into common regions with a single commander for each region, our civilian agencies need to do the same thing.

"Fourth, we need to strengthen our old partnerships and old alliances, and inaugurate a new one. I agree with former Prime Minister Aznar of Spain that we should build on the NATO alliance to defeat radical Islam.

"And further, if I were fortunate enough to be elected your President, I'd call for a National Summit of Nations to create a new partnership - a Partnership for Hope and Prosperity.

"This Partnership would assemble the resources of all the nations of the world to work to assure that Islamic states that are threatened with violent jihad have public schools that are not Wahhabi madrases; that they have micro credit and banking, the rule of law, human rights, basic healthcare, and competitive economic practices.

"And fifth, we have to keep Iran from developing a nuclear bomb. Their ambition to develop nuclear weaponry is clear: they have a virtually inexhaustible supply of clean natural gas for energy, they have refused Russia's offer to supply nuclear fuel for their power. Obviously, their nuclear ambition has nothing to do with clean energy.

"Ahmadinejad has gone beyond the boundary of outrage, beginning with his calculated desecration of history. His purpose is not only to deny the Holocaust; it is to deny Israel. He is doing what another evil man did before him: conditioning minds to acquiesce to the elimination of a people.

"In January I was at the Herzliya conference and I discussed the threat of Iran. Since then, Iran continues to operate its nuclear program in defiance of the UN Security Council. It's expanded its centrifuge operations in Natanz. It's issued a new banknote that features a red nuclear symbol superimposed on the map of Iran.

"Earlier this month, Iran boasted the production of nuclear fuel on an 'industrial level' with a goal of installing 50,000 centrifuges. On April 9th, Iran marked a new national holiday -

'Nuclear Day.' Just look at the extent of their activity. These show the nuclear sites in Iran. This is not a little narrow project. Does the world understand what's going on here? Do they recognize the threat which is posed by this nuclear-developing nation?

"Some people, of course, think that it's possible to live with a nuclear Iran. That thinking is based on the theory that Iran, once it's granted the privilege of becoming a member of the nuclear club, that it will be a responsible actor.

"Neither their words nor their actions justify that kind of thinking.

"Others believe that frankly back in the logic of deterrence, which served us through the Cold War - that that will protect us. But for all of the Soviet Union's deep flaws, they were never suicidal. A Soviet commitment to national survival was never in question. And that assumption simply can't be made about an irrational regime that celebrates martyrdom like Iran.

"It's time to take Ahmadinejad at his word and act accordingly. We are going to continue to work, we'll work with the UN, we'll encourage China and Russia to work with us at the UN Security Council.

"But the U.S. and Europe can't afford to wait.

"I have proposed a strategy to combat Iran's nuclear ambition. Let me describe just a few of the elements.

"First, we should severely tighten economic sanctions. I think the Bush Administration deserves a lot of recognition for restricting access to our banking and credit services, because financial, and credit and monetary penalties are some of the most effective sanctions there are. And we must get other nations to act now to follow our lead.

"In my meetings in Israel in January it became clear to me that pension funds, such as the one here in New York City, have invested in companies like the French oil giant, Total. After New York State named its Comptroller, I wrote him, and I also wrote to Governor Spitzer, and Senators Schumer and Clinton and urged them to disinvest from companies that have significant operations in collaboration with Iranian regimes.

"Second, I think it's important for us to isolate Iran diplomatically. Their leaders should be made to feel exactly like those of Apartheid South Africa, or worse. That's why I ordered the state police of Massachusetts to refuse security details for former Iranian President Khatami when he came to Harvard.

"Of course, we can communicate and talk with Iran and I support the upcoming efforts to discuss security in Iraq with Iraq's leaders and their neighbors in the region. But until there are indications that high level engagement would do anything other than reward bad behavior, I don't believe that we should be engaging Iran in direct, bilateral negotiations over their nuclear weapons program. Iran's nuclear intransigence is repulsive to the entire world and we shouldn't let Iran try to position it as an Iran vs. a US thing.

"Now there is one place of course where I'd welcome Ahmadinejad with open arms: and that's in a court where he would stand trial for incitement to genocide, under the terms of the Genocide Convention.

"There's a third effort. Arab states need to join this effort to prevent a nuclear Iran. These states can do a lot more than just wring their hands and urge America to do all the work. They should support Iraq's nascent government; they can help America's focus on Iran quickly by turning down the temperature on the Arab-Israeli conflict; they can stop the financial and weapons flows to Hamas and Hezbollah; and they must tell their Palestinian friends to drop their campaign of terror and recognize Israel's right to exist.

"This one's a little sensitive. Listen carefully. Fourth, we have to make it clear to the Iranian people that while nuclear capabilities may be the source of pride, they can also be a source of peril. If nuclear material from Iran falls into the hands of terrorists and is used, it would provoke a devastating response from the entire civilized world to the very nation that supplied it.

"There is yet another source of Jihadist nuclear danger, beyond Iran. It's the pursuit by Jihadists of acquiring what are commonly known as 'loose nukes.' The Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, which was launched last year, was a good start, but we need to accelerate and expand it.

"First, I'd appoint a senior American official to serve as Ambassador-at-Large to Prevent Nuclear Terror. He or she would have the authority and resources to work across agencies and departments in the United States to ensure that our strategies are coordinated here, and abroad.

"Further, I'd promote an international initiative to develop a new body of international law that would make nuclear trafficking a crime against humanity, on a par with genocide and war crimes. And by allowing for universal jurisdiction, charges can be brought up at any court, to help prevent traffickers from hiding in complicit or weak countries. Already, people have been caught trying to smuggle nuclear materials to sell them on the black market. Their acts shouldn't be dismissed with the kind of nonchalance that sometimes accompanies routine violation of the laws.

"Countries that want to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes should convene to reaffirm their commitment to non-proliferation. For years now, we have depended on the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty as the centerpiece. But recent technological and political developments suggest that the bargain at the center of this effort needs to be updated. We need to set a 'gold standard' for security, given the amount of highly enriched uranium that still exists in the world. Let me show you where it is. The countries in red are countries that have over ten thousand kilograms of highly enriched uranium and various research facilities

around their lands. As you look at that, you recognize why it is that we don't want to break off discussions with Russia. There's a lot of cooperation that we need to keep in place with Russia, because they've got to be engaged in frank and open discussions about the serious and disturbing turn of events in their own country. But we also have to remain a partner with them on the issue of securing the vast amount of highly enriched nuclear material in their country.

"Finally, the United States in my view should take the lead in organizing an international fuel bank, which would guarantee low-cost supplies of nuclear reactor fuel to countries willing to abide by very high standards for safety and security.

"The threat from Jihad is real and it is exacerbated by the demographic crisis. Today, over half the region is under 22 years old. The combined GDP of all Arab nations, including their oil revenue, is less than Spain's. Think of that. And with the growing population and lack of jobs, the ground for radical Islam will be increasingly fertile.

"Let me show you some slides I think are pretty interesting. This shows the map of the world drawn to the scale of where the proportion of the world's wealth was in 1960. Look at the United States - extraordinary wealth, larger than any other land in the world by far. Europe is shown in the pinkish colors there - that's western Europe. The blue is eastern Europe and then you'll see Africa of course very small in terms of portion of the economy of the world. The Middle East is in the light green. You can see India there in the yellow, right next to India, to the west of India is of course Pakistan. China is the bright green and Japan is the purple. Look how that changes as projected for 2015. Look what happens to China. Look what happens to Europe. But the Middle East continues to be extraordinarily small in terms of its economic clout. And Northern Africa, where Jihad is also rampant, is a tiny portion of the world's economic vitality in the year 2015. This is as projected by the UN. Where are the babies being born?

"Let's look at the same map, but instead of drawing it based upon where the economic strength is, let's show where babies are being born. That's where population will be as of 2050. The very places that have the least income have the extraordinary growth in population. And this is the very fertile and very frightening field that we're going to have to encounter.

"And so because of this and many other reasons in the final analysis, only Muslims are going to be able to defeat radical Jihad.

"But we can and we must support moderate Muslims in rejecting the extreme and accepting modernity.

"We should remember that in the two other global confrontations with totalitarianism in the past century, it wasn't always obvious that we'd win. Indeed, in those conflicts, the balance of power was not always in our favor.

"Those were wars we could have lost, but we didn't.

"In the current conflict, defeat is not nearly as dangerously close as it was during the darkest moments of the Second World War and the Cold War. There's no comparison between the economic and diplomatic, and military resources of the civilized world and those of the terrorist networks that threaten us today.

"In those previous global wars, there were many ways to lose, and victory was far from guaranteed.

"In the current conflict, there is only one way to lose, and that is if we as a civilized world decide not to lift a finger to defend ourselves, or our values, and our way of life.

"I will not be silent, you will not be silent.

"Today, we can lead the world. We can and we must lead the world to do what it has sought for so many centuries-to accept different people and different cultures, to respect the inalienable rights of every child of God, and to welcome a time of peace and prosperity for all the children of our Creator.

"Thank you so much."

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