

ROE, ROE, ROE, Your Ship Of State

Obama used Eisenhower Hall at West Point Military Academy, and about 4,000 cadets, as a backdrop for his “war president” speech on December 1. Obama said his three-month review of General Stanley McChrystal’s request for additional troops “...is now complete. And as Commander-in-Chief, I have determined that it is in our vital national interest to send an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan. After 18 months, our troops will begin to come home.”

That number, 30,000, is what everyone was anxiously waiting to hear. For weeks, media pundits had been asking, “Will Obama give McChrystal the 40,000 troops he requested in August?” There was only one problem with that question: McChrystal had asked for between 60,000 and 80,000 additional troops, with 40,000 as a bare *minimum*.

Obama had asked McChrystal for three troop options: low risk, moderate risk, and high risk. McChrystal’s low risk request was 60,000 – 80,000 troops. Assuming he wouldn’t get what he wanted from Obama, McChrystal set the moderate level request at 40,000, expecting he would get at least that number. The general’s high risk option was anything less than 40,000 troops. Obama chose the high risk option, and U.S. troops will be put at additional risk because of that decision.

If Obama has provided McChrystal with too few troops and the American effort in Afghanistan falters, Obama will be criticized for having chosen the option which the General told him at the outset was high risk. If Obama had given McChrystal the troops he requested, the United States would be in the fight against radical Islam for the long haul—which would alienate Obama’s far-left support base (and the Muslims in the Middle East he has tried so desperately not to offend). Obama’s decision was therefore purely political. To McChrystal, Obama essentially said, “30,000 is all you get. Too bad, deal with it. That’s your punishment for giving a speech in London that put me in a tough position.” To his leftist supporters, Obama said, “Not to worry... we’re out of there in 18 months.” As with most purely political decisions, Obama’s move will please almost no one.

To those who accused him of “dithering” over his troop decision, Obama said, “Let me be clear: there has never been an option before me that called for troop deployments before 2010, so there has been no delay or denial of resources necessary for the conduct of the war.” In other words, McChrystal didn’t give a specific date for the troops he needed, so Obama was justified in dawdling. (Try to imagine a battlefield commander in World War II pleading, “We need air support!” and General Eisenhower declining to provide it because the request came without a date or time.) Obama’s mealy-mouthed, self-serving, gratuitous statement is undeserving of a president—and an insult to the American people.

Even more offensive was Obama’s statement, “As President, I have signed a letter of condolence to the family of each American who gives their life in these wars. I have read

the letters from the parents and spouses of those who deployed. I have visited our courageous wounded warriors at Walter Reed. I have traveled to Dover to meet the flag-draped caskets of 18 Americans returning home to their final resting place. *I see firsthand the terrible wages of war.*” In Obama’s mind, signing letters and having to salute a few coffins gives him the right to say he saw “firsthand the terrible wages of war.” No, Barack Hussein Obama Soetoro Obama, you do not know anything of the sort. Bob Dole, who suffered near-mortal wounds while fighting in Italy, knows the wages of war. George H. W. Bush, shot down over the Pacific, know the wages of war. John McCain, held in a Vietnamese prison for years, knows the wages of war. My father, who operated anti-aircraft guns in Okinawa, knew the wages of war. The American families who accepted those flag-draped coffins know the wage of war; those who watch them pass by can only imagine. Obama knows the wages of war about as well as he knows a 9-to-5 job, which is to say not at all.

Obama went out of his way to say that Afghanistan is not “another Vietnam,” and argues, “Unlike Vietnam, we are joined by a broad coalition of 43 nations that recognizes the legitimacy of our action.” (Some might wonder if that “broad coalition of 43 nations” was not due to the efforts of President Bush, who Obama and the media mercilessly excoriated for “acting unilaterally” and with “cowboy diplomacy.”) Obama states that a comparison to Vietnam “depends on a false reading of history.” It is Obama who is misinterpreting history. We lost the war in Vietnam because the North Vietnamese simply wanted to win more than did Lyndon Johnson and the United States Congress. But although they didn’t have the stomach to win in Vietnam, Obama seems not to even see the need to win in Afghanistan. He made sure to note that he will “...begin the transfer of our forces out of Afghanistan in July of 2011”—but he did not *once* use the word victory. He “...determined that it is in our vital national interest to send an additional 30,000 U.S. troops...” but that commitment is so vital that “After 18 months, our troops will begin to come home.” Which is it, Obama, an issue of “vital national interest” or an “exit strategy?” How about a *victory* strategy?

The truth is, Obama does not want to be a war president. That is, he has no desire to fight a war against radical Islamist terrorism. (He is not only reluctant to fight radical Islamists, he refuses to use the term.) Obama would rather be the commander in chief in a domestic war, a war against free market capitalism—a war in which he has trained for decades and in which he has already won battles. Obama wanted to pull troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan immediately if he became president, but had he campaigned on that promise he would have lost the nomination to Hillary Clinton. He chose to be against the war in Iraq to gain votes from the left, but for the war in Afghanistan to avoid losing too many votes from the middle and the right. He postured to beat Clinton, and now finds himself stuck defending—if only half-heartedly—that posture.

Yes, the news on December 2 is that last night Obama gave McChrystal only 30,000 troops and wants to start bringing them home soon after they arrive on the battlefield. But the story is that those 30,000 troops cannot win the war because of the strict “rules of engagement” (ROE) under which they must fight. *The Washington Times* reported that American troops cannot conduct surprise or night searches, must warn villagers before

conducting a search, must be accompanied by Afghan police or soldiers during searches, cannot fire at the enemy unless they fire first or are preparing to fire, cannot engage the enemy if civilians are present, and can fire at an insurgent if they catch him planting a roadside bomb—but not if he is walking away from an area where he has just planted one. In other words, American troops are fighting the enemy with one hand tied behind their back—and the other hand holds a laminated card with the words, “You have the right to remain silent...”

The enemy, of course, may simply lie low until July 2011, and then wave good-bye to American forces while they retrieve their weapons and ammunition from their hiding places in the basements of schools, hospitals, and mosques. If they choose to keep fighting, they already know the routine: Plant roadside bombs, fire at American troops and quickly run away while they telephone for permission to launch a counter-attack. If captured, demand a lawyer and a civilian trial—and don’t forget to charge abuse by the American troop guarding you.

Obama and his traitorous attorney general, Eric Holder, seem more interested in protecting terrorists than Americans. The administration decided that enemy combatants be read their “Miranda rights.” Arguably, American citizens on U.S. soil do not even have to be “read their rights.” The Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution requires that “No person... shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself...” The Sixth Amendment gives the “right to a speedy trial” and “Assistance of Counsel for his defense.” Thus, the “right to remain silent” and the services of a public attorney for those who cannot afford one. But while the Founding Fathers defined those rights, they did not intend for murderers to be set free simply because the arresting officer neglected to give them a crash course in the U.S. Constitution. Although all Americans have the “right to remain silent,” there is no *constitutional* requirement that police officers *remind* people of that right. The reading of “Miranda rights” was demanded by an overzealous Supreme Court, in a 5–4 decision. (In March 1963, Ernesto Arturo Miranda confessed to raping an 18-year-old girl and was tried, convicted, and sentenced. In 1966 the Supreme Court overturned the conviction, and declared “The person in custody must, prior to interrogation, be clearly informed that he has the right to remain silent, and that anything he says will be used against him in the court of law; he must be clearly informed that he has the right to consult with a lawyer and to have the lawyer with him during interrogation, and that, if he is indigent, a lawyer will be appointed to represent him.”) But even if one accepts that police officers should remind suspects of their rights—before plunging his knife into his victim’s chest did the murderer recite, ‘You have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?’—it is ludicrous to read “Miranda rights” to enemy combatants on the battlefield. The Fifth Amendment applies to “criminal case(s),” *not* war, and to persons residing in the United States, not bloodthirsty Islamists on the other side of the world.

Therein lies the problem. The administration does not consider the United States to be at war with radical Islamists—even though the radical Islamists are at war with the United States (and all of Western civilization). You cannot win a war if you are not even willing to accept that you are at war. Obama *did not once* use the word “victory” in his address.

Instead, he stated, “As President, I refuse to set goals that go beyond our responsibility, our means, or our interests. And I must weigh all of the challenges that our nation faces. I do not have the luxury of committing to just one.” Some Americans might be happy if he even bothered to *define* one. And “beyond our means?” By that Obama is telling Congress and all Americans that he is “concerned with the cost of war.” Although Obama has shown no reluctance to spend money he doesn’t have on domestic programs, apparently there is in his mind a limit to the amount of money the United States should be willing to spend on defending itself. If we are at war, we should defeat the enemy—regardless of the cost. Is the United States not worth saving? Or has Obama moved from his 60s “better Red than dead” attitude to “better Shari’ah law than raising the debt limit?”

Although we know what Obama *won’t* do—defend the interests of the United States at all costs—we know what he *will* do. He will, for the first time in American history, allow a civilian criminal trial for enemy combatants. That is either a colossal case of naivety or an act of pure political evil (designed solely to force into the public forum classified information about the prior administration that will then be used by international courts who wish to try Bush and Cheney for war crimes). Both should be revolting to any American, but even if we assume the former we have as our commander in chief a fool. In his West Point address it was not enough for Obama to announce that he was giving his general on the ground less than he requested to fight a war, he had to again repeat his goal of a world without nuclear weapons. Having spectacularly failed at his attempt to persuade Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the ayatollahs to stop Iran’s nuclear program, Obama targeted 4,000 young cadets. Perhaps he thought they could be more easily persuaded—but they did not seem impressed in the slightest. Even at their tender ages they may already know more about the art of war and the evil present in the world than does their commander in chief.

Obama and his ilk consider the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan nothing more than a crime scene, just another episode of *Kandahar CSI*. In Obama’s fairy tale world there is no enemy... there are only misguided criminals, who should be read Miranda rights while evidence technicians collect shell casings and fingerprints—and who should be set free if a U.S. Marine was too busy dodging bullets to stop to retrieve the necessary DNA evidence. In Obama’s fairy tale world there is no need for victory because he is not at war. In Obama’s fairy tale world there are no radical Islamists, there are only a small group of extremists “who have distorted and defiled Islam, one of the world’s great religions.” In Obama’s fairy tale world, U.S. forces have to follow strict rules of engagement—while the enemy laughs and takes aim.

And in Obama’s world, there is a second term. Let’s hope that is also a fairy tale...

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December 2, 2009

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