



AmericanRhetoric.com

Barack Obama

Nomination of Key National Security Team Members

Delivered 1 December 2008, Chicago, Illinois



AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio

Good morning, everybody. I hope you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving.

Last week, we announced our economic team, which is working as we speak to craft an Economic Recovery Program to create jobs and grow our struggling economy. Today, Vice President-elect Biden and I are pleased to announce our national security team.

The national security challenges we face are just as grave -- and just as urgent -- as our economic crisis. We are fighting two wars. Our old conflicts remain unresolved, and newly assertive powers have put strains on the international system. The spread of nuclear weapons raises the peril that the world's deadliest technologies could fall into dangerous hands. Our dependence on foreign oil empowers authoritarian governments and endangers our planet.



AmericanRhetoric.com

America must also be strong at home to be strong abroad. We need to provide education and opportunity to all our citizens, so every American can compete with anyone, anywhere. And our economic power must sustain our military strength, our diplomatic leverage, and our global leadership.

The common thread linking these challenges is the fundamental reality that in the 21st century, our destiny is shared with the world's. From our markets to our security, from our public health to our climate, we must act with the understanding that, now more than ever, we have a stake in what happens across the globe. And as we learned so painfully on 9/11, terror cannot be contained by borders, nor safety provided by oceans alone.

Last week, we were reminded of this threat once again when terrorists took the lives of six American among nearly 200 victims in Mumbai. In the world we seek, there is no place for those who kill innocent civilians to advance hateful extremism. This weekend, I told Prime Minister Singh of India that Americans stand with the people of India in this dark time. And I am confident that India's great democracy is more resilient than killers who would tear it down.

And so, in this uncertain world, the time has come for a new beginning -- a new dawn of American leadership to overcome the challenges of the 21st century, and to seize the opportunities embedded in those challenges. We will strengthen our capacity to defeat our enemies and support our friends. We will renew old alliances and forge new and enduring partnerships. We will show the world once more that America is relentless in the defense of our people, steady in advancing our interests, and committed to the ideals that shine as a beacon to the world: democracy and justice; opportunity and unyielding hope -- because American values are America's greatest export to the world.

To succeed, we must pursue a new strategy that skillfully uses, balances, and integrates all elements of American power: our military and diplomacy; our intelligence and law enforcement; our economy and the power of our moral example. The team that we've assembled here today is uniquely suited to do just that.

In their past service and plans for the future, these men and women represent all of those elements of American power, and the very best of the American example. They've served in uniform and as diplomats; they have worked as legislators, law enforcement officials, and executives. They share my pragmatism about the use of power, and my sense of purpose about America's role as a leader in the world.

I have known Hillary Clinton as a friend, a colleague, a source of counsel, and as a campaign opponent. She possesses an extraordinary intelligence and a remarkable work ethic. I am proud that she will be our next Secretary of State. She is an American of tremendous stature who will have my complete confidence, who knows many of the world's leaders, who will command respect in every capitol, and who will clearly have the ability to advance our interests around the world.



AmericanRhetoric.com

Hillary's appointment is a sign to friend and foe of the seriousness of my commitment to renew American diplomacy and restore our alliances. There is much to do -- from preventing the spread of nuclear weapons to Iran and North Korea, to seeking a lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, to strengthening international institutions. I have no doubt that Hillary Clinton is the right person to lead our State Department, and to work with me in tackling this ambitious foreign policy agenda.

At a time when we face unprecedented transition amidst two wars, I've have asked Robert Gates to continue as Secretary of Defense, and I'm pleased that he's accepted. Two years ago, he took over the Pentagon at a difficult time. He restored accountability. He won the confidence of military commanders and the trust of our brave men and women in uniform, as well as their families. He earned the respect of members of Congress on both sides of the aisle for his pragmatism and competence. He knows that we need a sustainable national security strategy -- and that includes a bipartisan consensus at home.

As I said throughout the campaign, I will be giving Secretary Gates and our military a new mission as soon as I take office: responsibly ending the war in Iraq through a successful transition to Iraqi control. We will also ensure that we have the strategy and resources to succeed against al Qaeda and the Taliban. As Bob said not too long ago, Afghanistan is where the war on terror began, and it is where it must end. And going forward, we will continue to make the investments necessary to strengthen our military and increase our ground forces to defeat the threats of the 21st century.

Eric Holder has the talent and commitment to succeed as Attorney General from his first day on the job, which is even more important in a transition that demands vigilance. He has distinguished himself as a prosecutor, a judge, and a senior official, and he is deeply familiar with the law enforcement challenges we face -- from terrorism to counter-intelligence, from white collar crime to public corruption. Eric also has the combination of toughness and independence that we need at the Justice Department. Let me be clear: The Attorney General serves the American people. And I have every expectation that Eric will protect our people, uphold the public trust, and adhere to our Constitution.

Janet Napolitano offers the experience and executive skills we need in the next Secretary of Homeland Security. She has spent her career protecting people -- as a US Attorney, an Attorney General, and as the Governor of Arizona. She understands the need for a Department of Homeland Security that has the capacity to help prevent terrorist attacks and respond to catastrophe -- be it manmade or natural. Janet assumes this critical role having learned the lessons -- some of them painful -- of the last several years, from 9/11 to Katrina. She insists on competence and accountability. She knows firsthand the need to have a partner in Washington that works well with state and local governments. She understands as well as anyone the danger of an unsecure border. And she will be a leader who can reform a sprawling Department while safeguarding our homeland.



AmericanRhetoric.com

Susan Rice will take on the crucial task of serving as Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations. Susan has been a close and trusted advisor. As in previous Administrations, the UN Ambassador will serve as a member of my cabinet and an integral member of my team. Her background as a scholar, on the National Security Council, and Assistant Secretary of State will serve our nation well at the United Nations. Susan knows that the global challenges we face demand global institutions that work. She shares my belief that the UN is an indispensable and imperfect forum. She will carry the message that our commitment to multilateral action must be coupled with a commitment to reform. We need the United Nations to be more effective as a venue for collective action -- against terror and proliferation, climate change and genocide, poverty and disease.

Finally, I am convinced that General James Jones is uniquely suited to be a strong and skilled National Security Advisor. Generations of Joneses have served heroically on the battlefield -- from the beaches of Tarawa in World War II, to Foxtrot Ridge in Vietnam. Jim's Silver Star is a proud part of that legacy. He will bring to the job the dual experience of serving in uniform and as a diplomat. He has commanded a platoon in battle, served as Supreme Allied Commander in a time of war, and worked on behalf of peace in the Middle East. Jim is focused on the threats of today and the future. He understands the connection between energy and national security, and has worked on the frontlines of global instability -- from Kosovo to northern Iraq to Afghanistan. He will advise me and work effectively to integrate our efforts across the government, so that we are effectively using all elements of American power to defeat unconventional threats and promote our values.

I am confident that this team is what we need to make a new beginning for American national security. This morning, we met to discuss the situation in Mumbai and some of the challenges that we face in the months and years ahead. In the coming weeks, I will be in close contact with these advisors, who will be working with their counterparts in the Bush Administration to make sure that we are ready to hit the ground running on January 20th. Given the range of threats that we face and the vulnerability that can be a part of every presidential transition, I hope that we can proceed swiftly for those national security officials who demand confirmation.

We move forward with the humility that comes with knowing that there are brave men and women protecting us on our front lines: diplomats and intelligence officers in dangerous corners of the world, troops serving their second, third, or fourth tours; FBI agents in the field, cops on the beat, prosecutors in our courts, and cargo inspectors at our ports. These selfless Americans whose names are unknown to most of us will form the backbone of our effort. If we serve as well as they are serving, we will protect our country and promote our values.

And as we move forward with respect for America's tradition of a bipartisan national security policy and a commitment to national unity, we have to recall that when it comes to keeping our nation and our people safe, we are not Republicans or Democrats: We are Americans.



AmericanRhetoric.com

There's no monopoly of power or wisdom in either party. Together, as one nation, as one people, we can shape our times instead of being shaped by them. Together, we will meet the challenges of the 21st century not with fear, but with hope.