

Obama promotes militarism and murder

By Patrick Martin
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In a speech Tuesday before the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention in Pittsburgh, President Obama gave an extraordinary picture of his role as “commander-in-chief” of American imperialism. He listed a series of men killed or kidnapped by US Special Operations forces, punctuating the list with the assertion of their current status as either dead or imprisoned in the US.

As distributed by the White House, the text reads: “Osama bin Laden is gone. Anwar Awlaki, a leader of the Al Qaeda affiliate in Yemen—gone. Many of Al Qaeda’s deputies and their replacements—gone. Ahmed Abdi Godane—the leader of the Al Qaeda affiliate in Somalia—gone. Abu Anas al-Libi, accused of bombing our embassies in Africa—captured. Ahmed Abu Khattalah, accused in the attack in Benghazi—captured. The list goes on.”

Obama made no mention of the fact that Anwar al-Awlaki was an American citizen, convicted of no crime, judged in no court, but sentenced to death on the sole authority of the president of the United States. Nor did he refer to the subsequent US government murder of Awlaki’s son, an innocent teenager, in another drone missile strike, or the thousands of other civilian victims of US drone warfare across Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa.

This recitation of a death list came as the peroration of a speech in which Obama identified himself with the US military and demanded an end to congressional sequestration of funds so that the armed forces can receive tens of billions of dollars in new weaponry.

He threatened the world with the power of the US military machine, declaring, “Now, every ally and every adversary needs to know around the world the United States has and will continue to have the strongest, most capable fighting force the world has ever known. No one can match our Army—the greatest land force on Earth. Nobody can match our Navy—the

largest and most advanced battle fleet in the world. Or our Coast Guard—safeguarding our shores and ports. Nobody can match our Air Force—its reach and precision are unequalled. Nobody can match our Marine Corps—the world’s only global expeditionary force. Nobody can match our Special Operations Forces—our remarkable, quiet professionals.”

There is little doubt that these aggressive claims of global superiority are now being perused in foreign capitals—not only Moscow, Beijing, and Tehran, but also Berlin, Paris, Delhi, Tokyo and elsewhere. The choice of words provokes inevitable questions.

The Navy is a “battle fleet”—against whom? The Air Force has “unequalled” reach—so any country can be targeted. The Marine Corps is “the world’s only global expeditionary force”—only the United States claims either the right or the power to intervene anywhere in the world it chooses.

Also significant was Obama’s elevation of the Special Operations Forces to the level of the traditional military foursome of Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines. This is a president who is most truly at home, and in his element, in the weekly meetings with top military-intelligence staffers (once dubbed “terror Tuesdays”) where he approves kill lists drawn up by the CIA and Special Forces, for implementation through drone missile strikes in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Somalia and other countries, or through commando raids on virtually any site.

The corporate-controlled media in the United States gave comparatively little attention to Obama’s speech. Only the *Washington Post* discussed his list of assassination victims and quoted the chilling passage word for word. The newspaper suggested that this was an effort by Obama to “demonstrate his toughness” going into the congressional debate over the nuclear pact with Iran negotiated by the US and five other powers.

There is no doubt an element of truth in this. In promoting the nuclear deal, Obama pointedly noted that US sanctions against Iran over alleged support for terrorism and human rights abuses would remain in place, and that the US reserved the right to employ the “military option” against Tehran.

Obama’s boasting of the power of the US military was music to the ears of his audience, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, a frequent location for bellicose addresses by top US politicians. It was at a VFW convention in August 2002 that Vice President Dick Cheney publicly launched the Bush administration’s campaign for war against Iraq.

Cheney’s remarks 13 years ago deserve to be remembered in the context of Obama’s equally bloodcurdling boasts today. The then-vice president put forward for the first time the main lies that would be used to justify the war in Iraq.

He declared: “Many of us are convinced that Saddam Hussein will acquire nuclear weapons fairly soon... Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction... Regime-change in Iraq would bring about a number of benefits for the region... the streets in Basra and Baghdad are sure to erupt in joy...”

Obama’s militaristic rhetoric is cut from the same cloth. Like Cheney, he speaks for an American ruling elite that is drunk on homicidal violence, seeing military force as its trump card in a global struggle to control markets, resources and strategic territory against its foreign rivals.

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