



Written by [Jack Kerwick, Ph.D.](#) on July 25, 2012

Romney Addresses VFW; Wants More Military Spending, Foreign Intervention

On July 24, presumptive Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney [addressed](#) the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Romney said that “our veterans and our military” are entitled to not just “an accounting of our successes” as a country; veterans “deserve” as well “a fair and frank assessment of the whole picture — of where we are and where we want to be.” And the ugly truth of the matter, as Romney sees it, is that “as with our economy, the last few years have been a time of declining influence and missed opportunity.”



The fortunes — or reversals of fortune — of our economy are inseparable from those inflicting our military. It is this idea that served as the main thrust of Romney’s message.

Both economically and militarily, Romney contended, the first-term policies of his rival — President Obama — haven’t supplied much in the way of “confidence in a second” term. Though he didn’t explicitly say as much, Romney was nevertheless clear that by “the ultimate tests of American leadership,” Obama must be judged a failure.

“The president’s policies have made it harder to recover from the deepest recession in 70 years,” Romney declared. Furthermore, he has “exposed the military to cuts that no one can justify” and “compromised our national-security secrets.” Finally, “in dealings with other nations,” the president has “given trust where it is not earned, insult where it is not deserved, and apology where it is not due.”

To distinguish himself from Obama, Romney stated,

I am an unapologetic believer in the greatness of this country. I am not ashamed of American power. I take pride that throughout our history our power has brought justice where there was tyranny, peace where there was conflict, and hope where there was affliction and despair.

In contrast to his opponent, Romney does not “view America as just one more point on the strategic map, one more power to be balanced.” Rather, he claimed to believe that America is “the greatest force for good the world has ever known,” and “that our influence is needed as much now as ever.”

“This century,” Romney declared, “must be an American Century.”

But, he continued, if “the president’s radical cuts in the military” are permitted to occur, and if Obama and his team continue to “leak” national security information, as Romney charges, then America will continue down “the path to danger” by way of “weakness and indecision.”

Romney was blunt as to what he perceived as the choices facing the country come election day. “This is very simple: if you do not want America to be the strongest nation on earth, I am not your president. You have that president today.”



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Predictably, Republicans applauded Romney's remarks while Democrats bashed them.

For instance, writing in the Republican publication *National Review*, [Elliot Abrams](#) referred to Romney's speech as "very strong" and "noteworthy for many reasons." He described objection against Obama's policy on the Middle East as "coherent." Altogether, Abrams concluded that Romney's "criticisms represent a combination of idealism and realism."

On the other hand, Delaware Senator [Chris Coons](#), a Democrat, saw things quite differently.

According to Coons, Romney missed "yet another opportunity to show meaningful leadership" by choosing "instead ... to offer more empty rhetoric cloaked in patriotic bravado." The former Massachusetts governor "appears more focused on mocking the successful foreign policy of President Barack Obama," Coons alleged, "than on revealing exactly how a Romney administration would engage with the world."

In any event, it should come as no surprise to anyone that Romney would adopt the standard Republican line on the imperative of a robust, activist military. Moreover, as [The New American](#) reports, Romney "has gathered a coterie of establishment neoconservatives interested in war with Iran" with which to surround himself "as he embarks upon a trip to Europe."

The [Wall Street Journal](#) also confirms that Romney's "top foreign-policy advisers" are "both moderate and hawkish neoconservative[s]."

Romney should tread carefully when discussing foreign policy. Former presidential candidate and nationally renowned conservative commentator Patrick J. Buchanan forcefully makes this point.

In his most recent column, "[America Needs No More Neo-Imperial Nonsense](#)," Buchanan reminds readers that although he lost against George H.W. Bush in the 1992 Republican primaries, the latter eventually lost as well. Bush proclaimed as America's goal the construction of a "New World Order" against Buchanan's call for a resolutely non-interventionist foreign policy. But because Americans at the time were "looking inward," the first Bush's achievements in Iraq "could not save him" from losing to Democrat Bill Clinton.

Today, Americans are once again "looking inward," according to Buchanan. As Romney surrounds himself with the very same type of neoconservatives who embarked America upon two woefully unpopular wars — wars that, as Buchanan correctly notes, relieved the Republicans of both chambers of Congress as well as the presidency — he would be well served to bear this in mind.

Photo of Mitt Romney at VFW convention in Reno, Nevada: AP Images



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