



Updated April 13, 2010

5 Reasons We're Not As Safe With Obama In the White House

By J.D. Gordon

- FOXNews.com

The security climate in the United States has clearly diminished over the past 15 months.

I recently participated in a panel discussion at the America's Future Foundation in Washington, D.C., which asked, "Are We Any Safer?" As I sat alongside colleagues from the Heritage Foundation, Cato Institute, and Institute for Humane Studies, I had the opportunity to reflect back on the last decade and offer some strong conclusions about the state of our public safety since 9/11, particularly since January 2009.

Although our government has made notable gains in public safety since that catastrophic September day in 2001 – we've been able to use our military to crush Al Qaeda's ability to carry out such massive attacks, improved our intelligence and law enforcement operations to successfully break up terror plots and combined these efforts with enhanced public transportation screenings -- sadly, the security climate has diminished over the past 15 months.

In contrast to the Bush administration's record on protecting the public, we are less safe under the Obama administration. While it's not a complete list here are some of the reasons why our safety is declining:

- **Unilateral Nuclear Disarmament**

The utopian vision of a world without nuclear weapons may appear comforting in theory, however is potentially disastrous in its implementation. As the administration remains determined to unilaterally reduce our nuclear stockpiles while pledging to abandon development and testing of such weapons, the country's strategic advantage will be eroded should other nations fail to follow similar policies.

- **Inability to meaningfully confront Iran, which continues to rebuke the Obama administration, Despite Its Willingness to talk to Iran "Without Preconditions."**

The administration committed itself to a policy of appeasement on its first day in office by making conciliatory overtures to Iran without the promise of getting anything in return. Since then, international deadline after deadline has been set... and missed... in reaching a negotiated settlement on Iran's nuclear program. Should Iran acquire nuclear weapons, it would start an unimaginable arms race in the Middle East, and gravely imperil Israel, one of our closest allies.

• A Change In Policy On Terror Suspects Switching to Prosecution as a Law Enforcement Issue vs. a Military Issue.

The best case to illustrate this policy switch? -- Christmas Day bomber Abdul Mutallab of Nigeria. After failing to take down a Northwest Airlines flight from Amsterdam to Detroit, he was promptly read his Miranda Rights and predictably ceased cooperation with intelligence authorities. But there's more. Next, the administration was just weeks away from transferring five 9/11 co-defendants to New York from Guantanamo, where they would stand trial in civilian court vice in military commissions, despite gloating about their guilt in numerous war crimes court appearances since June 2008. Public pressure on New York City officials turned the tide, rescuing lower Manhattan from becoming an armed camp at a cost of \$200 million a year, while passing a megaphone to Al Qaeda's propaganda machine. Then there is the tale of the Department of Justice lawyers and human rights activists who represented Al Qaeda detainees at Guantanamo. The central criticism of these nine senior officials has been that they defended Al Qaeda -- which in turn received a logical counter-argument that everyone is entitled to a lawyer, no matter how heinous the crime. Lost in this discussion was the fact that these attorneys were in effect rewarded for their activism with high-level posts equivalent to three and four star generals, colonels and commanders, an entirely different matter than being given low level staff jobs after working on a few trials.

• Al Qaeda and Its Followers Still Seek to Destroy the United States, Regardless of President Obama's Personal Popularity Overseas and Goodwill Gestures.

Olive branches meant to defeat terrorism -- such as immediate executive orders closing Guantanamo and the abandonment of harsh interrogations -- are merely signs of weakness in the eyes of Al Qaeda. These gestures have not significantly changed world opinion about the United States. The terror group's rhetoric against President Obama has been intensely personal, as evidenced by Usama bin Laden's deputy Ayman Al-Zawahiri's egregious comments about his race, while ex-Guantanamo detainees who have surfaced in Yemen as leadership figures on the Arabian Peninsula, presenting fresh challenges to the Obama administration just days after the inauguration, despite the president's softer terrorism policies.

• The Recent Increase In the Homegrown Terror Threat.

Homegrown terrorists in the United States have spread rapidly and taken on surprising forms. They have been, literally, the man or woman next door for scores of unsuspecting Americans. Take, for example, the case of Nabjibullah Zazi, a U.S. permanent resident

from Afghanistan and Denver airport shuttle service employee who was arrested for plotting attacks on New York City subways; Colleen "Jihad Jane" La Rose and Jamie Paulin-Ramirez, two blond, blue-eyed women who were arrested for plotting online to attend a terrorist training camp; Ramy Zamzam, a Howard University dental student, who remains detained in Pakistan on terrorism charges along with four other Muslim-Americans from the Washington, D.C. area; Sharif Mobley, a NJ power plant employee captured in Yemen as a member of Al Qaeda, and others. The administration's shift in the public policy debate to favor increased legal protection of detainees and terror suspects has likely not been lost on people like these.

In our discussion, asking "Are We Any Safer?" on March 31, the panel offered grim answers to that question. And the answers served as a sober reminder of how much our security posture has slipped, and how much more vulnerable we've become since January 2009.

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