

From: "Mitchell, Megan M."
To: "Emanuel, Mike" <Emanuel@FOXNEWS.COM>
Subject: RE: TELEVISION INTERVIEW OF THE VICE PRESIDENT BY MIKE EMMANUEL, FOX NEWS
Received(Date): Thu, 15 Jan 2009 09:15:04 -0500

Thank you. This means a lot coming from you. It has been a real pleasure working with you. My best to you and your family.

From: Emanuel, Mike [mailto:Emanuel@FOXNEWS.COM]
Sent: Wednesday, January 14, 2009 7:02 PM
To: Mitchell, Megan M.
Subject: Re: TELEVISION INTERVIEW OF THE VICE PRESIDENT BY MIKE EMMANUEL, FOX NEWS

No problem, Megan. You are a class act! Thanks so much.

Mike Emanuel
White House Correspondent
Fox News
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----- Original Message -----

From: Mitchell, Megan M. <Megan_M_Mitchell@ovp.eop.gov>
To: Emanuel, Mike
Sent: Wed Jan 14 18:48:10 2009
Subject: Re: TELEVISION INTERVIEW OF THE VICE PRESIDENT BY MIKE EMMANUEL, FOX NEWS

Thank you mike. Sorry we misspelt your name. We are fixing now

From: Emanuel, Mike
To: Foster, Lea A.; Mitchell, Megan M.
Sent: Wed Jan 14 18:37:32 2009
Subject: FW: TELEVISION INTERVIEW OF THE VICE PRESIDENT BY MIKE EMMANUEL, FOX NEWS

Thanks so much for making this happen! I really enjoyed the opportunity to pick the Vice President's brain.

I wish you continued great health, success, & happiness.

All the best to you,

Mike

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Vice President

For Immediate Release

January 14, 2009

TELEVISION INTERVIEW OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

BY MIKE EMMANUEL, FOX NEWS

Vice President's Ceremonial Office

Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building

January 12, 2009

11:04 A.M. EST

Q Mr. Vice President, thanks for your time. Saturday marked the second anniversary of the surge in Iraq. I'm wondering if you could take us back a little bit to some of the internal discussions, and why you supported the surge,

and where we are now.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The basic decision the President had to make sort of end of '06, beginning of '07, was a strong sense that we needed to change what we were doing. What we were doing wasn't going to finish the job, or get the job done in Iraq. We'd made a lot of progress. We'd had three national elections, written a constitution, killed Abu Musab al Zarqawi, toppled Saddam's government and so forth. So there were a lot of good things that happened prior to that time. But in the last part of '06, I think there was a general view that things were a little rocky, and we needed to adjust our strategy.

The President did that when he decided to send five additional brigades into Iraq, and send Dave Petraeus in as the commander in Iraq, and push specifically his counterinsurgency strategy. It wasn't just the people that was important, it was also the strategy.

And now we look back on it some two years later, I think it's been enormously successful. It has, in fact, taken us to the lowest level of incidence and violence in Iraq since '03 when we first went in. We've seen I think a strong -- relatively strong Iraqi government emerge. They just finished negotiations with us on a strategic framework agreement that eventually will provide for the withdrawal of U.S. forces. So I think it's worked very well.

Q At the time when you were debating the idea of a surge, why did you believe so strongly in it?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: My sense of it was that what happened in Iraq was an enormously important question for the United States. We had a strategic interest in succeeding there. And the surge involved basically sending American personnel to make sure it succeeded. A lot of folks were arguing we shouldn't do that, that instead what we ought to do is rely on the Iraqis to succeed. And I just felt that it was important not to entrust sort of the fate of the republic, if you will, of this important question to the United States to Iraqi forces. They could be part of it, and they were part of it. They participated in the surge. But at the time, I didn't believe that it was appropriate to do that. I really thought it was important that -- if you're going to put the reputation of the United States and our strategic interest at stake, you needed to back it up with a significant commitment of U.S. troops. And that's what the President decided to do. I think it was a good decision.

I don't mean to take anything away from the Iraqis. But they had started -- their forces had been pretty well stood down, if you will, after '03, and we had to rebuild those forces, and we were in the midst of doing that. And as I say, they're playing in a major role, and play a major role all the time. But when it came down to that basic proposition of whether or not we were going to succeed with our mission in Iraq, I thought that was too important a mission to be left to others.

Q Two years later, are we close to achieving all of our objectives in Iraq?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I believe we are. I can't say that it's complete yet. We've still got work to be done. But if you look at where we've come from, if you look at where we were in '03 with Saddam Hussein in power -- one of the worst regimes in the Middle East, started two wars, produced and used weapons of mass destruction, sponsored terror, et cetera -- to this, where we are today with a democratically-elected government in power in Iraq, a constitution, three national elections, things have changed a lot, and they've changed for the better.

And I think that's to our benefit, it's to the benefit of the Iraqis, and the people throughout the region. So I think it's been a major success. I would not want to say it's over yet. This is a difficult part of the world. There are still possibilities for significant terrorist attacks. But one of the major things that we've done in succeeding in Iraq was to deal a devastating blow to al Qaeda. They made Iraq the central part of their campaign on the global war on terror. And we've dealt them, I think, devastating blows in Iraq.

Q National Security Advisor Steve Hadley in recent days said that he felt like Pakistan and Iran would be two of the most immediate challenges national security-wise for the new Obama team. Do you agree with that assessment? And any advice for them on those serious issues?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I do agree with Steve on those. The situation in Iran is a regime that's a terror-sponsoring state, a prime mover and shaker where Hezbollah is concerned, but also actively and aggressively trying to develop nuclear weapons.

And Pakistan -- Pakistan is an ally. We've worked closely with that government in recent years, especially since 9/11. But they've got a portion of the country that isn't really controlled by the central government that's become a safe haven for the Taliban operating into Afghanistan, and for al Qaeda. Those are going to be challenges that the new administration is going to have to deal with early on.

Q Advice for how to deal with them?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: There is advice being offered. Transition teams are working on those issues in particular. But I wouldn't want to talk about it. I think they need all the good advice and wisdom we can share with them, and we'll do that. But the exact content of it I think is best left to one of those secrets between administrations for now.

Q Leon Panetta for CIA director -- does that choice trouble you in any way, due to his lack of intelligence experience?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I know Leon. We first met back in the Nixon administration when we were both

Republicans. And then I served with him for 10 years in the House of Representatives. He was, of course, a Democrat, I was a Republican in the House. I like him a lot. He is one of my favorite Democrats, if I can put it in those terms. That may be the kiss of death for Leon, but I am very fond of him. He is a very talented guy.

And the problem, of course, is that I think we've established a very high standard with the team that we've had managing the intelligence community in the last couple of years. I think with Mike Hayden of the CIA, Steve Kappes, his deputy, Mike McConnell is Director of National Intelligence, Keith Alexander at the National Security Agency -- this is a superb team, as fine a team as I've ever worked with in those jobs. And it's important I think to try to continue that same level of expertise.

Now, whether or not Leon is the right guy for that job, only time will tell. I think he probably has a good relationship with the President-elect. He certainly will do well on the Hill. But these are very, very challenging positions, and we'll see how he does. I think the jury is still out.

Q As you look back on your eight years as Vice President, what accomplishments are you proudest of? What do you think may be permanent changes that the Bush-Cheney team brought about? And what do you think may be reversed rather quickly by a team that has a very different philosophy than yours?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think probably the most important thing we did was to keep the country safe for the last seven and a half years; to disrupt, interrupt, break up all the prospective attacks and plots that were developed to come launch another mass casualty attack inside the United States. That's been a remarkable achievement. It wasn't an accident, it didn't just happen. It happened because of some very good decisions the President made, and some great people out there to implement them in the military and intelligence and law enforcement.

So I point to that as our single, greatest success. Now, it's hard lots of times to give credit for something that doesn't happen, but I really believe there are thousands of Americans alive today because of what we did on things like terror surveillance and interrogation programs for high-value detainees, those steps, like the Patriot Act, that we took that gave the President and the executive branch, the Congress, the government in general, the authority and the tools that were necessary to prevent those attacks.

The challenge for the Obama administration is whether or not they can overcome their campaign rhetoric -- they obviously were very critical of all those policies during the course of the campaign -- can they overcome their commitment to that rhetoric and sit down instead and be objective and look at what we've done and how we've done it and what it's produced. Because I think if they do, if they're fair-minded about it, they'll recognize that it's important to continue those policies.

Now, whether or not they cancel them, obviously that's not a decision we get to make. But I would urge them to be

very cautious and very careful here; that it's not just an accident that we haven't been struck for nearly eight years, it's a result of those policies.

Q Do you worry they may roll back some of those policies? If so, which ones? And furthermore, do you worry that they may try to prosecute some people who worked for your team who believed they were doing what they needed to do to keep the country safe?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't know which ones they'll roll back. You can look at what was said during the campaign, and I think President-Elect Obama has made it clear he is going to carefully consider these issues before he jumps on it.

In terms of going back and trying to prosecute some of the folks who carried out those instructions, there are a couple of things to be said about it. Number one, the agency was very careful in terms of coming to get authorization for what they did, and they got it. That was based upon careful work done, for example, by the Justice Department. And the Terror Surveillance Program was signed up to by the Attorney General of the United States, as well as the President, as well as the Secretary of Defense. And we were very careful, in terms of how we proceeded, and made certain that we had the authority that was needed to do what we did.

The idea at this stage that you'd go back and try to prosecute somebody for that I think is not sound. First of all, I don't think the case can be made. We had the legal authority and opinions we needed in order to undertake those programs. But secondly, if you think about it, if you're going to go back in the next administration because of some political controversy, or because there's some political difference of opinion, and go try to prosecute people down who were field agents, or people that were out carrying out these policies, I think that would be devastating -- fundamentally unfair to the people involved, but also it would create a standard here in terms of people's willingness to take risk that I think would be very damaging to the country.

And I don't think anybody who watches that who is an employee of the CIA, say, for example, or an agent, is going to go out and ever again take risk in the name of the United States of America if, in fact, he's going to have to worry about hiring a lawyer in the next administration to defend himself against the charge that somehow he broke the law or did something inappropriate.

The fact is they didn't break the law. To my knowledge, everything that was done by the agency had the proper authorization, was legal. You can debate the legality of the opinions that were offered at the time, go get another lawyer. But the fact of the matter is it was handled very, very carefully. And I think that any suggestion that there should be prosecution of these folks is extraordinarily unwise and unfair.

Q As you look back on your eight years as Vice President, do you have a greatest regret or something you wish that could have gotten done that just didn't get done?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I suppose the one that I, when you put it in those terms, that I think of most often with regret would be that we didn't make any progress on the entitlements package. Our efforts right after the '04 election to try to get something going on Social Security ultimately were unsuccessful. We couldn't get any democratic buy-in to participate with us in that debate. And we made a major effort; the President and I campaigned all across the country on Social Security, held numerous town halls on the subject, but were unable to make significant progress in terms of dealing with that problem.

Q I had the pleasure of interviewing you in the summer of 2000, talking about your experience as Secretary of Defense. One question I asked you at the time was about Saddam Hussein. And you said: "It would be nice if he weren't on the scene today. He's still an aggravating individual, but I don't think he's much of a threat at this stage." Is the difference that happened a few years later the fact that we were living in a post-9/11 world?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes. Nine-eleven changed the -- well, changed everything really, in terms of how we thought about threats. Saddam Hussein in the period before 9/11 is as I described him there, as kind of an aggravation. But after 9/11 when you've been struck by terrorists, thousands of Americans had been killed, and when you know the terrorists are out there looking for weapons of mass destruction that they can use against the United States, that changes the way you look at a Saddam Hussein -- a man who had a close relationship with terrorists; he was making \$25,000 payments to the families of suicide bombers, providing safe haven for terror, and he had produced and used weapons of mass destruction, chemical and biological agents, and in the past had been trying to produce a nuclear weapon.

The possible marrying up, if you will, of his terrorist tendencies on the one hand with those weapons of mass destruction and his experience in that regard was of great concern, especially after 9/11 when we knew what al Qaeda was capable of.

Q With President Bush and you leaving office, there's no Republican President, there will be no Republican Senate majority leader, there will be no Republican House speaker. Who will be the next voice of the Republican Party? Where will leadership come from?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think there are a lot of very talented people out there who will step up now and take on some of that burden of leadership. We've been through this cycle before. I can remember going through the '74 election when we lost both houses of Congress badly; '76 we lost the presidency; by 1980 we were back with the Reagan Revolution, control of the Senate and so forth. So the pendulum swings back and forth here.

I'm basically an optimist. I think there are some very talented people out there on the Republican side. I think of people like Jon Kyl, who is the Whip in the Senate; or John Thune from South Dakota; or over on the House side, people like Eric Cantor, for example, from Virginia; Adam Putnam; Paul Ryan, from Wisconsin. Or if you go out and look around the states, people that I have hope for in terms of the future, I look at people like Rob Portman, from Ohio, who served as OMB director, special trade representative in the administration, served for several years

in the Congress, went home to Ohio a couple of years ago to pursue private interests. But I would hope a guy like Rob would be back at some point. So there are a lot of talented folks out there.

Q I seem to remember you telling I believe Governor Bush that if you were his running mate you would not run for President. Did you ever give that second thought? How about perhaps in the 2008 cycle when the conservative movement seemed to be looking for a voice?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I didn't give it a second thought. I thought about running for President myself back in the '94 time frame. In that election cycle, I did about 160 campaigns, I set up a political action committee, raised over a million dollars, and went out and basically tested the waters. At the end of that effort, I sat down with my family over the holidays in Jackson Hole that year, and thought about it, and decided I did not want to do all those things that I'd have to do if I wanted to mount a presidential campaign, and that I'd had 25 great years in government and I wanted to go off to the private sector. So that's what I did.

I've never looked back on that decision. But I think it was appealing, from the standpoint of the President, that he could pick somebody to be his Vice President who would always focus on his agenda and would not have a separate agenda. For example, if I'd worried about how I was going to be received in Iowa in January of '08, I don't think I would have been as bold, as aggressive as I've been in terms of supporting some of these controversial policies we had to support in order to protect the country.

You can't sort of have it both ways. You can't, on the one hand, be committed to pursuing the President's agenda, and on the other hand, pursue your own presidential campaign, in my opinion. So I think it's been an asset. But once I'd made that decision 14 years ago I never looked back.

Q Scooter Libby: In the remaining days people are wondering will he get a pardon. I'm wondering if you can make a case for why he deserves a pardon to the American public, or maybe why he doesn't?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I would simply say about Scooter that he's one of the most talented and able individuals I've ever worked with. He worked for me when I was Secretary of Defense, and then again, he was my Chief of Staff and National Security Advisor the first five years we were here.

I am going to pass on your request to voice what I think ought to happen there. It's a decision that the President and only the President can make.

Q Okay. Because I figured if he gets one, some people will object; if he doesn't get one, then I believe supporters of yours may object to that.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't have anything to add.

Q Your health issues have been well documented. Did you ever think that with all the stress of the job that you might have to leave at some point?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I didn't. If I had taken -- once I took the job on, it was only after I'd assured myself based on the best medical advice I could get, that there wasn't any reason why I couldn't do the job and fill out the full eight years. And that's turned out to be true.

Q Mr. Vice President, I appreciate your time.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Enjoyed it.

END 11:22 A.M. EST
