

Meeting With President Obama

On Friday Feb 6, Pres. Obama met with three dozen people, including myself, whose loved ones were murdered in the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the USS Cole and the embassy bombings. The subjects of the meeting were his executive order closing the prison at Guantanamo Bay (in a year and after a committee has decided what to do) and the prosecutions of the terrorists imprisoned there.

Although I remain convinced that closure of Guantanamo is unwise, I must give Mr. Obama credit for showing an interest in the views of the families. This is in sharp contrast to his predecessor. George W. Bush was happy to use families of terrorist victims in public settings as tools for creating the *appearance* of concern, but in private, every action of his and those under him showed contempt for and anger with any family member who was not willing to be his toady. Whether Mr. Obama's meeting with us was an expression of genuine concern or is merely a public relations ploy that is the product of political antennae that are sharper than Bush's we will only learn with the passage of time.

Obama started the meeting by speaking without notes for over thirty minutes; for at least another hour he answered questions. He promised "swift and sure justice," noting that as of the time he signed his order to close Guantanamo many of the prisoners were just being arraigned. That is hardly a swift prosecution. (Note that this was said just one day after he halted the nearly completed trial of one of the Cole bombers.) He said he had ordered his staff to "reexamine" the entire process for trying the prisoners and said the decision to close Guantanamo is in no way indicative of an ultimate decision on whether to try the defendants in military commissions or civilian courts.

He stated that Guantanamo has become a symbol around the world that has made the United States a focus of hatred; that the world has now confused Guantanamo with Abu Graib, and that he decided to close the prison because he "wants to strip away the excuses that have been made for [the prisoners.]"

His contention that Guantanamo has become for many in the United States and abroad a symbol of evil is correct as far as it goes: there are those who believe that

prisoners in Guantanamo are tortured and they sympathize with the prisoners based on that false belief. Many people have sent them gifts and letters of support and over five hundred lawyers have offered their services pro bono.

However, the President ignored some relevant facts. If some think Guantanamo prisoners are treated cruelly this is only because of a well financed propaganda campaign, a web of lies alleging ill treatment, which the Far Left has engaged in since the prison was opened. This was part of the Left's effort to undermine Pres. Bush regardless of the merit of any particular policy. In regard to Guantanamo that campaign has been highly successful. Of course Mr. Obama would not want to speak of this since the Left constituted the core of his support in the campaign for the Democratic nomination. It was to gain their support that he made promises, among them the closure of Guantanamo and it is to them that he owes his election. He cannot now betray these supporters and admit that their version of the prison is a complete fabrication.

Whatever the reason, Obama is correct that Guantanamo is damaging America's image abroad. Yet, we must wait and see if closure puts an end to the Far Left making "excuses" for these monsters. Perhaps not, for as the plagiarizing ex-professor, Ward Churchill has shown, the Far Left believes the victims of 9/11, being "little Eichmanns," deserved what they got."

Mr. Obama also addressed the problem of what information the government will turn over to the defendants. In earlier terrorist trials judges have ordered that defendants' attorneys be given access to classified information in order to mount a 'proper defense.' This information was then promptly transmitted by the attorneys to terrorists still at large, thus compromising America's security. Mr. Obama said Bush's decision to keep the prisoners out of the United States was an attempt to solve this problem, under the theory that by doing so they were not entitled to all of the rights the Constitution guarantees to criminal defendants in U.S. courts. He said that certain Supreme Court decisions had granted these rights to offshore prisoners, and this had undermined the legal basis for maintaining Guantanamo.

However Mr. Obama immediately revealed his own uncertainty on the matter by saying that it is "**unlikely** [emphasis added] that they will get all the Constitutional

protections of a US citizen.” Clearly, he lacks confidence that once on U.S. soil the same lawyers currently aiding the killers won’t try to get them into our criminal justice system with all the rights, including rights of discovery, which an ordinary criminal would have. Should that happen, what the president wants won’t matter: if a judge decides they’re entitled to classified information to make an effective defense, Administration refusal to provide it will result in dismissal of charges and their release. And that is possible, for when asked about the issue of classified information, the President responded: “We’re not going to give a whole bunch of classified information to them.”

If, a judge then dismisses the charges, will Mr. Obama refuse to release them?

Interestingly, the President at one point uttered the phrase “Far Left,” but he seemed to instantly recognize this as a faux pas and attempted to step over these words saying instead that “far right has over simplified the issue.” Then, as if trying to restore balance to he said that “both the Left and the Far Right” are guilty of this.

That little misstep of referring to the “Far Left” points to the President’s dilemma. Breaking his promise to core supporters on an issue in which they have invested so much, would have carried terrible political risk for this is a group which has a history of viciously attacking those whom they perceive as insufficiently loyal to the party line, particularly apostates. So it’s no surprise that Mr. Obama followed through on this commitment to shut the place down. He may think it wiser to risk setting the terrorists free than face the wrath of betrayed ACLU members. (In support of this view we must remember that his Attorney General, Eric Holder, was responsible for the midnight pardons granted by Bill Clinton that set free the Puerto Rican terrorists who had attempted to kill Pres. Truman.)

But if anything was apparent about Mr. Obama it is that he is highly intelligent man. He knows that after numerous screenings, what remains in Guantanamo are the worst of the worst; experts in finance, bomb building, and other specialists. Already, several dozen of those released from Guantanamo Bay have returned to terrorism. One of these appears to be the chief of Al Qaeda in Yemen. Obama cannot ignore the fact

that if his actions result in release of these killers, the blood of their future victims will be seen on his hands.

Mr. Obama seems to have given himself an escape clause. His executive order allows a year in which his administration can decide how to proceed. It is a year in which he can railroad into place many demands of his allies on the left, ACORN, NEA, AFSCME, ACLU, National Lawyers Guild, LaRaza and the rest. In that year he can achieve his goals of ending the secret ballot in union elections, perverting the Census, imposing socialized medicine, drastically increasing funding for the left, etc. Having fulfilled these political promises the President could decide it was safe to renege on his Guantanamo pledge and keep the place open after implementing vague "reforms." As it required a Richard Nixon, the longtime anti-Communist, to be the man to open relations with China, it requires a Barack Obama to keep Al Qaeda terrorists in Cuba and away from US courts.

Thus it may be that Pres. Obama was truthful with the families. If it is not swift, at least there may be justice. But muting the left's opposition will require surrender to the demands of ACORN, NEA and a host of other radical leftwing groups.

Whichever course he chooses, the people of the United States face bleak prospects.