

DAY AFTER ESCALATING CLIMATE DAMAGING WAR, OBAMA CITES “BEYOND VIETNAM” ON CLIMATE URGENCY

In a column at Salon, I compare two executive actions President Obama took this week: escalating the war against ISIL (and expanding it to “the Khorasan group”), and including climate resilience as one consideration in foreign aid projects.

The war escalation makes it quite clear that Obama believes he has expansive Executive Authority. Which makes it all the more pathetic that he’s still piddling around with using that authority to respond to a far more urgent threat, climate change.

Perhaps more appalling, however, is how he rolled these out. The day after escalating a war that will burn vast amounts of fossil fuel at a speech at the UN Climate Summit, Obama invoked Martin Luther King, Jr’s “Beyond Vietnam” speech to describe the urgency of the problem he is largely ignoring.

In his climate speech, the president rather ironically invoked Martin Luther King Jr.’s speech “[Beyond Vietnam](#).” In it, the civil rights leader described how we did then what we still do now in the Middle East: “[W]e increased our troop commitments in support of governments which were singularly corrupt, inept, and without popular support.” The day after Obama escalated a war on the other side of the world, he cited King’s radically anti-war speech to invoke the urgency of fighting climate change, not terrorism. “We are now faced with the fact, my friends,

that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now," the original speech went. "[T]here is such a thing as being too late," were the words the president cited.

And yet, having invoked that urgency, the president took executive action that – compared with his executive actions that expanded a war – was timid and inadequate to the climate threat facing the nation and the globe.

The president clearly believes he has expansive authorities to protect the country. Given that's the case, why isn't he heeding Dr. King's call to meet the urgency of the moment with appropriate action?

Obama is clearly making a choice to use his Executive Authority to respond to less urgent threats.

And all the while he's invoking the words of King to put a gloss on his own inaction.

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