

HILLARY PROMISES NOT TO ORDER THE MILITARY (!?!) TO TORTURE

Though I agree with the general sentiment that Donald Trump should not be trusted with America's nuclear codes, there's a lot I loathed in Hillary's foreign policy speech yesterday.

Her neat espousal of American exceptionalism, with the specter that another country could make decisions about our lives and jobs and safety, is especially rich coming from a woman who has negotiated several trade deals that give corporations the power to make decisions about our lives and jobs and safety.

I believe with all my heart that America is an exceptional country – that we're still, in Lincoln's words, the last, best hope of earth. We are not a country that cowers behind walls. We lead with purpose, and we prevail.

And if America doesn't lead, we leave a vacuum – and that will either cause chaos, or other countries will rush in to fill the void. Then they'll be the ones making the decisions about your lives and jobs and safety – and trust me, the choices they make will not be to our benefit.

That is not an outcome we can live with.

The rest of her riff on American exceptionalism – with weird claims like, "America's network of allies is part of what makes us exceptional" and "Allies provide staging areas for our military" – is worth an entirely separate post.

Her cavalier invocation of dead bodies and prolonging depressions exhibits a lack of self-awareness.

I'm frankly baffled by her description of her

plan to defeat ISIS, as well as her warnings elsewhere about allowing terrorists in Syria or emboldening ISIS, both of which past Hillary actions have done.

We need to lash up with our allies, and ensure our intelligence services are working hand-in-hand to dismantle the global network that supplies money, arms, propaganda and fighters to the terrorists. We need to win the battle in cyberspace.

[Applause]

And of course we need to strengthen our defenses here at home.

That – in a nutshell – is my plan for defeating ISIS.

Hillary never talks about how she'll get the Saudis – one of those allies she wants to “lash up with” – to stop fostering terrorism. That seems like a first step.

I'm even more curious what she intends with “strengthening our defenses here at home,” especially coming just lines after she falsely claimed San Bernardino was an ISIS attack? We already arrest scores of people for their support for ISIS, for doing things like RTing ISIS propaganda. To do much more – and to find the San Bernardino couple before they attacked – would have required far more domestic spying. Is that what Hillary has planned?

But here's the thing that most disturbs me about her hawkish speech. Note how she attacked Trump for his embrace of torture.

He has said that he would order our military to carry out torture and the murder of civilians who are related to suspected terrorists – even though those are war crimes.

[snip]

So it really matters that Donald Trump says things that go against our deepest-held values. It matters when he says he'll order our military to murder the families of suspected terrorists. During the raid to kill bin Laden, when every second counted, our SEALs took the time to move the women and children in the compound to safety. Donald Trump may not get it, but that's what honor looks like.

Two times in a formal, pre-written speech, delivered with tele-prompters, Hillary claimed Trump had said he'd order *our military* to carry out torture and murder of civilians. But that's not what he said. He spoke generally, and when speaking of torture he has talked about "interrogators," without reference to agency. Sure, that could mean DOD (and some DOD interrogators did torture under George Bush). It could also mean the FBI, the agency which currently leads high value interrogations and which John Brennan has said must have its "own processes and procedures and laws that govern its activities," separate from the techniques permitted in the Army Field Manual.

But the assumption of everyone listening to Donald Trump's promise to torture was that he'd ask CIA to do the business. Both former CIA Director Michael Hayden and current CIA Director John Brennan thought that's what he meant, anyway.

While Hillary was Secretary of State, the government killed the son of Anwar al-Awlaki, effectively murdering the family of a suspected (dead) terrorist.

It's bad enough that she's lecturing Trump about our deepest-held values. But she's also not promising to the one thing she appears to be promising: refusing to order the CIA – not the military – not to torture.