

January 26, 2015

Three paragraphs from Jonathan Tobin's latest post remind us how ideologically blinded and obtuse the president is.

*... Mr. Obama was also brainy enough to declare his foreign policy a terrific success on the very day that a Shiite militia group took over the presidential palace in the Sana'a, the capital of Yemen, "sparking fresh concerns about a country that has become a cornerstone of U.S. counterterrorism strategy." Which reminded me of how President Savant held up Yemen as a model of success only last September, telling us, "This strategy of taking out terrorists who threaten us, while supporting partners on the front lines, is one that we have successfully pursued in Yemen and Somalia for years." Which in turn reminded me of Libya.*

*It was in the fall of 2011 when President Obama, speaking to the United Nations and announcing yet another of his grand achievements, declared, "Forty two years of tyranny was ended in six months. From Tripoli to Misurata to Benghazi — today, Libya is free." Mr. Obama went on to say, "This is how the international community is supposed to work — nations standing together for the sake of peace and security, and individuals claiming their rights." And what a success it was. Just last summer, in fact, the United States, because of rising violence resulting from clashes between Libyan militias, shut down its embassy in Libya and evacuated its diplomats to neighboring Tunisia under U.S. military escort. Earlier this month King's College George Joffe wrote, "Libya seems finally to be about to descend into full blown civil war." Call it another Model of Success during the Obama era.*

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And Stephen Hayes writes on Iran nonsense.

*When House speaker John Boehner invited Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu to address Congress in the coming weeks, the reaction from the White House was swift. In background interviews with reporters, top Obama administration officials made clear that they considered the invitation itself an affront and the acceptance of it a breach of protocol.*

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*This is the same White House that last week had British prime minister David Cameron making calls to Capitol Hill to lobby lawmakers against more sanctions on Iran. It's the same administration that had to apologize to Senator Marco Rubio and others for violating its pledge to "consult Congress" before making any unilateral changes to U.S. policy on Cuba. This is the same president who has boasted repeatedly of his ability and willingness to ignore the legislative branch and use his "pen and phone" to do what he wants. And this is the same administration that used the cover of anonymity to call Netanyahu "chickenshit" in a recent interview. ...*

All of the above has led Craig Pirrong of Streetwise Professor to say "we are in the midst of another low and dishonest decade."

*Indeed, ISIS has been expanding rather dramatically throughout Syria, giving the lie to this SOTU statement: "In Iraq and Syria, American leadership—including our military power—is stopping ISIL's advance." That's true to a limited degree in Kobani and Mosul, but flatly wrong elsewhere in Iraq and especially Syria. Don't even get me started on another Obama delusion: the "success" in Yemen, which has descended into absolute chaos with competing "Death to America" factions, both Shia and Sunni, vying for control.*

*It's rather depressing to see the President of the United States do a Baghdad Bob imitation while addressing a joint session of Congress.*

*In sum, at present it appears that Putin is on the advance in Ukraine and ISIS is at best stalemated in Iraq and Syria. And the West's leaders, reflecting the indifference of their citizenry, are content to let it happen, or at least do too little to prevent it from happening. In other words, we are in the midst of another low and dishonest decade.*

And has the Editors of Investor's Business Daily starting to wonder if we have become a "banana republic."

*Yemen's government fell and Saudi Arabia's king died. But President Obama busied himself with YouTube stars and some of the lowest characters on the Internet. Is this our descent to a banana republic?*

*Another week has gone by in which the Free World could have used some leadership and President Obama was found wanting.*

*First, there were the events in Yemen, an ally that Obama had touted as one of our biggest successes in the war on terror but where the president was driven from office by tribal rebels. The commander in chief said virtually nothing. ...*

The Editors of IBD also rise to defend the A-10 Warthog.

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*This is not surprising, since the A-10 can almost hover over a battlefield as it picks out targets for its 20-foot-long, 2.5 ton, seven-barrel Gatling gun that can fire 1,100 of those 30 mm shells. The titanium shell that wraps around the bottom of its cockpit makes it difficult to shoot down.*

*The U.S. sent the aircraft to the region in late November with the 163rd Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, a unit with the Indiana Air National Guard. The unit also provided close air support for air operations against the Taliban in Afghanistan.*

*On Jan. 15, Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James pointed out that the A-10 had conducted 11% of all sorties against IS since August, despite the fact it was not deployed to the battlefield until November.*

*But it may be shot down soon by the budget-cutters. ...*

The last piece today on this president's disasters comes from **Roger Simon**.

... During Obama's presidency the influence of Ayatollah Khamenei's Iranian Shiite regime has spread across the world like the proverbial wildfire, reaching from North Africa into Iraq, Lebanon (via Hezbollah), Syria (via Assad whose red line on chemical weapons famously faded into invisibility), Gaza (via improved relations with Hamas) and now into Yemen (via the Houthis) and undoubtedly a number of other places, including Venezuela, North Korea and Cuba. And our president, consciously or unconsciously or both, has had as much to do as anyone with the creation of this nascent, soon-to-be nuclear armed and missile-ready fundamentalist "Greater Persia." No wonder the Sunni Saudis are alarmed — they have been for a long time — and no wonder Obama suddenly decided to replace Biden in paying a condolence visit to Riyadh for the death of King Abdullah. He has some powerful fence-mending to do that pretend bowing and scraping may not so easily solve.

Much of this Iran-coddling began back when the Green Movement was in the streets of Tehran seeking the overthrow of the ayatollahs and chanting "Obama, Obama... Are you with us or are you with them?" Our president did not respond. He was already in private communication with the bizarre Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Obama wanted to be the one who got credit for reining in the excesses of the Islamic Republic, not those unruly student demonstrators who were the ones suffering from the regime in the first place, being murdered, tortured and raped in Evin Prison, often in reverse order.

Indeed, this unconscionable and out-of-control narcissism has been the key to Obama's foreign policy throughout and accounts for the catastrophic global results we see in front of us now. The "leading from behind" mantra has always been a fraud, masking what it really means: "I, Barack, know best and manipulate affairs from behind." It's all about me. (Is it ever!) ...

As if by magic, the **Washington Post's** business section has an article that could stand as the perfect metaphor for the president. Turns out major auto manufacturers are adding fake engine noise to give their vehicles an undeserved V8 growl. But we all know President Bystander is a three cylinder two-stroke Saab.

*Stomp on the gas in a new Ford Mustang or F-150 and you'll hear a meaty, throaty rumble — the same style of roar that Americans have associated with auto power and performance for decades.*

*It's a sham. The engine growl in some of America's best-selling cars and trucks is actually a finely tuned bit of lip-syncing, boosted through special pipes or digitally faked altogether. And it's driving car enthusiasts insane.*

*Fake engine noise has become one of the auto industry's dirty little secrets, with automakers from BMW to Volkswagen turning to a sound-boosting bag of tricks. Without them, today's more fuel-efficient engines would sound far quieter and, automakers worry, seemingly less powerful, potentially pushing buyers away. ...*

*... That type of ire has made the auto industry shy about discussing its sound technology. Several attempts to speak with Ford's sound engineers about the new F-150, a six-cylinder model of America's best-selling truck that plays a muscular engine note through the speakers, were quietly rebuffed.*

*Car companies are increasingly wary of alerting buyers that they might not be hearing the real thing, and many automakers have worked with audio and software engineers to make their cars' synthesized engine melody more realistic.*

*Volkswagen uses what's called a "Soundaktor," a special speaker that looks like a hockey puck and plays sound files in cars such as the GTI and Beetle Turbo. Lexus worked with sound technicians at Yamaha to more loudly amplify the noise of its LFA supercar toward the driver seat.*

*Some, including Porsche with its "sound symposer," have used noise-boosting tubes to crank up the engine sound inside the cabin. Others have gone further into digital territory: BMW plays a recording of its motors through the car stereos, a sample of which changes depending on the engine's load and power. ...*

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## Contentions

### [The Smartest Guy Ever to Be President Isn't Quite As Smart As He Thinks](#)

by Peter Wehner

Barack Obama is really, really smart. I know, because he told me so during his State of the Union address. Our president is especially smart on foreign policy. I know because Mr. Obama told me that, too. "I believe in a smarter kind of American leadership," the president [said](#). "We lead best when ... we don't let our fears blind us to the opportunities that this new century presents. That's exactly what we're doing right now. And around the globe, it is making a difference."

Of course it is.

Take how smart the president has been in combating ISIS (aka ISIL and the Islamic State). On Tuesday night Mr. Obama informed us that he was asking Congress to pass a resolution to authorize the use of force against the Islamic State. This comes precisely a year after our really, really smart commander in chief referred to ISIS as a "[jayvee team](#)." That prediction was so prescient that the president decided to [deceive us](#) about it.

Here are some other examples of the shrewdness of the president. In his speech on Tuesday, Mr. Obama declared, "We're also supporting a moderate opposition in Syria that can help us in this effort [to defeat the Islamic State], and assisting people everywhere who stand up to the bankrupt ideology of violent extremism." This comes after the president [said](#) last August that the notion that

arming Syrian rebels would have made a difference has “always been a fantasy.” The president apparently believes that supporting what he deemed a fantasy—one military official [told the press](#) they are calling the moderate Syrian opposition “the Unicorn” because they have not been able to find it—now qualifies as Kissingerian.

The president also declared on Tuesday that “in Iraq and Syria, American leadership — including our military power — is stopping ISIL’s advance.” That would be good news—if it were true. But just last week a senior defense official was quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* saying, “certainly ISIL has been able to expand in Syria.” [According to the Journal](#), “More than three months of U.S. airstrikes in Syria have failed to prevent Islamic State militants from expanding their control in that country, according to U.S. and independent assessments, raising new concerns about President Barack Obama’s military strategy in the Middle East.” NBC’s chief foreign-policy correspondent, Richard Engel, in reacting to the president’s address, [said](#), “Well, it sounded like the President was outlining a world that he wishes we were all living in but which is very different than the world that you just described with terror raids taking place across Europe, ISIS very much on the move.”

The president added, “Instead of sending large ground forces overseas, we’re partnering with nations from South Asia to North Africa to deny safe haven to terrorists who threaten America.” Now in commenting on those safe havens we’re denying terrorists, is it indecorous to point out that the Islamic State, located in the Middle East, is the best-armed, best-funded terrorist group on earth and that it “controls a volume of resources and territory unmatched in the history of extremist organizations,” in [the words](#) of Janine Davidson of the Council on Foreign Relations? I hope not, since even Mr. Obama’s own secretary of defense, Chuck Hagel, has said ISIS is “beyond anything we have ever seen.” (That’s some jayvee team.)

Mr. Obama was also brainy enough to declare his foreign policy a terrific success on the very day that a Shiite militia group took over the presidential palace in the Sana’a, the capital of Yemen, [“sparking fresh concerns about a country that has become a cornerstone of U.S. counterterrorism strategy.”](#) Which reminded me of how President Savant held up Yemen as a model of success only last September, [telling us](#), “This strategy of taking out terrorists who threaten us, while supporting partners on the front lines, is one that we have successfully pursued in Yemen and Somalia for years.” Which in turn reminded me of Libya.

It was in the fall of 2011 when President Obama, [speaking to the United Nations](#) and announcing yet another of his grand achievements, declared, “Forty two years of tyranny was ended in six months. From Tripoli to Misurata to Benghazi — today, Libya is free.” Mr. Obama went on to say, “This is how the international community is supposed to work — nations standing together for the sake of peace and security, and individuals claiming their rights.” And what a success it was. Just last summer, in fact, the United States, because of rising violence resulting from clashes between Libyan militias, shut down its embassy in Libya and evacuated its diplomats to neighboring Tunisia under U.S. military escort. Earlier this month King’s College George Joffe [wrote](#), “Libya seems finally to be about to descend into full blown civil war.” Call it another Model of Success during the Obama era.

Our percipient president also declared in his State of the Union speech, “Our diplomacy is at work with respect to Iran, where, for the first time in a decade, we’ve halted the progress of its nuclear program and reduced its stockpile of nuclear material.” That assertion is so reality-based that (a) the *Washington Post* fact-checker [declared](#) “there is little basis” for the president’s claims and (b) the highest ranking *Democratic* member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Robert Menendez, [said](#) the more he hears from Mr. Obama and his administration about Iran, “the more it sounds like talking points that come straight out of Tehran.” Oh, and the president made his

announcement on the very day that [we learned](#) that Russia and Iran are more aligned than ever, having signed an agreement on military cooperation between the two nations.

I also thought it was really smart of the president to declare that “we stand united with people around the world who have been targeted by terrorists, from a school in Pakistan to the streets of Paris”—especially since Mr. Obama was one of the very few leaders in the free world who *didn't* stand with the people in the streets of Paris during a three-million-person-plus solidarity march there two weeks ago. The president stayed away even though there was no conflict with his schedule, apart from NFL playoff games, of course. And the president wisely saw fit not to send the vice president, his wife, or a member of his Cabinet to attend the rally, but rather sent as his representative the American ambassador to France. (Give yourself a gold star if you can name her without first googling her.)

For us lesser mortals, the president's foreign policy—country by country, region by region, crisis by crisis—looks to be a disaster. But it turns out it's actually a fantastic success. How do I know? Because [“the smartest guy ever to become president”](#) told us it is.

## Weekly Standard

### [Iran Nonsense](#)

by Stephen F. Hayes

When House speaker John Boehner invited Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu to address Congress in the coming weeks, the reaction from the White House was swift. In background interviews with reporters, top Obama administration officials made clear that they considered the invitation itself an affront and the acceptance of it a breach of protocol.

Please.

This is the same White House that last week had British prime minister David Cameron making calls to Capitol Hill to lobby lawmakers against more sanctions on Iran. It's the same administration that had to apologize to Senator Marco Rubio and others for violating its pledge to “consult Congress” before making any unilateral changes to U.S. policy on Cuba. This is the same president who has boasted repeatedly of his ability and willingness to ignore the legislative branch and use his “pen and phone” to do what he wants. And this is the same administration that used the cover of anonymity to call Netanyahu “chickenshit” in a recent interview.

So spare us the whining about prerogatives and propriety and protocol. In a functioning capital—with a White House that understands the enemy is Iran and not the Republican Congress—it'd be better for Congress and the White House to coordinate efforts. But that's not Washington today. Consider the section on Iran in President Obama's State of the Union. It took up just 172 words of his 6,500-word address. It reads, in its entirety:

Our diplomacy is at work with respect to Iran, where, for the first time in a decade, we've halted the progress of its nuclear program and reduced its stockpile of nuclear material. Between now and this spring, we have a chance to negotiate a comprehensive agreement that prevents a nuclear-armed Iran, secures America and our allies, including Israel, while avoiding yet another Middle East conflict. There are no guarantees that negotiations will succeed, and I keep all options on the table to prevent a nuclear Iran.

But new sanctions passed by this Congress, at this moment in time, will all but guarantee that diplomacy fails—alienating America from its allies; making it harder to maintain sanctions; and ensuring that Iran starts up its nuclear program again. It doesn't make sense. And that's why I will veto any new sanctions bill that threatens to undo this progress. [Applause] The American people expect us only to go to war as a last resort, and I intend to stay true to that wisdom.

This is delusional. The United States hasn't "halted" Iran's nuclear program. A week before that claim, Iran announced it would build two more reactors. During this diplomacy, it has made progress on its plutonium program and continued enriching. It was supposed to freeze centrifuge activities at the Pilot Fuel Enrichment Plant at Natanz, but the IAEA reported last fall it was feeding uranium hexafluoride gas into the IR-5 centrifuge there.

The fact that the Obama administration still insists Iran hasn't violated the terms of its interim agreement with the United States and its allies says more about the administration's eagerness to continue diplomacy than it does about Iran's behavior.

Even as the Obama administration has demonstrated its determination to give the Iranian regime every benefit of the doubt, the president reflexively questions the motives of anyone who has a different view. In comments at a press briefing with Cameron, Obama implied that Congress—not Iran—would be at fault if military conflict erupted. And at a recent meeting with congressional Democrats, Obama accused Senator Bob Menendez of bowing to the interests of campaign contributors when the New Jersey Democrat expressed concern about never-ending negotiations without consequence.

When Boehner announced his Netanyahu invitation, he accused Obama of downplaying the Iranian threat in the State of the Union. "There is a serious threat that exists in the world," he said, "and the president last night kind of papered over it."

Boehner is correct, of course. And he was right to invite Netanyahu to address Congress and the American people.

The State Department lists Iran as the foremost state sponsor of terror in the world. According to a former top U.S. military official, the Iranian regime is responsible for more than a third of American troop deaths in Iraq. The regime talks openly about eliminating Israel.

It's long past time for a serious discussion of the threat posed by Iran. Let's have one.

## **Streetwise Professor**

### **[The World in Flames: Another Low, Dishonest Decade](#)**

by Craig Pirrong

Recent days have seen a dramatic escalation of military operations in eastern Ukraine. The New York Times headline is on point: "[War Is Exploding Anew in Ukraine](#)." The Russians\* launched an assault on the battered hulk of the Donetsk airport, which had held out for 242 days. The airport fell, with the garrison of "cyborgs" being killed or captured. A counterattack by Ukrainian regulars was abortive. Recent days have seen rocket attacks in Donetsk and Luhansk, with civilians dying. Today a Grad attack in Mariupol killed over 30. A Ukrainian salient centered on Debaltsevo (between Donetsk and Luhansk) is evidently under attack. The "leadership" of the rebels in Donetsk announced—and then unannounced—that an assault on Mariupol was underway.

[As I wrote in November, an attack along the coast to open up a route to Crimea would be an obvious move.](#) As for those (including some former military) who claim that major offensive operations would be postponed to the spring, I say: Huh? Winter warfare is a Russian specialty, and even a passing familiarity with the history of campaigns in Russia (Napoleon's, WWI, and WWII) shows that it is spring (and fall) mud that is a far greater impediment to military operations than cold and snow. The notorious "raputitsa" that follows the snow melt (or fall rains) causes movement to grind to a halt until the fields and roads dry.

This offensive could be underway now, but given the lack of reliable reporting it is impossible to know.

What is Putin's objective here? Securing Crimea, which is now isolated and vulnerable and difficult to supply, is clearly paramount. Beyond that, I doubt he really wants to take ownership of a Sovok sh\*thole like the Donbas. His main objective is to force Kiev to sacrifice its sovereignty, and become a reliable satrapy of Russia. A combination of economic and military pressure falling short of an all out invasion is likely sufficient for that purpose. This is especially true inasmuch as the feckless West is quite clearly unwilling to risk anything to protect Ukraine. Keeping the meat grinder turning in Donbas advances this objective.

As for the indiscriminate attacks on cities, I have no good explanation. Perhaps it is just the thuggishness of the anti-Kiev forces. Perhaps it is part of Putin's testing of the West. If killing of civilians elicits no more than a shrug of indifference, Putin can be assured that further escalation will come at little cost.

So much for Obama's State of the Union boast:

Second, we are demonstrating the power of American strength and diplomacy. We're upholding the principle that bigger nations can't bully the small—by opposing Russian aggression, supporting Ukraine's democracy, and reassuring our NATO allies.

Putin apparently didn't notice. Ukraine certainly hasn't noticed that the bullying has stopped. Indeed, the final assault on the Donetsk airport occurred on the day that Obama uttered these words.

Traveling to the south and west, Syria and Iraq are also in flames, and making a liar of Obama.

[Back in December I discerned the outlines of a campaign that will culminate with an attack on Mosul.](#) Last week it became clear that this campaign is indeed proceeding. The Kurds, supported by American airpower, are shaping the battlefield and isolating Mosul from the west and south. The Kurds have made advances around Sinjar and Tal Afar, thereby interfering with ISIS supply lines to its Syrian fastness. The US military has indicated, however, that an assault on Mosul will not occur until the summer, when sufficient numbers of Iraqi regulars have been trained.

In Syria meanwhile, the US is pounding Kobani regularly, and the Kurds are painstakingly pushing back ISIS.

The US commander in the region, General Lloyd Austin stated that ISIS had lost approximately 6000 KIA, and was having manpower problems. This theme was picked up by the US ambassador to Iraq, but the Pentagon quickly squelched this discussion, due to Viet Nam body count flashbacks.

But other than attrition and shaping the battlefield around Mosul, there has been scant progress against ISIS. Indeed, ISIS has been expanding rather dramatically throughout Syria, giving the lie to this SOTU statement: "In Iraq and Syria, American leadership—including our military power—is stopping ISIL's advance." That's true to a limited degree in Kobani and Mosul, but flatly wrong elsewhere in Iraq and especially Syria. Don't even get me started on another Obama delusion: the "success" in Yemen, which has descended into absolute chaos with competing "Death to America" factions, both Shia and Sunni, vying for control.

It's rather depressing to see the President of the United States do a Baghdad Bob imitation while addressing a joint session of Congress.

In sum, at present it appears that Putin is on the advance in Ukraine and ISIS is at best stalemated in Iraq and Syria. And the West's leaders, reflecting the indifference of their citizenry, are content to let it happen, or at least do too little to prevent it from happening. In other words, we are in the midst of another low and dishonest decade.

\*There is a war of labels in Ukraine. What to call those fighting against the Kiev government? Rebels? Separatists? Pro-Russians? Terrorists (the preferred Ukrainian label)? Russians? The problem is that each label describes a part of the anti-Kiev combatants, but none describes it completely. Yes, there are Ukrainian citizens who are engaged in a separatist rebellion that aims to achieve unification with Russia, and they are advancing Russian interests, making them pro-Russian. Yes, sometimes they employ terrorist methods, though they primarily use conventional military tactics. Yes, there are Russian troops involved, of various types (GRU spetsnaz, artillery and air defense units, armored and infantry elements) in fluctuating numbers. Russian number spiked in August, and appear to be increasing now.

This is a Russian owned and run operation. The indigenous forces in Donbas obviously obtain massive quantities of Russian ammunition and weapons from Russia, and can't pay for these arms themselves. Their objectives largely overlap with Putin's. In addition, there is direct Russian involvement, and that will increase if Putin indeed decides to escalate.

## **Investor's Business Daily - Editorial** **[Obama Presidency Now Redolent Of A Banana Republic](#)**



*President Obama poses for a selfie with YouTube stars Hank Green, GloZell Green and Bethany Mota on Thursday at the White House.*

**Leadership:** Yemen's government fell and Saudi Arabia's king died. But President Obama busied himself with YouTube stars and some of the lowest characters on the Internet. Is this our descent to a banana republic?

Another week has gone by in which the Free World could have used some leadership and President Obama was found wanting.

First, there were the events in Yemen, an ally that Obama had touted as one of our biggest successes in the war on terror but where the president was driven from office by tribal rebels. The commander in chief said virtually nothing.

There was also the death of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, a major transition for a country near the center of both the war on terror and a crash in world oil prices in part engineered to undercut Iran. But instead of words of calm to friends or a warning to enemies not to take advantage, the White House put out an anodyne expression of condolence.

Fact is, the president's priority was the permanent campaign — playing Hollywood celebrity with three D-list Internet stars. They included a green-lipstick-wearing artiste called GloNell Green, whose stunts include sitting in a bathtub filled with Froot Loops and milk and scarfing down junk food to get attention.

As American Thinker's Thomas Lifson pointed out, the "interview" with Green was done from specially constructed sets, signaling a president with a lot of money and time for playthings and not much interest in anything else.

It's not that we haven't seen such unseriousness before. A dead ambassador and burning U.S. consulate in Tripoli were trumped by a fundraising trip to Las Vegas. The beheading of a U.S. journalist by the world's worst terrorist group wasn't reason to cancel a golf outing. And a demonstration by 44 world leaders and 3 million people after a terrorist massacre in a Paris newsroom lost out to a need to watch the football playoffs.

These things pile up and come to define the Obama presidency in all its ennui, cupidity and childishness even as crises build in the rest of the world.

The week also saw the president snub Bibi Netanyahu in a fit of pique after the Israeli leader was invited without White House permission to address the House of Representatives. For good measure, Obama's sophomoric minions leaked there would be payback.

Meanwhile, in Argentina, in the same week as the brazen political assassination of a special prosecutor who had fingered Iran as a terrorist state with vast networks in our hemisphere, Obama named his new envoy: a Hollywood political-donation bundler with no knowledge of that country.

All this continues to suggest a president with no real interest in the job, just a ceaseless appetite for celebrity adulation and high-school backbiting.

## Investor's Business Daily - Editorial

### [Pentagon To Scrap Warplane The Islamic State Fears](#)



*The A-10 Warthog can nearly hover over a battlefield with its 20-foot, 2.5 ton, seven-barrel Gatling gun ablaze.*

**Defense Spending:** The venerable A-10 Warthog, designed to stop Soviet tanks, and the perfect weapon to "degrade and destroy" the Islamic State, as President Obama promised, faces a budgetary chopping block.

We have noted the irony of how Obama was going to war against the Islamic State with weapons systems he had scrapped, ending the production runs of the F-22 Raptor and Tomahawk cruise missiles. They were dismissed by the administration as relics of the Cold War even as Russia was rearming and trying to reassemble the old Soviet Union.

We've also mentioned the phasing out of the A-10 Thunderbolt, a close-support aircraft that entered service in 1972 and was designed to combat Soviet tank formations on a European battlefield.

Dubbed the "Warthog" because of its decidedly un-sleek profile, the A-10 has been found to be useful in another capacity in Iraq — attacking IS forces that don't want to be on the [business](#) end of the Warthog's 30 mm cannon as it flies low and slow over the battlefield.

As Iraqi [News](#) reported last week after an A-10 sortie against IS forces near Mosul: "The aircraft sparked panic in the ranks of ISIS and bombing its elements in spaces close to the ground." Such strikes also prove the value of such a low-maintenance aircraft built to take the punishment expected in close air support.

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The U.S. sent the aircraft to the region in late November with the 163rd Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, a unit with the Indiana Air National Guard. The unit also provided close air support for air operations against the Taliban in Afghanistan.

On Jan. 15, Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James pointed out that the A-10 had conducted 11% of all sorties against IS since August, despite the fact it was not deployed to the battlefield until November.

But it may be shot down soon by the budget-cutters. The Pentagon figures it can save \$4.2 billion in operation and maintenance costs over five years by retiring all 283 of the Air Force's A-10s. It also believes the F-35, despite its unit cost and troubled development, can fill the need for close air-support need. Whether it can take the punishment the A-10 can is open to question.

A supersonic fighter pilot flying miles above the battlefield will not see enemy forces the way a Warthog pilot can. And his aircraft that costs 10 times as much will burn much more fuel in a shorter period than an A-10 designed to withstand ground fire the way an F-35 is not. Some have called the A-10 a flying MRAP, or Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle, designed to protect troops in counterinsurgency operations.

Force requirements should be dictated by battlefield requirements, not budget restraints. Nor should we become so enamored of high-tech weaponry that we forget that sometimes only a hammer will do. The A-10 is such a hammer. Let's accept the realities of the threats we face and weapons we need, Warthogs and all.

## **Roger L. Simon** **[Obama, the Shiite, Goes to Riyadh](#)**

Remember how Richard Nixon told us to watch what he does, not what he says? Good advice. Well, Barack Obama — our POTUS who makes Nixon *and* Clinton seem like Diogenes — thinks like a postmodern agnostic, professes to be a Christian, but *acts* like a Shiite.

During Obama's presidency the influence of Ayatollah Khamenei's Iranian Shiite regime has spread across the world like the proverbial wildfire, reaching from North Africa into Iraq, Lebanon (via Hezbollah), Syria (via Assad whose red line on chemical weapons famously faded into invisibility), Gaza (via [improved relations](#) with Hamas) and now into Yemen (via the [Houthis](#)) and undoubtedly a number of other places, including Venezuela, North Korea and Cuba. And our president, consciously or unconsciously or both, has had as much to do as anyone with the creation of this nascent, soon-to-be nuclear armed and [missile-ready](#) fundamentalist "Greater Persia." No wonder the Sunni Saudis are alarmed — they have been for a long time — and no wonder Obama suddenly decided to replace Biden in paying a [condolence visit](#) to Riyadh for the death of King Abdullah. He has some powerful fence-mending to do that pretend bowing and scraping may not so easily solve.

Much of this Iran-coddling began back when the Green Movement was in the streets of Tehran seeking the overthrow of the ayatollahs and chanting "Obama, Obama... Are you with us or are you with them?" Our president did not respond. He was already in private communication with the bizarre Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Obama wanted to be the one who got credit for reining in the excesses of the Islamic Republic, not those unruly student demonstrators who were the ones suffering from the regime in the first place, being murdered, tortured and raped in Evin Prison, often in reverse order.

Indeed, this unconscionable and out-of-control narcissism has been the key to Obama's foreign policy throughout and accounts for the catastrophic global results we see in front of us now. The "leading from behind" mantra has always been a fraud, masking what it really means: "I, Barack, know best and manipulate affairs from behind." It's all about me. (Is it ever!)

Now I realize Obama is not really a Shiite. He was raised in Sunni Indonesia. And, yes, Sunnis — notably ISIS, Boko Haram and AQAP — are leading the way in the public butchery department for the moment and need to be opposed with all our might. But that doesn't mean Shiites are not active. Just the other day we had the mysterious Buenos Aires death of [Alberto Nisman](#), who was about to reveal truths about the 1994 bombing of the Jewish community center in that city in which 85 were killed — a kind of simultaneous beheading in which Iran's Revolutionary Guards and Hezbollah are said to be the culprits. Almost anyone honest and awake knows the Islamic Republic is and has been the primary state sponsor of terrorism worldwide for decades.

Yet Obama persists in playing sides in a literally insane Shiite-Sunni religious conflict that has gone on so long it makes the Hundred Years' War seem like the three-week invasion of Grenada. (Interestingly, in a January 20 column, "[Say It Like It Is](#)," Thomas Friedman finally breaks the *New York Times* *omertà* on radical Islam, saying the president is wrong for not naming the enemy. But in doing so, Friedman isolates the violence as almost all coming from Arab and Pakistani Sunnis, giving the president continued cover to appease Iran.) The reason for Obama's persistence is not religious, but the aforementioned narcissism. He had already plighted his troth on a *pax Iranian*. Making it easier was his longtime conviction that Western imperialism was the root cause of most evil on the planet anyway. The president now has an Iran deal so tied up in his mind with his legacy that the appearance of Netanyahu in front of Congress opens a psychological wound so large Obama is likely to do almost anything. The world — not just Saudi Arabia and Israel — had better beware.

## Washington Post

### [America's best-selling cars and trucks are built on lies: The rise of fake engine noise](#)

by Drew Harwell



*The 2015 Ford F-150 plays a muscular engine note through its speakers.*

Stomp on the gas in a new Ford Mustang or F-150 and you'll hear a meaty, throaty rumble — the same style of roar that Americans have associated with auto power and performance for decades.

It's a sham. The engine growl in some of America's best-selling cars and trucks is actually a finely tuned bit of lip-syncing, boosted through special pipes or digitally faked altogether. And it's driving car enthusiasts insane.

Fake engine noise has become one of the auto industry's dirty little secrets, with automakers from BMW to Volkswagen turning to a sound-boosting bag of tricks. Without them, today's more fuel-efficient engines would sound far quieter and, automakers worry, seemingly less powerful, potentially pushing buyers away.

Softer-sounding engines are actually a positive symbol of just how far engines and gas economy have progressed. But automakers say they resort to artifice because they understand a key car-buyer paradox: Drivers want all the force and fuel savings of a newer, better engine — but the classic sound of an old gas-guzzler.

"Enhanced" engine songs have become the signature of eerily quiet electrics such as the Toyota Prius. But the fakery is increasingly finding its way into beefy trucks and muscle cars, long revered for their iconic growl.

For the 2015 Mustang EcoBoost, Ford sound engineers and developers worked on an "Active Noise Control" system that amplifies the engine's purr through the car speakers. Afterward, the automaker surveyed members of Mustang fan clubs on which processed "sound concepts" they most enjoyed.

Ford said in a statement that the vintage V-8 engine boom "has long been considered the mating call of Mustang," but added that the newly processed pony-car sound is "athletic and youthful," "a more refined growl" with "a low-frequency sense of powerfulness."

Among purists, the trickery has inspired an identity crisis and cut to the heart of American auto legend. The "aural experience" of a car, they argue, is an intangible that's just as priceless as what's revving under the hood.

"For a car guy, it's literally music to hear that thing rumble," said Mike Rhynard, 41, a past president and 33-year member of the Denver Mustang Club. He has swayed between love and hate of the snarl-boosting sound tube in his 2012 Mustang GT, but when it comes to computerized noise, he's unequivocal: "It's a mind-trick. It's something it's not. And no one wants to be deceived."

That type of ire has made the auto industry shy about discussing its sound technology. Several attempts to speak with Ford's sound engineers about the new F-150, a six-cylinder model of America's best-selling truck that plays a muscular engine note through the speakers, were quietly rebuffed.

Car companies are increasingly wary of alerting buyers that they might not be hearing the real thing, and many automakers have worked with audio and software engineers to make their cars' synthesized engine melody more realistic.

Volkswagen uses what's called a "Soundaktor," a special speaker that looks like a hockey puck and plays sound files in cars such as the GTI and Beetle Turbo. Lexus worked with sound technicians at Yamaha to more loudly amplify the noise of its LFA supercar toward the driver seat.

Some, including Porsche with its "sound symposer," have used noise-boosting tubes to crank up the engine sound inside the cabin. Others have gone further into digital territory: BMW plays a recording of its motors through the car stereos, a sample of which changes depending on the engine's load and power.

Orchestrated engine noise has become a necessity for electric cars, which run so quietly that they can provide a dangerous surprise for inattentive pedestrians and the blind. Federal safety officials expect to finalize rules later this year requiring all hybrid and electric cars to play fake engine sounds to alert passersby, a change that experts estimate could prevent thousands of pedestrian and cyclist injuries.

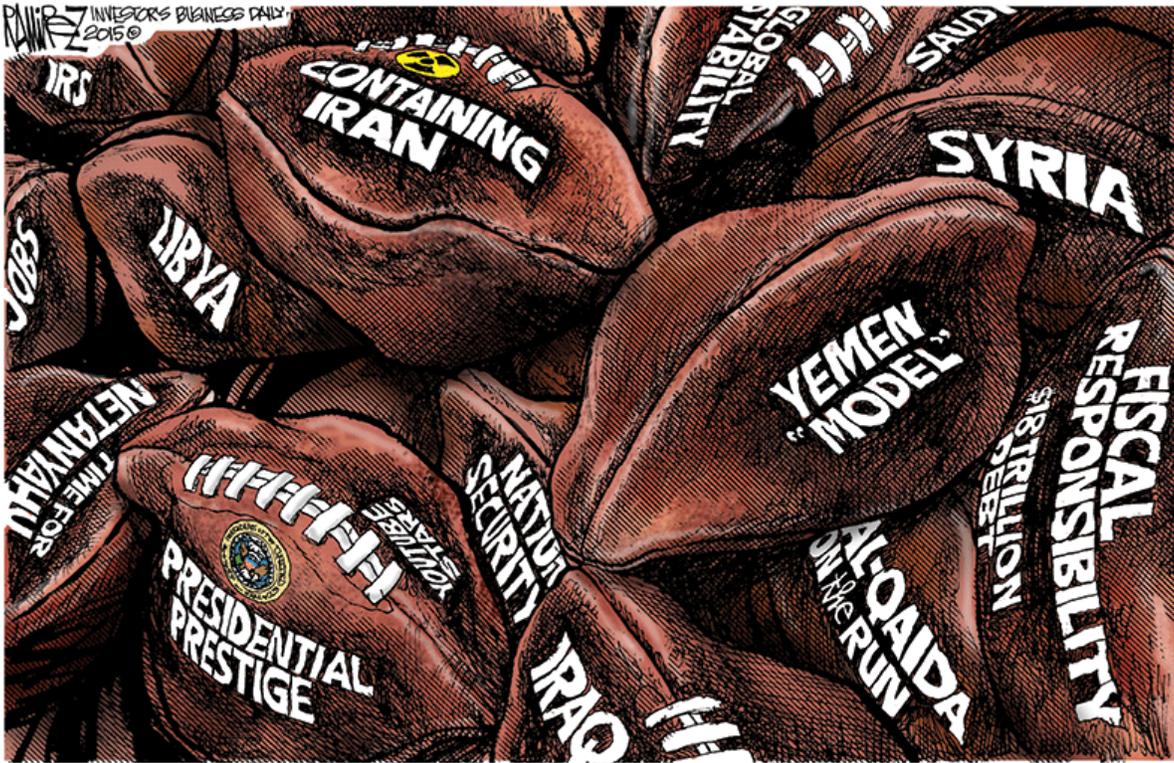
With traditional engines, some boosters have even celebrated artificial noise as a little added luxury. Without it, drivers would hear an unsettling silence or only the kinds of road racket they would rather ignore, like bumps in the pavement or the whine of the wind.

Yet even drivers who appreciate the accompaniment have questioned the mission. A SlashGear reviewer who otherwise enjoyed the new F-150 said the engine sound was piped in "arguably pointlessly."

Which raises a more existential question: Does it matter if the sound is fake? A driver who didn't know the difference might enjoy the thrum and thunder of it nonetheless. Is taking the best part of an eight-cylinder rev and cloaking a better engine with it really, for carmakers, so wrong?

Not everyone is so diplomatic. Karl Brauer, a senior analyst with Kelley Blue Book, says automakers should stop the lies and get real with drivers.

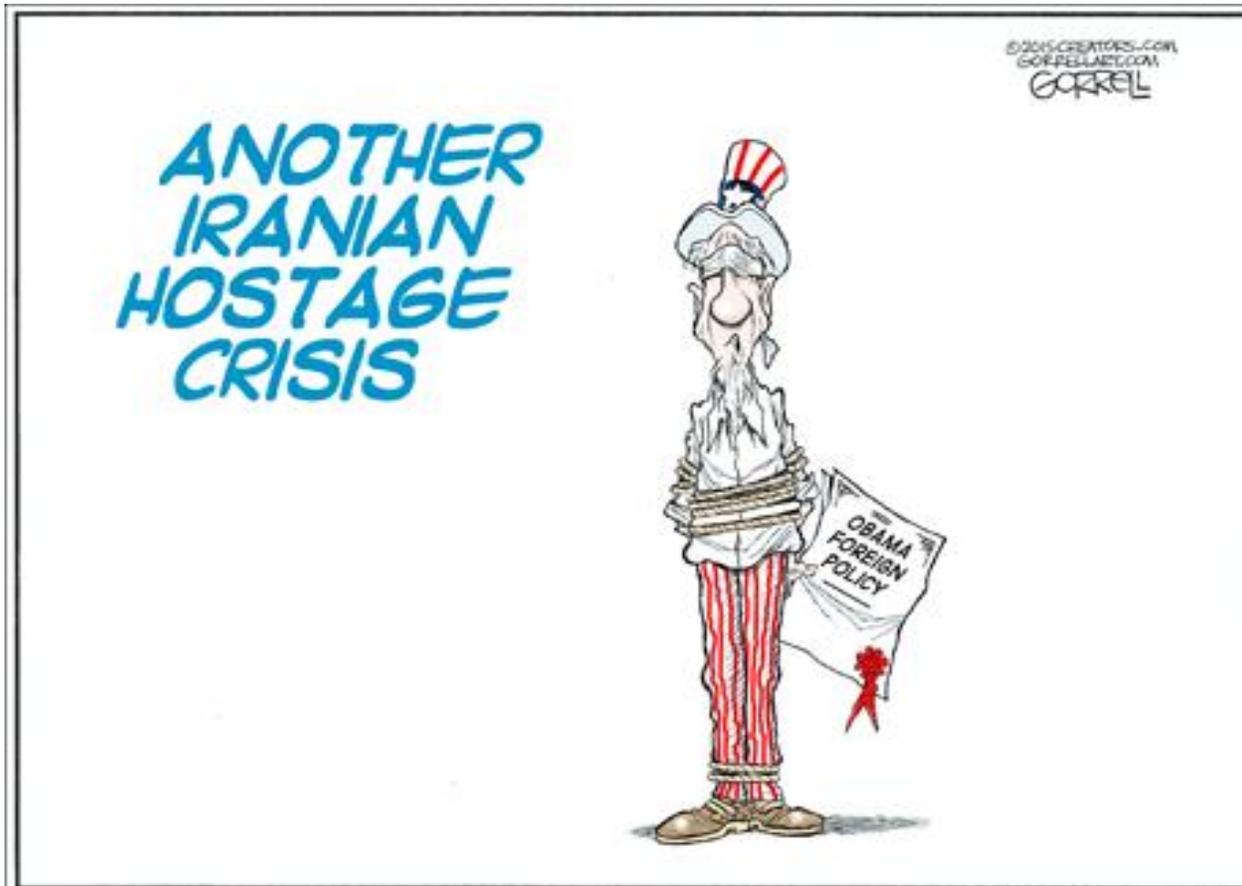
"If you're going to do that stuff, do that stuff. Own it. Tell customers: If you want a V-8 rumble, you've gotta buy a V-8 that costs more, gets worse gas mileage and hurts the Earth," Brauer said. "You're fabricating the car's sexiness. You're fabricating performance elements of the car that don't actually exist. That just feels deceptive to me."

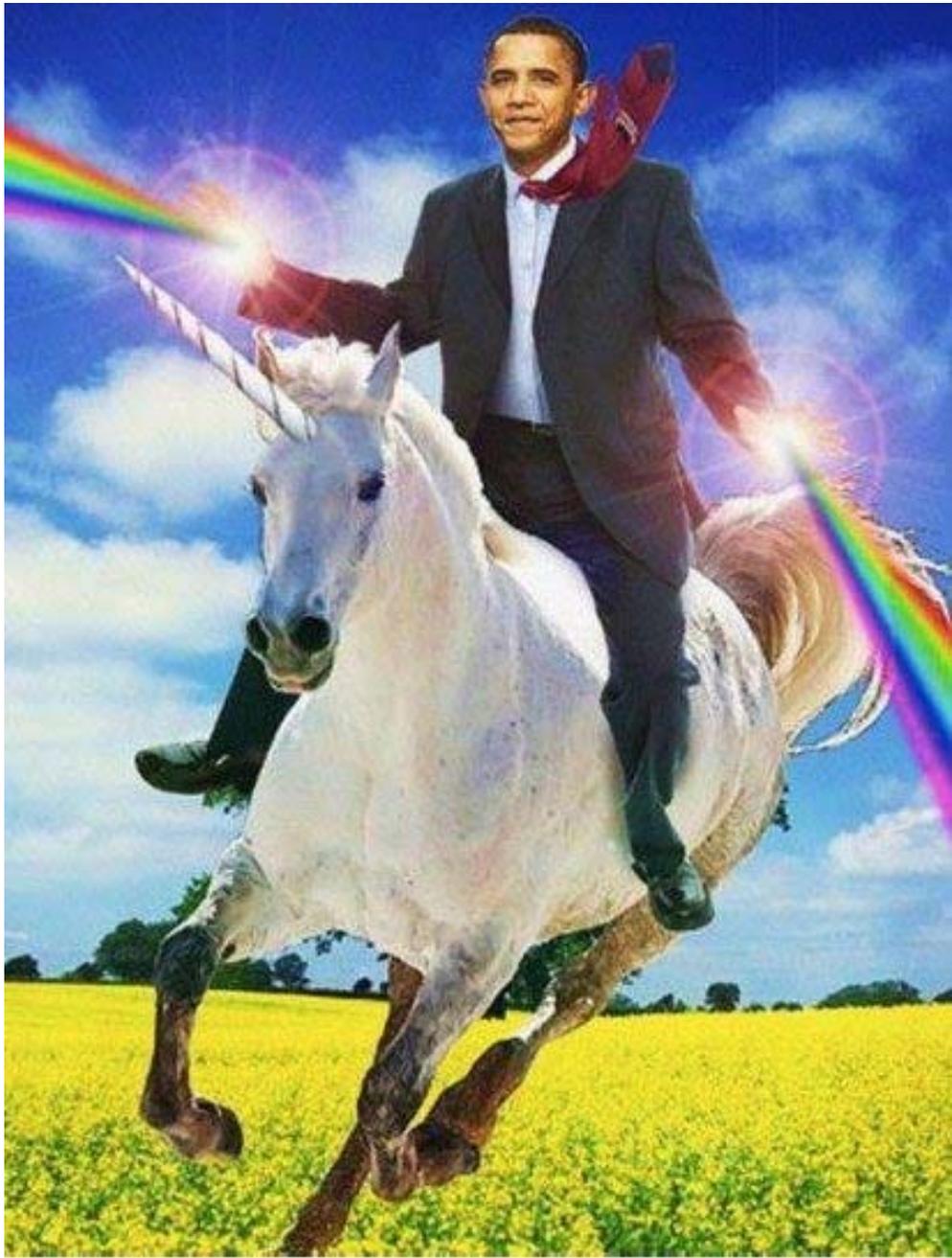


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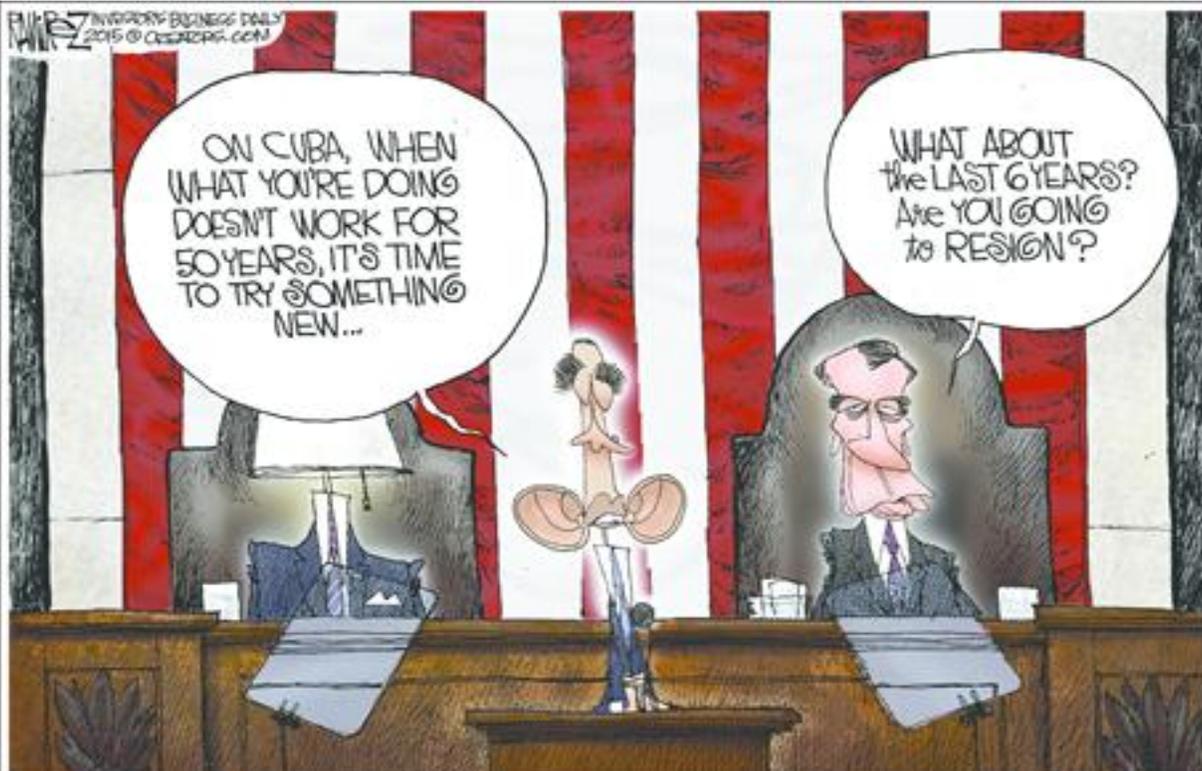




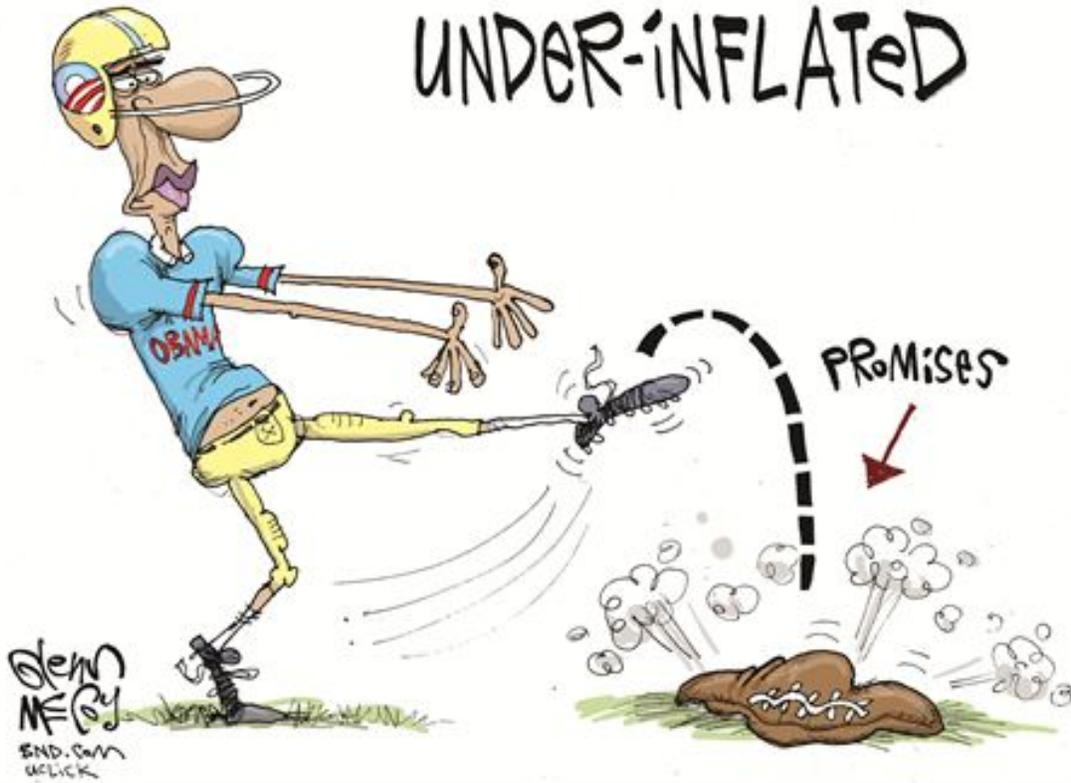




IF OBAMA WERE PRESIDENT DECEMBER 8, 1941



# UNDER-INFLATED



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AND NOW,  
A RESPONSE  
TO THE  
PRESIDENT'S  
ADDRESS...

