

January 15, 2016 - CURRENT OCCUPANT

In this installment covering barry's excellent adventure, we lead with a article from Oliver Darcy at the Blaze about the previous president. It involves W's Christmas vacations. Seems he would never leave Washington until the day after Christmas. The writer explains why;

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Quite a contrast to the current occupant who purports to have concern for all. But if anything threatens his sybaritic vacations, barry has a heart of stone.

Craig Pirrong posts on the SOTU.

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*Tonight Obama gives his last (thank God!) State of the Union Address. To guilt us all about the widespread reluctance to admit tens of thousands of Syrian refugees, Obama is trotting out a poor boy who lost his family—and his arms—to an bomb strike in Syria.*

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*For one thing, as tragic as his story is, this boy is not representative of the refugees that will attempt to get in the US. It is well known that the refugees in Europe are disproportionately young adult males, not women and young wounded waifs.*

*You could get a more representative example of would-be refugees in front of the Cologne Cathedral on New Year's Eve.*

*For another, Obama's policies in Syria have been cynical beyond belief, and have dramatically worsened the humanitarian crisis in the country. As is his wont in such matters, he chose the worst option. He did not intervene decisively early in the crisis, thereby allowing it to spin out of control. That is defensible. But he also has supported the arming (via the CIA) of opposition groups in Syria, including Islamist groups. This has increased the intensity of, and extended, the war.*

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*It hasn't gotten better. Indeed, tonight's farce shows that it's gotten even worse. ...*

From another direction, **Barron's** has an interview with Harvard historian Niall Ferguson.

*... Part of the reason the world isn't as buoyant as it might be is that Europe is doing much worse than the U.S. It doesn't help Europe to have a massive influx of real and "not so real" refugees. Some 220,000 people arrived in the European Union in October, a direct consequence of the disintegration of order in a whole bunch of countries, Syria principally, but not only.*

*The U.S. walking away from the Middle East has had a direct impact. We're only beginning to see the ramifications, in Paris most recently. It isn't going to stop there. There is growing anxiety in East Asia about the rise of China. Japan remains a large economy, but a depressed one in yet another recession. Economists tend to underestimate geopolitical factors because they aren't in their models. Global order and stability need to be underwritten. It doesn't just happen spontaneously.*

*Are you suggesting that the U.S. ought to be the world's policeman?*

*Somebody's got to do it. It better not be the Chinese or Russians. The market system requires an effective state that enforces the rule of law. That is true internationally, as well. As the world becomes less secure, it becomes a less safe place to do business.*

*A world in which the U.S. yields regional power to China or Russia is one in which the rule of law is driven back. We underestimate the extent to which the age of globalization depended on an American underwriting, and that is gradually unraveling.*

*Can the U.S. afford to keep the peace?*

*The U.S. has a fundamental problem: Gradually, its national security is being squeezed by social [benefits], particularly its health-care system. It will be squeezed by the burden of interest payments on Federal debt as interest rates go up. In theory, as the biggest economy in the world, the U.S. should be able to afford to build up its military power. In practice, the congressional budget sequester was a blunt instrument applied to the defense budget, cutting it indiscriminately.*

*The U.S. should be investing to maintain its lead, particularly in areas where it is vulnerable, such as cybersecurity. No matter how many aircraft carriers we have, it might not be that big of a technological leap for us to be matched in the new theaters of war that are emerging. ...*

**Matthew Continetti** writes on the "lamest duck."

*President Obama spent the week defending his proposals to curb gun violence, culminating in a CNN town hall. Think about that. What else happened during the last few days that might warrant a presidential town hall?*

*Oh, nothing much:*

- *Iranian protestors stormed the Saudi embassy in Tehran after the House of Saud executed a Shiite cleric, escalating sectarian warfare in the Middle East*
- *The stock market tumbled on fears of a global economic slowdown*
- *A U.S. soldier was killed in action in Afghanistan, where the Taliban controls more ground than at any time since 2001*
- *Iran revealed the existence of an underground ballistic missile launch site*
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*We have entered a most dangerous period of the Obama presidency. It's not just that every rogue actor from Kim and Putin and Castro to Maduro and Khamenei and Xi knows he has one last year to behave badly without fear of reprisal. It's that the president and his team are isolated, aloof, detached from reality.*

*They think a climate deal is a rebuke to terrorism. They think the response to jihad in San Bernardino is to 'close the gun-show loophole.' They think a new communications strategy will convince the public that the war against ISIS is going well. I don't question Obama's sincerity. I question his sanity.*

*What actually results from a given policy seems no longer to matter to him. Take guns—he'd sure like to. His executive order does little more than reiterate current law. It wouldn't have stopped the killing at Sandy Hook elementary or in San Bernardino. Indeed, the most important consequence of Obama's fight with the NRA has been record gun sales and a windfall for gun manufacturer shareholders. At least when Hillary Clinton takes on an industry, its stock goes down. Obama can't even get that right.*

*The Iran deal is another farce. ...*

**Andrew Malcolm** posts on vacation costs.

*As Barack, Michelle, Malia and Sasha Obama, family, friends, pets and staff enjoy their half-month-long Hawaiian vacation, the Secret Service finally complied with a court order to release some Obama vacation expenses from two years ago.*

*That's how eager the Obama administration is about being transparent when it comes to spending large sums of taxpayers' money on itself.*

*As with the slow-motion releases of Hillary Clinton's emails, the idea of bureaucratic stalling, of course, is that the details become "old" news more likely to be ignored by media. Fortunately, we're not on vacation this week, so we can help the president out. Here goes:*

*The new expense reports, heavily-redacted allegedly for security reasons, push the total known costs for vacations during Obama's reign to nearly \$71 million -- with another full year to go. That's about \$10.1 million per year in known expenses. ...*

Thinking about vacations brings to mind a link in December 25's post. That's the one where a candidate promised he would not take vacations while in office. Here it is again.

A 2008 video of a presidential candidate promising no vacations during his time in office. **Daily Caller** has the story. Go to the link for the video of the liar.

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## **The Blaze**

### **Why George W. Bush Never Left D.C. Until the Day After Christmas**

by Oliver Darcy

Like many Americans, U.S. presidents often take time off around the holidays.

However, according to journalist Joseph Curl, who previously covered the White House, former President George W. Bush went on Christmas vacation in a way that stands in direct contrast to President Barack Obama.



"[H]ere's the thing: In December, we never left Washington, D.C., until the day after Christmas. Never. Mr. Bush and his wife, Laura, would always depart the White House a few days before the holiday and hunker down at Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland," Curl wrote in a 2013 column that was [republished Thursday](#).

After a few years, curiosity finally got to the former Washington Times reporter and he asked a low-level administration official why.

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"Who was 'us'? Hundreds and hundreds of people, that's who. Sure, the reporters who covered the president, but also dozens and dozens on his staff, 100 Secret Service agents, maybe more, and all of those city cops required whenever the president's on the move in D.C.," Curl added in his column.

However, things seemingly changed when Obama took office.

"[T]his president would never delay his trip to his island getaway. He's off every year well before Christmas. Hundreds and hundreds head off with him, leaving family behind," Curl wrote.

"No Christmas at home," he added. "Instead, the Hawaiian Village Waikiki Beach Resort. Nice, but not exactly home."

### **Streetwise Professor**

#### **[Lily Tomlin Didn't Know the Half of It: In the Age of Obama, It's Impossible to Keep Up on Your Cynicism](#)**

by Craog Pirrong

Lily Tomlin once said "We try to be cynical, but it's hard to keep up." She didn't know the half of it, because she said this before the age of Obama.

Tonight Obama gives his last (thank God!) State of the Union Address. To guilt us all about the widespread reluctance to admit tens of thousands of Syrian refugees, Obama is trotting out a poor boy who lost his family—and his arms—to a bomb strike in Syria.

This is the most rank emotional manipulation I have ever seen in politics, and that is saying a lot. It is cynical beyond belief.

For one thing, as tragic as his story is, this boy is not representative of the refugees that will attempt to get in the US. It is well known that the refugees in Europe are disproportionately young adult males, not women and young wounded waifs.

You could get a more representative example of would-be refugees in front of the Cologne Cathedral on New Year's Eve.

For another, Obama's policies in Syria have been cynical beyond belief, and have dramatically worsened the humanitarian crisis in the country. As is his wont in such matters, he chose the worst option. He did not intervene decisively early in the crisis, thereby allowing it to spin out of

control. That is defensible. But he also has supported the arming (via the CIA) of opposition groups in Syria, including Islamist groups. This has increased the intensity of, and extended, the war.

Don't take my word for it. Walter Russell Mead, a very middle-of-the-road guy who started with high hopes for Obama, [wrote a scathing article about Obama's Syria cynicism back in November](#).

It hasn't gotten better. Indeed, tonight's farce shows that it's gotten even worse.

All of this takes place against the background of the Iranian seizure of two US riverine patrol craft, two Swedish-built CB90 boats.

There is zero doubt-zero-that the Iranians did this to troll Obama's SOTU. But the show must go on! So rather than make an issue out of this that might detract attention from Obama's swan song star turn, the administration, with the appalling assistance of the Pentagon, is saying "no big deal! Just an accident!"

[Here is one story puked up by the Pentagon:](#)

Pentagon spokesman Peter Cook told The Associated Press that the boats were moving between Kuwait and Bahrain when the U.S. lost contact with them.

"We have been in contact with Iran and have received assurances that the crew and the vessels will be returned promptly," Cook said.

U.S. officials said that the incident happened near Farsi Island, situated in the middle of the Persian Gulf. They say it stemmed from some type of mechanical trouble with one of the boats, causing them to run aground. The troops were picked up by Iran.

I have only two words in reply. Bull. Shit.

First, there is no way both boats had mechanical issues. If only one had problems, the other could tow it.

Second—and more outrageously—these are bleeping *riverine* boats intended to operate in very shallow waters. They draw .8 meters. That's less than 3 feet, boys and girls. They wouldn't go aground in your back yard after a heavy rain.

Third, in these days of GPS, a navigation error can be ruled out.

My conclusion: they were seized. Without a fight. Which tells you something about the Rules of Engagement vis a vis Iran that we operate under in the Gulf.

Josh Earnest actually had the audacity to say that it is incidents like this that make the Iran deal worthwhile.

I'd explain what he means, but I'm hopelessly trapped by archaic Western concepts like "logic," so I can't.

How many cheeks does Obama have to turn to domestic critics? Zero. How many to Iran? I can't count that high.

Of course this will only stoke the Sunni freaks in the Gulf into even greater frenzies of paranoia about Obama's Shia sympathies, thereby intensifying an already fraught situation.

So what's the State of the Union? I'll let you know when I get caught up on my cynicism. This may take a while.

## **Barron's**

### **Niall Ferguson Takes on the World**

***Ferguson sees more trouble ahead for Europe, China, and Saudi Arabia. But countries with cheap stocks and political stability could beckon investors.***

by Vito J. Racanelli

Niall Ferguson, the historian, Harvard professor, and author of more than a dozen books on the nexus of economics, finance, and geopolitics, argues that America's abdication of its role as the world's policeman is one cause of the global economic malaise. U.S. policies, or lack thereof, have allowed terrorism to breed and dictatorial states such as Russia and China to assume a larger role in world affairs.

The author of *Civilization: The West and the Rest*, Ferguson says China's attempt to move to a true market economy probably will fail, potentially causing serious disruptions to other markets. He likens Saudi Arabia to Iran in 1979—a state ripe for destabilization. In the U.S., he sees tax reform coming, but worries that America's love affair with regulation will continue to dampen its growth prospects. India gets a thumbs-up, but Europe's prospects are bleak.

Ferguson recently announced that he'll leave Harvard next year to become a senior fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. He spoke with *Barron's* at our offices just after November's terrorist attacks in Paris, and was every bit as thoughtful and provocative as when we last chatted, three years ago.

***Barron's:*** *The U.S. economy has been growing by only 2% to 3% a year. Why isn't it firing on all cylinders?*

**Ferguson:** There are at least three theories. The seven-year hangover theory suggests that the U.S. will shake off the effects of the 2008 financial crisis next year. The secular-stagnation theory posits that, for a variety of reasons, the economy is in a depressed state. That is most obviously [expressed] in interest rates.

I'm attracted to a third argument, the geopolitical one, that says growth in modern American history has tended to be high at times of national strength and low at times of national weakness, because our weakness has ramifications for the world as a whole. One has to combine the three theories to understand why growth is lower than expectations. It isn't low based on a pretty long-term average, but it is sluggish compared with the glory days of the Cold War.

*What was so glorious about the Cold War?*

There were two phases of growth, one associated with the Eisenhower and Reagan administrations, and one with the depressed period in between. Since 9/11, things have gone from bad to worse. We find ourselves in a deflationary version of the 1970s, marked by stagnation, not stagflation. [Russian President Vladimir] Putin is doing his best to give us reasons to man up. But we're not really doing so.

The global economy needs a strong hegemonic power to reduce conflict, ensure freedom of the seas, and so forth. In the 19th century, it was Great Britain, and for much of the 20th, the U.S. But in 2013, President Obama said there was no global policeman. There are deleterious consequences if the leading power in the world abdicates its leadership role.

*What are some of these ramifications?*

Part of the reason the world isn't as buoyant as it might be is that Europe is doing much worse than the U.S. It doesn't help Europe to have a massive influx of real and "not so real" refugees. Some 220,000 people arrived in the European Union in October, a direct consequence of the disintegration of order in a whole bunch of countries, Syria principally, but not only.

The U.S. walking away from the Middle East has had a direct impact. We're only beginning to see the ramifications, in Paris most recently. It isn't going to stop there. There is growing anxiety in East Asia about the rise of China. Japan remains a large economy, but a depressed one in yet another recession. Economists tend to underestimate geopolitical factors because they aren't in their models. Global order and stability need to be underwritten. It doesn't just happen spontaneously.

*Are you suggesting that the U.S. ought to be the world's policeman?*

Somebody's got to do it. It better not be the Chinese or Russians. The market system requires an effective state that enforces the rule of law. That is true internationally, as well. As the world becomes less secure, it becomes a less safe place to do business.

A world in which the U.S. yields regional power to China or Russia is one in which the rule of law is driven back. We underestimate the extent to which the age of globalization depended on an American underwriting, and that is gradually unraveling.

*Can the U.S. afford to keep the peace?*

The U.S. has a fundamental problem: Gradually, its national security is being squeezed by social [benefits], particularly its health-care system. It will be squeezed by the burden of interest payments on Federal debt as interest rates go up. In theory, as the biggest economy in the world, the U.S. should be able to afford to build up its military power. In practice, the congressional budget sequester was a blunt instrument applied to the defense budget, cutting it indiscriminately.

The U.S. should be investing to maintain its lead, particularly in areas where it is vulnerable, such as cybersecurity. No matter how many aircraft carriers we have, it might not be that big of a technological leap for us to be matched in the new theaters of war that are emerging.

*But as you note, our finances are hobbled.*

Entitlements are the obvious problem. Republicans discovered that if you want to cut entitlements, it is hard to win the presidency. I'm optimistic that the U.S. can make its health-



care system far more efficient and less expensive as new technology comes into place. With the application of technology, we will start seeing not only stuff about our own health, but also which doctors and hospitals do which things best.

The employer-pays insurance system is loopy and ripe for revolution, in the way that Uber is revolutionizing transportation. We will see similar types of companies revolutionizing health care. At that point, you may be surprised to find that costs start coming down. I can't imagine in 10 years' time that when you visit your doctor, someone will hand you a clipboard with a badly photocopied form that you'll have to fill out for nth time. That's ludicrous.

*You have written about the toxic combination of litigation and regulation in the U.S. What are the odds of reform?*

I don't see any light at the end of the tunnel. The Federal Register has never been so large. The Dodd-Frank and Affordable Care Acts alone produced a staggering volume of regulation. Now we have the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, with a document even larger than Dodd-Frank. It is really disheartening. That there hasn't been more rapid U.S. growth is due at least in part to these head winds.

*Many U.S. companies won't bring home the cash they have overseas because it would be subject to a hefty tax. Is there any chance this might change soon?*

The income-tax code has to be simplified, and corporate tax has to be reduced to some internationally competitive rate. Otherwise, corporations are going to continue to emigrate to wherever the tax burden is lower. Tax reform must be on the agenda of the next president in year one. Tax reform will happen. The political class gets it; the voters get it. It is much harder to tackle excessively complex regulation because there are too many people who benefit from it.

*Let's turn to Asia. You have said that regarding China as an emerging market is absurd. Why?*

It is now the second-largest economy in the world, or the largest based on purchasing-power parity, with an influence on the global economy second only to the U.S. China is sui generis. Is China is going to go further in the direction of a market economy? Will it reduce the importance of state-owned enterprises and remove the state from the financial system? Is it going to open its capital account and allow the Chinese to invest abroad freely? Each answer has ramifications for the rest of us like no other economy.

*Give us your answers.*

We don't know whether China will be more of a market economy 10 years from now. It is risky for a one-party state to continue increasing the economic freedom of its citizens. President Xi Jinping, who is more interested in power than anything else, understands this well. Consequently, plans for privatization of state-owned enterprises, liberalization of the financial system, and the opening of the capital account will remain plans, but won't be implemented.

China has created the biggest middle class in history, but middle-class people want property rights. That implies law courts and officials who aren't corrupt. The moment you demand these things, you are asking the one-party state to loosen its grip on power. The Chinese are terrified of anything like that.

*What impact might Xi's foreign policy have on markets around the world?*

To ensure the one-party state's legitimacy, Xi won't shy away from a relatively saber-rattling foreign policy, because this plays well [domestically]. There is also an element that isn't propaganda. China is building up its naval capability, modernizing its pretty antiquated army. It has a financial diplomacy that has proved effective. The Chinese have been using their considerable resources to win friends and influence people around the world, including in Central Asia and Africa. China says, "Let us build your infrastructure." That increases its leverage over a whole bunch of countries that the U.S. has neglected.

*What is the outlook for India?*

The Indian economy looks to be growing faster than the Chinese economy. India is good for a couple of reasons, including demographics, which turn out to be a lot more important than most people thought. India didn't have the one-child policy, unlike China, whose workforce is shrinking.

India has rule of law—slow, maybe, but it is there, and a representative government and free press. Unless you think the success of the West is pure luck, which I don't, those are advantages. There are many thickets of vested interest, but I'm broadly bullish about India's prospects. The problems India faces are fixable, like infrastructure and housing. China's problems are much more difficult.

*Will the Middle East roil markets in the years ahead?*

I expect next year to be more violent than 2015. Many investors don't realize that since the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011, fatalities due to armed conflicts are up by about a factor of four; terrorism is up by a factor of six.

The events in Paris are a reminder that the jihadist network doesn't confine itself to the majority-Muslim world. It is now embedded in minority-Muslim communities all over Europe. There will be more such attacks, and at some point the terrorists will be successful in the U.S. again. [This interview was conducted before radicalized Islamists killed 14 people in San Bernardino, Calif.] The resources that go into producing radicalism aren't about to disappear. Networks are difficult to decapitate.

The president has failed to understand this because his model is decapitation. You think, let's take out the boss. Then you are amazed to find the network [still] grows. We won't see this go away in the next 10 years. The threat of violent instability in the region will go up, and probably will affect Saudi Arabia. Support for the Islamic State is high among the Saudi population.

*Why is that?*

An Islamic state can credibly argue that the Saudi royal family is corrupt, Westernized, and hypocritical. The family itself is divided. Saudi Arabia is a weak link, the way Iran was in 1979. If you had to ask what headline would move markets tomorrow morning, a revolution in Riyadh, especially a messy one, would be a pretty good answer. You could see a big terrorist attack on Saudi facilities, and markets would move the price of oil up.

*The dollar is strong, and commodity prices are weak. What does that mean for countries like Brazil and Russia?*

There comes a point when an investor says, "Hey, that's attractively priced." Argentina has been one of the great trades of the year. You might ask, "Where is the political problem horrible, and

where is it about to get solved?" It is pretty horrible in Brazil, and I don't see a fix in the short run. Things will be solved in Argentina, more or less. South Africa? No, that looks bad politically. Turkey? [Prime Minister Recep Tayyip] Erdogan is a dodgy customer. Egypt? I don't like the way that's going.

The key is attractive prices and political stability. Money is going to start flowing back into emerging markets that don't have a political problem, such as Indonesia and maybe Malaysia. In Russia, suppose the sanctions get relaxed, as seems likely next year. Russian bonds have been one of the great performers this year. Everybody was too negative about Russia. There are some interesting opportunities in the rest of the world. It is hard to see the dollar- strength story continuing indefinitely.

*What is the biggest risk to global markets?*

China. It was so crucial as an engine of growth through the financial crisis. If there is a policy error in China, it could cause huge instability. The government could ease restrictions on cross-border capital flows, which would result in a great wall of money coming out of China. Money would be deployed in Western assets, and it might be difficult for China to cope. Imagine the effect on all other emerging markets, if China suddenly devalues by 20% or 30%.

On the other hand, if Xi turns the clock back, this could lead to a big downside shock.

*Will Europe get its act together?*

Europe faces three extraordinary challenges. It wants to have a foreign policy to be able to influence the fate of Syria, but it can't act independently of the U.S. because it has slashed its defense capability. Secondly, Europe can't stop this huge wave of refugees. The border is enormous, vastly larger than the Mexican border with the U.S., and much of it is a sea border.

The biggest problem is the fifth column within Europe—people who aren't loyal to their European states even though they are citizens, second- and third-generation. Potentially, there are thousands of jihadists or sympathizers.

Europe's problems are unsolvable. Anybody who thinks this great wave of immigration solves Europe's demographic deficit hasn't been to the suburbs of Paris.

*On that cheerful note, thank you.*

**Free Beacon**

**The Lamest Duck**

***President Obama's final year in office will be a long, hard slog***

by Matthew Continetti

President Obama spent the week defending his proposals to curb gun violence, culminating in a CNN town hall. Think about that. What else happened during the last few days that might warrant a presidential town hall?

Oh, [nothing much](#):

- Iranian protestors stormed the Saudi embassy in Tehran after the House of Saud executed a Shiite cleric, escalating sectarian warfare in the Middle East
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They think a climate deal is a rebuke to terrorism. They think the response to jihad in San Bernardino is to 'close the gun-show loophole.' They think [a new communications strategy](#) will convince the public that the war against ISIS is going well. I don't question Obama's sincerity. I question his sanity.

What actually results from a given policy seems no longer to matter to him. Take guns—he'd sure like to. His executive order does little more than reiterate current law. It wouldn't have stopped the [killing at Sandy Hook elementary](#) or in San Bernardino. Indeed, the most important consequence of Obama's fight with the NRA has been [record gun sales](#) and a windfall for gun manufacturer shareholders. At least when Hillary Clinton takes on an industry, [its stock goes down](#). Obama can't even get that right.

The Iran deal is another farce. In recent months the mullahs have taken an additional hostage, convicted a *Washington Post* reporter of espionage, launched ballistic missiles, [fired rockets near a U.S. aircraft carrier](#), and waged proxy war in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen. The president's response: no sanctions for missile violations, promises to exempt Iran from a tough U.S. visa law, a hands-off approach to Saudi-Iranian conflict. And of course sanctions relief for not testing a nuke. If only Obama were this generous with Republicans.

America has supported the Saudis for 70 years. That's changing—without public debate, without serious reflection on what the repercussions might be. I am no friend of the Saudis. But if America really is to step back from our relationship with the Kingdom, especially as it [teeters](#) on the brink, doesn't the president owe the public an explanation for why this course of action is the right one?

What we get instead is more of the same: a sustained presidential trolling of conservatives and Republicans, as the president uses the bully pulpit to provoke, to titillate, to polarize. With no other goal in mind than to make the GOP look extremist.

I wonder if the Clintons have considered just how big a liability Obama could be by Election Day. It's no mystery why Hillary Clinton has remained loyal to the president—she wants to reproduce the coalition that elected him twice. But Obama is going to make it terribly difficult for her. His approval rating has been [underwater for months](#). [Two-thirds of the country says we're on the](#)

[wrong track](#). Not only does Hillary have to worry about the international situation; she has to worry about troubling signs [at home](#).

It won't be guns that decide the 2016 election but the economy and ISIS. The president is powerless on the former issue and ineffectual on the latter one. The Democratic frontrunner is unlikable and untrustworthy and running for her party's third consecutive term. The Republican frontrunner is [this man](#). This year is seven days old—and it's already depressing.

## **Investor's Business Daily**

### **New Obama vacation costs uncovered; They now exceed \$70 million**

by Andrew Malcolm

As Barack, Michelle, Malia and Sasha Obama, family, friends, pets and staff enjoy their half-month-long Hawaiian vacation, the Secret Service finally complied with a court order to release some Obama vacation expenses *from two years ago*.

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The new expense reports, heavily-redacted allegedly for security reasons, push the total known costs for vacations during Obama's reign to nearly \$71 million -- with another full year to go. That's about \$10.1 million per year in known expenses.

The totals come from [Judicial Watch](#), the dogged watchdog group that pursues such information through repeated Freedom of Information Act requests.

Earlier this year Judicial Watch obtained transportation costs for a pair of the Democrat's cross-country golf weekends just in 2015. They [totaled nearly \\$2 million](#), or \$20,000 per hole, the Washington Examiner calculated.

In February, for instance, Obama spent President's Weekend golfing with male friends in Palm Springs. At \$206,000 per flight hour, that trip set taxpayers back \$1.03 million. That does not include other costs such as security and transportation.

Of course, even with Camp David available for free in Maryland every president goes on vacation, though none have gone so far so often as the Obamas, sometimes in separate planes.

Their family trips to Hawaii, for example, require at least 18 hours of Air Force One flight time at \$206,000 per flight hour. Or \$3.7 million minimum.

Complaints of over-spending on personal travel have dogged this first couple starting with Michelle Obama's luxury vacation with friends to Spain at the peak of the recession and subsequent family excursions during the nation's weakest economic recovery since World War II.

As [we reported earlier this year](#): The Obamas have "traveled more than any other first family, often with Mrs. Obama's mother and her friends. By the summer of 2014 the Obamas had taken 31 international trips lasting 119 days. At the same point in his presidency, Ronald Reagan had taken 14 such trips over 73 days.

"When the family visited Ireland in 2013, taxpayers were hit for just under \$8 million, including a quarter-million dollars for a two-day side-trip to Dublin for the Obama women. They chose a \$3,500-per-night hotel suite in addition to 29 other rooms for their traveling party at the five-star hotel.

"Last year when Mrs. Obama, her mother and two daughters toured China, they stayed in a Beijing hotel suite costing \$8,400 per night."

Joe Biden, currently vacationing with his wife in the Virgin Islands, hasn't exactly suffered on the road either. Two years ago an [unusually large Biden entourage ran up a London hotel bill of \\$480,000](#) in *one night*. The next day in Paris, Biden's tab was \$585,000, again for a single night.

The latest expense revelations extracted from the Secret Service [by Judicial Watch](#) seem almost a bargain by comparison. They show, among other things, \$92,000 for rental cars and \$225,000 for lodging paid to Paradise Luxury Rentals and Cabana Girl LLC for agents during the Obamas' 2013 Hawaii holiday.

"It is easy to see why the Secret Service, reeling from its own scandals, covered up these outrageous expense numbers for just one of Obama's luxury Christmas vacations," said Judicial Watch President Tom Fitton. "The \$317,000 in Secret Service expenses are only the tip of the iceberg for the true cost of Obama's 2013 vacation in Hawaii, which has now skyrocketed to \$8,098,060."

The organization has another lawsuit pending against the Department of Homeland Security for ignoring an additional 19 Freedom of Information requests.

## Daily Caller

### [\*\*FLASHBACK: Obama Promises No Vacations For Himself As President\*\*](#)

by Aaron Bandler

[Weasel Zippers](#) has revived an old video of Barack Obama promising not to take vacations if he were elected president.

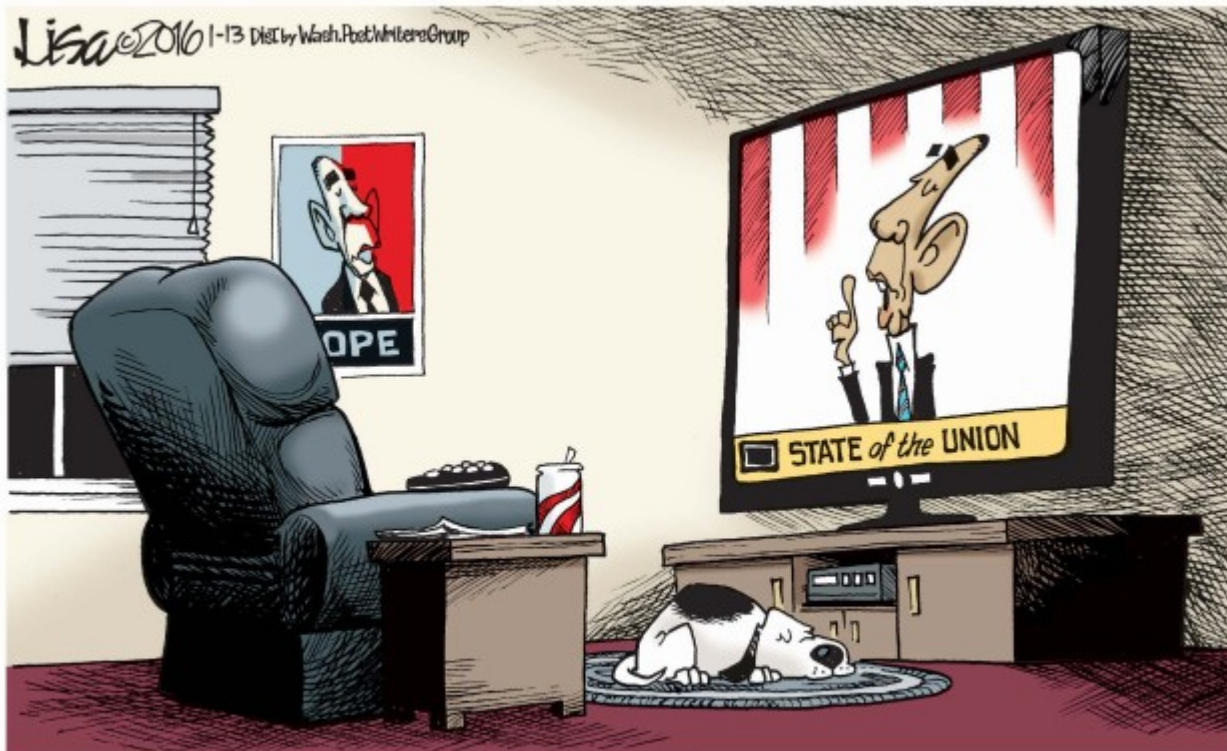
The video features then-Sen. Obama discussing his book "The Audacity Of Hope" with New York Times columnist Bob Herbert in 2008.

The future president was talking about how those running for president need to be prepared to "give their life to it."

"The bargain that any president strikes with is, you give me this office and in turn my, fears, doubts, insecurities, foibles, need for sleep, family life, vacations, leisure is gone," Obama said. "I am giving myself to you."



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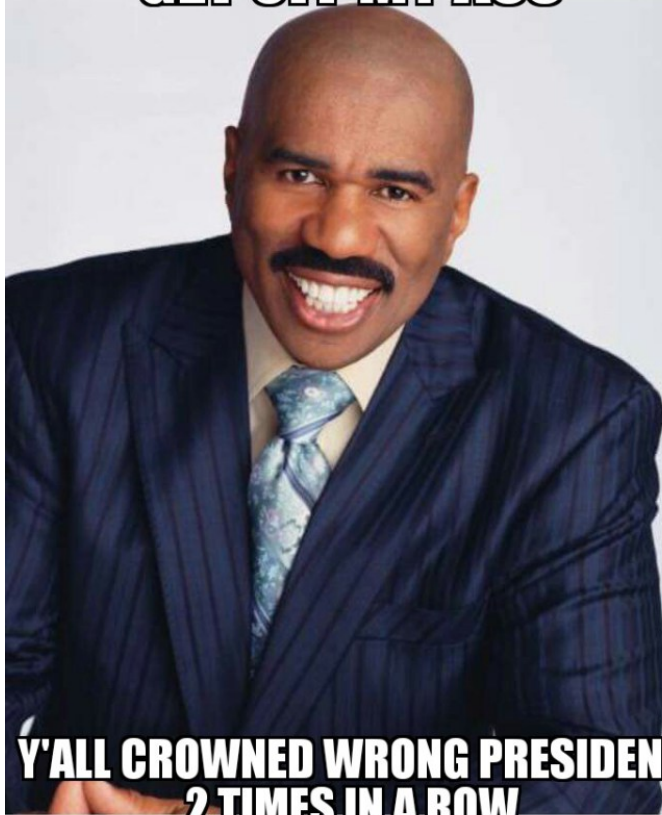


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