

- excerpt from - Whitehouse 180

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Anatomy of a Landslide

Tampa, FLA, August 29, 2012. The Republican National Convention. Sixty-five year old Mitt Romney postures himself to the podium, poised to accept his parties nomination. Despite the nick name "Flip Flomney" that his detractors on the left have dubbed him (due to his penchant for changing his stance on a large array of issues - from gun control and abortion to bail-outs and whether it was worth going after bin laden or not) Romney begins his speech with a certainty in his tone and manner that is easy to perceive. This air of confidence is a characteristic which Romney has perhaps had his entire life, but has honed over the course of the last ten years with the specific purpose of running for the office of President of the United States.

"Mr. Competent". That is how Romney's handlers are packaging him for this speech - in contrast to President Obama's Mr. Cool. And in this, the biggest speech of his career up to this point, Romney *looks* competent. But as the speech wears on, he is less than spectacular - in fact he had already been upstaged by an 82 year old Hollywood actor, Clint Eastwood, who preceeded Romney's speech by having an imaginary conversation with an empty chair. Romney follows Eastwood's "empty chair" routine with his own "empty suit" routine by giving a speech that was long on "rah-rah" slogans and partisan-tested and approved sound bites, but short on specifics, particularly in regard to his Nixon-esque "secret plan" to fix the economy (if elected President). Upon finishing his speech, Romney flourishes through the robotic gestures, poses, waves and facial expressions

that the moment calls for. The Republican crowd expresses the expected congratulatory reaction. But something was missing. Maybe it hadn't dawn on the pundits and members in the audience just then, but Romney had deliberately failed to make any mention of the American troops currently serving their country in Afghanistan and Iraq. In fact he had made no mention of the American troops or the military at all in his speech - a glaring omission the likes of which the Republican Party had not seen in anyone's recent memory.

The following day a handful of left wing pundits pick up on Romney's failure to give recognition to the troops, but this gripe only half-heartedly makes its rounds among the talk radio shows. It wouldn't be until later in the week, when President Obama makes his acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention and repeatedly gives seemingly heartfelt thanks to the troops and recognizes them for their dedication and sacrifice to their country, that Romney's omission is really magnified. To make matters worse, in an interview with FOX news on the Friday after Obama's acceptance speech, Romney explains that he didn't mention the troops in his own speech because the troops aren't important enough.

ROMNEY: When you give a speech you don't go through a laundry list, **you talk about the things that you think are important.**

The stark contrast between Romney and Obama's recognition of the troops seemed to register in the sluggish subconscious of the mainstream American media and more immediately it ignited the left-wing internet blog apparatus into motion. Within 24 hours a critical Swift-boat mass had begun to swarm around this notion that Romney did not have respect for the nation's military.

The lefties began with evidence that the Romney family had a history of putting low priority on serving their country. This idea was presented in the disparaging remarks that Mitt's father,

George Romney (as the governor of Michigan) had made during his run for President in 1968. George Romney had infamously stated that the generals in Vietnam were trying to "brain-wash" him. Prior to making that remark, George Romney had actually been the leading candidate for the Republican nomination in 1968. He was ahead of Dick Nixon by 8 points according to a Gallup poll, and ahead of Democrat Lyndon B. Johnson by 12 points. His Republican opponent however, Tricky Dicky Nixon - perhaps the shrewdest candidate there ever was, quickly picked up on Romney's comments about the generals and spun it into the major theme in which frame Romney. Within weeks, Right-wing voters began abandoning the George Romney bandwagon in droves as the Nixon campaign continually pounded in the idea that George Romney had some nerve to criticize our military leaders, especially in a time of war, and especially considering that George Romney himself had not even seen fit to serve his country during World War II.

With this foundation laid, the left-wing bloggers next began to associate the fact that George Romney had avoided serving his country in World War II with the fact that during the Vietnam War, Mitt had gone out of his way to avoid serving his nation as well. Worse yet, as the Lefties pointed out, after protesting against his fellow class mates at Stanford (students who were protesting the draft) when Romney himself became eligible for the draft, instead of suiting up to serve his country, he fled the United States and headed to France. While the students who Romney protested against were being sent off to the booby-trapped mosquito-infested jungles of Vietnam, Mitt was living in a palace in France, being waited on by servants. This went on the next two and a half years and Romney eventually secured FOUR deferments so that he could avoid Vietnam.

Armed with these facts, the seed of doubt was planted into the minds of the American voters in regards to Mitt's patriotism. Bloggers went as far as to point out that not only had George and Mitt Romney avoided serving their country but NONE of Mitt's FIVE

sons had seen fit to serve their nation as well, despite two wars in Iraq and a war in Afghanistan that the Romney boys had been eligible to participate in. Lefties venomously characterized Mitt as a "bumper sticker Patriot", the kind of coward who wraps himself up in a flag, puts a bumper sticker on his car, sings the national anthem at the top of his lungs and is the first person to yell out "Freedom Isn't Free" and "Let's nuke Iran" and "Kill us some muslims" yet who would never even think of suiting up and putting his ass on the line to actually fight for his country.

In the days and weeks that followed, Romney's campaign managers watched his poll numbers sink in swing states like Virginia and North Carolina - two states that had large voting blocks of military members. The left-wing attack machine did not relent, in fact they continued to give fodder to the most hyper-skeptical blogosphere-informed voting populas of all time until even Right-wingers like Sarah Palin and Rush Limbaugh started criticizing Romney as not being aggressive enough on foreign policy (for, as any Right-wing military hawk can tell you: the only way to cover weakness in your own military background is to rattle the sabers and start point fingers at any country that is not America).

Meanwhile, as Romney was being used as a mainstream media punching bag, Obama had benefitted from a small but real DNC bounce. The biggest story in the news about him in fact was that an exuberant Republican pizza shop owner had given Obama a bear hug that lifted the President off the ground during an unexpected visit. Romney's team had been enough horse races to know when things were slipping away. The first sign of desperation came four days after he had implied that the troops were not important. September 11th was traditionally a day that political opponents traditionally put aside politics to focus on the memory of the lives lost during the terrorists attacks from 2001. This year however, on September 11th, Romney not only breaks this tradition, but also dishonors the US Ambassador to Libya and three others

who were killed earlier in the day during attacks in Libya and Egypt. Furthermore, the Romney campaign rushed a statement to reporters trying to link the protests to Obama's failed policies in the Middle East, Romney spoke to the press.

MITT ROMNEY: "It's disgraceful that the Obama administration's first response was not to condemn attacks on our diplomatic missions, but to sympathize with those who waged the attacks."

That Romney's accusations of Obama were completely false (Obama had not made any statement about the attacks in which he had sympathized with the attackers) was nothing new. Romney had been making false accusations of Obama literally for years. The shocking thing about Romney's accusations were that he was engaging in partisan mudslinging at a time in which America was mourning the lives of other Americans. Just like he had given the impression that the troops were not important enough to address in his convention speech, he was no disrespecting the lives lost not only during the terrorist attacks of 11 years earlier, but also of the 4 lives lost in the middle east just hours earlier, by playing politics with them instead of honoring them.

Within hours the blogosphere, cable tv pundit programs and talk radio were ablaze. You Tube clips that showed the responses of Presidential hopefuls Ronald Reagan and George Bush reaction to the Iranian Hostage crisis in 1980 that were juxtaposed to Romney's response to this very similar current situation displayed a harsh contrast.

Ronald Reagan: "This is a difficult day for all of us Americans. ... It is time for us...to stand united. It is a day for quiet reflection...when words should be few and confined essentially to our prayers."

George H.W. Bush: "I unequivocally support the president of the United States — no ifs, ands or buts — and it certainly is not a time

to try to go one-up politically. He made a difficult, courageous decision.”

Instead of looking Presidential by calling for national unity, Romney was looking like a desperate Partisan Hack. The snowball had already begun rolling down the mountain by this point and quickly on its way to becoming an avalanche.

