

Obama: Iran threatens all of us

BY [DAVE NEWBART](#), [Chicago Sun Times](#), March 3, 2007

<http://www.suntimes.com/news/politics/281249,CST-NWS-OBAMA03.article#>

Sen. Barack Obama said Friday the use of military force should not be taken off the table when dealing with Iran, which he called "a threat to all of us."

Speaking before a pro-Israel crowd at a downtown hotel, Obama also repeated his call for a phased pullout of U.S. troops from Iraq and strongly backed a strong U.S. relationship with Israel.

Earlier in the day, the Republican National Committee took aim at Obama, issuing a research memo aimed at highlighting the Illinois freshman senator's lack of experience on foreign affairs. That the gloves-are-off memo was even generated at this time is a testament to Obama's growing strength in the Democratic primary field.

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Senator Barack Obama makes a major policy speech on Israel before the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

(Rich Hein/Sun-Times)

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Obama campaign spokesman Dan Pfeiffer dismissed the Republican memo as an "example of the type of politics Barack Obama is hoping to change." He said Obama has spoken out against the war for years.

Iranian leader 'reckless'

While he was being attacked in Washington, Obama was in friendly territory in Chicago as he appeared at a forum attended by 800 members of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, an influential pro-Israel lobby. He received a standing ovation from the crowd and a hug from one of the group's leaders.

Obama said global leaders must do whatever it takes to stop Iran from enriching uranium and acquiring nuclear weapons. He called Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad "reckless, irresponsible and inattentive" to the day-to-day needs of the Iranian people.

The Iranian "regime is a threat to all of us," Obama said.

While Obama wouldn't rule out force, he said the United States should engage in "aggressive diplomacy combined with tough sanctions" to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear threat.

Visited Israel last year

Again taking aim at the Bush administration and the war in Iraq, he said the war had actually strengthened Iran's influence in the region. He noted the war had spurred "anti-U.S. and further anti-Israel propaganda."

Obama told of a trip he took to Israel in January 2006, visiting a village that resembled a suburb in the United States. He said he was deeply moved by a visit to a home hit by a rocket launched by Hezbollah.

"Our job is to never forget that the threat of violence is real," he said.

Obama's appearance was seen as a move to court Jewish donors, although the event wasn't a fund-raiser. He did pose for photos with AIPAC members at a private reception before the speech. Although the event was billed as a "forum," he took no questions from the audience or media and left immediately after his half-hour speech.

Even though many in the crowd endorsed his remarks, some said they are waiting to hear more from him in the coming months to better gauge his position on Israel and other foreign-policy questions.

"He is an unknown," said Diane Dubey, an AIPAC member from Lincolnwood.

Others said Obama, who largely read from prepared remarks, seemed slightly less passionate about the topic than presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton, who spoke at AIPAC's national convention last year. Both Clinton and Obama will be at the convention March 11 in Washington.

"He speaks beautifully, but we don't find a lot of emotion in what he says," said Mark Sherman of Northbrook.

Contributing: *Lynn Sweet*