



Aula em áudio 12

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CHRIS UHLMANN: The US president Barack Obama has fought back against critics of his foreign policy in a keynote speech overnight that laid out a blueprint for the rest of his presidency.

In the address at the US Military Academy in West Point, president Obama reinforced his commitment to act jointly with other nations to help resolve global crises but with a focus on diplomacy rather than military intervention.

He hit back at criticism that he's been passive and indecisive as a world leader, casting himself instead as striking a middle ground between war mongers and isolationists.

North America correspondent Jane Cowan reports.

(Military music)

JANE COWAN: It was an effort to answer his critics, on a grand scale.

At the West Point Military Academy a sea of military cadets wearing dress whites provided the audience for a wide-ranging address.

(Military music)

With the president fresh from announcing the last US soldier would leave Afghanistan in 2016, this graduating class is the first since September 11 that won't automatically head to the battlefields of Afghanistan or Iraq.

BARACK OBAMA: The strategy that involves invading every county that harbours terrorist networks is naive and unsustainable and I would betray my duty to you and to the country we love if I ever sent you into harm's way simply because I saw a problem somewhere in the world that needed to be fixed.

JANE COWAN: The speech was designed to lay the ground for Barack Obama's final two and a

half years in office, but it was mostly a restatement of his multilateral approach to foreign policy.

BARACK OBAMA: There are a lot of folks, a lot of sceptics who often downplay the effectiveness of multilateral action. For them working through international institutions like the UN or respecting international law is a sign of weakness. I think they're wrong.

JANE COWAN: After a decade of war the US president said it's time to shift America's counter terrorism strategy.

While terrorism remains the biggest threat to American security, he said the enemy was no longer a centralised Al Qaeda but affiliate groups and extremists in the Middle East and North Africa.

Barack Obama said large scale military attacks were no longer the answer, instead announcing a \$5 billion counterterrorism partnership to help train countries to carry out operations against extremists.

If approved by Congress, the initiative would train security forces in Yemen, fund peacekeepers in Somalia, secure Libya and confront terrorists working in and across Syria's borders.

Barack Obama's overriding objective in foreign policy has been to avoid a blunder on the scale of the Iraq war.

But his caution and his preference for building coalitions has drawn vehement opposition. Among the most vocal critics is the Republican senator John McCain.

JOHN MCCAIN: None of us who will worry about America's national security and have lived through these crisis for many, many years want to send Americans into harm's way, but we do want to have a strong and steadfast America and a president who when he draws a red line and chooses to and then violates that red line, that then hurts the United States of America, which not that we're weak, we're not. It's a matter of our reliability and around the world they believe we are unreliable.

JANE COWAN: Barack Obama's speech was perhaps aimed less at changing the terms of the foreign policy debate in Washington than appealing to a war wary electorate.

There were hints too of what he wants his legacy to be, the president identifying a range of priorities from negotiations on Iran's nuclear program to a new global accord on climate change.

(Band playing the end of the American national anthem)

This is Jane Cowan reporting for The World Today.