

Not so worthy of fireworks: America's oil addiction

By James Marvin: Retired Navy commander and member of Environmental Entrepreneurs - 07/07/11 08:39 AM ET

Many of us have just returned from long holiday weekend travels and celebrating our nation's independence with road trips to the beach or visits with friends and relatives.

Yet while we were off reveling in our country's freedom, every stop at every gas station along the way should have served as a stark reminder of another threat to our independence and future: Our addiction to oil.

Having recently retired from the U.S. Navy after 20 years in the SEAL Teams, I have seen firsthand the tremendous resources our country dedicates to protecting oil infrastructure, both onshore and in the sea lanes used by oil tankers.

Around the globe, our service men and women are risking their lives to keep America safe and access to the global commons free. Many have paid the ultimate price.

The risks of our continued dependence on oil are both direct and indirect.

Some countries hostile to the United States, for instance, use their oil revenues to fund violent extremist groups and terrorist organizations. As a result, some of the money we spent at gasoline stations during our recent holiday travels could wind up helping to kill Americans. That is something that runs against the strength of character that made our nation free.

Our military's top leaders have come to realize our dependence on oil is a national security issue. They know the time to change is now, and they're leading the way.

Every branch of the military is now on a mission to reduce its dependence on oil and help increase operational readiness.

The Navy and Air Force, for instance, have pledged to get at least half of their fuel from alternative sources. The Army is working toward a "Net Zero" strategy where bases will consume only as much energy or water as they produce. Marines are using alternative and renewable energy on the battlefield.

So why does it seem like the rest of America doesn't understand we need to declare our independence from oil and gas?

Instead of calling for more alternative fuel vehicles like the military is doing, private industry and some of our national leaders are content on keeping us dependent on gas-guzzlers. When the Obama administration recently announced new proposed standards that would push automakers to make vehicles that average 56 miles per gallon, some carmakers and politicians chose not to rise up to the challenge, but to condemn it - just because it's difficult.

Instead of answering the call of Americans who resoundingly say they want alternatives to gas and oil, some of our nation's leaders are content keeping us hooked on petroleum. When members of Congress recently had the opportunity to pass legislation and direct our taxpayer dollars toward energy efficiency programs, they instead decided to funnel our money toward oil industry tax breaks and pass bills that encourage more drilling, not new energy options.

And instead of embracing the challenge of creating a new and better economy - indeed, a new and better nation - some of our loudest self-proclaimed "patriots" today are content keeping us shackled to foreign oil, hurting our wallets, our environment and our nation.

There's a saying in the Navy SEALs: "The only easy day was yesterday."

No, ending our dependence on petroleum won't happen overnight. No, it won't be easy.

But isn't pursuing freedom and independence, even when it's hard, what America is all about?

James Marvin is a retired Navy Commander who spent 20 years on active duty as a Naval Special Warfare Officer before becoming a clean-energy consultant in 2009. He is a member of Environmental Entrepreneurs, a group of business leaders that advocates good environmental policy while building economic prosperity.

Source:

<http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/energy-a-environment/170087-not-so-worthy-of-fireworks-americas-oil-addiction>