

By Judy L. Randall

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STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- In a series of verbal slaps and put-downs, former Vice President Dick Cheney repeatedly criticized President Obama during an appearance on Staten Island Monday night, portraying him as an inexperienced chief executive more concerned with his re-election campaign than fighting the war on terror and creating jobs.

He thumped Obama for a "rush to the exits" in Iraq and charged that the president's September 2012 deadline for pulling out of Afghanistan "coincides with the political schedule," rather than keeping the region safe from Iran looking to fill the "vacuum."

Cheney also said Obama should sign off on the Keystone XL Pipeline that would move synthetic crude oil from Alberta, Canada, to Texas through refineries in Illinois and Oklahoma. He said the pipeline "has been studied," is "ready to go" and would create an estimated 20,000 jobs.

He called the current administration "foolish" for not doing so, predicting the pipeline will go through British Columbia instead with Chinese investment, "and we'll have sat here sucking our thumbs," rather than trying to achieve "energy security ... instead of the kind of idiocy we have seen in the White House."

