

Revolt of Generals On Eve of Elections

by Jeffrey Steinberg

On Oct 26, several hundred active duty, reserve, and National Guard soldiers issued an Appeal for Redress to the U.S. Congress, calling for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. The short petition-statement, initiated by active duty servicemen based in the Norfolk, Virginia area, and sponsored by Iraq Veterans Against the War, Veterans for Peace, and Military Families Speak Out, read: "As a patriotic American proud to serve the nation in uniform, I respectfully urge my political leaders in Congress to support the prompt withdrawal of all American military forces and bases from Iraq. Staying in Iraq will not work and is not worth the price. It is time for U.S. troops to come home."

The statement is circulating for additional signatures, through the website www.appealforredress.org, and will be formally presented to members of Congress on Martin Luther King Day in January 2007.

The unprecedented initiative by active-duty soldiers and sailors, taken under the Military Whistleblower Protection Act, occurs in the midst of a renewed assault on the Bush-Cheney Administration's bankrupt Iraq war policy, by a growing number of retired flag officers, who have demanded the firing of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and, more recently have called on voters to oust the Republican majorities in the U.S. House and the Senate on Nov. 7.

Stopping the Next Disastrous War

On Oct. 16, *The Nation* published a cover-story, "Revolt of the General—Military Officers Speak Out Against A Failed War," by Richard J. Whalen, a prominent Republican Party strategist. Whalen began his piece: "A revolt is brewing among our retired Army and Marine generals. This rebellion—quiet and nonconfrontational, but remarkable nonetheless—comes not because their beloved forces are bearing the brunt of ground combat in Iraq, but because the retirees see the U.S. adventure in Mesopotamia as another Vietnam-like, strategically failed war, and they blame the errant, arrogant civilian leadership at the Pentagon."

The fact that a leading left-of-center journal like *The Nation* would highlight the work of a leading conservative writer and strategist with decades of service to the Republican Party, underscores the growing bipartisan movement to sink the disastrous Bush-Cheney Administration and prevent the launching of new preventive wars, including a strike against Iran that could likely include the use of nuclear weapons, and would lead to a perpetual "clash of civilizations" war

stretching from Southwest Asia around the globe.

Indeed, in the concluding section of his lengthy *The Nation* piece, Whalen observed that "The retired generals' revolt may be inspired by their apprehension over a wider Mideast conflict spreading to potentially nuclear Iran." Citing retired Air Force Lt. Col. Karen Kwiatkowski, Whalen wrote, "She speculates that the generals are trying to get rid of Rumsfeld now to head off a conflict with Iran. The Bush Administration," he continued, "has contingency plans to bomb Iran's UN-disapproved nuclear sites. Some under-employed Navy and Air Force officers are lobbying to strike Iran, but the overstretched ground combat forces overwhelmingly oppose it as the worst of all possible wars."

Other retired military officers have echoed the same view that the revolt is driven more by concern that an unchecked Bush-Cheney White House will soon strike Iran and, perhaps North Korea. In a recent *New Yorker* magazine piece, Seymour Hersh reported that a number of retired officers with whom he spoke viewed the recent Lebanon invasion by Israel as "a prelude to a potential American preemptive attack to destroy Iran's nuclear installations." Retired Naval officer and former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage told Hersh that, "If the most dominant military force in the region—the Israeli Defense Forces—can't pacify a country like Lebanon, with a population of four million, you should think carefully about taking that template to Iran, with strategic depth and a population of seventy million. . . . The only thing that the bombing has achieved so far is to unite the [Lebanese] population against the Israelis."

Despite the lessons of Lebanon, Hersh and his military sources are all convinced that an American preventive air strike against Iran is all-but-certain, under the present White House policy trajectory, before Bush-Cheney leave office in January 2009.

Vote Against the War Party

Clearly reflecting this perception, a number of senior retired military officers—with recent combat experience in Iraq—have come out calling on American voters to put the Democratic Party back in power in the Congress on Nov. 7. Maj. Gen. John Batiste (USA-ret.) and Maj. Gen. Paul Eaton (USA-ret.) have given interviews to *Salon*, an online magazine, calling for a Democratic victory. "The best thing that can happen right now is for one or both of our houses to go Democratic so we can have some oversight," General Batiste told *Salon's* Mark Benjamin.

General Eaton echoed the sentiments, telling *Salon*, "The way out that I see is to hand the House and the Senate to the Democrats and get this thing turned around," referring to the deepening Iraq quagmire. Citing other military officers, active-duty and retired, who share the same view, Eaton explained, "Most of us see two more years of the same if the Republicans stay in power." A lifelong Republican, like Batiste, Eaton added, "You could not have tortured me enough to vote for Mr. Kerry or Mr. Gore, but I'm not at all thrilled

with who I did vote for.” An unnamed active-duty senior officer who was also recently in Iraq, added, “I will tell you, in the circles I talk to, the only way to enable or enact change is to change the leadership.”

Col. W. Patrick Lang (USA-ret.), the former Defense Intelligence Officer for the Near East and South Asia, who runs the widely read website *Sic Semper Tyrannis 2006*, recently warned that rumors circulating around Washington about a Bush-Cheney “course correction” on Iraq, Iran, and North Korea are “hoey.” Colonel Lang wrote that Congress has a few options to curb the war party at the White House. They can un-authorize the war powers granted to the President in October 2002, and they can cut off the funds for a continuing Iraq misadventure.

All of these issues are on the table for voters on Nov. 7, and the institution of the U.S. armed forces has weighed in about as forcefully as ever to force a change in direction.

Documentation

General Hoar: Going Into Iraq Was a ‘Bad Idea’

On Oct. 25, 2006, Gen. Joseph Hoar (USMC-ret.), the former Commander-in-Chief of the Central Command, appeared on the Joey Reynolds Show on WOR-Radio, along with former CNN military correspondent Chuck De Caro and EIR senior editor Jeffrey Steinberg. These are excerpts from the lively, and sometimes heated discussion.

De Caro: If the generals leading CENTCOM, or the CINC, or the COCOMM and the DEPCOCOMM, if they really disagreed with [the Iraq war and occupation policy—ed.], why didn’t they simply resign? Answer that question, please?

Hoar: Yes. This is a very difficult problem and one that I’ve written about. And there’s no easy answer to it, because, as I mentioned earlier, our civilian leadership is responsible for making the decisions.

And it’s interesting that we went through this same issue with the Vietnam War. Gen. Harold Johnson, of course, in a session at the Marine Corps Command Staff College, in which I was present as a student, was asked this question by an Army officer in the class. And he said, “The reason I didn’t resign was I thought I could do more good by staying in the Army and fighting for what I knew needed to be done.” But in his memoirs, he said that his greatest regret was that he didn’t resign in protest. And I think we’re facing that right now.

There have been some general officers that have retired, which is different from resigning, rather than staying on and continuing to be a part of the way the war has been prosecuted.

Reynolds: Well, are you feeling that you are disappointed, so therefore, you have to withdraw? I know withdrawal is different from retreat. So, are you feeling that you had to do that, because of consent? You know, you withdraw your consent to go along, so you are now at a place where you’re retired and you’re outspoken?

Hoar: As of today, I’ve been involved directly almost on a daily basis with the Middle East for now 18 years. And you know, people like Tony Zinni and myself, who had some sense of that region and what was possible and what wasn’t possible. All of us had a chance to speak. I testified three times before Senate committees—the Foreign Relations Committee and the Armed Services Committee—and said it was a bad idea in 2002, and everybody said, “Thank you very much, General,” and most of these guys went ahead and voted in favor of going to war. And many of them said things during that run-up that I’m sure they would not like to have repeated today.

Reynolds: I want to ask you something about the French. They had that region in homeroom, the Foreign Legion; and the British certainly, they’ve had it for a long time. So, those guys have some wisdom. The English are on our side, I guess, or we’re on their side, however you look at it. But the French never really thought it was a good idea, and they were vocal about it. . . .

Hoar: Well, let me offer some thoughts on that, too, if I may.

You know the French were involved in two major counterinsurgency wars in the post-World War II era: one in Vietnam—or in Indo-China, because it really extended beyond Vietnam—and the other in Algeria. And the Algerian one is really important, because the army in Algeria was successful militarily. They whipped the intelligence problem. They had 50,000 Algerians working for them in their intelligence operation as spies. They killed hundreds of thousands of Algerians in battle, and the President of the Republic of France, a former soldier, a guy named de Gaulle, said: “We can’t do it. This is a political problem and the only solution is for the French army to withdraw and give Algeria its independence.”

And so, the French have been over this ground before, just as we have, in Vietnam, by the way.

Reynolds: Right. That’s why I said that.

Hoar: Yes. And they have learned by this experience. They were occupied during the Second World War. They fought an insurgency during the Second World War, and they come to a very different conclusion than we do. President Chirac fought as a lieutenant in Algeria, he had personal experience with this sort of thing.

And if you read the British experience in Iraq, from 1917 until 1930, you realize how futile their effort was. Winston Churchill, who was the Minister for Colonial Affairs, described Iraq as an “ungrateful volcano.”