

Hatred of Obama Growing Within Institutions of U.S. Government

by Carl Osgood

Nov. 18—LaRouchePAC issued an assessment on Nov. 6, based on discussions with confidential, well-placed sources, of the growing hatred of President Barack Obama, not just among leaders in the Arab world and in Europe, but increasingly in the institutions of government in the United States.

“A number of leading institutional figures, including some well-known individuals, have come forward in recent days to express their horror at the degree to which the Obama Presidency has totally broken down and is leading to the global isolation and discrediting of the United States,” the assessment read. “According to one such leading figure, no one inside the Obama Administration can fathom where the policy decisions and pronouncements from Obama’s mouth are coming from.

“There is a total breakdown of any deliberative process, and increasingly, leading Administration figures, from Kerry to Hagel to General Dempsey, are finding themselves baffled by policies that they are supposed to go out and defend. There is a consensus among these individuals that, while the first Obama term in office was a disaster, at least there were competent individuals in key positions who had some input into the policy debates—even when they disagreed with the ultimate policy decisions. In the first nine months of the second term, there simply is no policy deliberation whatsoever, and the consequences are even more disastrous.”

Some of the strongest reactions against the meltdown of the Obama White House came in response to an assessment that Lyndon LaRouche presented to an organizers’ conference call on Nov. 3, when he warned that we have entered uncharted territory, where a major financial explosion or sudden outbreak of war could occur at any moment. The accuracy of LaRouche’s and LaRouchePAC’s assessment was confirmed in spades, when a number of articles and statements began appearing on Nov. 13, starting with two articles in the inaugural edition of *Politico*’s new monthly magazine.

Those articles prompted others, and comments by a leading Democratic member of the U.S. House of Representatives during an open forum at the Council on Foreign Relations, all indicating the hot revolt against the dysfunctional President.

Discontent in the Military

The growing rebellion within the military against the Obama White House was documented by Rosa Brooks, a Georgetown University human rights lawyer who was a Pentagon official from 2009 to 2011, in an article in *Politico Magazine* (November 2013), titled, “Obama vs. the Generals.” She begins by describing the lack of communications between the White House and the military: “I recall asking one general, recently back from Afghanistan, if he’d shared his experiences and insights with the president. Rolling his eyes, he told me grimly that the White House preferred the military to be seen but not heard.” That comment, which sets the tone for the whole article, was made during the time she was at the Pentagon, but from her recent inquiries with current and retired senior officers, she reports that “most of my sources said tensions between the White House and the military are running worryingly high.”

Many senior officers, she reports, “complained of feeling baffled and shut out by a White House National Security Staff that, in their view, combines an insistence on micromanaging minor issues with a near-total inability to articulate coherent strategic goals. ‘The NSS wants to run the show, day to day and minute to minute,’ laments a former military official, ‘so they have no time—they’re almost incapable of strategic thinking.’

“If war is ‘the continuation of policy’ [as Clausewitz wrote], I’d like to know what that policy is—so I can avoid screwing it up, or wasting lives for no purpose.” said another recently retired general officer. But, “I don’t understand the process by which the White

House is making strategic or foreign-policy decisions. There's an appearance of consultation, but you know you won't be listened to."

A former White House official with Pentagon experience told Brooks that White House staffers often remain willfully uninformed about the logic behind military recommendations: They "don't want to take the time to go through the slide deck or get the full briefing. Basically, they don't want to know."

Brooks describes a process, coming out of the 2009 debate over Afghanistan policy, that was more like bickering over the price of a car rather than real policymaking. If the White House tells the military to do something, the military comes back and says, "We need this many troops." White House staffers, because they don't trust the military, will say that's too many, we'll let you have only half as many. The result will end up somewhere in the middle, not based on any policy analysis, but rather on the results of bargaining.

Former Deputy Undersecretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks told Brooks that whether the topic is Afghanistan or Syria, "the backdrop is really tensions over budgets and money. Senior military officials worry that they're being asked to do all these [different] things, but who will fund it? Who's looking out for the military's institutional interests?" Meanwhile, she added, "the White House suspects that the military is exaggerating the problems that will be caused by budget cuts, which just makes the military even more frustrated."

Being Locked in Obama's Cabinet Is Hell

The same issue of *Politico Magazine* features on the cover an article "Locked in the Cabinet: The Worst Job in Barack Obama's Washington." While the article gos-



DoD photo/Erin A. Kirk-Cuomo

President Obama's ill-conceived (insane) military policies are drawing fire. Here he is shown on Jan. 5, 2012, with the military brass and then-Defense Secretary Leon Panetta (far left).

sips about how Cabinet members are mistreated by foul-mouthed hacks on the White House staff, its main points underline what Brooks also emphasizes: Obama isn't interested when it comes to making serious policy; he only listens to his "insiders": Rahm Emanuel, Valerie Jarrett, David Axelrod, David Plouffe, and Susan Rice, with the later addition of Denis McDonough.

Author Glenn Thrush reports that Obama would even prefer to listen to the "amateurs" than former Defense Secretary Robert Gates.

"The West Wing's obsessive control of messaging drove Gates crazy, and he felt crowded by young amateurs in the White House who had much less experience and much better access to Obama, guys like McDonough and speechwriter Ben Rhodes, who would weigh in after the secretary's SUV had departed for the Pentagon.

"Over the previous four decades, Gates had served in a variety of posts, from deputy director of the CIA to the upper rungs of the NSC, and had seen a gradual increase in White House influence over internal Pentagon affairs. But that trend hit warp speed under Obama.

There were far more deputies meetings attended by too many lower-ranking aides, and Gates believed an alarming number of White House staffers were being read in on specific war plans.

“Most importantly, Gates had significant policy disagreements with Obama. By the time of his exit in July 2011, the lifelong Republican was dissenting more and more on major decisions being pushed by liberal interventionists including Clinton, U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice and NSC adviser Samantha Power. He has called the NATO intervention in Libya a mistake. . . . Since retiring, Gates has become increasingly disillusioned with Obama’s foreign policy; one friend says Gates winced when the president drew his red line more than a year ago on the use of chemical weapons in Syria. White House aides are nervously awaiting the publication of Gates’s memoir in January. The manuscript . . . questions Obama’s policy choices on the Arab Spring in particular, and even compares the president unfavorably with Bush. . . .”

Thrush, one of the leading reporters for *Politico’s* daily newspaper, also reports on Gates’ clashes with Susan Rice (now National Security Advisor) and Samantha Power (now UN Ambassador).

Thrush describes the military decision disaster over the mooted strike against Syria: Obama huddled with McDonough, and went for a walk in the woods to discuss not going ahead with the attack, just after Secretary of State John Kerry had virtually announced that a strike was definite. Neither Kerry nor Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel was consulted or informed until after Obama had announced his decision to go to Congress, Thrush says. The decision to bypass Congress is described: “Before his second Inauguration, he ordered the Cabinet and West Wing officials to come up with a list of actions he could take without relying on Congress. . . .”

But the worst disasters are still to come:

“The decision to muzzle the Cabinet for all these years,” writes Thrush, “means the president now has fewer seasoned surrogates to make his case in public. Putting a premium on political savvy over creativity has made it harder to generate new proposals. Limiting the number of new voices in Obama’s inner circle has given a cramped, predictable feeling to his White House and increased the pressure on a diminishing cast of indispensable staffers, who are now burning out and breaking down. Never have the strains been more ap-

parent than during the troubled, ill-coordinated rollout of Obamacare. . . .”

CIA Analysts Threatened To Resign

In a similar vein is a Nov. 13 article by former CIA officer Phil Giraldi in the *American Conservative*, entitled, “Quitting Over Syria.” Giraldi recounts the battle between the White House, which wanted a statement from the intelligence community saying that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad used chemical weapons against his own people last Aug. 21, *à la* Dick Cheney and Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction, and the analysts who saw no evidence to make that case. Excerpts follow:

“In a scenario unfortunately reminiscent of the lead up to Iraq, the National Security Council tasked the various intelligence agencies to beat the bushes and come up with more corroborative information. Israel obligingly provided what was reported to be interceptions of telephone conversations implicating the Syrian army in the attack, but it was widely believed that the information might have been fabricated by Tel Aviv, meaning that bad intelligence was being used to confirm other suspect information, a phenomenon known to analysts as circular reporting. Other intelligence cited in passing by the White House on the trajectories and telemetry of rockets that may have been used in the attack was also somewhat conjectural and involved weapons that were not, in fact, in the Syrian arsenal, suggesting that they were actually fired by the rebels. Also, traces of Sarin were not found in most of the areas being investigated, nor on one of the two rockets identified. Whether the victims of the attack suffered symptoms of Sarin was also disputed, and no autopsies were performed to confirm the presence of the chemical.

“With all evidence considered, the intelligence community found itself with numerous skeptics in the ranks, leading to sharp exchanges with the Director of Central Intelligence John Brennan and Director of National Intelligence James Clapper. A number of analysts threatened to resign as a group if their strong dissent was not noted in any report released to the public, forcing both Brennan and Clapper to back down. This led to the White House issuing its own assessment, completely divorcing the process from any direct connection to the intelligence community. The spectacle of CIA Director George Tenet sitting behind Secretary of

State Colin Powell in the United Nations, providing him with credibility as Powell told a series of half-truths, would not be repeated. . . .”

White House Doesn't Trust Congress, Either

Congress, it turns out, is as isolated from White House policy deliberations as the rest of the government. This was revealed, on Nov. 14, by Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.), the ranking Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee. By virtue of his position in Congress, Smith should be someone whom the Obama Administration consults with and relies heavily on with respect to national security policy, but this turns out not to be the case.

At the end of an hour-long discussion at an event at the Council on Foreign Relations, Smith, in surprisingly candid remarks, described policymaking in the White House in a way that echoes comments from the military officers related by Rosa Brooks in her *Politico* article. Smith said that there is no effort from the White House to reach out to key members of Congress, in contrast to even the George W. Bush Administration, which lobbied Congress heavily in favor of the Iraq surge before it was publicly announced.

The Obama White House, he said, has a different model. First, “They figure out the policy. They announce it, then they come tell us what it is,” he said. “I get that. *They don't trust us*. . . . You'd have a better chance of success if you [would] include key policymakers in Congress in the decision-making process instead of trying to get them to buy in to the decision after the fact” (emphasis added).

These comments came after Smith had lambasted the administration for its incoherent policy in Syria, starting with Obama's “red line.” “The red line was not well thought out,” he said. “You do not say ‘if you step across this red line we will use military force’ unless you really mean it, unless you know the full implications of it.” If the U.S. hadn't done that, it might not have changed things a great deal on the ground, Smith said, but “at least it would've given us the benefit of consistent policy.” Smith said it might have been better to say at the outset that we wanted President Assad to get rid of his chemical weapons stockpile, rather than taking it up as an afterthought. “That lack of clarity and at least the appearance that it was sort of being developed on the fly did undermine our credibility,” Smith added.

As for Obama's Aug. 31 decision to go to Congress

to seek authorization to bomb Syria, Smith said he simply should not have done that, because “there was no way they were going to get the votes,” so there would have been no point to it.

Army Officer Blasts Obama Policymaking

The theme of Obama's insularity was repeated on Nov. 15, by a currently serving Army officer, Lt. Col. Robert Bateman, in an article in *Esquire* magazine. Bateman is a prolific writer and outspoken critic who, like a handful of other blunt-spoken Army officers, is a historian who is well-versed in war-making and strategy-making. In an article entitled “How Badly Things Are Broken With Our Defense,” Bateman endorses the thesis of Brooks' *Politico* article.

“I see absolutely nothing wrong with” Brooks' assessments, Bateman writes. “As she was a political appointee in the Pentagon, appointed by President Obama, mind you, she has credence to point fingers and expose laundry. And she is right. The generals and admirals are excessively defensive, and according to her, the White House has been less than forthcoming with the sort of firm and clear decisions and coherent directions needed at the political level of war. Read this, if you read nothing else, to understand where things seem to be running off the rails.”

The first half of his article is a lesson in the five levels of war: tactical, operational, strategic, grand strategic, and policy. It's at the top two levels, Bateman writes, that “America is falling flat on its face.”

Bateman also cites a *Defense News* article covering remarks by Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.) at a conference in Washington on Nov. 14, lambasting the “arrogance” of the Pentagon in stonewalling the Congress. Bateman says that this is also true, but the reason for it is given in the Brooks article. “The Pentagon has not been given that absolutely imperative, ‘firm and clear decisions’ and ‘concrete guidance.’ The slogan now is ‘Pivot East,’ which is not a firm and clear decision, nor has it been accompanied by concrete guidance.”

The result is that the generals and admirals are left to their own devices, which is not a good place for them to be, Bateman writes. “Without a hard political decision at the political level of war, we mere military officers are thrust into the position which our own sub-cultures have generally crafted us to be the least prepared people to make.”

Michele Steinberg contributed to this article.