

MCCAIN: STRAIGHT, BUT UNWISE, TALK ON FOREIGN POLICY

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"To jaw-jaw is always better than to war-war"

--Winston Churchill, White House luncheon, June 26, 1954

Recently John McCain commented that the Iraq War was our country's longest military campaign since the Vietnam War. As we note the 7th anniversary of the invasion of Afghanistan, where more Americans now die each day than in Iraq, McCain needs to be reminded, once again, he and Bush took "their eyes off the ball" in the War on Terror.

McCain: "Great Progress" in Afghanistan and Osama "Not That Important"; Petraeus: Surge Strategy Will Not Work in Afghanistan

The most recent National Intelligence Estimate paints a bleak picture in Afghanistan. The government controls only about a third of the country and violent attacks are up 40 percent this year. The Afghan people are alienated by government corruption and by high civilian death tolls due to U.S. bombing. The most dramatic example of corruption is that President Hamid Karzai's brother is the main broker in the heroin trade, which, by some estimates, accounts for half of the country's economy.

In an interview on Face the Nation (3/3/02) McCain said that we were making great progress in Afghanistan and that capturing Osama was "not that important." That of course has always been Obama's main goal. In a 2003 news conference McCain says that Iraq was much more important than Afghanistan and that he predicted that we would "muddle through in

Afghanistan"(<http://thinkprogress.org/2008/07/17/mccain-03-afghanistan>).

According to a British commander, we are not even doing that; he says we are losing the war and we may have to negotiate a deal with the Taliban. If Bush had focused on Afghanistan and Osama bin Laden, instead of sacrificing 4,200 American lives and \$600 billion in Iraq, we might have now pacified and rebuilt Afghanistan and the Taliban would have been defeated.

McCain proposes that the U.S. use the same surge strategy that was used in Iraq, but General Petraeus, in a talk to the conservative Heritage Foundation, argued that it wouldn't work in Afghanistan. As Petraeus wisely stated: "Every situation is unique." In that speech Petraeus also stated that "you have to talk to your enemies," and it is reported that the Karzai government recently met, presumably without preconditions, with Taliban representatives in Saudi Arabia.

McCain on January 2, 2002: "Next Up, Baghdad!"

Even before September 11, McCain was urging war with Iraq. On January 2, 2002, 15 months before the invasion, McCain declared "Next Up, Baghdad" on board the aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt. He joined many other GOP leaders in saying that the war would be "fairly easy" and that the Iraqis would greet us as liberators. With McCain as his main cheerleader, Bush prepared the conditions for a civil war between Sunnis and Shias, which the Shias won to Iran's great satisfaction and increased influence in Iraq's affairs.

McCain still cannot keep Sunnis and Shias straight, and doesn't seem to care that this is crucial for understanding the Middle East. In March McCain repeated four times the false charge that Shiite Iran was training Sunni Al Qaeda fighters. He also thought that Iraq shared a border with Afghanistan, even though there is a thousand miles of Iran in between.

In 2004 McCain said that if the Iraqis ask us to leave, then we should honor their decision, but now he says that we have to stay until we "win" regardless of

what the Iraqis want. Both Bush and McCain were thrown off guard when Prime Minister Maliki declared that he agreed with Obama's idea of a timed withdrawal of American troops.

As more and more evidence is gathered about the surge, it is clear that the fact that the Sunnis switched sides and Moqtada Al Sadar ordered his Shiite troops to step down did far more to quell violence than the additional 30,000 U.S. troops. The Shiite government is now refusing to pay the Sunni Awakening, heretofore paid by Uncle Sam, and it is arresting many of their leaders. The Sunnis offered the names of 3,000 Awakening fighters to join the Iraqi security forces, and only 400, all Shias, were selected. It is clear that the U.S. invasion and occupation has increased sectarian divisions rather than lessen them.

Very few surge troops were sent to Anbar Province where the Sunni Awakening cleaned out Al Qaeda fighters. U.S. troops pacified Baghdad by a process of ethnic cleansing and division. The 20-foot concrete walls that separated Sunnis and Shias are now coming down, and renewed sectarian tension is anticipated. The second round of the civil war may be upon us. The most recent National Intelligence Estimate flatly contradicts McCain's boast that "victory in Iraq is finally in sight."

McCain Flip Flops on Torture and Denies Rights to Detainees

In a Republican presidential debate on Nov. 28, McCain said that the Army Field Manual should be the gold standard for interrogations. But on February 14, 2008 McCain supported Bush's veto of a bill that would make the CIA follow the anti-torture provisions of the Army Field Manual. As Andrew Sullivan of *The Daily Dish* remarked: "McCain feels the need to appease the Republican far right at this point in time, and, tragically, the right to torture has now become a litmus test of 'conservative' orthodoxy."

McCain also described the Supreme Court ruling giving the right to appeal to Guantanamo Bay detainees as "one of the worst decisions in the history of this country." The Magna Carta of 1297 and the UN Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 assumed with question that human rights are universal and cannot be denied even in time of war. With regard to this seminal court decision, Obama said "this is an important step toward re-establishing our credibility as a nation committed to the rule of law and rejecting a false choice between fighting terrorism and respecting habeas corpus."

Even though Bush was well advised after September 11 to call Islam a religion of peace, our invasion of Iraq has alienated hundreds of millions of moderate Muslims around the world and destroyed our credibility in the world's capitals. When a lady stood up at a recent McCain rally and declared that she did not trust Obama because he was an Arab, McCain did not defuse the main issue at all. His answer that Obama was not an Arab but a decent man left the clear implication that Arabs and Muslims are not good people. The Council of American-Muslims Relations and six million law-abiding American Muslims have been totally frustrated by the fact that even the news media cannot speak to the fundamental point of respect for their religion and their ethnic backgrounds.

Dr. James Zogby, President of the Arab American Institute, says, "Enough is enough! . . . This exploitation of bigotry and the stoking of racist fires to forward an agenda are reprehensible. This is not only offensive to Arab Americans, but to all Americans. As every ethnic group who has ever been used to scare the electorate knows, this is a dangerous game that, tragically, can get innocent people hurt."

McCain and his Campaign Manager Cuddle Up to Russia in Montenegro, but McCain Refuses to Talk to Spain's Prime Minister

The McCain campaign staff is loaded with former lobbyists, and until very recently Rick Davis, McCain's campaign manager, was receiving \$30,000 a month to represent Fannie and Freddie. Since 2006 Davis' firm Davis Manafort has been on the payroll of Montenegro, whose independence from Serbia McCain called it "the greatest European democracy project since the end of the cold war."

According to an article in *The Nation* (10/20/08), Montenegro is now known as "Moscow by the Mediterranean." Denis MacShane, former British diplomat, contends that "Montenegro is almost a new Russian colony, as rubles flow in to buy property and business in the tiny state." A very interesting experiment in democracy, indeed.

A Russian billionaire by the name of Oleg Deripaska bought Montenegro's aluminum plant, which contributes 80 percent of Montenegro's export earnings. Former Ambassador Richard Sklar stopped advising the government when he saw that the Russians were getting a "sweetheart deal." Davis took up where Sklar left off and introduced McCain to Deripaska in Switzerland in January, 2006, and then seven months later Deripaska helped McCain celebrate his 70th birthday in Montenegro.

Since 2003 Deripaska has received help from numerous GOP lobbyists, including former Senator Bob Dole and Richard Burt, a foreign policy advisor to McCain since 2000. Dole's company earned \$1.38 million during Montenegro's independence campaign, and Dole recommended that Davis take over the lobbying contract.

McCain apparently sees no problem in enabling our new antagonist in Montenegro, but he now says that he would not talk to a good European friend. In a rambling, sometimes incoherent interview to the Spanish media, McCain would not commit to talking to Spain's Prime Minister Zapatero, with whom Secretary of State Condi Rice asserts we have "warm" relations.

Earlier in the interview the reporters had been asking about new leftist leaders in Latin America, and they thought that McCain mistakenly thought that Zapatero was one of them. McCain's campaign later clarified that he knew that Zapatero was the leader of Spain's government, and only reason for McCain's defiant stance appears to be Zapatero's decision to withdraw all of Spain's troops from Iraq.

Memo to Palin: Russian Incursion in Georgia was not "Unprovoked"

During the campaign McCain has criticized Obama for being soft on Russia because Obama insisted that both the Russians and Georgians should show restraint. Obama was simply speaking the truth, because Georgian troops shelled the South Ossetian capital and opened fire on Russian peacekeepers there. Out on the stump Sarah Palin still calls the Russian invasion "unprovoked" and suggests that we might have to go to war with a resurgent Russia.

Former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and George Shultz warn that "this drift toward confrontation [with Russia] must be ended. . . . It is neither feasible nor desirable to isolate a country adjoining Europe, Asia and the Middle East and possessing a stockpile of nuclear weapons." Kissinger has also urged that we enter into high level negotiations with Iran.

Even Israel is Talking to its Enemies

Israel is now talking to Syria about the Golan Heights and its representatives are meeting with Hamas. Retiring Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has proposed that Israel give up East Jerusalem, West Bank settlements, and the Golan Heights. Syria and Lebanon have just established diplomatic relations for the first time. Our refusal to have bilateral talks with North Korea stalled crucial nuclear weapons negotiations for and only after Bush put aside his stubborn position was an agreement achieved.

In the post war period the United States has succeeded diplomatically because it followed international law and acted responsibly within multilateral alliances. Bush has destroyed our reputation by acting unilaterally, refusing to talk, torturing detainees, and insisting that we have a right to attack countries even though they are no immediate threat to us.