

NeoCon Continuity at the Pentagon: Robert Gates Involved in Iran-Contra Scandal

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Global Research, November 09, 2006

Wikipedia 9 November 2006

Region: [USA](#)

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It is unlikely that the appointment of Robert M. Gates will lead to a significant change in direction with regard to the Middle East War.

Washington's appointee to replace Rumsfeld at the helm of the DoD is part of the same stable of Iran-Contra officials.

The Iran-Contra Affair was a CIA sponsored covert operation during the Reagan administration which consisted in financing the Nicaraguan Contras from the proceeds of illegal covert arms sales to Iran.

As a senior CIA official (who was later appointed to head the agency), Robert M. Gates had close personal ties to key figures in the Iran-Contra affair. There is evidence that he lied to Congress. He was, however, never indicted nor was he formally accused of having committed acts of perjury.

"Gates was an early subject of Independent Counsel's investigation, but the investigation of Gates intensified in the spring of 1991 as part of a larger inquiry into the Iran/contra activities of CIA officials.... Gates consistently testified that he first heard on October 1, 1986, from Charles E. Allen, the national intelligence officer who was closest to the Iran initiative, that proceeds from the Iran arms sales may have been diverted to support the Contras. Other evidence proves, however, that Gates received a report on the diversion during the summer of 1986 from DDI Richard Kerr. The issue was whether Independent Counsel could prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Gates was deliberately not telling the truth when he later claimed not to have remembered any reference to the diversion before meeting with Allen in October.

(See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Gates)

In 1987, Robert M. Gates' nomination by the Reagan administration to head the CIA was withdrawn, amidst controversy on his role in the Iran-Contra affair. Four years later, in October 1991, Gates was appointed to the helm of the CIA by President George H. W. Bush, following lengthy confirmation hearings under the auspices of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. According to previously classified documents made public by the Senate Committee, "Mr. Gates [had] distorted intelligence reports so they would conform to the political beliefs of his superiors." (NYT, 1 October 1991).

"Although the Central Intelligence Agency's involvement in the covert world of coups,

assassination plots and spy operations has periodically come under public scrutiny, never before in the agency's 44-year history has the bare-knuckles atmosphere of its analytical side been so exposed to view, senior officials of the agency said." (Ibid)

Central Role of the Iraq Study Group in Gates' Nomination

The nomination of Robert M. Gates to head the Department of Defense was not decided by President Bush, on the spare of the moment, in the wake of the November 7 elections.

In March, Robert Gates integrated the Iraq Study Group (ISG) co-chaired by James Baker III and former Congressman Lee Hamilton.

The ISG held secretive meetings focussing on the process of political transition after the mid-term elections. Its major objective is to ensure continuity in the US military agenda under a negotiated bipartisan arrangement.

Other members of the ISG are Clinton's adviser Vernon Jordan, former Attorney General Edwin Meese, retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, former Clinton Chief of Staff Leon Panetta, former Defense Secretary William Perry, former Senator and Governor of Virginia Charles Robb, and former Wyoming Senator Alan Simpson.

In all likelihood, Robert M. Gates' candidacy to replace Donald Rumsfeld had been discussed behind closed doors under the auspices of the ISG.

"Since March, Baker, backed by a team of experienced national-security hands, has been busily at work trying to devise a fresh set of policies... "Baker is primarily motivated by his desire to avoid a war at home—that things will fall apart not on the battlefield but at home. So he wants a ceasefire in American politics," a member of one of the commission's working groups told me. Specifically, he said, if the Democrats win back one or both houses of Congress in November, they would unleash a series of investigative hearings on Iraq, the war on terrorism, and civil liberties that could fatally weaken the administration and remove the last props of political support for the war, setting the stage for a potential Republican electoral disaster in 2008. "I guess there are people in the [Republican] party, on the Hill and in the White House, who see a political train wreck coming, and they've called in Baker to try to reroute the train."

(See Robert Dreyfuss, <http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2006/0609.dreyfuss.html>)

Unfolding Bipartisan Consensus

Former Secretary of State James Baker III played a central role in the Robert M. Gates nomination. Consultations had been initiated and Rumsfeld was in all likelihood informed of what constitutes a carefully planned political transition.

James Baker has a longstanding relationship to the Bush family. As chief legal advisor to George W. Bush in 2000, he was involved in "overseeing the Florida recount." as well as securing the timely support of the Supreme Court. Moreover, he is senior counsel as well as a major shareholder of the Carlyle Group, which has sizeable financial interests in Iraq. Moreover, Baker's law firm Baker & Botts acted on behalf of Enron since 1997.

The Gates nomination ultimately serves the interests of the Texas oil companies and the military-industrial complex including the Carlyle Group. Moreover, James Baker III had no doubt secured the support of key Democrats for Gates nomination to the Pentagon prior to the mid-term elections. In other words, the decision to nominate Gates did not hinge upon the Republicans' defeat on November 7.

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John Warner "hopes Defense Secretary-designate Robert Gates can be confirmed [by the outgoing Senate dominated by the Republicans] before the end of the year".

Democrats in the Senate have already intimated that "they will probably support Gates". "I'm going to give it a fair and fresh look," said Michigan Sen. Carl Levin, ranking Democrat on the Armed Services Committee:

"I [Carl Levin] expect, relative to his successor or potential successor, that the Armed Services Committee and the Senate will give very careful consideration to the forthcoming nomination of Robert Gates to be secretary of defense.

I've already talked to Chairman Warner and I assured him that I will do everything I can to facilitate his consideration during the upcoming lame-duck session.

And, of course, Chairman Warner assured me that we would follow the usual processes, and that means that we would be providing questions to him for the record and we'd be having hearings. (CQ Transcription, 8 Nov 2006)

Senator Joe Biden has also signified his acceptance of the Gates nomination.

ISG Agenda: The Partition of Iraq, Iran and Syria

The ISG, which has played a key role in securing the Robert M. Gates nomination, favors the partition of Iraq into several "autonomous" proxy States.

The group [ISG] would recommend breaking Iraq up into "three highly autonomous regions." According to "informed sources" cited by the paper, the Iraq group "has grown increasingly interested in the idea of splitting the Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish regions of Iraq ... His [Baker's] group will not advise 'partition,' but is believed to favor a division of the country that will devolve power and security to the regions, leaving a skeletal national government in Baghdad in charge of foreign affairs, border protection and the distribution of oil revenue. The Iraqi government will be encouraged to hold a constitutional conference paving the way for greater devolution. Iran and Syria will be urged to back a regional settlement that could be brokered at an international conference."

(Daily Star, 12 Oct 2006
http://www.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/11032)

This strategy of partition along ethnic lines -which was applied in Yugoslavia- is by no means limited to Iraq. It is also contemplated for Iran and Syria as part of the Pentagon's "New Middle East". (See map below). The proposed borders under the "New Middle East Map" are intimately related to oil and oil pipelines. An Arab Sunni State would also encompass part of Iran including its extensive oil fields.

A portion of Syrian territory would be annexed to “Greater Lebanon”, which would form a “strategic corridor” along the Eastern Mediterranean coastline linking Turkey to Israel.

Oppose the Robert M. Gates Nomination

In a bitter irony, “the defeat of the Republicans” has served to reinforce rather than weaken the Neoconservative grip on US foreign policy.

If Robert M. Gates is appointed Secretary of Defense (in a prearranged bipartisan consensus), one can expect the military agenda in Iraq to be directed more forcefully towards the breaking up of Iraq as a nation.

The Iran Contra affair in which Robert Gates was implicated was part of the architecture of the “war on terrorism”. What is rarely acknowledged is that part of the proceeds of the illegal weapons sales to Iran were also used to finance the CIA sponsored Islamic brigades (i.e. Al Qaeda) involved in the Soviet-Afghan war. These covert operations in support of Al Qaeda paved the way for the “war on terrorism” which constitutes the cornerstone of US National Security doctrine.

The Republicans are anxious to finalize the confirmation hearings prior to the instatement of the new Senate and House in January. California Democrat Nancy Pelosi, who is slated to become the next speaker of the House, has not signified her disapproval of the nomination of Robert M. Gates.

It is absolutely essential for US citizens to join hands in opposing the Robert Gates nomination, by pressuring the Senate and House of Representatives, with a view to blocking the appointment of Robert Gates at the upcoming confirmation hearings.

Gates’ involvement in the Iran-Contra affair should be sufficient to forcefully block his nomination to the position of Secretary of Defense.

New Middle East Map



Note: The following map was prepared by Col. Ralph Peters. It was published in the Armed Forces Journal in June 2006, Peters is a retired colonel of the U.S. National War Academy.

Although the map does not reflect official Pentagon doctrine, it has been used in a training program at NATO’s Defense College for senior military officers. This map as well as similar maps have most probably been used at the National War Academy as well as in military planning.



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