

# Backlash Grows Against Obama's Foreign and Military Policies

by Edward Spannaus

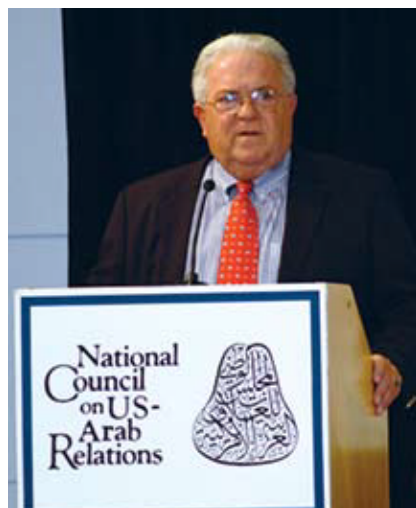
Oct. 25—As discussions intensify in Washington over the necessity of removing President Obama by utilizing the provisions of the 25th Amendment, informed intelligence sources are advising *EIR* that Obama's gross failures in foreign policy are becoming an integral part of this debate.

These concerns, brought to the surface by the firing of National Security Advisor Gen. James Jones (ret.) (see last week's *EIR*), are reflected in a number of public statements by figures who could be considered part of the institution of the Presidency within the United States. These are by no means partisan attacks; in fact, a number of such statements are coming from individuals who first emerged publicly because of their opposition to the Bush-Cheney policies in the "war on terror"—and who now acknowledge that nothing has changed under Obama.

## 'Long Wars' from Bush to Obama

The most comprehensive overview of the failures—and folly—of Obama's foreign policy was presented by a very senior retired Foreign Service officer, with many postings in the Middle East and Asia, Chas Freeman, who gave the keynote address to the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations (NSUSAR), in Washington on Oct. 21, on the topic of "Failed Interventions and What They Teach."<sup>1</sup>

In his hour-long speech and the question-and-answer period, Freeman never once made any distinction between the military and foreign policies of the Bush-



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*Amb. Chas Freeman addresses the conference on Oct. 21: "Our current policy course is changing us for the worse without changing the Arab and Islamic worlds for the better."*

Cheney Administration and the Obama Administration.

Freeman attacked the practice of "long wars" and the doctrine of counterinsurgency which fuels them. "Wars of attrition corrupt; they do not solve problems," he emphasized in response to a question. As for counterinsurgency doctrine, Freeman alluded to its British origins, noting: "It was developed to defend post-colonial governments in newly independent states modeled on those of their erstwhile colonial masters. It was never intended to emulate colonialism by building such states in traditional societies that lack and don't much want them."

A major theme of Freeman's address was the continuing militarization of U.S. foreign policy. "If you

view the world through a bombsight, everything looks like a target," Freeman pointed out, stressing that "one of the main lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan is that there are some problems for which invasion and occupation are inappropriate and ineffective responses."

At the outset, Freeman said he wanted to address three issues: "First, why militarized U.S. policies and the actions we are taking pursuant to them in the broader Middle East risk provoking terrorist retaliation against the United States and its citizens. Second, why our military and quasi-diplomatic interventions in the region have failed or are failing. And, third, how our current policy course is changing us for the worse without changing the Arab and Islamic worlds for the better."

To demonstrate that war is not a spectator sport, nor the "cakewalk" that neo-con armchair warriors make it out to be, Freeman demonstrated how casualty rates

1. Freeman's speech is posted at <http://chasfreeman.net/failed-interventions-and-what-they-teach/>



PENGMON/Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign

*Freeman translated the proportion of deaths of Palestinians into American demographic terms of reference: 460,000 American dead, including 95,000 children. Left: Israeli troops keep watch while a bulldozer flattens a Palestinian shop. Right: A Palestinian boy after the destruction of his home in Rafah, in the Gaza Strip, by Israeli forces.*

among Israelis, Palestinians, and Iraqis would translate into a comparable impact on the United States. For example, in American terms, the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli soldiers or settlers would translate into 460,000 American dead, including 95,000 children. He urged his listeners to “think about the impact that level of physical and moral insult would have on us.”

After reviewing the shambles that U.S. intervention has left in Iraq, and the folly of the U.S. military adventure in Afghanistan, Freeman summarized by saying that “our military interventions in the greater Middle East have been both unproductive and counterproductive,” and “we have hardly tried diplomacy.” During the question period, Freeman said that it is likely that there is no possibility any longer for a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians, which is why the Palestinians and the Arab League are considering other alternatives.

Freeman also put great stress on the impact of our military interventions on U.S. constitutional rights and civil liberties. “Our violent interaction with the Arab and Muslim worlds is clearly changing us much more than it is changing Arabs and Muslims,” he declared. “Our obsession with homeland security is corroding our values at home while increasing enmity and disregard for us abroad. If this makes us safer in the short term, it makes us both less free and less safe in the long term.”

Freeman aptly quoted John Quincy

Adams, from his July 4, 1821 speech to the U.S. House of Representatives, to illustrate that the original American philosophy was that “we could best secure our own sovereignty and freedom by respecting the sovereignty and diverse ways of life of other nations.” He quoted Adams: “America . . . has abstained from interference in the concerns of others, [even] when the conflict has been for principles to which she clings, as to the last vital drop that visits the heart. . . . She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own. . . . She might become the dictatress of the world: she would be no longer the ruler of her own spirit.”



U.S. Army/Jim Wagner

*U.S. soldiers apprehend a suspected Taliban fighter in Kalata, Afghanistan. “There are some problems for which invasion and occupation are inappropriate and ineffective responses,” said Freeman.*

## The Donilon Fiasco

A few days prior to his U.S.-Arab Council address, Freeman had circulated a private memorandum within national security circles, triggered by Obama's appointment of political hack Tom Donilon to replace fired National Security Advisor Jones, and the anticipated appointment of Denis McDonough as Donilon's deputy.

Former CIA officer Larry Johnson (one of the founders of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, VIPS) published parts of the Freeman memo on his own website, under the title "Heading into a National Security Nightmare."

Freeman wrote:

"...[T]here's a broader issue with the appointment of Tom Donilon, a creature of Congress whose professional formation has taken place entirely within the Washington bubble. Nothing in his background as a lawyer or aide to elected officials and political appointees hints at any skill at strategic thinking, foreign policy formulation, or diplomatic maneuver that is directed at anyone other than domestic constituencies. He gives every sign of faithfully reflecting the political risk aversion, venal deference to campaign contributors, and constipated strategic imagination of the Washington establishment. We Americans have spawned our own version of the eunuchs of old, who flourished inside the walls of the Forbidden City or Topkapi/Dolmabahçe Palace. Their counterparts now practice the arts of the courtier within the Beltway at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue. (It is said that Afghanistan has *jirgas* to make village-level decisions and *loya jirgas* to decide things at the national level, while Washington now makes decisions in circle *jirgas*.) Donilon is exhibit A of this archetypal Washington type; his presumed successor, Denis McDonough, is exhibit B. . . .

"Note that the principal argument for Donilon and McDonough is not their competence or mastery of the subject matter of national security affairs in its diplomatic, intelligence, and military dimensions, but the trust the President has in them. To me, this underscores



*John Quincy Adams, as quoted by Freeman:*  
"We could best secure our own sovereignty and freedom by respecting the sovereignty and diverse ways of life of other nations."

that American politics has become entirely self-referential and solipsistic. We have evolved the world's most militarily powerful autistic government. The Obama Administration is practicing non-partisanship by carrying on the foreign policy of its predecessor. Mr. Magoo is still at the helm, as I discovered he was years back. . . ."

Commenting on Freeman's memo, Larry Johnson wrote:

"Let's be clear about the purpose and mission of the National Security Council and the position of the Advisor—it is or should be the coordinating entity that ensures the President gets a full picture of threats, strategic risks and policy options. The various departments and agencies that popu-

late Washington's bureaucratic landscape are a fractious bunch. They'll fight over the color of toilet paper if given the chance. There is no single, supreme entity. When you come to a meeting of the National Security Council, the President is surrounded by the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, Attorney General, Director of National Intelligence, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and Secretary of the Treasury, just to mention a few. Each Department knows that they are the most important player in the room. Each insists that their particular interests are first and attended to.

"The best National Security Advisor in the last 60 years was Brent Scowcroft (his deputy was current Sec Def, Robert Gates). Scowcroft and Gates wrestled some tough issues, but what set them apart was their ability to coerce all of the competing bureaucracies to get their positions on paper and to provide an efficient process for ironing out differences and getting a clear Presidential decision.

"The recently retired Jim Jones was not too good at this. The failure to address Afghanistan in a timely manner was symptomatic of the chaos that has defined Obama's tenure. Donilon will not make the trains run on time. Worse, he will be focused almost entirely on the domestic political implications and will pay little attention to the longterm strategic interests of the United States."





White House/Pete Souza

*Tom Donilon, whom Obama named as his new National Security Advisor, although Donilon's experience is with Capitol Hill politics, not foreign and strategic policy.*



*Flynt Leverett: Obama encouraged a Turkey-Brazil-Iran uranium-swap agreement, but never expected they would actually reach one; when they did, he rejected it.*

Department and the CIA, all between 1992 and 2003. That year, Leverett resigned because of disagreements over the Bush Administration's policies in Iraq.

In his Oct. 21 remarks, Leverett was referring to an April 2010 letter from President Obama to Brazil's President Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva, stating U.S. willingness to back a uranium-swap agreement to be worked out among Turkey, Brazil, and Iran, as had first been proposed by former International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) director Mohamed ElBaradei. But when Turkey and Brazil actually succeeded in working out such an agreement, the Obama Administration rejected it out of hand and pressed ahead for sanctions against Iran.

Donilon's corrupt history was outlined in a recent column by veteran journalist Robert Scheer, who pointed out that Democratic operative Donilon was the chief lobbyist for Fannie Mae from 1999 to 2005, during which time, it successfully pressured Congress to gut the power of regulators to exert any control over Fannie Mae. "He was also a top executive at Fannie Mae during the period when cooking the books to increase executive compensation would later lead to a \$400 million fine. In pursuit of those profits, Fannie Mae entered into a partnership with Angelo Mozilo's shady Countrywide Financial, and together they produced the computerized CLUES and MERS credit verification and mortgage registration systems that are at the heart of the housing swindle."

Why would Obama hire Donilon for such a sensitive position as national security advisor, Scheer asks. "Because he is one of the most skilled of the Washington players, and, as this President has demonstrated so often with his key appointments, it's the top hustlers of whom he seems enamored."

### **Obama Lied on Iran Uranium Deal**

A remarkably blunt charge—that Obama lied to another head of state—was delivered at the NCUSAR conference by Flynt Leverett, who served as senior director for Middle East Affairs at the National Security Council, and also as a Middle East analyst in the State

Leverett charged that the Administration was never prepared to accept the deal, but it had assumed that it was safe to make the offer, in the expectation that Iran would reject it. Then, the thinking was, the United States could get Turkey and Brazil, both members of the UN Security Council, to back sanctions against Iran.

But, he continued, after Turkey and Brazil had the temerity to go to Tehran and succeed in obtaining the agreement, the White House line was that the Obama letter was never really a formal statement of American policy. Leverett pointed out that he had worked at the NSC, and he knows how carefully every word of a letter from the U.S. President to another head of state is agonized over—precisely because it *will* be understood as a statement of U.S. policy.

"This was a cheap trick by the Obama Administration, that went bad," Leverett stated, "and it raises the question whether the Obama Administration is really prepared to play straight in approaching engagement with Iran."

When Leverett finished his statement, the moderator asked the stunned panelists if anyone wished to respond. After an awkward silence, the State Department's sanctions policy director, Thomas Delare, obviously angry and embarrassed, could only accuse Leverett of making an "intemperate and inflammatory" statement, but he was completely unable to refute the accuracy of Leverett's charges.