

August-September 2008

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## Don't miss this:

- *Presidential Debate dates on page 4.*
- *Democrats Abroad at the Democratic Convention on pages 3 and 16*
- *New "In Depth" feature, where we cover a major issue in a longer, more comprehensive way than you'll find in most media sources.*

## Letter from the Editor

***"It is time for a new generation of leadership, to cope with new problems and new opportunities. For there is a new world to be won."***  
**John F. Kennedy**

By Paul Crist



Americans are not happy. Eighty percent of us think our country is on the wrong track, and heading for a train wreck. Normally, Americans are the world's most self-confident people, but we're now concerned not just about a failed Presidency, but about a floundering nation.

One source of worry is the state of American capitalism. We've been championing open markets and deregulation for a generation, telling the world it is the solution to all economic problems. The public consensus now is that this approach has led us to a downturn in housing, financial-sector woes, loss of manufacturing jobs, a declining dollar, and rising gasoline prices.

Further, many Americans feel as though they missed the boom that the Bush administration tells us we've had. Between 2002 and 2006, 99% of Americans saw an average annual increase in real income of only 1% (and many lost ground). Those in the top 1% enjoyed an 11% annual increase. Fully  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the economic gains of the past seven years have gone to that top 1%. For many, the rich of today are the modern equivalents of the "malefactors of great wealth" decried by Teddy Roosevelt at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. No longer are the rich seen as entrepreneurial role models, but as tax cheats and job cutters. Economic envy is ubiquitous, and free trade is less popular in America than in any other industrialized country. A nation built on immigration is building walls to keep people out. Eight million more Americans are without health insurance today than in 2000, while rising healthcare costs threaten our competitiveness in global markets. Many Americans think that their generation will be the last to see a great America.

And those are just the domestic woes. The world's "last remaining superpower" has squandered vast amounts of blood and treasure in an ill-conceived and illegal invasion and occupation in the name of a "war on terror." Abu Ghraib, a deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, Guantánamo, secret CIA prisons, and the flouting of not only the Geneva Conventions, but our own Constitution has shown us to be neither "super" nor "powerful." And we are certainly not the beacon of hope and democracy we have claimed to be for a century. Russia and China are ascendant, both economically and militarily.

[\(continued on page 2\)](#)

## Letter from the Editor (continued from page 1)

We continue to borrow from China and elsewhere to buy oil from countries that don't much like us. The earth is cooking, and the future looks bleak all around.

The challenges are indeed enormous. But we need to remember that America has been in bad humor before. In the 1950's, the U.S. populace was deeply concerned about Soviet power, particularly after the launch of Sputnik into orbit. In the 1960's, there was Vietnam and unease over civil rights for people of color. In the 1970's, there was Watergate, oil shocks, and the buying up of America by the Japanese. Each time, America rebounded. We're actually quite good at fixing ourselves when things go wrong. A large part of that ability comes from a system that permits great leaders to emerge when we need them. Teddy Roosevelt pushed through anti-trust rules that have served us for a century. Franklin Roosevelt got us out of a horrendous depression and led us to victory in World War II. John Kennedy inspired us to reach for the moon, and return safely to earth.

Barack Obama and Joe Biden are the great leaders who will, I believe, set America back on the path to prosperity and international respect. Together, they make a team that is inspiring, prudent, informed, fair, honest, and thoughtful. These qualities are the building blocks of leadership we can trust to lift us from the current doldrums. Whoever your preferred candidate before, I hope the Democratic Convention has been a cathartic event that will unite us all behind this team. America's future depends on it.

As several speakers in Denver stated, Barack Obama and Joe Biden can't do it alone. They need every one of us. Now is no time to sit on the sidelines. The Republican attack machine is already in high gear, and the race promises to be razor close. For those of us living in Mexico, particularly from swing states where current polling reveals a virtual dead heat, our absentee ballots could make the crucial difference in delivering the electoral votes to Obama.

We get the government we demand. In 2000 and 2004, we were too complacent. We failed to demand by failing to get out every eligible voter to cast his or her vote. We cannot let that happen in 2008.

You can contact me at

[editor@mexicodemocrats.org](mailto:editor@mexicodemocrats.org)

I welcome submissions for the newsletter, including thoughtful and respectfully written opinions; news from your local chapter; and any other items you think may be of interest to readers. This is **YOUR** newsletter! Participate!

## Volunteer Opportunities

*"Ask not what your Democrats Abroad Mexico Chapter can do for you...ask what you can do for your chapter!"*

The Convention is over. It is now **CRUNCH TIME**, and Democrats Abroad-Mexico needs **ALL HANDS ON DECK!** Funds must be raised **NOW!** Absentee ballot request forms must be mailed **NOW!**

Contact your local chapter leaders to find out how you can help! If you do not know how to contact your chapter's leaders, visit the Democrats Abroad Mexico website, where you'll find links to their email addresses.

[www.mexicodemocrats.org](http://www.mexicodemocrats.org)

And make it your mission to remind everyone to request their ballot at:

[www.VoteFromAbroad.org](http://www.VoteFromAbroad.org)

DA-Mexico is also eager to reach out to dual-nationality Mexican-Americans living in Mexico who may not know they have a right to vote in the November elections.

Fundraising is also an important aspect of DA-Mexico.

These are just a few areas where Democrats Abroad-Mexico could use your help right now. Check Action/Acción bimonthly newsletter and [www.MexicoDemocrats.org](http://www.MexicoDemocrats.org) for more information. Or contact your local Chapter.

## REGISTER TO VOTE

## REQUEST ABSENTEE BALLOTS

AT

## [VoteFromAbroad.org](http://VoteFromAbroad.org)

## (AND TELL YOUR FRIENDS!)

## Convention Perspectives from Howard Feldstein, DA-Mexico Chair



Coming to Denver was a bit of a homecoming for me as I had lived there for 10 years before moving to Mexico 4 years ago, but being a part of my first convention went way beyond the joy of seeing old friends and places here. The energy in Denver was palpable from the moment we arrived. Welcome signs were everywhere. Denver is a friendly city normally, but they had rolled out the welcome mat for Democrats in a big way. My wife Helena and I checked into our delegation hotel on Sunday and met up with old DA friends from around the globe. Soon we boarded buses bound for the Colorado Convention Center where the Delegate Welcoming Reception was about to begin. The reception was sponsored by Friends of New Orleans and we were treated to wonderful food and music from that city that has struggled to get back on its feet over the past three years.

The convention convened each day at 3:00PM local time so there was plenty of time to seek out and enjoy any number of forums, speeches, luncheons, roundtables, caucuses or just people watching. On Monday I first went to the Hispanic Caucus and heard from a number of leaders of that community including Senators Ken Salazar of Colorado and Bob Menendez of New Jersey. The keynote speaker of this day's caucus was Hillary Clinton and her speech was great. The next event of the day was a panel discussion sponsored in part by the American European institute dealing with America's image in the world and how it can be fixed. The panel was led by Ambassador Richard Holbrooke and included a number of former presidents and prime ministers and other world leaders.

The first day of the convention was most notable for the heartwarming speech by Michelle Obama. What a wonderful kickoff to what would be an inspiring week of great speeches. Although the Democrats Abroad seating on the floor wasn't in a great location, just being there was incredible. The spirit and energy in the Pepsi Center was palpable and infectious. I urge any of you to seek a delegate position in 2012 if you can. It was an awesome experience.

On Tuesday, I attended a luncheon honoring Federico Peña, former mayor of Denver and Transportation and Energy Secretary in the Clinton administration. While there, I had the opportunity to meet the Mexican ambassador to the United States. We have exchanged emails and I'm seeking some help and advice on how to reach Mexican American dual citizens here.

Tuesday's convention session featured Hillary Clinton and her speech that brought the party together. When she arrived on stage she was greeted with a sea of white Hillary signs that filled the building from the floor to the rafters. I spent a part of the day talking with several of our Hillary delegates discussing their continued support for her. They assured me that although they expected to be released by Senator Clinton, they intended to cast their votes for her. At first I was concerned about how this would play out with regard to the press' reporting of the roll call, but they assured me that we would have a unified convention by the time we ended and they were right.

Wednesday's pre-convention activities included the International Affairs Forum: "Enhancing the U.S. Role Around the World" -- a roundtable discussion moderated by Tom Brokaw and including panelists, Madeleine Albright, Richard Holbrooke and others. The delegates were asked to get to our seats early for the roll call vote which was expected to start soon after the gavel fall. Roll call votes are seldom exciting, but this one certainly was. The DA delegation got about 30 seconds of fame as Christine Marques delivered our vote. Then it got real interesting as Hillary Clinton appeared in the New York delegation to deliver the deciding vote for Barack Obama and move for his nomination by acclamation. The key speeches this evening were by Bill Clinton and Joe Biden. In total it was another amazing day in Denver.

As you probably know, Thursday's convention location was changed to the 75,000 seat Invesco Field at Mile High so transportation, security and seating were different. When our delegation arrived at the stadium about 6 hours before Obama's acceptance speech, the delegate security clearance line was already about ½ mile long. Luckily, some of the delegates were escorted to the general admission line and expedited through security. About an hour before the speech we heard that there were about 20,000 people still in line and it would take at least 2 hours to clear. Our seating at Invesco was right in front of the ABC broadcast booth between CNN and CBS so we got to see and interact with the talking heads.

Of course the highlight of the day and of the whole convention was Barack's speech that evening. I'm sure most of you saw it on TV, but the experience in the stadium was exceptional. I had been to Invesco Field for football and soccer games in the past, but this was very different. Virtually every seat was filled, there were no vendors hawking beer and you could hear a pin drop as everyone was totally focused on every word that our next president was saying. I'm sure you could see Barack Obama on TV better than I could from my seat, but I wouldn't have changed places with you for anything. This is one of those moments in life that I will remember forever. If you would like to have an experience like this four years from now, I recommend you start getting involved in Democrats Abroad and the delegate selection process now. You won't regret it, I can assure you.

**Howard Feldstein**  
**Chair, Democrats Abroad Mexico**  
**Delegate, 2008 Democratic National Convention**

## Debate Dates and Fundraising Ideas

### Presidential Debates

Jim Lehrer, Sept. 26, at Ole Miss.  
Tom Brokaw, Oct. 7, in Nashville  
Bob Schieffer, Oct. 15, at Hofstra.

### Vice Presidential Debate

Gwen Ifill, Oct. 2,  
at Wash. U in St. Louis

Each debate will begin at 9:00 p.m. EDT, and last 90 minutes.

**Your local Democrats Abroad Mexico Chapter may be planning events around these dates. The Presidential Debates Parties are an excellent opportunity to meet and share ideas and opinions with fellow Democrats, and a great way to raise funds for your Chapter.**

**Campaigns cost money, whether it's a Presidential Campaign or a local Get-Out-The-Vote Campaign. Contact your Chapter leaders to organize a**

**"Debate Night Fundraising Party"**

or

**find out if one is already planned in your area!**

Be an informed voter!

Help us inform Mexico Democrats!

Send your ideas, opinions, and news clips to

editor@mexicodemocrats.org

### Fundraising Ideas

by Lois Schroff, Fundraising Chair, Democrats Abroad Mexico

**Let's look at what's possible with a handful of dedicated people. The Democrats are out there, and they want to meet other Democrats and to learn how easy it is to go to [VoteFromAbroad.org](http://VoteFromAbroad.org), register to vote, and then VOTE. COMBINING A FUNDRAISER WITH VOTER REGISTRATION, DEBATES, OR OTHER ELECTION-SEASON EVENTS is a no-brainer. It is estimated that there are 485,000 people living in Mexico who are eligible to vote in US elections!**

**Here are a few creative ideas that have worked:**

**On July 4** the Lake Chapala Chapter held a good ole-fashioned Independence Day picnic at the Feldstein's house, charged \$100 pesos admission, registered folks, had 90 people attend, and netted over \$6,000 pesos. We all love to get together with like-minded people (and the equivalent of \$10 US dollars for a meal is not unusual). People were asking for Obama T-shirts, so orders were taken and they will be made locally. (Ordering from O. headquarters is too slow.)

**On July 4** the San Miguel de Allende Chapter charged \$150 pesos, had their largest turnout—170 people!—and netted over \$4,000 pesos. They worked with a restaurant who charged them \$100 pesos per person for hot dogs, hamburgers, etc., and one drink. They also raffled Obama's book *The Audacity of Hope*, some DVDs and Obama buttons (which they had made at a local shop).

**On July 6** the Mexico City Chapter's party was attended by 35 Democrats, with Anna Maria Salazar as their headliner.

**On August 19** Lake Chapala held a **Latin Dance Class** fundraiser. Fundraisers were also scheduled during the Democratic Convention days of August 25 through 28.

#### **OTHER IDEAS TO TRY IN YOUR CHAPTER:**

Schedule a fundraiser around the **DEBATES** (see dates at left).

A **BOOK CLUB** could help members get acquainted as well as being a vehicle for raising funds, as Banderas is doing. Select a reading list you think will interest Democrats Abroad members. A brief list of suggestions, researched by Beverly Bandler and others can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

An **ELECTION NIGHT GALA** to celebrate a big win by Barack



## More on Fundraising!

At the Democrats Abroad Mexico Executive Committee Meeting held on August 11, a discussion was held regarding possible alternatives for funding expenses at the national level. A motion was approved by majority vote to request that each local Chapter share 30% of their current treasury balance, and 50% of future fundraising. A change to the Mexico Country Committee bylaws to incorporate Chapter fund sharing will be discussed at an upcoming meeting of the Executive Committee.

Each local Chapter in Mexico has a fundraising chair, and organizes local fundraising activities. The Mexico Country Executive Committee, however, is made up of members from Chapters across Mexico. Further, the membership of the Executive Committee changes every two years, according to the bylaws. This usually means the leadership moves around with each bi-annual election of officers. This makes fundraising to meet expenses at the national level challenging, at best. To date, there has been no method for meeting this challenge. The current request for fund sharing is intended to address this issue.

When the fund-sharing request was made to Chapter Executive committees, a number of members asked why it was necessary and what the funds would be used for.

### **Lois Schroff, Democrats Abroad Mexico Fundraising Chair replied:**

*"To answer your question, funds raised by the chapters stay in Mexico. In fact, they are supplemented by additional funds from the DPCA (Democratic Party Committee Abroad--"DPCA" for short) and used mostly for advertising. We are currently about to launch a series of ads in as many English and Spanish newspapers around the country as we can find, advising people about the procedure to vote from Mexico. We have thousands of members of Democrats Abroad here, but we have approximately 485,000 eligible voters living in Mexico. Thus, we have many potential voters and members whom we have not yet reached. We want to reach them all, with instructions on how to register and how to vote in the November election; and also to encourage them to become active members of Democrats Abroad. Although VoteFromAbroad.org is available to all voters, the web site was created and paid for by the Democratic Party, of which we are a part. The DA Mexico country committee will soon be calling on the individual chapters to contribute to the upcoming ad campaign."*

It cannot be stressed enough that we are now entering the final weeks when voting from abroad will be feasible, due to the long lead time required for mailing of ballot request forms, and official ballots. A major push is required NOW, all across Mexico, to GET\_OUT\_THE\_VOTE! Advertising will be key to turnout. And turnout here could make the difference in what is shaping up to be a close race for President and for increasing Democratic majorities in Congress.

But even after the election, Democrats Abroad Mexico cannot rest on the laurels of success (which we will enjoy only with your help!). In two years, there will be midterm elections. And every week, there are legislative issues being debated in Washington that are of vital importance to our futures. By continuing our efforts to increase our membership, to reach out to those 485,000 eligible voters in Mexico, we can be sure that our voices are heard loud and clear all the way to Washington DC. Adequate funding for an ongoing campaign of outreach to current and potential members...at the local as well as the national level ...is a vital part of ensuring that we are not forgotten simply because we live outside of the U.S.

**Regarding Obama Fundraisers.** A reminder that Democrats Abroad cannot sponsor these events via paid media (e-mail OK). The organizers of an event may ask that a notice be posted to members in the DA database, but the database list cannot be transferred to the Obama fundraising committee. SMA Democrats (not the DA Chapter) are scheduling an Obama fundraiser for Sept. 25. For clarification of fundraising rules, please contact Lois Schroff at [lois.schroff@gmail.com](mailto:lois.schroff@gmail.com).

## Fundraising Rules!

Perkins Cole, legal counsel for the DNC, has issued the following opinion regarding promotion or attack of Federal candidates (i.e. Obama-Biden or McCain-Palin):

**Rule #4: Only Democrats Abroad International may pay for:** public communications, including newspapers, TV, radio, direct mail of over 500 pieces and phone banks making over 500 calls that promote, support, attack or oppose a Federal candidate or political party.

**Rule #5: E-mail and postings on the Internet ARE NOT public communications.**

**Rule #9: Country committees may not contribute directly to Federal candidates, political party committee or any other political committee.** The country committee may collect contributions for a Federal candidate provided that the contributions are promptly (within 10 days) forwarded to the candidate with the requisite information, including the name, address, occupation and employer of the contributor."

Thus, San Miguel **residents** (not Democrats Abroad) on 9/25 will host an AMERICANS FOR OBAMA fundraiser. They expect 350 guests who will pay \$150US to attend.

Mexico City was the site of the Obama fundraiser at which his sister Maya was the keynote speaker. Lunch was \$250US/plate and dinner was \$1,000US/plate. They raised between \$40,000 and \$60,000US. **This was not a Democrats Abroad event**, but was attended by DA members as individuals supporting Obama.

DA members, as U.S. citizens are free to hold Obama fundraisers, and invitations to the event may be delivered to DA members via email or other means... but DA is not the sponsor or organizer of said events.

## Voter Suppression?

Recently, the Veterans Administration issued a directive prohibiting voter registration drives at VA facilities. Politically appointed VA Directors cited the Hatch Act, which prohibits partisan political activities on Federal property, and the potential for disruption of services at VA healthcare facilities. Senate Democrats accused VA officials of attempting to suppress voter turnout, a tactic generally benefitting Republican candidates.

With thanks to Anna Marie Mattson and DA-France for their initiative in addressing this important issue locally, the Executive Committee of Democrats Abroad adopted the following resolution on August 5<sup>th</sup>:

Democrats Abroad Executive Committee Resolution Supporting Voter Registration at VA Facilities

**Whereas** all Veterans Administration facilities are required to develop comprehensive voter registration plans to assist veterans and provide absentee voter applications for in-patients under the Department of Veterans Affairs Directive 2008-023 and in line with the Overseas Voting Practical Amendments Act of 2007,

**Whereas** the Veterans Health Administration has prohibited voter registration drives at VA facilities, citing the Hatch Act [Title 5 United States Code (W.S.C.) 732d1-7326] and to avoid disruption to the facilities' operation, in **VHA Directive 2008-025**,

**Whereas** the VHA directive is discriminatory and disenfranchises veterans, not only because veterans are not federal employees subject to the Hatch Act but because the VHA has not shown that hospital operations would be disrupted,

**Whereas** the VHA directive limits the political participation of the veterans who have uniquely served our nation,

**Therefore, be it resolved that the Executive Committee of Democrats Abroad vigorously endorses and supports the actions taken by U.S. Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI), Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), and Senator John Kerry (D-MA), to restore voter registration drives at all Department of Veterans Affairs facilities.**

## Welcome new members!

Thank you so much for joining Democrats Abroad Mexico! You are now part of a connected community of progressive-minded and politically active U.S. citizens living in diverse and wonderful cities and towns throughout Mexico. We encourage you to contact and get to know your local Chapter leaders, get involved, participate locally and nationally in your Democrats Abroad Mexico community.

In Democrats Abroad, you'll find interesting and passionate people who will expand your intellectual and social horizons, and perhaps respectfully challenge some of your beliefs. You'll find like-minded people who care deeply about the future of the United States and the world we live in. You'll enjoy the rewards of giving back to your community while exercising your civic duties as a U.S. citizen.

Thanks to effective Get-Out-The-Vote projects in our local chapters, and the tremendous excitement that this election season continues to generate, DA-Mexico is gaining new members at a record pace! We're grateful for your support, and we look forward to your participation in our push to Democratic electoral victory in November!

**So now that you're a part of the growing Democrats Abroad Mexico community, what's next?**

### For Answers to Your Questions

Start at:

[www.mexicodemocrats.org](http://www.mexicodemocrats.org)

Here you'll find general information about DA Mexico, news about your Chapter's activities, email links to the Country and Chapters' Executive Committee members, and much more. We're glad to answer your questions and help you become more involved in the organization.

**It's also important for you to visit:**

[www.DemocratsAbroad.org](http://www.DemocratsAbroad.org)

This is the website of our international organization. Democrats Abroad is the official overseas branch of the U.S. Democratic Party. With members in more than 160 countries around the globe, Democrats Abroad holds eight positions on the Democratic National Committee and sends a voting delegation to the Democratic National Convention to select our presidential candidate..

This month on the site, be sure to see the video "Where on Earth Will YOU Vote?" featuring actress Gwyneth Paltrow, who will be voting from London. Here, you can learn what positions we take, and how we're working to raise both the status and the voice of all Democrats living abroad.

**You can (and should) also update your personal membership profile at the DA site. When you joined (possibly at the same time you filled out your Absentee Ballot Request at [www.VoteFromAbroad.org](http://www.VoteFromAbroad.org)) , you should have received shortly afterwards an email with a link to the DA website and a 1-time password. You should have clicked on that link to go to the DA website, to update your password to one you can easily remember, and to update your member profile. If you have not done this, please contact Gary Klein, Mexico Database Administrator, to assist you with logging in your first time.**

## Where in Mexico Will YOU Vote?

### U.S. CITIZENS RESIDENT ABROAD CAN VOTE WITH AN ABSENTEE BALLOT IN THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Request your Absentee Ballot online at [www.votefromabroad.org](http://www.votefromabroad.org) (site in English & Español) or In person at one of the Voter Registration Sites set up by Democrats Abroad volunteers in your city.

- ◇ Voting eligibility and residency requirements are determined by the various U.S. states. Most state rules are broadly similar, but if you have questions, check with your Chapter's Voter Assistance Volunteer (see below).
- ◇ States suggest you re-register and request your overseas absentee ballot by September 4.
- ◇ Your "legal state of residence" for voting purposes is the state where you last resided immediately prior to departure from the U.S., even if you no longer maintain an address there.
- ◇ For State Voter Registration Links (links to voter information, deadlines, and instructions sites for the 50 states and DC) please visit <http://www.democratsabroad.org/vote> or check with your Chapter's Voter Assistance Volunteer (see below).
- ◇ Voting in the Democrats Abroad global primary did not register you to vote November 4.
- ◇ For voter registration and assistance in obtaining absentee ballots, contact the appropriate Voter Assistance Volunteer (see below). Contact emails are also listed under "Contacts" at [www.MexicoDemocrats.org](http://www.MexicoDemocrats.org).
- ◇ *IF* you have not received your requested Absentee Ballot by October 15, it is recommended that you complete a Federal Absentee Write-In Ballot (FWAB). If needed, check with your DA voter registration volunteers for assistance.

### [www.VoteFromAbroad.org](http://www.VoteFromAbroad.org)

will take you step-by-step through a six screen process in which you will answer some questions, download the completed form, print and sign it, mail (or fax) the form.

For more information and assistance from your local Chapter:

**Lake Chapala - Ajijic:** Mondays, Lake Chapala Society 10-12 noon; Wednesdays, Salvador's 10-12:30 p.m.; Assistance is also available in *San Juan Cosala* and *Vista del Lago*. For more info:

[voter-registration.lakechapala@mexicodemocrats.org](mailto:voter-registration.lakechapala@mexicodemocrats.org); Phone Madelyn Fisher: 766-3638.

**San Miguel de Allende** – For locations, days and times where you can find a DA volunteer to assist you, please contact Ken Rowland at [voter-registration.sanmiguel@mexicodemocrats.org](mailto:voter-registration.sanmiguel@mexicodemocrats.org)

**Costa Banderas**— A voter-registration volunteer will be at the Mailboxes Etc. Store at Plaza Caracol, every Wednesday, 1 to 3 PM. For more info, contact Susan at [treasurer.banderas@mexicodemocrats.org](mailto:treasurer.banderas@mexicodemocrats.org)

**Mexico City**— For locations, days and times where you can find a DA volunteer to assist you, please contact Susannah Glusker at [voter-registration.mexicocity@mexicodemocrats.org](mailto:voter-registration.mexicocity@mexicodemocrats.org)



**Where to Find the Truth?****TELL YOUR FRIENDS TO CHECK THE FACTS THEN GO TO****[www.VoteFromAbroad.org](http://www.VoteFromAbroad.org)****AND REGISTER TO VOTE THE EASY WAY**

If there are any doubts about the current facts in recent campaigning, check the following websites to get it right:

[www.factcheck.org/](http://www.factcheck.org/)

[www.snopes.com/politics/](http://www.snopes.com/politics/)

<http://blog.washingtonpost.com/fact-checker/>

[http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/internet/a/current\\_netlore.htm](http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/internet/a/current_netlore.htm)

[www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/](http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/)

[www.realclearpolitics.com/](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/)

[www.cjr.org/campaign\\_desk/](http://www.cjr.org/campaign_desk/)

[www.mexicodemocrats.org](http://www.mexicodemocrats.org)

[www.opensecrets.org/](http://www.opensecrets.org/)

[www.ontheissues.org/](http://www.ontheissues.org/)

<http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/fighththesmearshome/>

[www.truthfightsback.com](http://www.truthfightsback.com)

During recent separate interviews in a forum aimed at evangelical voters, Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Church in Lakeforest, California asked both Obama and McCain the same Question:

***“Which of the current Supreme Court Justices would you NOT have nominated?”***

**John McCain responded:**

David Souter, John Paul Stevens, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Stephen Breyer.

**Barack Obama replied:**

Clarence Thomas (“not prepared for elevation to the court”); Antonin Scalia (“sharp disagreements on legal interpretation”); John Roberts (“suspicious confirmed”)

***Don't these responses speak volumes about the importance of this election? Few Presidential responsibilities are more important, or have a more lasting effect, than his or her nominations to the courts. Think before you vote!***

## Chapter News

### San Miguel de Allende

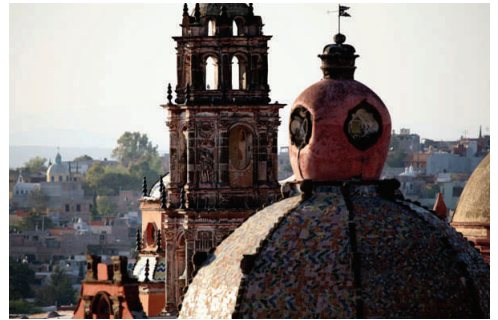
The San Miguel de Allende Chapter will host Debate Viewing Parties on October 2 (Vice Presidential Debate) and October 15 (Presidential Debate). Both will be at Los Milagros, Relox #17. Members can expect final details via email, or check in "Atencion."

Members of the Chapter have organized an ObamaFest fundraiser for September 25<sup>th</sup>, with tickets costing 150 Pesos. They anticipate approximately 350 attendees. No tickets will be sold at the door, so advance reservations must be made, with tickets held at the door.

San Miguel has had an incredible voter registration turnout, with lines of people waiting. Chair Gretchen Sullivan notes that time is running out for Absentee Ballot Requests to be mailed, but they will continue to publicize [www.VoteFromAbroad.org](http://www.VoteFromAbroad.org) and the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot for people who still haven't registered.

The Chapter is also planning a Phone Bank to support Senate Democratic candidates in states where the Democrat has a chance of displacing a Republican incumbent.

For information on any activities or projects in San Miguel, contact a member of the Executive Committee. The list can be found at: [www.mexicodemocrats.org/html/san\\_miguel1.html](http://www.mexicodemocrats.org/html/san_miguel1.html)



[www.MexicoDemocrats.org](http://www.MexicoDemocrats.org)

#### is where you'll find:

- Mexico Chapter information;
- email links to your Chapter's executives;
  - the latest meeting and event info;
- links to Democratic Party and progressive news and opinion sites;
  - downloadable graphics for publicity;
  - and other material.

All members are invited to send relevant and useful news items and updates for placement on the website to Jim Stork, at [webmaster@MexicoDemocrats.org](mailto:webmaster@MexicoDemocrats.org).

## Chapter News

### Costa Banderas

The Costa Banderas Chapter has had a quiet summer, typical in this hot, humid and rainy beach town. With many members away for the summer, event planning and fundraising has slowed. However, plans are underway to re-group. At least one fundraiser will be held in conjunction with the presidential Debates, and an Election Night Celebration and Fundraiser will be held at a private home on November 4, to celebrate the landslide win we know Barack Obama will have on that night!



With the return of members and residents beginning in late October, plans are also underway to begin a Chapter Book Club. Among the books planned for reading and discussion are Vicente Fox's book, "Revolution of Hope," and Naomi Wolf's "The End of America."

Progress on the get-out-the-vote (GOTV) effort is well underway, led by Chapter treasurer Susan Wichterman. Business-sized cards are being distributed by members to both remind voters and to provide contact information and online resources including [www.VoteFromAbroad.org](http://www.VoteFromAbroad.org). The cards are in Spanish and English, encouraging English-speaking expats to request absentee ballots and encouraging Mexican-Americans who are eligible to vote to register with our assistance and vote. Several local English-language news sources are assisting our efforts by regularly publishing submitted articles and press releases. These include the online Banderas News, Vallarta Tribune, and Vallarta Today.

GOTV volunteers will be on hand at the Mailboxes Etc. store every Wednesday through October 1 to assist voters with registration and absentee ballot requests.

Costa Banderas Vice Chair Larry Canady, has resigned due to his moving to San Miguel, where he is already actively assisting efforts in that Chapter. We wish Larry all the best in his new town!

### Lake Chapala

Lake Chapala held a Latin Dance instruction fundraiser on August 20<sup>th</sup>.

A fundraising and voter-registration gala was held on August 28<sup>th</sup>, at the Plaza Jardin Restaurant in Ajijic, coinciding with Barack Obama's acceptance speech. Thanks go to Kem Spaulding for the tremendous success. The same location has been selected for a celebration party on November 5.

Lake Chapala continues with registration and Absentee Ballot Requests throughout September and is also providing Federal Write-in Absentee Ballots for those who may not receive their state Absentee Ballot in time. Emphasis switches to ballots during October with the culmination necessary by October 20 so that ballots can be sent via the Guadalajara consulate to be stamped as originating in Mexico and pouched to the USA. For voting help in the Lake Chapala area: [AskUs@MexicoDemocrats.org](mailto:AskUs@MexicoDemocrats.org) or telephone Madelyn Fisher at 376-766-3638.



#### Locations, dates, times for Voter Assistance

**Lake Chapala Society:** Monday Mornings 10-12:30

**Salvador's:** Wednesday Mornings 10-12:30

**American Legion:** First Wednesday 9:30-11:30

**Vista del Lago** (Chapala Country Club):  
September 25, 11:30AM - 2PM

**Questions:** [AskUs@MexicoDemocrats.org](mailto:AskUs@MexicoDemocrats.org)

Two televised Presidential debates (Sept. 26, Oct 15) and VP debate (Oct 2) will be shown live as fundraising events at private homes in Ajijic. Contact [www.fundraising.lakechapala@mexicodemocrats.org](mailto:www.fundraising.lakechapala@mexicodemocrats.org) for times & locations.

#### Contact info for Lake Chapala, visit:

[http://www.mexicodemocrats.org/html/lake\\_chapala1.html](http://www.mexicodemocrats.org/html/lake_chapala1.html)

### Mazatlan

Mazatlan gets pretty quiet in summer, but members will be spreading the word about Democrats Abroad and voting from abroad everywhere possible. The Executive Committee is planning one or more events for the Presidential Debate dates. Further details to be announced soon.



## Chapter News

### Mexico City

**Mexico City** welcomed Nicholas Moreno, the Obama Campaign representative in Mexico who has been actively passing out flyers and registering voters.

More than 60 people gathered to watch the Obama speech in Denver, and they registered many new voters; Other similar events are planned for the debates and Voter Registration is in full swing at Community Organizations.

For information about the next meeting contact Ralston Darlington:

[chair.mexicocity@mexicodemocrats.org](mailto:chair.mexicocity@mexicodemocrats.org)

### Veracruz

**Veracruz** chapter is very lucky to have a visiting Democrat Abroad from Canada, Giles Hogya, who is organizing a voting registration event in Xalapa Saturday, September 13 from 10-2:30 at La Posada Mariquinta, 12 Alfara en el Centro of Xalapa. Other efforts include setting up a special email for voter registration questions for people in the state of Veracruz.

## Lake Chapala Election of Officers Planned

Elections of Officers for Democrats Abroad Lake Chapala Chapter will be held at the Chapter's annual meeting (hopefully February '09) the third Monday of the month at Nueva Posada in Ajijic. The positions available are listed below including the (5) five Officers and (5) five members at large. Anyone wishing to run for a position on the Board or nominate someone may contact

**Zane & Mary Pumiglia at  
765-2660, or [zanymar@yahoo.com](mailto:zanymar@yahoo.com).**

The slate should be ready to announce at the general meeting in January '09.

Democrats Abroad Mexico  
Lake Chapala Chapter  
Executive Committee Elections  
DEFINITIONS & PROCEDURES

According to Chapter By-laws:

#### **ARTICLE VII**

The Executive Committee shall be composed of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Counsel or Parliamentarian and five Members-at-Large elected from the membership. The Chairpersons of the Standing Committees shall be ex-officio members of the Executive Committee.

#### **ARTICLE VIII**

The Chairpersons of these committees shall be appointed by the Chairperson of the organization, subject to ratification by the membership at the next meeting.

#### **ARTICLE XI**

Election of officers and/or members-at-large of the Executive Committee shall be by a simple plurality of votes cast by members present in person, by on-line ballot, or by absentee ballot at the meeting in which the election is held. Upon request of one-third of members present, voting will be by secret, written ballot. When candidates are unopposed voting by acclamation may be in order.

#### **ARTICLE XII**

A provision will be made for "absentee voting" by any member, provided the absentee vote is made by secret, written ballot. Absentee votes must be received prior to the meeting in which the election is held and recorded by the Secretary.

#### **ARTICLE XIII (excerpt)**

Candidates may be nominated from the floor at the meeting in which the election will be held. The Secretary shall communicate the names of the candidates selected by the nominating committee to the membership not less than 20 days before the election.

Voting Abroad Made Easy

VOTEFROMABROAD.ORG



## Opinion

### Have We Missed the Key to Obama's Leadership Style?

By R.J. Eskow, on the *Huffington Post* blog, July 11, 2008

I'm starting to suspect we've all missed the real story behind Barack Obama's leadership style. His recent actions may not have been driven by calculation or centrism, as most people thought, but by something else. He may have a core value that's new to our political process -- one that exists on a different plane, grounded in a web of personality, spirituality, and culture.

I had to think back many years -- and many thousands of miles -- before I remembered where I'd seen his kind of style before: Japan.

When I did some work there nearly twenty years ago I encountered some of the same traits we're seeing in Obama now: The urge for consensus. The courtesy toward all parties, no matter how strong the disagreements. The nearly-holographic quality of appearing different to different observers. The centeredness and self-control.

It may be coincidental. Or it may be the result of growing up with Hawaii's Pacific Rim influence. But Obama's management style resembles the classic Japanese model. And, at least historically, these haven't just been *behaviors*. They're living embodiments of a spiritual perception which says that all humanity -- all *existence* -- is interconnected and equal.

The operative word, the core value behind this behavior, is *unity*. Unity means preserving the integrity of a social group. Where elections and debates emphasize *process*, and policies focus on *outcome*, unity creates an emphasis *structure*. That's unfamiliar to us.

People who value unity will always choose structure over process, or even outcome. If Obama's core value is unity, Democrats should know better than to expect him to fight their partisan fights for them. And while he may disappoint them, they can also learn to respect the fact that he's being true to himself.

Obama's been frustrating observers across the political spectrum lately. Progressive bloggers are debating whether he's driven by cynicism or centrism, while the right wingers at Human Events claim there's a "Secret Plan Behind Obama's Move to the Right!"

They're all missing the point. He's *not* moving to the Right. His political architecture isn't built on the old foundation of Right vs. Left -- or on Right vs. Wrong, for that matter. It isn't even *binary*. When it comes to policy he inclines toward the progressive position, but he's not thinking in terms of "winning" or "losing." His goal is *group unity around the best possible realistic outcome*. That means assess the situation, get what you can, then move to bring the parties together around a new consensus.

We can speculate on why Obama might be driven by unity. Family history? Community organizing? Christianity? That Pacific Rim upbringing? We can't know for sure. But if the model's right Obama's highest loyalty will always be to the nation as a group, and he'll sacrifice partisan interests to preserve its cohesion. He won't get overly attached to any specific policy position. In the end, he'll make his assessment about what he can get and then default to the unifying position.

(continued next page...)

## Opinion

*(R.J. Eskow, continued from p. 13)*

He won't "bring the fight to the enemy" where the GOP is concerned, either. In fact, he doesn't necessarily even see an enemy -- just fellow group members with whom he must eventually reconcile. He will be able to inspire and lead -- but he won't be able to inflame and arouse. He will never be a firebrand. (Interestingly, despite his ability to excite a crowd he struck me as cool and analytical -- "clinical" was the word that came to mind -- the one time I saw him in close quarters.)

If I'm right, how should progressives respond? First, by *making their voices heard* through groups like [Get FISA Right](#). Don't stop now. A consensus-builder's process will always be influenced by groups like this. Secondly, by *not taking it personally* when he moves on. Recognize that it's part of his style: He believes he's done all he can do (whether you agree with him or not -- in FISA's case I don't), and that now it's time to bring the group together.

In some ways Obama's novel values could be extremely valuable, even transformational, for our political process. But they could also lead him down some blind alleys and leave him open for sucker punches. So far he's been impressive at dodging those punches -- but where the Right's concerned, we ain't seen nothin' yet. Still, I wouldn't bet against him.

Obama's unific style has sometimes disappointed me. But I've also found it fascinating to watch. And it's given me an opportunity to re-examine my own style, which has been rewarding.

Two factors are making this election historical: the political power of the Internet, and Obama's management approach (whatever its origins.) That gives us a chance to relate to a politician in new ways -- by detaching from him, studying his leadership model, and then interacting with him tactically and strategically.

Strangely enough, I get the feeling he'd like that. More importantly, it's a good exercise for *us*. After all, the best thing we can do politically is to become smarter and more flexible. That makes each of us more capable of supporting *our* most important value - whether it's unity or something completely different, like freedom. Or justice.

But whatever your core value, we can agree on one thing for unity's sake: It's going to be an interesting year.



Jesus was a community organizer. Cesar Chavez was a community organizer. Gandhi was a community organizer. Martin Luther King was a community organizer.

Pontius Pilate was a governor.

## Flip-Flopper, or Thoughtful and Brave Leadership?

**How do you answer the critics when they accuse your candidate of being a “flip-flopper?” Consider this:**

By Julian Baggini, in *The Guardian*, a London daily newspaper. Saturday July 5, 2008

“...Presidential hopefuls have been accusing their rivals of flip-flopping. Politicians want to be like Margaret Thatcher, whose insistence that “the lady’s not for turning” was a turning point in her popularity. Where are the convictions of politicians of today, people ask. I’ll tell you: in Zimbabwe, in Tehran, and in the White House. It was Walter, in *The Big Lebowski*, who said: “Say what you like about the tenets of National Socialism, Dude, but at least it was an ideology”; courage of conviction is too often admired even when the convictions are hopelessly wrong.

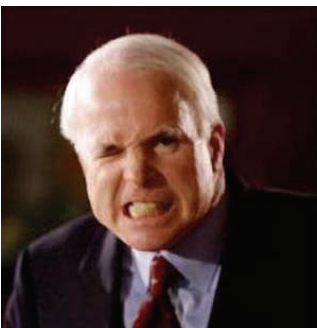
The trouble with most people is not that they lack the courage to stick to their guns, but they don’t have the greater bravery to change course. Consistency is a good thing, but not when it is understood as simply refusing to change your mind. Indeed, one of the best reasons for changing your mind is precisely to become more consistent. If you backed biofuels for environmental reasons, then it would be consistent with your beliefs to drop that support if you became convinced that biofuels weren’t that green after all. To worry more about whether you’ve stuck with your views than about how they stack up now is to value loyalty to ideas more than fidelity to the truth.

Consistency is much more important at a time than over time. If I believe global warming is a man-made danger but don’t support measures to counter it, I am being inconsistent. However, if 10 years ago I doubted global warming, but now favor lowering CO2 emissions, I’m guilty of nothing more than changing my mind as evidence emerges.”

We’ve heard dissent from fellow Democrats about Barack Obama’s views and statements on government support for faith-based programs; the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA); impeachment; same-sex marriage; and other issues. Some have claimed he flipped on certain issues. Others say he jibed rightward after securing the party’s nomination.

None of us are going to agree with any candidate on every issue. We do have to agree that the alternative to an Obama Presidency is leadership with which we agree on almost nothing. And, consider that Barack Obama may well be changing his opinions, or developing opinions anew, based on emerging evidence...even if that evidence is nothing more than the realities of electoral politics in a diverse America.

He’s proven himself to be a man of good judgment and principles on many issues over the course of his political career. He deserves the benefit of the doubt on the issues and his positions with which we may individually take exception. Remember: if he doesn’t win this election, he won’t be in a position to change anything.



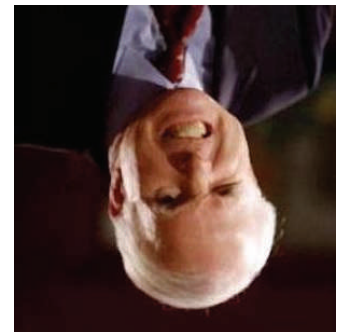
### Sometimes, a flip-flop really is a flip flop:

McCain called Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell “agents of intolerance” in the 2000 presidential campaign.

Then:

Delivered the commencement address at Falwell’s Liberty University in May 2006

*Or has something fundamental changed about Fundamentalism and the Theocratic Right?*





## Democrats Abroad Get Their Message Across!



An estimated six million Americans live overseas. We're teachers and aid workers; bankers and businesspeople; students, soldiers and CEOs. We're George Clooney on the shores of Lake Como and Ruby Wax on the streets of Notting Hill.

But here's the catch. It's kind of complicated to vote from abroad. There are forms to complete, ballots to receive and three rounds of international airmail in all. Too many people just don't take the time, or get started too late. In 2006, only about a million overseas absentee ballots were requested.

That leaves five million voters missing in action. Five million Americans who have travelled the world and seen the damage to our reputation wrought by eight years of George Bush. Five million potential votes in a land where elections can be decided by a few hundred.

Remember 2000? George Bush became president by a margin of 527 votes in Florida. In 2004, Democrat Christine Gregoire became Governor of Washington by just 127 votes. And in 2006, a race for a seat on the Erie County Democratic Committee ended in a dead tie. (The winner was ultimately chosen by coin toss.)

That's why Democrats Abroad has launched a global search party to find our missing overseas voters. And we've enlisted some high-profile help.

In a [new video](#), Hollywood headliner Gwyneth Paltrow urges her fellow overseas Americans to use the website [VoteFromAbroad.org](http://VoteFromAbroad.org) to request their absentee ballots. "Every vote will count. I'll be voting from London, but you can vote from anywhere," she appeals.

Many would argue that the choice of an American president affects the whole world. So, the whole world ought to have a say. Nice try. Here's a more feasible alternative. Most Americans living overseas don't vote – find one and make sure that s/he does.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amukRM9SSoo>



## Opinion

Readers are encouraged to submit thoughtful, respectful opinions, editorials, and articles for inclusion in this section.

My vision, as Editor of this newsletter, is to use this as a forum to inform on important topics of the day; to make us think; to introduce the issues and controversies we may face in the future; to share ideas and opinions. The views do not necessarily reflect those of Democrats Abroad, the Democratic Party, or even my own (unless it's clearly my own writing).

I hope you will send me your thoughts, opinions, ideas, and responses to the information found here. I don't guarantee every submission will be published. I may edit for clarity or length, but I will always try to keep your intent intact.

**John McCain's response to the Corsi book has been reported as: "Gotta keep your sense of humor."**

## A Book Written to Defeat Barack Obama

By Beverly Bandler

*"The goal is to defeat Obama," author Jerome Corsi said in a telephone interview. "I don't want Obama to be in office."*

Books used to be written to educate, inspire, or entertain. These days they are written to serve as political weapons. And the intellectual standards of book publishers appear to have been degraded significantly.

Jerome R. Corsi has written a "new attack book" titled: ***The Obama Nation: Leftist Politics and the Cult of Personality***. (Threshold Editions, August 1, 2008). **The chief editor of Threshold Editions is Mary Matalin, the former Republican operative turned publisher-pundit.** As of August 17, the book was No. 1 on the *New York Times* Best Seller list for the second week, being pushed along by a large volume of bulk sales to conservative organizations and an estimated 100 author interviews with talk show hosts. The "best-seller" status of the book is used to bolster its claims of legitimacy. Threshold has reportedly printed 475,000 copies so far. The book charges that the presumed Democratic presidential nominee, Senator Barack Obama, is "an extreme leftist," "a stealth radical liberal" who has tried to cover up extensive connections with Islam and radical politics. **Corsi was the co-author of *Unfit for Command: Swift Boat Veterans Speak Out Against John Kerry***, which included accusations that were "ultimately undermined by news reports pointing out the contradictions." It appears Corsi and Matalin hope that the book will repeat the '04 Swift Boat anti-Kerry feat.

The book description states that it "explains why the extreme leftism of an Obama presidency would leave the United States weakened, diminished and divided, why Obama must be defeated—and how he can be." The book purports to be a "thoroughly researched and documented book" and emphasizes its "[s]crupulously sourced...600 footnotes." Corsi attempts to legitimize his book with his Ph.D. credentials prominently displayed on the book cover. But Jerome Corsi's status as a respected scholar has been challenged.

Jerome Corsi has been characterized as a "conservative gadfly," a "fringe author," and a "lying, white supremacist, propagandist" known for his "paranoid ramblings" and who, in addition to being charged with lying about John Kerry's military service, made his name for making anti-Islam, anti-Catholic, anti-Semitic and homophobic statements. According to professor of history Joe Palermo, Corsi "staunchly supported the Vietnam War when he was draft age, but he ducked military service with the excuse of being afflicted with 'hereditary eczema.'" The *Chicago Sun-Times* calls his "Latest smear against Obama an abomination." According to *People for the American Way* (PFAW), Jerome Corsi is "little more than a third-tier hack prone to spinning out conspiracy theories with an overblown sense of his own importance." According to PFAW, Corsi posted a series of online comments throughout 2004 that included suggestions that Hillary Rodham Clinton is a lesbian and Muslims worship Satan. He also calls Muslims "Ragheads" and "Boy-Bumpers." *Politico* states that Corsi "has left a trail of wild theories [among them the assertion that oil is a nearly infinite resource that continues to generate naturally], vitriol and dogma that have called into question his credibility."

*(continued on page 18)*

**Opinion** (article continued from previous page)*(Corsi book)*

Significant parts of the book have already been challenged as “misleading or false.” *Media Matters*, which is run by former right-wing journalist David Brock, has determined the book “unfit for publication” and lists several of the book’s accusations that are “unsubstantiated, misleading or inaccurate.” *Media Matters* reports that it previously documented false and baseless charges Corsi made about Obama’s positions on the Global Poverty Act of 2007 and nuclear weapons, as well as false statements Corsi made concerning Obama’s position on abortion and his memoir, *Dreams From My Father* while discussing the book with Fox News host Sean Hannity.

**Conservatives have their own concerns about Jerome Corsi.** Jon Henke of the conservative website, *TheNextRight*, writes: “The continued tolerance and prominence of *Jerome Corsi* - his books, columns and appearances - is just embarrassing. It is embarrassing for the Right, embarrassing for Republicans, embarrassing for conservatives and libertarians, embarrassing for all of us.”

**Chicago Sun-Times** columnist Mary Washington fears that Corsi is “hoping his book will give credibility to the smears you can read for free on the Internet. Only now -- it’ll cost you. “A rebuttal,” she says, “would only fuel more interest in the book and put more money in Corsi’s bank account.”

**Another view, however, is that the lack of immediate and aggressive rebuttal of the Swift Boat attacks in 2004 hurt John Kerry and that responding to any and all inaccuracies or lies in Corsi’s book is essential.** The Obama Campaign has produced a 41-page *Investigative Report on the Lies in Jerome Corsi’s ‘Obama Nation.’*

John McCain’s response to the Corsi book has been reported as: “Gotta keep your sense of humor.”

That the humor of the Republican presidential nominee is startling is an understatement. Huffington Post writer Andy Borowitz reported the existence of a McCain “Top Ten Funniest Ways to Kill Iranians” video posted on his official site, [www.JohnMcCain.com](http://www.JohnMcCain.com). The page is no longer available, but he reportedly quips “My friends, in these trying times in which we live, there’s one thing all Americans can agree on: Killing Iranians is hilarious.”

[www.democratsabroad.org](http://www.democratsabroad.org)

[www.mexicodemocrats.org](http://www.mexicodemocrats.org)

[www.votefromabroad.org](http://www.votefromabroad.org)

Be sure to check all of these sites regularly for:

- voting and registration information;
- Democratic Party news and updates;
- communicate with other members;
- links to progressive news and blog sites;
- contact and legislative activity for House and Senate members;
- more

Two general-interest independent Yahoo groups exist, one for members of Democrats Abroad Mexico and one for all Democrats Abroad members worldwide. They are:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Democrats-Abroad-Mexico/>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/DemsAbroad/>



## Opinion

Christine Rolland, DA France, weighs in on impeachment:

The real subject of impeachment is what our country really is: a democracy based on the Constitution or a self-destructing Empire bent on domination. Since 2001, we have been split right down the middle, with the Left constantly caving in -- or at least giving way at each step.

Beyond the oft-blamed corporate influence, it seems that EVERYONE comes from a family where there is someone voting Right and someone voting Left, and no possible common ground in-between. This is the groundwork for Civil War -- and when I look at my discussions (a mild term for what really goes on) with my older brother, I see that the political situation in the country is now analogous to what happens in a family which is built on abuse. The exact same mirror-image accusations and denials of reality are locked into place on each side. The Left accuses the Right of spreading lies and propaganda and controlling the press and vice versa. Neither will read the other's sources.

Meanwhile, the whole world is (helplessly) watching. This is exactly what outsiders do when they become aware of child abuse in a closed family. They become petrified, salt pillars, immobilized -- and thus let the abuse continue. In an abusive family structure, there are two solutions to breaking the cycle of violence. One is for the victim to escape and seek to build a separate identity elsewhere after having analyzed the real situation. The other is for direct confrontation and lawsuits to take place, culminating in punishment of the perpetrators.

That is why Impeachment and War Crimes Trials are imperative. The truth must out -- and either people will be shown innocent and acquitted or they will be condemned.

Either that or 50% of the population of the U.S. will leave the country or else rise up in revolt or trigger civil war. If either of the latter two options happens, then dictatorship or bloodbath will surely take place. Or final option -- the abuse continues and continues until the U.S.A. no longer exists, not as democracy and not as empire. And it may well take much of the world down with it.

Christine Rolland, Normandy

**GOT A SPECIFIC LEGISLATIVE ISSUE AND WANT TO KEEP UP ON WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH IT IN CONGRESS?**

### **HERE'S A LIST OF BASIC LEGISLATIVE TRACKING WEBSITES:**

Public Broadcasting System

<http://www.pbs.org/now/politics/legislation.html>

A good place to start.

The Library of Congress Thomas

<http://thomas.loc.gov/>

GovTrack.us

<http://www.govtrack.us/>

GovTrack tracks the United States Congress. Follow the status of federal legislation or learn about your members of Congress.

Roll Call

<http://www.rollcall.com/>

The newspaper of Capitol Hill since 1955

Congressional Quarterly

[http://corporate.cq.com/wmspage.cfm?parm1=12#tracking\\_network](http://corporate.cq.com/wmspage.cfm?parm1=12#tracking_network)

Congressional Quarterly's Legislative Tracking: "the only service that covers every legislative action in Congress. From introduction through committee, to conference negotiations and the president's desk..."

**Opinion** (*this is a long one, but worth your time!*)**Let's Give 'Blue Dogs' the Boot**Glenn Greenwald, [www.salon.com](http://www.salon.com) July 29, 2008

In American politics, exceedingly few positions generate overwhelming agreement across the ideological spectrum. Even propositions that ought to be uncontroversial -- such as whether there is scientific evidence for evolution or whether Saddam Hussein personally planned the 9/11 attacks -- produce sizable portions of the citizenry lined up on each side. **One notable exception to this rule is the issue of whether the current U.S. Congress is doing a poor job.** That question produces a remarkable consensus that is close to unanimous.

Earlier this month, Rasmussen Reports announced the humiliating finding that "the percentage of voters who give Congress good or excellent ratings has fallen to single digits..." That extremely negative view of Congress cuts across partisan and ideological lines, as only small percentages of Democrats (13 percent), Republicans (8 percent) and independents (3 percent) believe that Congress is doing an "excellent" or even a "good" job. Perhaps most remarkable, some polls -- such as one from Fox News last month -- reveal that the Democratic-led Congress is actually more unpopular among Democrats than among Republicans. That a Democratic Congress is so deeply unpopular even among Democrats may be historically unusual, but it is hardly surprising or difficult to understand. On key issue after key issue, it is the Bush White House and Republican caucus that have received virtually everything they wanted from Congress, while the base of the Democratic Party has received virtually nothing other than disappointment and an overt repudiation of its agenda. Since the American people gave them control of Congress, the Democrats in Congress have given the country the following:

Unlimited and unconditional funding for the Iraq war. Vast new warrantless eavesdropping powers and retroactive amnesty for their telecom donors -- measures the administration tried, but failed, to obtain from the GOP Congress. The ability to ignore congressional subpoenas with utter impunity. A resolution formally decreeing parts of the Iranian government to be a "terrorist organization." A failure to outlaw waterboarding, to apply the torture ban to the CIA, to restore the habeas corpus rights abolished by the Military Commissions Act of 2006, to impose the requirement of congressional approval before President Bush can attack Iran. Confirmation of highly controversial Bush nominees, including Michael Mukasey as attorney general even after he embraced the most radical Bush theories of executive power and repeatedly refused to say that waterboarding was torture.

Other than (arguably) the resignation of Alberto Gonzales as attorney general and a very modest increase in the minimum wage (enacted in the first month after Democrats took control of Congress), one is hard-pressed to identify a single event or issue since November 2006 that would have been meaningfully different had the GOP retained control of Congress. The Congress of Harry Reid and Nancy Pelosi has been every bit as passive, impotent and complicit as the Congress of Bill Frist and Denny Hastert was. Worse, in contrast to the Frist/Hastert-led Congress, which at least had the excuse that it enabled a wartime president from its own party while he enjoyed high approval ratings, the Reid/Pelosi Congress has capitulated to every presidential whim despite an "opposition party" president who is now one of the most unpopular in modern American history. It's difficult to imagine how even Reid and Pelosi themselves could contest the claim that the Democratic-led Congress, from the perspective of Democratic voters, has been a profound failure.

With those depressing facts assembled, the only question worth asking among those who are so dissatisfied with congressional Democrats is this: What can be done to change this conduct? As proved by the 2006 midterm elections -- which the Democrats dominated in a historically lopsided manner -- mindlessly electing more Democrats to Congress will not improve anything. Such uncritical support for the party is actually likely to have the opposite effect. It's axiomatic that rewarding politicians -- which is what will happen if congressional Democrats end up with more seats and greater control after 2008 than they had after 2006 -- only ensures that they will continue the same behavior. If, after spending two years accommodating one extremist policy after the next favored by the right, congressional Democrats become further entrenched in their power by winning even more seats, what would one expect them to do other than conclude that this approach works and therefore continue to pursue it?

*(continued next page)*



## Opinion

*(continued from previous page: Glenn Greenwald "Blue Dogs")*

If simply voting for more Democrats will achieve nothing in the way of meaningful change, what, if anything, will? At minimum, two steps are required to begin to influence Democratic leaders to change course: 1) impose a real political price that they must pay when they capitulate to -- or actively embrace -- the right's agenda and ignore the political values of their base, and 2) decrease the power and influence of the conservative "Blue Dog" contingent within the Democratic caucus, who have proved excessively willing to accommodate the excesses of the Bush administration, by selecting their members for defeat and removing them from office. And that means running progressive challengers against them in primaries, or targeting them with critical ads, even if doing so, in isolated cases, risks the loss of a Democratic seat in Congress.

Those goals are the basis of the recent campaign that I helped launch -- along with progressive bloggers such as [Jane Hamsher](#) and the [Blue America PAC](#) -- to target selected Democratic members of Congress who have been responsible for some of the worst acts of complicity and capitulation. The campaign we launched, which raised over \$350,000 in a very short time largely from dissatisfied progressives, has run multimedia ads criticizing the likes of Blue Dog Rep. Chris Carney and Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, despite the fact that neither has a primary challenger and despite the fact that Carney is quite vulnerable in his reelection effort this year.

The Blue America campaign also ran ads against Blue Dog Rep. John Barrow in Georgia, who did have a progressive primary challenger, state Sen. Regina Thomas. It was always clear that Barrow was highly likely to defeat Thomas in the primary. It was also clear that if Thomas beat the odds and won the primary, her chances of beating the Republican in the general election was far less than the chances of the more conservative and incumbent Barrow, who himself had to fight hard to win reelection in 2006. Knowing that a Barrow defeat in the primary might make a Republican win more likely in November, Blue America nonetheless ran ads against him. We believed that even if Barrow prevailed in his primary (as he ultimately did), the ad campaign against him would undermine his reputation in his district and could thus force Barrow, the Blue Dog caucus and the Democratic leadership to devote far more resources to defending his seat for November. That is what it means to attach a price to trampling on the political values of Democratic supporters.

Barrow and the two other two solidly pro-war Democrats targeted -- Carney and Hoyer -- were not merely supporters, but vocal and active leaders, of the effort to have Congress give to George W. Bush the sweeping new warrantless eavesdropping powers and telecom immunity Bush demanded. Why would any progressive want to see that behavior rewarded by having those three safely reelected? Given the certainty of Democratic control under all circumstances, what possible benefit comes from their seamless return to power?

Many progressives and other Democratic supporters are reflexively opposed to any conduct that might result in the defeat of even a single, relatively inconsequential Democratic member of Congress or the transfer of even a single district to GOP control. No matter how dissatisfied such individuals might be with the Democratic Congress, they are unwilling to do anything different to change what they claim to find so unsatisfactory. Even though uncritically cheering on any and every candidate with a "D" after his or her name has resulted in virtually nothing positive -- and much that is negative -- many progressives continue, rather bafflingly and stubbornly, to insist that if they just keep doing the same thing (cheering for the election of more and more Democrats), then somehow, someday, something different might occur. But, as the cliché teaches, repeatedly engaging in the same conduct and expecting different results is the very definition of foolishness.

As foolish as it is, this intense aversion to jeopardizing any Democratic incumbents might be considered rational if doing so carried the risk of restoring Republican control of Congress. But there is no such risk, and there will be none for the foreseeable future. No matter what happens, the Democrats, by all accounts, are going to control both houses of Congress after the 2008 election. Their margin in the House, which is currently 31 seats, will, by even the most conservative estimates, increase to at least 50 seats. No advertising campaign or activist group could possibly swing control of Congress to the Republicans this year, and -- given the Brezhnev-era-like reelection rates for incumbents in America -- it is extremely unlikely that the House will be controlled by anyone other than Steny Hoyer, Rahm Emanuel and Nancy Pelosi for years to come.

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## Opinion

*(continued from previous page: Glenn Greenwald "Blue Dogs")*

The critical question, then, is not who will control Congress. The Democrats will. That is a given. The vital question is what they will do with that control -- specifically, will they continue to maintain and increase their own power by accommodating the right, or will they be more responsive, accountable and attentive to the political values of their base?

As long as they know that progressives will blindly support their candidates no matter what they do, then it will only be rational for congressional Democrats to ignore progressives and move as far to the right as they can. With the blind, unconditional support of Democrats securely in their back pocket, Democratic leaders will quite rationally conclude that the optimal way to increase their own power, to transform more Republican districts into Blue Dog Democratic seats, and thereby make themselves more secure in their leadership positions, is to move their caucus to the right. Because the principal concern of Democratic leaders is to maintain and increase their own power, they will always do what they perceive is most effective in achieving that goal, which right now means moving their caucus to the right to protect their Blue Dogs and elect new ones.

That is precisely what has happened over the past two years. It is why a functional right-wing majority has dominated the House notwithstanding the change of party control -- and the change in direction -- that American voters thought they were mandating in 2006. As progressive activist Matt Stoller put it, "Blue Dogs are the swing voting block in the House, they are self-described conservatives, and they are perfectly willing to use their status on every action considered by the House." The more the Democratic leadership accommodates the Blue Dog caucus -- the more their power relies upon expanding their numbers through the increase of Blue Dog seats -- the less relevant will be the question of which party controls Congress.

The linchpin for that destructive strategy is uncritical progressive support for congressional Democrats. That is what ensures that Democratic leaders will continue to pursue a rightward-moving strategy as the key to consolidating their own power. Right now, when it comes time to decide whether to capitulate to the demands of the right, Beltway Democrats think: "If we capitulate, that is one less issue the GOP can use to harm our Blue Dogs." And they have no countervailing consideration to weigh against that, because they perceive -- accurately -- that there is no cost to capitulating, only benefits from doing so, because progressives will blindly support their candidates no matter what they do. That is the strategic calculus that must change if the behavior of Democrats in Congress is to change.

Democratic leaders must learn that they cannot increase their majority in Congress by trampling on the political values of their own base. It's crucial that they understand that they will not gain seats, but will lose seats, the more they accommodate the right's agenda. That, in turn, will happen only if progressives target for defeat selected members of the Democratic caucus who are responsible for that right-wing-enabling behavior. That is the only way to eliminate the incentive for the Democratic leadership to continue to follow the strategy of increasing their own power by mimicking Republicans. Those who disagree with that -- who object that it is oh-so-terrible to cause the defeat of any Democratic incumbents, no matter how complicit and irrelevant -- have the responsibility to identify what alternative strategy they think should be pursued in order to alter the behavior of the Democratic Party in Congress.

Defeating scattered, individual Democratic incumbents -- even if it means that a Republican wins -- will result in nothing negative. What is the difference -- specifically -- if Steny Hoyer and Rahm Emanuel have a 43-seat margin of control rather than a 56-seat margin? There is no difference. Far more important than the size of the Democrats' majority is the question of who is dominating and controlling that majority.

At the moment, the Blue Dog contingent is dominant in the Democratic caucus and drives much of what the caucus does. The more Blue Dogs there are in the Democratic caucus, the more dominant they will be. Changing the face of Congress requires, first and foremost, that the face of the Democratic caucus change, that its strategic incentive scheme be altered. **Until progressives make Democratic leaders pay a price for their allegiance to the right's agenda -- the only price that politicians recognize: having their power diminished and jeopardized -- then none of this will change. It will only continue to worsen.**

**In Depth ...For those who want to know a little more...**

This is a new section for the newsletter. In each edition, we will finish out the newsletter with a topic that will be covered in much greater depth than a one or two page Opinion commentary permits. It is our belief that there are issues of great importance to America, to our democracy and freedom, to our future prosperity, and to our way of life that the general media is not covering adequately. Democracy can only succeed if the voting public is educated, informed, and aware. Otherwise, we are like sheep, bound to follow our leaders where they may take us... even if it is off a cliff.

*To offer a bit of context for Chalmers Johnson's latest post on the privatization of U.S. intelligence, it's important to know just how lucrative that intelligence "business" has become. According to the latest estimate, the cumulative 2009 intelligence budget for the 16 agencies in the U.S. Intelligence Community will be more than \$55 billion. However, it's possible that the real figure in the deeply classified budget may soar over \$66 billion, which would mean that the U.S. budget for spooks has more than doubled in less than a decade. And as Robert Dreyfuss points out at his invaluable blog at the Nation, even more spectacularly (and wastefully), much of that money will end up in the hands of the "private contractors" who, by now, make up a mini intelligence-industrial complex of their own.*

*Chalmers Johnson, who once consulted for the CIA and more recently, in his book Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic, the third volume of his Blowback Trilogy, called for the Agency to be shut down, knows a thing or two about the world of American intelligence. As he has written, "An incompetent or unscrupulous intelligence agency can be as great a threat to national security as not having one at all." Now consider, with Johnson, just how incompetent and unscrupulous a thoroughly privatized intelligence "community" can turn out to be. Thomas Engelhardt*

## **The Military-Intelligence- Industrial Complex**

### **It's Much Later Than You Think**

By Chalmers Johnson

Most Americans have a rough idea what the term "military-industrial complex" means when they come across it in a newspaper or hear a politician mention it. President Dwight D. Eisenhower introduced the idea to the public in his farewell address of January 17, 1961. "Our military organization today bears little relation to that known by any of my predecessors in peacetime," he said, "or indeed by the fighting men of World War II and Korea... We have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions... We must not fail to comprehend its grave implications... We must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex."

Although Eisenhower's reference to the military-industrial complex is, by now, well-known, his warning against its "unwarranted influence" has, I believe, largely been ignored. Since 1961, there has been too little serious study of, or discussion of, the origins of the military-industrial complex, how it has changed over time, how governmental secrecy has hidden it from oversight by members of Congress or attentive citizens, and how it degrades our Constitutional structure of checks and balances.

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From its origins in the early 1940s, when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was building up his "arsenal of democracy," down to the present moment, public opinion has usually assumed that it involved more or less equitable relations – often termed a "partnership" – between the high command and civilian overlords of the United States military and privately-owned, for-profit manufacturing and service enterprises. Unfortunately, the truth of the matter is that, from the time they first emerged, these relations were *never* equitable.

In the formative years of the military-industrial complex, the public still deeply distrusted privately owned industrial firms because of the way they had contributed to the Great Depression. Thus, the leading role in the newly emerging relationship was played by the official governmental sector. A deeply popular, charismatic president, FDR sponsored these public-private relationships. They gained further legitimacy because their purpose was to rearm the country, as well as allied nations around the world, against the gathering forces of fascism. The private sector was eager to go along with this largely as a way to regain public trust and disguise its wartime profit-making.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, Roosevelt's use of public-private "partnerships" to build up the munitions industry, and thereby finally overcome the Great Depression, did not go entirely unchallenged. Although he was himself an implacable enemy of fascism, a few people thought that the president nonetheless was coming close to copying some of its key institutions. The leading Italian philosopher of fascism, the neo-Hegelian Giovanni Gentile, once argued that it should more appropriately be called "corporatism" because it was a merger of state and corporate power. (See Eugene Jarecki's *The American Way of War*, p. 69.)

Some critics were alarmed early on by the growing symbiotic relationship between government and corporate officials because each simultaneously sheltered and empowered the other, while greatly confusing the separation of powers. Since the activities of a corporation are less amenable to public or congressional scrutiny than those of a public institution, public-private collaborative relationships afford the private sector an added measure of security from such scrutiny. These concerns were ultimately swamped by enthusiasm for the war effort and the postwar era of prosperity that the war produced.

Beneath the surface, however, was a less well recognized movement by big business to replace democratic institutions with those representing the interests of capital. This movement is today ascendant. (See Thomas Frank's new book, *The Wrecking Crew: How Conservatives Rule*, for a superb analysis of Ronald Reagan's slogan "government is not a solution to our problem, government is the problem.") Its objectives have long been to discredit what it called "big government," while capturing for private interests the tremendous sums invested by the public sector in national defense. It may be understood as a slow-burning reaction to what American conservatives believed to be the socialism of the New Deal.

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Perhaps the country's leading theorist of democracy, Sheldon S. Wolin, has written a new book, *Democracy Incorporated*, on what he calls "inverted totalitarianism" – the rise in the U.S. of totalitarian institutions of conformity and regimentation shorn of the police repression of the earlier German, Italian, and Soviet forms. He warns of "the expansion of private (i.e., mainly corporate) power and the selective abdication of governmental responsibility for the well-being of the citizenry." He also decries the degree to which the so-called privatization of governmental activities has insidiously undercut our democracy, leaving us with the widespread belief that government is no longer needed and that, in any case, it is not capable of performing the functions we have entrusted to it.

Wolin writes:

*"The privatization of public services and functions manifests the steady evolution of corporate power into a political form, into an integral, even dominant partner with the state. It marks the transformation of American politics and its political culture, from a system in which democratic practices and values were, if not defining, at least major contributory elements, to one where the remaining democratic elements of the state and its populist programs are being systematically dismantled."* (p. 284)

**Mercenaries at Work**

The military-industrial complex has changed radically since World War II or even the height of the Cold War. The private sector is now fully ascendant. The uniformed air, land, and naval forces of the country as well as its intelligence agencies, including the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), the NSA (National Security Agency), the DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency), and even clandestine networks entrusted with the dangerous work of penetrating and spying on terrorist organizations are all dependent on hordes of "private contractors." In the context of governmental national security functions, a better term for these might be "mercenaries" working in private for profit-making companies.

Tim Shorrock, an investigative journalist and the leading authority on this subject, sums up this situation devastatingly in his new book, *Spies for Hire: The Secret World of Intelligence Outsourcing*. The following quotes are a précis of some of his key findings:

*"In 2006, the cost of America's spying and surveillance activities outsourced to contractors reached \$42 billion, or about 70 percent of the estimated \$60 billion the government spends each year on foreign and domestic intelligence. [The] number of contract employees now exceeds [the CIA's] full-time workforce of 17,500. Contractors make up more than half the workforce of the CIA's National Clandestine Service (formerly the Directorate of Operations), which conducts covert operations and recruits spies abroad.*

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*"To feed the NSA's insatiable demand for data and information technology, the industrial base of contractors seeking to do business with the agency grew from 144 companies in 2001 to more than 5,400 in 2006. At the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), the agency in charge of launching and maintaining the nation's photoreconnaissance and eavesdropping satellites, almost the entire workforce is composed of contract employees working for [private] companies. With an estimated \$8 billion annual budget, the largest in the IC [intelligence community], contractors control about \$7 billion worth of business at the NRO, giving the spy satellite industry the distinction of being the most privatized part of the intelligence community.*

*"If there's one generalization to be made about the NSA's outsourced IT [information technology] programs, it is this: they haven't worked very well, and some have been spectacular failures. In 2006, the NSA was unable to analyze much of the information it was collecting. As a result, more than 90 percent of the information it was gathering was being discarded without being translated into a coherent and understandable format; only about 5 percent was translated from its digital form into text and then routed to the right division for analysis.*

*"The key phrase in the new counterterrorism lexicon is 'public-private partnerships'. In reality, 'partnerships' are a convenient cover for the perpetuation of corporate interests." (pp. 6, 13-14, 16, 214-15, 365)*

Several inferences can be drawn from Shorrock's shocking expos. One is that if a foreign espionage service wanted to penetrate American military and governmental secrets, its easiest path would not be to gain access to any official U.S. agencies, but simply to get its agents jobs at any of the large intelligence-oriented private companies on which the government has become remarkably dependent. These include Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), with headquarters in San Diego, California, which typically pays its 42,000 employees higher salaries than if they worked at similar jobs in the government; Booz Allen Hamilton, one of the nation's oldest intelligence and clandestine-operations contractors, which, until January 2007, was the employer of Mike McConnell, the current director of national intelligence and the first private contractor to be named to lead the entire intelligence community; and CACI International, which, under two contracts for "information technology services," ended up supplying some two dozen interrogators to the Army at Iraq's already infamous Abu Ghraib prison in 2003. According to Major General Anthony Taguba, who investigated the Abu Ghraib torture and abuse scandal, four of CACI's interrogators were "either directly or indirectly responsible" for torturing prisoners. (Shorrock, p. 281)

Remarkably enough, SAIC has virtually replaced the National Security Agency as the primary collector of signals intelligence for the government. It is the NSA's largest contractor, and that agency is today the company's single largest customer.

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There are literally thousands of other profit-making enterprises that work to supply the government with so-called intelligence needs, sometimes even bribing Congressmen to fund projects that no one in the executive branch actually wants. This was the case with Congressman Randy "Duke" Cunningham, Republican of California's 50th District, who, in 2006, was sentenced to eight-and-a-half years in federal prison for soliciting bribes from defense contractors. One of the bribers, Brent Wilkes, snagged a \$9.7 million contract for his company, ADCS Inc. ("Automated Document Conversion Systems") to computerize the century-old records of the Panama Canal dig!

**A Country Drowning in Euphemisms**

The United States has long had a sorry record when it comes to protecting its intelligence from foreign infiltration, but the situation today seems particularly perilous. One is reminded of the case described in the 1979 book by Robert Lindsey, *The Falcon and the Snowman* (made into a 1985 film of the same name). It tells the true story of two young Southern Californians, one with a high security clearance working for the defense contractor TRW (dubbed "RTX" in the film), and the other a drug addict and minor smuggler. The TRW employee is motivated to act by his discovery of a misrouted CIA document describing plans to overthrow the prime minister of Australia, and the other by a need for money to pay for his addiction.

They decide to get even with the government by selling secrets to the Soviet Union and are exposed by their own bungling. Both are sentenced to prison for espionage. The message of the book (and film) lies in the ease with which they betrayed their country – and how long it took before they were exposed and apprehended. Today, thanks to the staggering over-privatization of the collection and analysis of foreign intelligence, the opportunities for such breaches of security are widespread.

I applaud Shorrock for his extraordinary research into an almost impenetrable subject using only openly available sources. There is, however, one aspect of his analysis with which I differ. This is his contention that the wholesale takeover of official intelligence collection and analysis by private companies is a form of "outsourcing." This term is usually restricted to a business enterprise buying goods and services that it does not want to manufacture or supply in-house. When it is applied to a governmental agency that turns over many, if not all, of its key functions to a risk-averse company trying to make a return on its investment, "outsourcing" simply becomes a euphemism for mercenary activities.

As David Bromwich, a political critic and Yale professor of literature, observed in the *New York Review of Books*:

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*"The separate bookkeeping and accountability devised for Blackwater, DynCorp, Triple Canopy, and similar outfits was part of a careful displacement of oversight from Congress to the vice-president and the stewards of his policies in various departments and agencies. To have much of the work parceled out to private companies who are unaccountable to army rules or military justice, meant, among its other advantages, that the cost of the war could be concealed beyond all detection."*

Euphemisms are words intended to deceive. The United States is already close to drowning in them, particularly new words and terms devised, or brought to bear, to justify the American invasion of Iraq – coinages Bromwich highlights like "regime change," "enhanced interrogation techniques," "the global war on terrorism," "the birth pangs of a new Middle East," a "slight uptick in violence," "bringing torture within the law," "simulated drowning," and, of course, "collateral damage," meaning the slaughter of unarmed civilians by American troops and aircraft followed – rarely – by perfunctory apologies. It is important that the intrusion of unelected corporate officials with hidden profit motives into what are ostensibly public political activities not be confused with private businesses buying Scotch tape, paper clips, or hubcaps.

The wholesale transfer of military and intelligence functions to private, often anonymous, operatives took off under Ronald Reagan's presidency, and accelerated greatly after 9/11 under George W. Bush and Dick Cheney. Often not well understood, however, is this: The biggest private expansion into intelligence and other areas of government occurred under the presidency of Bill Clinton. He seems not to have had the same anti-governmental and neoconservative motives as the privatizers of both the Reagan and Bush II eras. His policies typically involved an indifference to – perhaps even an ignorance of – what was actually being done to democratic, accountable government in the name of cost-cutting and allegedly greater efficiency. It is one of the strengths of Shorrock's study that he goes into detail on Clinton's contributions to the wholesale privatization of our government, and of the intelligence agencies in particular.

Reagan launched his campaign to shrink the size of government and offer a large share of public expenditures to the private sector with the creation in 1982 of the "Private Sector Survey on Cost Control." In charge of the survey, which became known as the "Grace Commission," he named the conservative businessman, J. Peter Grace, Jr., chairman of the W.R. Grace Corporation, one of the world's largest chemical companies – notorious for its production of asbestos and its involvement in numerous anti-pollution suits. The Grace Company also had a long history of investment in Latin America, and Peter Grace was deeply committed to undercutting what he saw as leftist unions, particularly because they often favored state-led economic development.

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The Grace Commission's actual achievements were modest. Its biggest was undoubtedly the 1987 privatization of Conrail, the freight railroad for the northeastern states. Nothing much else happened on this front during the first Bush's administration, but Bill Clinton returned to privatization with a vengeance.

According to Shorrock:

*"Bill Clinton picked up the cudgel where the conservative Ronald Reagan left off and took it deep into services once considered inherently governmental, including high-risk military operations and intelligence functions once reserved only for government agencies. By the end of [Clinton's first] term, more than 100,000 Pentagon jobs had been transferred to companies in the private sector – among them thousands of jobs in intelligence. By the end of [his second] term in 2001, the administration had cut 360,000 jobs from the federal payroll and the government was spending 44 percent more on contractors than it had in 1993." (pp. 73, 86)*

These activities were greatly abetted by the fact that the Republicans had gained control of the House of Representatives in 1994 for the first time in 43 years. One liberal journalist described "outsourcing as a virtual joint venture between [House Majority Leader Newt] Gingrich and Clinton." The right-wing Heritage Foundation aptly labeled Clinton's 1996 budget as the "boldest privatization agenda put forth by any president to date." (p. 87)

After 2001, Bush and Cheney added an ideological rationale to the process Clinton had already launched so efficiently. They were enthusiastic supporters of "a neoconservative drive to siphon U.S. spending on defense, national security, and social programs to large corporations friendly to the Bush administration." (pp. 72-3)

**The Privatization – and Loss – of Institutional Memory**

The end result is what we see today: a government hollowed out in terms of military and intelligence functions. The KBR Corporation, for example, supplies food, laundry, and other personal services to our troops in Iraq based on extremely lucrative no-bid contracts, while Blackwater Worldwide supplies security and analytical services to the CIA and the State Department in Baghdad. (Among other things, its armed mercenaries opened fire on, and killed 17 unarmed civilians in Nisour Square, Baghdad, on September 16, 2007, without any provocation, according to U.S. military reports.) The costs – both financial and personal – of privatization in the armed services and the intelligence community far exceed any alleged savings, and some of the consequences for democratic governance may prove irreparable.

These consequences include: the sacrifice of professionalism within our intelligence services; the readiness of private contractors to engage in illegal activities without compunction and with impunity; the inability of Congress or citizens to carry out effective oversight of privately-managed

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intelligence activities because of the wall of secrecy that surrounds them; and, perhaps most serious of all, the loss of the most valuable asset any intelligence organization possesses – its institutional memory.

Most of these consequences are obvious, even if almost never commented on by our politicians or paid much attention in the mainstream media. After all, the standards of a career CIA officer are very different from those of a corporate executive who must keep his eye on the contract he is fulfilling and future contracts that will determine the viability of his firm. The essence of professionalism for a career intelligence analyst is his integrity in laying out what the U.S. government should know about a foreign policy issue, regardless of the political interests of, or the costs to, the major players.

The loss of such professionalism within the CIA was starkly revealed in the 2002 National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction. It still seems astonishing that no senior official, beginning with Secretary of State Colin Powell, saw fit to resign when the true dimensions of our intelligence failure became clear, least of all Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet.

A willingness to engage in activities ranging from the dubious to the outright felonious seems even more prevalent among our intelligence contractors than among the agencies themselves, and much harder for an outsider to detect. For example, following 9/11, Rear Admiral John Poindexter, then working for the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) of the Department of Defense, got the bright idea that DARPA should start compiling dossiers on as many American citizens as possible in order to see whether "data-mining" procedures might reveal patterns of behavior associated with terrorist activities.

On November 14, 2002, the *New York Times* published a column by William Safire entitled "You Are a Suspect" in which he revealed that DARPA had been given a \$200 million budget to compile dossiers on 300 million Americans. He wrote, "Every purchase you make with a credit card, every magazine subscription you buy and medical prescription you fill, every web site you visit and every e-mail you send or receive, every bank deposit you make, every trip you book, and every event you attend – all these transactions and communications will go into what the Defense Department describes as a virtual centralized grand database." This struck many members of Congress as too close to the practices of the Gestapo and the Stasi under German totalitarianism, and so, the following year, they voted to defund the project.

However, Congress's action did not end the "total information awareness" program. The National Security Agency secretly decided to continue it through its private contractors. The NSA easily persuaded SAIC and Booz Allen Hamilton to carry on with what Congress had declared to be a violation of the privacy rights of the American public – for a price. As far as we know, Admiral

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Poindexter's "Total Information Awareness Program" is still going strong today.

The most serious immediate consequence of the privatization of official governmental activities is the loss of institutional memory by our government's most sensitive organizations and agencies. Shorrock concludes, "So many former intelligence officers joined the private sector [during the 1990s] that, by the turn of the century, the institutional memory of the United States intelligence community now resides in the private sector. That's pretty much where things stood on September 11, 2001." (p. 112)

This means that the CIA, the DIA, the NSA, and the other 13 agencies in the U.S. intelligence community cannot easily be reformed because their staffs have largely forgotten what they are supposed to do, or how to go about it. They have not been drilled and disciplined in the techniques, unexpected outcomes, and know-how of previous projects, successful and failed.

As numerous studies have, by now, made clear, the abject failure of the American occupation of Iraq came about in significant measure because the Department of Defense sent a remarkably privatized military filled with incompetent amateurs to Baghdad to administer the running of a defeated country. Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates (a former director of the CIA) has repeatedly warned that the United States is turning over far too many functions to the military because of its hollowing out of the Department of State and the Agency for International Development since the end of the Cold War. Gates believes that we are witnessing a "creeping militarization" of foreign policy – and, though this generally goes unsaid, both the military and the intelligence services have turned over far too many of their tasks to private companies and mercenaries.

When even Robert Gates begins to sound like President Eisenhower, it is time for ordinary citizens to pay attention. In my 2006 book *Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic*, with an eye to bringing the imperial presidency under some modest control, I advocated that we Americans abolish the CIA altogether, along with other dangerous and redundant agencies in our alphabet soup of sixteen secret intelligence agencies, and replace them with the State Department's professional staff devoted to collecting and analyzing foreign intelligence. I still hold that position.

Nonetheless, the current situation represents the worst of all possible worlds. Successive administrations and Congresses have made no effort to alter the CIA's role as the president's private army, even as we have increased its incompetence by turning over many of its functions to the private sector. We have thereby heightened the risks of war by accident, or by presidential whim, as well as of surprise attack because our government is no longer capable of accurately assessing what is going on in the world and because its intelligence agencies are so open to pressure, penetration, and manipulation of every kind.

End.