

CREATING TERRORISM

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SEPT. 30, 2009 -- Barack Obama has done a lot of contentious things since becoming President. But getting Bob Gates to continue as Secretary of Defense is one thing that has received universal acclaim.

Gates' reaction over the weekend to withdraw from Afghanistan shows the best of our leadership has yet to understand the cause of terrorism against the United States. Quoting from the *New York Times*: "Mr. Gates said that imposing timelines and exit strategies at this point 'would all be a strategic mistake. The reality is, failure in Afghanistan would be a huge setback for the United States.' He argued that if the leadership of the Taliban and Al Qaeda could brag to the world that the United States was driven from the region, it 'would have catastrophic consequences in terms of energizing the extremist movement, Al Qaeda recruitment, operations, fund-raising and so on.'" "Brag to the world" – that's what the terrorists have been doing! Energizing extremist movement, Al Qaeda recruitment? What in the world does the Secretary and his generals think we've been doing?

On 9/11, Afghanistan and the Swat Valley in Pakistan were in peace. We ran Osama bin Laden into the Swat Valley and now have ended up shooting lethal missiles from drones into the Valley, killing civilians, turning a peaceful valley into chaos, and causing two million refugees. Refugee camps are hotbeds for energizing militancy, insurgency, and Al Qaeda. How do the Secretary and generals think one creates a terrorist? Exactly the way my friend, Vice President Biden, suggests.

Stay off-shore and lob artillery into the Valley or with drones lob missiles into supposedly militants' homes. You hit a home in my neighborhood and you've got a militant. I've become a believer in Osama – a terrorist. Osama said the U.S. was engaged in a Crusade against Islam. Now, the U. S. deployed in Kuwait, having invaded Iraq, invading Afghanistan, and invading Pakistan, I'm a believer. Here I am peacefully reading my Koran and missiles from the United States hit my neighbor. You've got a militant. Come hell or high water I'm going to get you one way or the other. Yes, even learn to fly – and kill myself to destroy your World Trade Towers.

Now the Secretary of State says our mission is to make sure Al Qaeda can't train in Afghanistan and become a threat to the security of the United States. Remember, on 9/11 the then Secretary of State reported that Al Qaeda was in forty-five countries, including the United States, but not in Iraq. The headlines blare that an Afghan immigrant, planning to blow up New York, has now been captured. Actually, the "Afghan immigrant" is a United States Citizen that trained in Pakistan. The Secretary's mission could be spread to forty-five countries, including the United States.

Five years ago, I went with Ted Stevens, Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and Senator John Warner, Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, into Pakistan. At the time, a Gallup poll showed 82% of Pakistanis looked upon Osama bin Laden as a freedom fighter. Our own President and the United States was less than 10%

popular. We've spent eight years in Afghanistan, and what do we have to show for it? The superpower has been brought to its knees and we've energized terrorism. A year ago, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, said: "... in a counterinsurgency, if you're not winning, you're losing." And we weren't winning. Again in March, Admiral Mullen said we're losing. Now, the Commander on the ground, General McChrystal, said we're not winning. We're losing.

But we've created a hell of a lot of terrorism. Insurgency used to be in isolated areas. Now the generals tell us insurgency has spread to all sections of Afghanistan. Afghanistan has never attacked the United States or been a threat to our security. In fact, Afghanistan was our ally in *Charlie Wilson's War*, the only war we've won since World War II. Saudi Arabians who trained in Afghanistan attacked the United States. In the Muslim world, more important than freedom and democracy is tribe and religion. We are not going to teach warlords to like democracy and grow wheat instead of poppies. Apparently, McChrystal now wants 120 thousand U. S. troops to stop killing civilians. Six hundred thousand

troops didn't win in Vietnam, a country of 16 million. Afghanistan, tribal as it is, with 31 million, will not be secured with 120 thousand or 600 thousand troops. The army works in three shifts. A hundred and twenty thousand troops means thirty thousand for Kandahar and thirty thousand for Kabul, with sixty thousand for the rest of the country. You've already run out of troops.

America's GIs have been brave. I hate to use President Obama's term, but the generals are stupid. After eight years of war, we're losing – only to have turned Afghanistan and Pakistan into terroristic turmoil. My friend, Senator Kit Bond, complains that President Obama has time to go to Copenhagen for the Olympics, but not time to listen to his generals. That's our trouble. Listening to the generals is the one thing Commander in Chief George W. Bush was doing for eight years. Now the generals say we have a better chance of winning by not only stopping the killing of civilians but deploying troops who have already been to Afghanistan. That's the crowd that knows the mission is futile. Out!

Senator Hollings of South Carolina served 38 years in the United States Senate, and for many years was Chairman of the Commerce, Space, Science & Transportation Committee. He is the author of the recently published book, [Making Government Work](#) (University of South Carolina Press, 2008).

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