

Democrats unveil midterm election platform: a blueprint for endless war

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The following is a statement issued by Socialist Equality Party candidate for US Senate from New York, Bill Van Auken.

The Democrats unveiled the first major element of their campaign platform for the 2006 midterm elections Wednesday, making it plain that the party intends to cynically adapt to the mass hostility that exists within the American people to the US war in Iraq, while pledging to continue that war and even escalate the buildup of American militarism.

The statement, entitled “Real Security,” was presented at Washington’s Union Station by Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, together with other Congress members, as well as Clinton’s former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former NATO commander and unsuccessful Democratic presidential candidate Wesley Clark—both of whom played key roles in the 1999 US war against Yugoslavia.

The thrust of this document, reiterated by the party’s Congressional leaders, is that the Bush administration has bungled the war in Iraq and the overall “global war on terror,” and that the Democrats can do a more competent job of waging both.

The underlying premise is the same as that employed by the Bush administration to terrorize the American people into accepting an illegal and unprovoked war abroad and historic attacks on basic democratic rights at home: that there exists some omnipresent terrorist threat that makes “national security” the overriding priority to which all else must be subordinated.

The Democrats, no less than the Republicans, promote the big lie that the September 11, 2001 attacks—an event that has yet to be seriously explained or investigated—make it a matter of self defense for the US to carry out “preemptive” war against largely defenseless countries and to continue the vast expansion of American military might.

In a sense, in elaborating its 2006 election strategy the Democratic Party has turned inside out the cowardly policy that it adopted—to such disastrous effect—in the last midterm election in 2002. Then, the Democrats decided to ignore the looming war in Iraq—after trying to get the issue off the table by voting to authorize the war on the eve of the election—running strictly on a domestic agenda.

Now, they are attempting to make “national security” their preeminent issue, declaring that “the first responsibility of our government is the security of every American” and that the Democrats possess a policy that is “both tough and smart.”

The Democratic document indicts the Bush administration not for having launched an illegal and immoral war of aggression that has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and over 2,300 American military personnel, but rather for failing to succeed in this criminal venture.

“The war in Iraq began with manipulated intelligence and no plan for success,” the document states. No, the war began with a massive propaganda campaign of lies, in which the Democratic Party leadership was a full and indispensable participant.

For Democrats to now complain that they were victims of “manipulated intelligence” is a patent fraud. Tens of millions of people around the world, and millions in the US, took to the streets to oppose the Iraq war because they understood perfectly well that the Bush administration’s claims about weapons of mass destruction and Iraqi terrorist ties were lies. That the Democratic leadership chose to accept and echo them was not a matter of gullibility, but rather of class interest.

The war in Iraq was a consensus policy within the American ruling elite: a conscious decision to utilize US military might to seize oil resources and strategic positions in the Middle East as a means of furthering the drive for US global hegemony at the expense of American capitalism’s economic rivals in Europe and Asia. What differences existed—and exist today—were strictly of a tactical character about how best such a war could be prepared and executed.

The Democrats will continue this war and have no intention of turning the 2006 midterm election into a referendum on whether US troops should be withdrawn. While polls indicate that not only a majority of the American people, but a majority of the soldiers deployed in Iraq as well, want an end to the war and a withdrawal of American troops, the Democratic Party is not proposing anything of the sort.

The party’s election statement calls only for “the Iraqis assuming primary responsibility for securing and governing their country” and “the responsible redeployment of US forces.”

These ambiguous formulations are in no way distinguishable from the policy of the Bush White House. The call for “responsible redeployment” means that US troops will remain in Iraq until all resistance to the US takeover of the country is crushed. To the extent that a tactical shift is suggested, it is one in which American forces would be redeployed to permanent bases, utilizing air strikes and rapid reaction forces to suppress a hostile population. It is a prescription for a protracted colonial war which

promises an even more horrendous death toll among Iraqi civilians.

The statement continues, vowing that the Democrats will “insist that Iraqis make the political compromises necessary to unite their country and defeat the insurgency.” How such insistence on what policies the Iraqis must follow is consistent with the document’s vow to ensure “full Iraqi sovereignty” is not explained. Clearly, the aim of the Democrats, just like the Republicans, is to install an obedient client state that will defend US interests, accept US bases and control of Iraqi oil fields and assist in repressing any popular opposition.

Nor does the Democratic plan stop at Iraq. It vows to “eliminate Osama bin Laden” and to “finish the job in Afghanistan, and end the threat posed by the Taliban.” In other words, the party proposes an escalation of the long simmering US war in Central Asia.

Moreover, it pledges to “redouble efforts to stop nuclear weapons development in Iran and North Korea.” While the document makes no mention of how the party intends to accomplish this goal, leading Democrats, such as New York’s Senator Hillary Clinton, have repeatedly attacked Bush from the right on this issue, demanding a more aggressive policy, particularly against Iran.

While laying the political foundations for still more US wars, the document also promises to make concrete preparations to execute them.

It pledges to “rebuild a state-of-the-art military by making the needed investments in equipment and manpower so that we can project power to protect America wherever and whenever necessary.”

The suggestion that the Bush administration, which succeeded this year in passing—with Democratic approval—a record \$440 billion Pentagon budget, has failed to make “needed investments” in the military is breathtaking. The gargantuan Pentagon budget already amounts to more than the combined military spending of every other nation on the planet and has been fed through the systematic slashing of funding for vital social needs.

The “Real Security” plan proposes to “double the size of our Special Forces” and “increase our human intelligence capabilities.” In other words, it envisions a substantial increase in the US military’s waging of dirty wars against insurgent peoples—the specialty of the Special Forces—as well as a further expansion of US spying.

Significantly, in the entire document there is no mention of the Bush administration’s illegal domestic wiretapping operation—which after barely a month has been abandoned as an issue by the Democratic leadership—and indeed no statement pledging to uphold democratic rights at all.

In every election campaign, socialists take a principled position of rejecting the argument of voting for the Democrats as the “lesser of two evils” on the grounds that together with the Republicans this party is a key component of a two-party system that serves to defend the interests of the ruling elite. To back a supposedly less reactionary Democrat against a Republican only serves to derail the necessary struggle to establish the political independence of working people from both big business parties.

In 2006, however, as this document issued by the Democratic congressional leadership makes clear, the “lesser evil” argument fails on its face. To a large extent, the Democrats are challenging the Bush administration from the right.

There are some who are attempting to mount primary challenges to those like Hillary Clinton, who have functioned as willing accomplices of the Bush administration in launching and continuing the war in Iraq. They claim to be engaged in a struggle for the “soul of the Democratic Party.” The Socialist Equality Party says unequivocally to anyone contemplating support for such a campaign: don’t waste your time. The Democratic Party has no soul; it sold it, and at a good price.

Leading party officials have either been drawn from the ranks of the super-rich or—like the Clintons—have become immensely wealthy through connections forged with big business while in office. A prime example of the real interests represented by this party can be found in the person of California Senator Dianne Feinstein, whose husband Richard Blum owns major interests in firms that have reaped hundreds of millions of dollars from military contracts supporting the war in Iraq.

The unpostponable task posed before all those seeking a means to fight war, social reaction and attacks on democratic rights is a decisive break with the Democrats and the building of a new independent party of the working class, based on a perspective of socialism and internationalism.

This is the purpose of the Socialist Equality Party’s intervention in the 2006 election campaign. We will fight in this election to give voice to the mass antiwar sentiment, campaigning on a program demanding the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all US troops from Iraq, Afghanistan and the entire region. Our campaign demands that all those responsible for launching this unprovoked and illegal war be held accountable through prosecution for war crimes, and that the US government compensate both the Iraqi people for the death and destruction this war has inflicted upon their country, as well as the American soldiers wounded in this conflict and the families of those who have been killed.

We urge all those who support these demands to join in this fight. Contact the Socialist Equality Party and the *World Socialist Web Site* to become part of this campaign, participating in the petition drives to place SEP candidates on the ballot and organizing meetings to discuss our party’s program.

The purpose of this campaign is not merely to provide a means for those opposed to the war in Iraq to express themselves at the polls, but to lay the political foundations for the emergence of a new mass party fighting to put an end to militarism through the socialist transformation of American society.



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