

# McCain adviser suggests that Republican campaign would benefit from another 9/11 attack

Patrick Martin  
25 June 2008

A senior adviser to the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, John McCain, in the course of an interview with *Fortune* magazine made public Monday, declared that a new terrorist attack like September 11, 2001 would be good for his candidate's electoral prospects. Such an event "certainly would be a big advantage to him," declared Charles R. Black Jr., in a comment that even the monthly business magazine felt compelled to describe as "startling."

Black added that the assassination last December of former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, while "unfortunate," had given McCain a boost in the final days before the New Hampshire primary, by focusing public attention on a major international crisis. "His knowledge and ability to talk about it reemphasized that this is the guy who's ready to be Commander-in-Chief. And it helped us," Black said.

Within hours of the publication of his comments on the magazine's web site, Black's views were being disavowed by McCain. Black eventually appeared before a press gathering on Monday afternoon to make the ritual "apology" that is always offered as a signal that those doing the apologizing want to shut down any further public discussion.

But McCain himself has made remarks analogous to those of Black. On the day of Bhutto's murder, he told CNN there might be a positive impact on his struggling campaign for the Republican nomination. "I'm the one with the experience, the knowledge and the judgment," he said in an interview with CNN anchor Dana Bash. "So perhaps it may serve to enhance those credentials."

Press reports on Tuesday noted that McCain had made a similar comment in 2004, when he described a video released by Osama bin Laden, on the eve of the presidential vote, as "very helpful" to the reelection of President Bush.

In the same *Fortune* article that quoted Black, McCain was asked to name "the biggest single threat to the American economy." He answered by citing, not unemployment,

financial collapse, exploding oil prices or the huge trade deficit, but another terrorist attack. "I would think that the absolute gravest threat is the struggle that we're in against radical Islamic extremism, which can affect, if they prevail, our very existence," he said. "Another successful attack on the United States of America could have devastating consequences."

Besides the bizarre character of the suggestion that a handful of Islamic fundamentalist terrorists could "prevail" or threaten the "very existence" of the United States, the comment demonstrates that McCain is running a one-note campaign, in which the answer to every issue and every problem is the "war on terror." Now trailing by significant margins in opinion polls—a Bloomberg/*Los Angeles Times* poll published Tuesday put him behind Obama by 15 points—McCain sees his only chance of success is to, quite literally, terrify the American people into electing him president.

Obama campaign spokesman Bill Burton called Black's comments "a complete disgrace." But he went on to use the controversy as an occasion for burnishing Obama's own credentials as commander-in-chief in the "war on terror." Burton said, "Barack Obama will turn the page on these failed policies and this cynical and divisive brand of politics so that we can unite this nation around a common purpose to finish the fight against al-Qaeda."

There was no effort, either by the Democratic candidate or the media, to explore the real significance of Black's remark. This is anything but a "gaffe," or rather, the gaffe is that Black blurted out something that is widely discussed in the inner circles of the McCain campaign, the Republican Party and the Bush White House—and, more than likely, in the highest echelons of the Pentagon and CIA as well—but which is not intended for public consumption. As Fox News correspondent Carl Cameron observed Tuesday, Black "got in trouble for saying what everyone is talking about."

Black is a long-time Republican Party operative, who has

also served as a Washington lobbyist for a who's who of right-wing dictatorships and political gangsters.

He entered national politics as the political director of Young Americans for Freedom, the far-right organization that opposed the mass movement of youth and students against the Vietnam War, and then worked for the first Senate campaign of ultra-rightist Jesse Helms in North Carolina in 1972. Black became the founding chairman of the National Conservative Political Action Committee, and rose to become political director of the Republican National Committee, where he mentored Lee Atwater, the principal political hit-man for President George H. W. Bush, and Karl Rove, who played the same role for the younger President Bush.

Black was a top adviser to the presidential campaign of Ronald Reagan in 1980, when the Republican Party was fearful that the Carter administration would pull off an "October surprise"—such as obtaining the release of the US Embassy hostages being held in Iran—that might tip the balance in the election. There have long been reports that Reagan representatives headed by William Casey, later head of the CIA, met with Iranian officials in Paris to make sure that no such deal was struck. The Iranian regime held the hostages until the final hours of the Carter administration, releasing them only as Reagan took the oath of office.

With the Republicans in power, Black sought to cash in financially, founding the lobbying firm of Black, Manafort and Stone, which became the Washington representative of such right-wing dictators as Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines, Mohamed Siad Barre of Somalia and Nigerian Gen. Ibrahim Babangida.

Black's most prominent international client was Jonas Savimbi, whose anticommunist UNITA movement, backed by the Reagan administration and apartheid South Africa, waged a brutal war against the Cuban-backed nationalist regime in Angola.

In the mid-1990s, Black's lobbying firm acquired another prominent "dissident" as a client: Ahmed Chalabi, the exiled Iraqi banker and convicted swindler, whose Iraqi National Congress fed false information about Baghdad's alleged "weapons of mass destruction" and lobbied ceaselessly for a US invasion of Iraq.

Black's activities were not merely mercenary. He was motivated by reactionary politics and loyalty to the American state machine. He told the *Washington Post* in a recent interview that he had never represented foreign governments and political movements "without first talking to the State Department and the White House and clearing with them that the work would be in the interest of US foreign policy."

These undoubted connections to the US military-

intelligence apparatus, as well as Black's long history in the concoction of right-wing political provocations, lend a particularly sinister character to the latest incident.

It is not just a matter that Black has breached political decorum by making a public estimate of the potential political impact of a major terrorist attack, as the limited media coverage of the dispute and the Obama campaign's denunciation of the "politics of fear" suggest.

The question not asked by either the media or the Democrats is whether, having determined that a terrorist attack would benefit the McCain campaign, sections of the state apparatus and the Bush administration are actively preparing such an event, either by permitting an ongoing conspiracy to unfold unobstructed—as was likely the case on 9/11 itself—or by actively engineering such an atrocity.

There is nothing farfetched about such a conjecture. On the contrary, many of Black's own international clients engaged in such activities—planting bombs, staging phony "terrorist" attacks, concocting pretexts for arresting political opponents or suspending elections. The US intelligence apparatus, of course, has long experience in such methods of provocation and political manipulation, as do the Israeli secret services.

As with the prospect of US or Israeli air strikes on Iran, or some other reckless military adventure, during the months leading up to the election, the driving force of events is not the conduct of some foreign enemy—Al Qaeda, Iran, Syria, etc.—but the ever-deepening crisis of American capitalism itself.

The political representatives of the American ruling elite—and this includes the Democratic Party and Senator Obama, just as much as the Republicans and McCain—have no policy to alleviate the growth of unemployment and inflation, to halt a financial crisis whose dimensions are consistently underestimated by the media, or to assuage the seething discontent among tens of millions of working people who face an increasingly difficult struggle to survive.

Increasingly, the financial aristocracy is turning to methods of war and provocation to distract and disorient the public and create a political climate in which any expression of social discontent can be demonized and suppressed. This is the real meaning of the comments of Charles Black.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**