

Clinton launches appeal for right-wing Republican support

Tom Hall
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With Donald Trump effectively winning the Republican nomination on Tuesday after his victory in the Indiana primary, Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton is moving aggressively to attract layers of the Republican Party opposed to Trump's candidacy by portraying herself as the more reliable figure to head the US military-intelligence apparatus.

The Clinton campaign sent out a press release Wednesday boasting that Clinton would receive support from many top Republicans who would prefer the Democrat to Trump. The press release cited statements from 41 Republican politicians and commentators expressing either opposition to Trump in the general election or open support for Hillary Clinton as the better candidate. This was the first official response by the Clinton campaign to Trump's clinching of the nomination.

The list of Republicans opposing Trump includes two former heads of the Republican National Committee; four staffers for the campaigns of Mitt Romney and John McCain, the two previous Republican presidential candidates; and three former members of the George W. Bush administration. Right-wing pundits like neoconservative William Kristol and George Will are on the list as well.

Most of these figures whose views Clinton proudly cites are opposed to Trump, not because of his fascistic demagoguery, but because of his claimed opposition to the war in Iraq and to other US interventions in the Middle East. They prefer Clinton, who voted in 2002 to authorize the war and who is, in their judgment, the more hawkish of the two candidates. She is seen as a more reliable and time-tested instrument of American imperialism than Trump, whose foreign policy is seen as too "isolationist" and erratic.

Thus, former George W. Bush speechwriter Peter

Wehner, who also served in the Reagan and Bush Sr. administrations, complains in a *New York Times* op-ed (cited by the Clinton press release) that Trump lacks "military experience" and is ignorant of things such as the so-called "nuclear triad" of deployment options for nuclear weapons utilized by the American military. Worse, according to Wehner, are Trump's complimentary remarks for Russian President Vladimir Putin, against whose country the US foreign policy establishment is openly preparing for war. "The prospect of Donald Trump as commander in chief should send a chill down the spine of every American," Wehner concludes.

The fact that Trump is being assailed by Republicans for being "soft" on foreign policy is an indication that a massive escalation of militarism is being prepared in the aftermath of the November elections, regardless of which party wins. Trump himself has publicly called for the assassination of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, reiterated his support for torture, including methods "a hell of a lot worse" than waterboarding, among other blatant war crimes. In a major foreign policy speech last month, the Republican candidate declared that under a Trump administration, "We will develop, build and purchase the best equipment known to mankind. Our military dominance must be unquestioned, and I mean unquestioned, by anybody and everybody."

As for Hillary Clinton, during her tenure as Obama's Secretary of State she played a leading role in multiple crimes of American imperialism, including the destruction of Libya, fomenting civil war in Syria, and drone warfare in many countries. While Trump offers bellicose rhetoric at campaign rallies, Clinton already has the blood of countless people on her hands.

On Thursday, the Clinton campaign associated itself with a new Republican attack on Trump, this time from

House Speaker Paul Ryan, who told CNN that he could not yet endorse Trump, even though he was the presumptive nominee of the Republican Party, until Trump gave him certain political assurances. Ryan said, “I think conservatives want to know, does he share our values and our principles on limited government, the proper role of the executive, adherence to the Constitution?”

This appears to be a reference both to Trump’s claims that as president he could order mass deportations and build a wall along the Mexico-US border without congressional approval, and to his professed opposition to the cuts in Social Security and Medicare embodied in the budget drafted by Ryan and the House Republicans. In Ryan’s interpretation, “limited government” does not refer to scaling back the gargantuan military-intelligence apparatus, the main threat to the democratic rights of the American people, but destroying whatever remains of welfare-state spending.

The Clinton campaign hailed Ryan’s intervention under the headline, “Speaker Paul Ryan Joins Growing List of Conservatives Rebuking Trump as He Captures GOP Nomination.”

The Clinton camp has made clear that Wednesday’s press release was intended as the start of a broader campaign to win over sections of the Republican Party to her candidacy. During a CNN appearance on Wednesday, Clinton made further appeals for Republican support, calling Trump a “loose cannon” and declaring, “Let’s get off the red or the blue team. Let’s get on the American team.”

The effective clinching of the nomination by Trump, the first time that one of the main capitalist parties has chosen a nominee with a distinctly fascist character, has produced a deep crisis in the Republican Party. Both living former Republican presidents, George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush, have declined to officially endorse Trump in the aftermath of his securing the nomination, a virtually unprecedented snub. Eliot Cohen, former undersecretary of state in the George W. Bush administration (whose opposition to Trump was also cited by the Clinton campaign), openly called for the formation of a breakaway third party to oppose Trump in the general election in a recent *Washington Post* op-ed.

There has been considerable media commentary

about the strategic “debate” within the Clinton campaign, about whether to move to the right to appeal to layers of the Republican Party opposed to Trump, and turn them into “Clinton Republicans,” or to focus on winning over the supporters of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, who remains Clinton’s main rival for the Democratic nomination and who has pledged to support whoever is selected by the Democratic Party.

Whatever discussion took place, the decision has clearly been made. Clinton plans to run a right-wing campaign in the general election tailored towards the financial oligarchy and military-intelligence apparatus of which she is a leading representative. Voters in November will be asked to choose between two right-wing and deeply unpopular candidates, both pledged to a program of imperialist war abroad and repression and austerity at home.



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