

Mideast war architects back Clinton over Trump

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Retired Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, who has held top national security positions in Republican administrations going back to Richard Nixon, endorsed Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton Wednesday. Scowcroft was National Security Adviser to two presidents, Gerald Ford and George H. W. Bush, and played a major role in US policy in wars of aggression from Vietnam to the Persian Gulf.

In an email distributed to friends and associates, mainly in the Republican foreign policy establishment, and shared by them with the press, Scowcroft wrote that former Secretary of State Clinton “brings deep expertise in international affairs, and a sophisticated understanding of the world,” which he said were “essential for the Commander-in-Chief.”

Scowcroft sees eye-to-eye with Clinton in seeking to maintain the dominance of American imperialism in global politics. “Secretary Clinton shares my belief that America must remain the world’s indispensable leader,” he declared. “She understands that our leadership and engagement beyond our borders makes the world, and therefore the United States, more secure and prosperous.”

While not referring to Republican candidate Donald Trump, Scowcroft implicitly compared Clinton’s experience to Trump’s, writing, “Her longstanding relationships with a wide array of world leaders, and their sense of her as a strong and reliable counterpart, make her uniquely prepared for the highest office in the land.”

Scowcroft specifically cited Clinton’s role as Secretary of State during the Israeli war on Gaza in 2012, and in mobilizing “a global coalition to impose a sanctions regime on Iran.” He made no mention of Clinton’s support for the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, which Scowcroft himself opposed, or her advocacy of a

more aggressive US intervention in the Syrian civil war. Instead, he portrayed her as a cautious advocate of military force, saying, “She appreciates that it is essential to maintain our strong military advantage, but that force must only be used as a last resort.”

In endorsing Clinton, the 91-year-old Scowcroft is giving her the stamp of approval of the vast US military-intelligence apparatus, where he has played an important role for nearly half a century. A career Air Force officer, he went to work in the Nixon White House in 1969 as an assistant to Henry Kissinger, then Nixon’s national security adviser, moved to an advisory position with the Joint Chiefs of Staff (the Vietnam War was then at its height), before moving back to the White House in 1972 as military assistant to the president, then as Kissinger’s deputy from 1973 to 1975, a period that includes such crimes as the Christmas bombing of Hanoi and the US-backed military coup in Chile, in which tens of thousands were slaughtered.

In November 1975, President Gerald Ford named Scowcroft his national security adviser. During his 14 months in that position, the US government backed the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in which as many as 200,000 Timorese were killed by death squads of the military dictatorship.

Scowcroft left government after Ford’s defeat, taking a lucrative position at Kissinger Associates advising US corporations on foreign policy matters, serving on several advisory commissions under the Reagan administration, then returning to the White House as national security adviser for President George H. W. Bush from 1989 to 1993.

Among the major military operations launched by the US government during this period were the 1989 invasion of Panama, the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War,

in which hundreds of thousands of Iraqis were incinerated by US bombs and missiles, and the dispatch of troops to Somalia in 1992. Scowcroft also played a major behind-the-scenes role in the US policy during the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Scowcroft's one moment of public notoriety came when he visited Beijing in December 1989, six months after the Tiananmen Square massacre, and was televised warmly saluting the Chinese leaders and inviting them "as friends to resume our important dialogue."

In the subsequent political uproar, it was revealed that Scowcroft had actually visited Beijing previously, in July 1989, a few weeks after the bloodbath, to reassure the Stalinist butchers that the Bush administration's public denunciations were only for show. In reality, US imperialism welcomed the slaughter of Chinese workers and youth, which paved the way for the restoration of capitalism in China and the transformation of China into a cheap-labor haven for transnational corporations.

That such a figure embraces Hillary Clinton and publicly praises her views on foreign and military policy speaks volumes about the right-wing course that a second Clinton administration would adopt. If anything, Clinton has adopted an even more hawkish posture than Scowcroft, who opposed the 2002 authorization for the war against Iraq which Clinton voted for in the US Senate.

A second prominent Republican war criminal, former Pentagon official Richard Armitage, announced last week that he would vote for Clinton over Trump. Armitage has a record of involvement in the wars of US imperialism just as long as Scowcroft's, although he held less senior positions.

His backing of Clinton is perhaps even more revealing than Scowcroft's, because Armitage is a more hands-on militarist who has played a direct, personal role in some of the foulest crimes of American imperialism. A naval officer in Vietnam, Armitage is widely reported to have been involved in the Phoenix Program, in which more than 20,000 Vietnamese were assassinated by US special forces and CIA operatives. He later became a defense attaché at the US embassy in Saigon.

From 1976 to 1978, the former military-intelligence

operative ran an export-import business based in Bangkok, Thailand, allegedly part of the notorious CIA operation to export heroin from the Golden Triangle area of Burma, Thailand and Laos, where US-backed anti-communist Chinese warlords sustained their exile military forces by harvesting the crop.

After returning to the United States to work for Senate Republican leader Bob Dole, Armitage became a foreign policy adviser to candidate Ronald Reagan, moving on to increasingly high-level positions in the Pentagon. As Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (1983-1989) he was responsible for all international security, special operations and counter-terrorism programs during the period of intensive US arming of death squads in Central America and the covert war against Nicaragua.

The special prosecutor investigating the Iran-Contra scandal, Lawrence Walsh, reportedly considered indicting Armitage for his role—he certainly knew of and approved the shipment of Israeli weapons, supplied by the US, to Iran—but eventually decided that Armitage was not a central player.

Armitage followed his patron Colin Powell into the Bush administration, serving as Powell's chief deputy during his four years as Secretary of State (2001-2005), where he played an important role in promoting the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. He was also the official who leaked the name of CIA agent Valerie Plame to the media, in retaliation for statements by her husband, diplomat Joseph Wilson, opposing the war in Iraq.

Again, that such a thug for American imperialism, linked to assassinations, drug-peddling, gun-running and illegal wars, publicly declares his support for Democratic presidential candidate provides another yardstick for measuring the reactionary nature of both the Democratic Party and a future Clinton administration.



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