

Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren support General “Mad Dog” Mattis as head of Pentagon

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Former Democratic presidential candidate and self-proclaimed democratic socialist, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, and Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren were among the Democratic senators who joined their Republican counterparts in overwhelmingly approving General James “Mad Dog” Mattis to serve as President Donald Trump’s secretary of defense.

Sanders and Warren, leaders of the supposedly “progressive” wing of the Democratic Party, joined nearly every Democratic senator in giving their support to a general who is personally responsible for countless war crimes in Iraq.

As the commander of the 1st Marine Division, Mattis directed the bloody assault on Fallujah in 2004, which reduced the city to rubble and resulted in the deaths of untold thousands of civilians.

Mattis was appointed by former President Barack Obama in August 2010 to oversee Central Command, making him responsible for overseeing all of the US war and military operations in the Middle East, North East Africa, and Central Asia. Mattis served in that position until his retirement from the military in 2013.

Only one senator, New York Democrat Kirsten Gillibrand, voted against Mattis, on the grounds that he has not been out of the military for more than seven years before serving as secretary of defense, as is stipulated by law. Mattis was granted a waiver by Congress, with overwhelming Democratic Party support, making him only the second recently retired military member to head the Pentagon after General George Marshall in 1950, who had served as secretary of state before his tenure as secretary of defense.

Sanders also joined his Republican colleagues in voting to confirm retired General John Kelly to lead the

Department of Homeland Security. Kelly was the commander of Southern Command, responsible for US military operations in Central and South America, including the notorious military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, from September 2012 until January last year. Warren joined 10 other Democrats in voting against Kelly.

As head of Homeland Security, Kelly, who has advocated a more aggressive position towards immigrants in the United States and supports Trump’s calls for a wall on the Mexico border, will command the security forces tasked with policing the border and deporting immigrants.

The Democrats, including Sanders and Warren, have put up no significant resistance to Trump’s plan to fill out his cabinet with generals, far-right ideologues, and super-wealthy oligarchs. Instead they have sought to place pressure on the Trump administration from the right, promoting unsubstantiated allegations that Moscow “hacked” the 2016 election to the benefit of Trump, in order to get his nominees to stake out pro-war positions against Russia.

In his Congressional testimony last week Mattis distanced himself from Trump’s conciliatory positions regarding Moscow and singled out Russia as one of the leading threats to the US. Kelly also took an aggressive position against Russia in confirmation hearings.

While Sanders has not released a statement explaining his votes last Friday, those who followed his presidential primary campaign last year should not be surprised by his support for Generals Mattis and Kelly.

The generals who now take their place in Trump’s cabinet could just have easily found their place in a “progressive” Democratic administration under a

President Sanders. Senator Sanders consistently combined left populist rhetoric against social inequality and the “billionaire class” with an unwavering support for Barack Obama’s wars and foreign policy, as well as staking out nationalist and anti-immigrant positions.

During the Democratic primary, in which he faced the war-hawk and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Sanders made clear that he would continue the imperialist military operations waged by the Obama administration. He openly supported the deployment of hundreds of US Special Forces to Syria, and advocated for the intervention of Saudi and other Arab forces in the civil war stoked by the US and its allies.

The esteemed Senator endorsed the “kill lists” and drone assassination program utilized by Obama to kill without due process alleged terrorists, including American citizens, as well as thousands of civilians across the Middle East over the last eight years. Asked by NBC “Meet the Press” moderator Chuck Todd in late 2015 if he would use drones and Special Forces in military operations overseas, Sanders insisted that his foreign policy would involve “all of that and more.”

Sanders support for imperialist war goes hand-in-hand with his economic nationalism. He used his stump speeches during the primaries to scapegoat Mexican and Chinese workers for the problems confronting American workers. His nationalist and pro-capitalist politics were made clear in a Vox interview in July 2015 when he denounced an open borders immigration policy as a right-wing “Koch Brothers proposal” which “would make everybody in America poorer.”



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