The CIA Democrats: A balance sheet of the primaries

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With the end of the primary season, the Democratic Party leadership and their allies in the national security apparatus have completed the first stage of what might be termed a "friendly takeover" of the Democrats by candidates recruited from among military, CIA and civilian national security cadres.

The *World Socialist Web Site* first identified the phenomenon of the CIA Democrats in a series published in March. At the time we noted the large number of candidates drawn from the military-intelligence apparatus seeking Democratic nominations in competitive congressional districts. If the Democrats won the November election, we warned, such military-intelligence operatives would hold the balance of power in the new House of Representatives.

Of the 44 districts we identified in March—since grown to 46—military-intelligence candidates have won 30 nominations, a success rate of about 66 percent or two-thirds. That testifies to their extensive support from the Democratic Party leadership, from longtime financial backers of the Democrats, and from the top levels of the national security establishment.

There are 115 districts rated as competitive by the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) or by groups specializing in the district-by-district analysis of congressional races. The 30 military-intelligence candidates account for more than one quarter of the Democratic candidates in these districts, making them the largest single group, ahead of state and local politicians (26), lawyers (20), millionaires (15), other professionals (8), former Obama aides (3) and miscellaneous (13).

Most of the organizations that investigate and rate congressional races are projecting that the Democrats will win more than the 23 seats required to take control of the House, and possibly as many as 50 or 60. In the latter scenario, CIA Democrats could make up as much as half of the new class of first-time representatives.

There is one particularly ominous aspect of the *politics* of this group of candidates. Despite their personal involvement in the wars of the past two decades, in Iraq and Afghanistan, and in the overall operation of the vast US national-security establishment, many of the CIA Democrats say nothing at all on their websites about foreign and military policy. This strongly suggests that they are backers of an aggressive expansion of US military intervention and political subversion around the world, but they choose to conceal that fact from the voters of their districts.

What follows is a complete list of the 30 military-intelligence Democrats who are on the ballot November 6, together with the details of their careers in the national security apparatus. The list includes new candidates not previously identified, and new information on all the candidates.

The candidates are listed by alphabetical order of their state. The facts and photographs are all taken from the candidates' own websites. It is notable that they see long records with the national-security apparatus as their principal credentials for office, not as something to downplay. Equally notable, not one of these candidates draws any negative, let alone anti-war, conclusions from their own participation in wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen and other countries.

California: Fourth District

Jessica Morse was Iraq country coordinator for the State Department in the course of "over a decade as a national security strategist," according to her website. She worked for the Agency for International Development, a longtime CIA front, then as adviser to the US Pacific Command, where she "strengthened the US-India defense relationship … and worked to counter terrorist threats in South Asia." She actually outraised five-term Republican Congressman Tom McClintock through June 30, the last reporting period, but is considered an underdog in the race. The district extends from the Sacramento suburbs south along the Sierra Nevada range and its foothills.

Colorado: Sixth District

Jason Crow is one of the first candidates to be promoted by the DCCC under its "red-to-blue" program, favoring him over several primary rivals. He is a veteran of the 82nd Airborne Division, leading a paratrooper platoon during the invasion of Iraq. According to his website, "Shortly after returning from Iraq he joined the U.S. Army's elite 75th Ranger Regiment, serving two additional tours—this time in Afghanistan, as part of the Joint Special Operations Task Force, where Jason served along the Pakistan border and achieved the rank of Captain." He has spent the past dozen years as a lawyer for business interests in Denver. Crow has matched five-term Republican Congressman Mike Coffman dollar for dollar in fundraising and is considered the favorite in the Denver suburban district.

Florida: Sixth District

Nancy Soderberg is a longtime US foreign policy figure going back to the Clinton administration. She was the foreign-policy chief of the 1992 Clinton-Gore campaign, then staff director at the National Security Council, then deputy assistant to the president for national security affairs, then an alternate US ambassador to the United Nations. She is identified with such policies as the US intervention in Bosnia and the bombing of

Kosovo. She has spent much of her time since then heading private overseas operations aligned with US foreign policy, including the International Crisis Group. She is on the Board of Advisors to the President of the Naval Postgraduate School and Naval War College. Soderberg has far outraised the Republican nominee, Michael Waltz, in the race to succeed Ron DeSantis, who is the Republican candidate for governor, although the race is considered a toss-up.

Florida: Twelfth District

Christopher Hunter joined the FBI after the 9/11 attacks, quitting his job as a state prosecutor. He worked as an agent "focusing on counterintelligence, counterterrorism, and international fugitive investigations." His website is long on militaristic bluster, declaring, "Superior firepower, aggressive counterterrorism measures, and sophisticated intelligence operations must drive our security strategy" and demanding "an uncompromising victory over Russia and its tyrannical regime." Hunter moved from the FBI to a position as a federal prosecutor, then quit the Department of Justice last December to launch his campaign. He is considered a longshot possibility against three-term Republican Congressman Gus Bilirakis, in a district based in the suburbs of Tampa-St. Petersburg.

Florida: Eighteenth District

Lauren Baer was a legal adviser to both Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and her successor John Kerry, as well as to UN Ambassador Samantha Power. After leaving the State Department, she joined Albright Stonebridge Group, the global strategy firm founded by former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. Her website declares that she will take her years of foreign policy experience to Congress, where she will ensure funding for the Pentagon, "because we have the strongest, best equipped, and most well-trained military in the world." Baer trails first-term Republican Congressman Brian Mast, himself an Army veteran who lost both his legs in Afghanistan, in fundraising and in the polls of voters in the district on Florida's Atlantic Coast, centered on West Palm Beach.

Illinois: Twelfth District

Brendan Kelly is one of a half dozen of the military-intelligence candidates who launched political careers prior to this year. The son of civilian Pentagon employees, he grew up on Scott Air Force Base, joined ROTC in college and was commissioned as a Navy officer. After a stint that included deployment in the Middle East, he returned to southern Illinois, obtained a law degree, and became a federal prosecutor, then State's Attorney for St. Clair County, in the Illinois suburbs of St. Louis. He represented the National District Attorneys Association as an observer of the prosecution of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay. He is in a toss-up race against two-term Republican Congressman Mike Bost and has matched the incumbent in fundraising.

Kentucky: Sixth District

Amy McGrath is perhaps the most heavily publicized of the military-intelligence candidates, and has raised more than $3 million, an enormous sum for a previously unknown political figure. McGrath was a career Marine Corps fighter pilot with 89 missions over Iraq and Afghanistan. Her military career is the axis of her candidacy. Her website home page identifies her as Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.) Alongside the standard photo of the candidate with her husband and children is a picture of McGrath in uniform standing next to a jet and a photo of the fighter jet itself. McGrath is considered a slight favorite against three-term Republican Congressman Andy Barr.

Maine: Second District

Jared Golden enlisted in the Marines after 9/11 and spent four years as an infantryman, deploying to Afghanistan in 2004 and to Iraq in 2005-2006. He is the only rank-and-file soldier among the 30 military-intelligence Democrats, and the only one to acknowledge the negative impact of the war on American troops, revealing his own diagnosis with post-traumatic stress disorder. He was clearly committed to the US wars, however, returning to Afghanistan as a volunteer schoolteacher, and then going to work as a staff member for the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, where he worked for Maine's Republican Senator Susan Collins. Golden began his own political career in 2014, winning a seat, as a Democrat, in the Maine House of Representatives, rising to Democratic whip in 2016, and winning the nomination for Congress with the support of the party establishment this year. He is in a toss-up race with heavily funded two-term Republican Congressman Bruce Poliquin.

Maryland: First District

Jesse Colvin spent six years in Army intelligence, including four combat deployments to Afghanistan and a year near the Demilitarized Zone between North Korea and South Korea. According to his campaign biography, "I am a proud graduate of the US Army's Ranger Course, the premier leadership school in the military … I led intelligence teams whose work facilitated capture/kill missions of Taliban, al-Qaeda and other terrorist leaders. I managed a lethal drone program. I ran human intelligence sources. Everyday, my team and I made dozens of decisions whose outcomes carried life and death consequences for my fellow Rangers, our Afghan partners, and Afghan civilians." Colvin is a distinct underdog against four-term Republican Congressman Andy Harris, in a largely rural district that includes the entire Eastern Shore of Maryland.

Michigan: First District

Matthew Morgan had a 20-year career in the Marine Corps "where I would deploy routinely overseas, culminating in several senior staff roles where I'd provide counsel to numerous military leaders, including the secretary of defense." He did two tours in Iraq and also worked in

counterterrorism on the Horn of Africa. He was unopposed for the Democratic nomination in the First District, a largely rural area that includes the entire Upper Peninsula and the northern third of the Lower Peninsula. He is running against first-term Republican Congressman Jack Bergman, himself a retired Marine Corps lieutenant general who once commanded the Marine Reserves.

Michigan: Eighth District

Elissa Slotkin has one of the longest records as a leading participant in the crimes of American imperialism, despite her relative youth. The 42-year-old spent 15 years in national-security positions, including three tours as a CIA agent in Iraq, then worked on the National Security Council for George W. Bush and Barack Obama, rising to the position of Iraq director. The first Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte, an arch war criminal, hired her as a top assistant. She later moved to the Pentagon, where, as a principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, her areas of responsibility included drone warfare, "homeland defense" and cyber warfare. She has far outraised her Republican opponent, two-term Republican Congressman Mike Bishop and is projected to take his seat (see: "Elissa Slotkin: A CIA Democrat runs for Congress in Michigan").

Minnesota: First District

Dan Feehan was both a front-line soldier and a civilian Pentagon official. According to his campaign biography, from 2005 to 2009, Feehan "served as an active duty soldier and completed two combat tours of duty as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom," the Orwellian title given by the Bush administration to the US invasion and occupation of that country. He then joined the Obama administration, first as a White House aide, then as an acting assistant secretary of defense. He is a slight favorite in the First District, which includes the southern tier of Minnesota, along the border with Iowa, which was previously held by Democrat Tim Walz, now the party's candidate for governor. Feehan has substantially outraised Republican candidate Jim Hagedorn, who lost to Walz in 2016.

New Jersey: Third District

Andy Kim was a war planner and civilian strategist, not a soldier. According to his campaign biography, "I worked at the White House on countering terrorism and protecting our country, advised the Secretary of Defense and the Pentagon on national security, and I served in Afghanistan as a strategic adviser to Generals David Petraeus and John Allen. When I served in Afghanistan, no one asked me if I was a Democrat or a Republican. We all worked together focused on the mission of keeping our nation safe." He does not detail his final position: two years as director for Iraq on Obama's National Security Council. He is in a toss-up race with Republican Congressman Tom MacArthur, who has held the south Jersey district for two terms.

New Jersey: Fourth District

Josh Welle graduated from the Naval Academy and spent 12 years on active duty, including a tour in Afghanistan and four shipboard deployments to the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Europe. According to his campaign biography, "His responsibilities spanned from strategically advising the Ambassador in Kabul to being Executive Officer of a Navy Mine Countermeasure ship in the Persian Gulf." He then founded a software company developing mobile apps for the Pentagon. Welle is a heavy underdog to 19-term Republican Congressman Christopher Smith, long identified for his fanatical opposition to abortion rights, but Welle has raised nearly as much money. He has denounced Smith for refusing to condemn Trump's August press conference appearance side-by-side with Vladimir Putin, declaring, "The people of the 4th District deserve a representative who protects our national security institutions and long-standing interests around the world."

New Jersey: Seventh District

Tom Malinowski is a long-time apologist for what might be called "human rights imperialism." An aide to the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, he spent the 1990s in the State Department and Clinton White House, mainly as a speechwriter. From 2001 to 2014 he headed the Washington office of Human Rights Watch, during which time the NGO was firmly aligned with US foreign policy. This became manifest when in 2014 Malinowski joined the Obama administration under Secretary of State John Kerry as assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor. He specialized in human rights charges directed against groups and states targeted by the US government: ISIS, Myanmar (until the military junta shifted from a pro-China to a pro-US orientation), Sri Lanka (until its government did the same), North Korea and Ukraine. Meanwhile, such US allies as Saudi Arabia, Thailand and Israel received no such pressure. He has significantly outraised five-term Republican Congressman Leonard Lance, and he is favored to win the seat in the upscale western suburbs of the New York metropolitan area.

New Jersey: Eleventh District

Mikie Sherrill graduated from the Naval Academy and became a helicopter pilot, with 10 years' active service in Europe and the Middle East, before becoming a federal prosecutor. According to her campaign biography, while in the military, "Mikie worked on the Battle Watch Floor in the European Theater during the Iraq invasion, and served as a Flag Aide to the Deputy Commander in Chief of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet. She also served as a Russian policy officer and worked on the implementation of our nuclear treaty obligations and oversaw the relationship between the U.S. Navy and Russian Federation Navy." Perhaps the last assignment accounts for the warmth of her embrace by the Democratic Party establishment, which pumped funds into her campaign, effectively clearing the primary contest for a seat left open by the retirement of 12-term Republican Congressman Rodney Freylingheusen. Sherrill is heavily favored over Republican candidate Jay Webber in the district, one of the wealthiest in the United States, located in the suburban region west of Paterson, New Jersey. She has outraised Webber by $4.2 million to less than $600,000, according to the latest FEC

report.

New York: Eleventh District

Max Rose, according to his campaign biography, "is a proud veteran of the U.S. Army. He served as an active duty officer in Afghanistan from 2012-2013, and earned a Bronze Star, Purple Heart and Combat Infantryman Badge. He continues his service today in the National Guard, and is also Ranger-qualified." After active duty, Rose went to work as a special assistant to the Brooklyn District Attorney, while remaining an officer in the National Guard. During August, he took a two-week break from campaigning to participate in small-unit training exercises. He has slightly outraised two-term Republican Congressman Dan Donovan in a district that includes all of Staten Island and part of Brooklyn.

North Carolina: Ninth District

Dan McCready, a Marine Corps veteran turned "clean energy" multimillionaire, claims to have found Jesus in Iraq, where he was baptized in water from the Euphrates River. He joined the Marines after 9/11, commanded a unit of 65 men during the 2007 "surge" in Iraq, and ended his wartime deployment as a captain. He went on to get an MBA at Harvard and work as a consultant for McKinsey & Co. before launching his own company. After three-term Republican Congressman Robert Pittenger was defeated in the primary by fundamentalist pastor Mark Harris, who advocates the subordination of married women to their husbands, McCready became the favorite to win the seat. He has outraised Harris three-to-one and went into the fall campaign with an even larger lead in cash-on-hand.

Ohio: Seventh District

Ken Harbaugh is the son and grandson of Air Force combat pilots. He joined the Navy and became a pilot himself, flying reconnaissance missions in the Middle East and the Korean peninsula. His campaign website features photos of Harbaugh in military gear and posing with his Navy plane. After nine years in the military, he went to Yale for a law degree, joined the McKinsey consulting firm, and then became chief operations officer and later president of Team Rubicon Global, an organization that mobilizes military veterans to deploy to natural disasters in the US and around the world. He has been considerably outraised by Republican Congressman Robert Gibbs, who has held the Canton-based district for three terms.

Pennsylvania: Sixth District

Chrissy Houlahan , a 10-year veteran of the Air Force, leaving it as a captain, has been virtually guaranteed a seat in Congress by the Democratic Party leadership, which cleared the primary of any rivals for the nomination in a district left open by the sudden retirement of two-term Republican Congressman Ryan Costello. The 42-year-old decided not to run for reelection after the court-ordered redrawing of Pennsylvania district lines left him with a heavily Democratic electorate. In addition to outraising her Republican opponent Greg McCauley by $2.8 million to $174,000 in campaign funds, Houlahan has been the recipient of a flood of favorable media coverage. The most fawning portrayal came from Frank Bruni of the *New York Times*: "Usually you only get to dream about a candidate like Chrissy Houlahan. People in the Philadelphia suburbs actually get to vote for her."

Pennsylvania: Tenth District

George Scott was a career Army intelligence officer, on active duty for 20 years, including the US invasion of Panama, the first Persian Gulf War and Operation Enduring Freedom, the official name of the ongoing "war on terror" launched in 2001. He retired as a lieutenant colonel after commanding a battalion of over 1,800 soldiers. Scott then entered the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg and is now pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in East Berlin, Pennsylvania. After the death of Senator John McCain, Scott issued a statement saying, "He shall be remembered as a true patriot, a political titan, and a respected statesman worthy of every distinction. He will be sorely missed by our nation." Scott is regarded as an underdog against three-term Republican Congressman Scott Perry, although the district's boundaries were altered to include the whole city of Harrisburg.

Pennsylvania: Seventeenth District

Conor Lamb won a special election earlier this year in the 18th Congressional District, in the southwest corner of the state. However, after redistricting moved his home into the 17th District, he is now challenging three-term Republican Congressman Keith Rothfus. Lamb's campaign biography begins by identifying him as "a Marine and former federal prosecutor," and he emphasized his military background during the campaign for the special election. He was on active duty in the Far East until 2013, as a captain and Judge Advocate General (in effect, a Navy prosecutor). He is now a major in the Marine Corps Reserves. Lamb has raised more than $7 million this year and spent $5 million on the campaign in the special election. He is considered a heavy favorite over Rothfus because the new 17th district lines were drawn more favorably to the Democratic Party.

Texas: Twenty-First District

Joseph Kopser is a West Point graduate and career Army officer. According to his campaign biography, "After volunteering for air assault and airborne training, Joseph headed for Ranger school, the Army's toughest program outside of war. Designed to provide intense training on four hours of sleep and one meal per day, the training pushed Joseph to the limits of his own physical and emotional endurance." He became a West Point instructor, but after the US invasion of Iraq volunteered for assignment there and spent 14 months over two tours, much of it in Mosul. After his return to the US, he was assigned to a high-level

Pentagon job developing plans for the Future Combat Systems program, as well serving as a speechwriter and political adviser to top officials. After leaving the military in 2011, he developed a ride-sharing platform that was the basis for a company, RideScout, which he subsequently sold to Daimler-Benz, giving him the resources to enter politics. Kopser has raised more money than Republican Chip Roy in the race for a seat in the San Antonio-Austin region, left vacant by the retirement of 15-term Republican Congressman Lamar Smith, a notorious anti-immigrant demagogue.

Texas: Twenty-Third District

Gina Ortiz Jones was an Air Force intelligence officer in Iraq. According to her campaign biography, "In the 12-years following her active duty service, Gina has continued to build her career in national security, intelligence, and defense—including advising on operations in Latin America and Africa, to include advising on military operations that supported South Sudan's independence referendum and serving in the Libya Crisis Intelligence Cell." She later became director for investment of the Office of the US Trade Representative, where she led the portfolio that reviewed foreign investments for possible risks to national security. The contest for the seat representing the 23rd District, which runs along the Texas-Mexico border from El Paso nearly to Laredo, and inland as far as the San Antonio suburbs, is literally spy vs. spy, since the incumbent, two-term Republican Congressman Will Hurd, is a former CIA agent.

Texas: Thirty-First District

Mary Jennings Hegar, a helicopter pilot for the Air Force, spent three tours of duty in Afghanistan in search and rescue operations. This included, as Hegar declares on her website, "being shot down by enemy fire, defending my crew and patients, and earning a Purple Heart." Hegar came to prominence through a lawsuit against the Pentagon policy of barring women from combat and is the subject of a forthcoming biographical film based on her memoir, *Shoot Like a Girl: One Woman's Dramatic Fight in Afghanistan and on the Home Front*. Hegar is an underdog to eight-term Republican Congressman John Carter in district that stretches north from Austin, although she substantially outraised him during the first half of 2018.

Virginia: Second District

Elaine Luria was one of the first Navy women to serve as an officer on a nuclear-powered ship. According to her campaign biography, she "deployed six times to the Middle East and Western Pacific as a nuclear-trained surface warfare officer." She was second-in-command of a guided missile cruiser and commanded assault craft supporting a Marine Corps deployment. Initially an underdog against one-term Republican Congressman Scott Taylor, a former Navy SEAL, Luria has seen her standing in polls improve after Taylor's staff was caught forging signatures to place another Democrat on the ballot as an independent in November to split the anti-Taylor vote. This Democrat, recently prosecuted on federal fraud charges, has since been removed from the ballot, while Taylor denies all knowledge of the affair.

Virginia: Seventh District

Abigail Spanberger once had the following statement at the top of her campaign website: "After nearly a decade serving in the CIA, I'm running for Congress in Virginia's Seventh District … My previous service as a law enforcement officer, a CIA officer, and a community volunteer has taught me the value of listening." Perhaps in recognition of the ominous implications of this declaration, it has been removed, although the site still states, "Abigail joined the CIA as an Operations Officer. She traveled and lived abroad collecting intelligence, managing assets, and overseeing high-profile programs in service to the United States." Spanberger defeated another military-intelligence candidate in the Democratic primary and is in a toss-up race with two-term Republican Congressman David Brat, in a district that extends north from the Richmond suburbs.

West Virginia: Second District

Talley Sergent is one of a half dozen former State Department officials who ran in the Democratic primaries, and she won her contest against another national-security candidate, a combat veteran from the Iraq War, despite being outraised two-to-one. Sergent worked for Democratic Senator Jay Rockefeller before joining the State Department under Hillary Clinton, where she specialized in issues relating to the status of women and girls, part of the "human rights imperialism" technique used to threaten countries targeted by Washington. She then became a corporate flack for Coca-Cola at its Atlanta headquarters, before running Clinton's disastrous statewide campaign in West Virginia, where Clinton was routed in both the primary and the general election. Sergent is a heavy underdog against two-term Republican Congressman Alex Mooney, who has a nearly ten-to-one fundraising advantage.

West Virginia: Third District

Richard Ojeda was elected as a West Virginia state senator in 2016, running as a Democrat, in the same election in which he cast his own vote for Donald Trump. He has based his political career on more than two decades in the US Army Airborne, including repeated tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, where he reached the rank of major. His last post before winning state office was as executive director of Army recruiting in Beckley, seeking to convince youth in West Virginia and Virginia to become cannon fodder for the Pentagon. Ojeda has combined a militaristic approach with pro-union demagogy, winning him the support of the United Mine Workers and the teachers' unions, which have systematically betrayed workers in southern West Virginia, one of the poorest regions in the country. Ojeda is in a toss-up race with Carol Miller, a wealthy state legislator, to succeed two-term Republican Congressman Evan Jenkins, who ran for US Senate and was defeated in the Republican primary.

Wisconsin: Seventh District

Margaret Engebretson is a 24-year veteran of the US Navy, now retired after three years of active duty and 21 years in the Naval Reserve and Minnesota Air National Guard. Among her "civilian" occupations during the period was as a deputy sheriff of corrections at the St. Louis County Jail in Duluth, Minnesota. She lives in northern Wisconsin, just across the Minnesota state line, and is running in a district that comprises the northwestern and north central third of the state and is predominately rural and small town. Although the district was held for 42 years by Democrat David Obey, Engebretson has raised little money and is viewed as a heavy underdog against four-term Republican Congressman Sean Duffy, a former "reality television" contestant. As of July 25, Duffy had a campaign war chest of $2.5 million compared to under $6,000 for Engebretson.

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