

Eleven military-intelligence Democrats win US House seats

Patrick Martin

17 November 2018

With the victory of Jared Golden, an Iraq and Afghanistan war veteran, in Maine's 2nd Congressional District, a total of 11 Democrats with military or intelligence backgrounds have won Republican-held seats in the House of Representatives in the midterm elections.

The military-intelligence apparatus accounts for the largest number of victorious Democratic challengers in Republican districts, more than lawyers (9), state and local government officials (7), businessmen/wealthy individuals (7), or others (8).

Golden trailed incumbent Republican Bruce Poliquin by a narrow margin in the initial vote results. Under Maine's ranked-choice voting system, however, since none of the four candidates on the ballot won 50 percent, the votes for the third and fourth-place candidates in the district, about 8 percent of the total, were redistributed, giving Golden the margin of victory.

The third- and fourth-place candidates had urged their supporters to preference Golden over Poliquin on their ballots, and they did so by a sizeable margin. Golden trailed Poliquin by 2,632 first-choice votes, but he won by 2,905 votes, with 50.5 percent of the total, when the votes of the two eliminated candidates were redistributed.

Poliquin has filed a lawsuit against ranked-choice voting—but only after Election Day, when it became clear that the new system, approved by Maine voters in a referendum in 2016, was likely to cost him his seat. On Thursday morning, a federal judge rejected Poliquin's request for a temporary restraining order to stop the vote redistribution process, citing the previous referendum vote, but the Republican congressman said he would appeal.

With Golden's victory, Democrats now hold every congressional seat in the six New England states, 21 in all. Poliquin had held the 2nd Congressional District seat for four years, and President Trump carried the largely rural area, which covers two-thirds of the state, in the 2016 election.

Of the 11 military-intelligence Democrats newly elected to Congress, nine defeated incumbent Republicans, while two

won seats left open by a Republican retirement. Besides Poliquin, the Republicans defeated by candidates drawn directly from the national-security apparatus include Dan Donovan in New York, Leonard Lance and Tom MacArthur in New Jersey, Keith Rothfus in New Jersey, Scott Taylor and David Brat in Virginia, Mike Bishop in Michigan, and Mike Coffman in Colorado.

Besides Golden—who 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, the only rank-and-file soldier in the group—the military-intelligence Democrats who won congressional seats include:

Jason Crow, Colorado 6th District, veteran of the 82nd Airborne Division, leading a paratrooper platoon during the invasion of Iraq,

Chrissy Houlahan, Pennsylvania 6th District, a 10-year veteran of the Air Force, leaving it as a captain,

Andy Kim, New Jersey 3rd District, strategic adviser to US commanders in Afghanistan, then director for Iraq on Obama's National Security Council,

Conor Lamb, Pennsylvania 17th District, Marine captain and Judge Advocate General, won special election in the 18th District earlier this year, redistricted into the 17th,

Elaine Luria, Virginia 2nd District, career Navy surface warfare officer, second-in-command of guided missile cruiser, commanded assault craft supporting Marine Corps deployment,

Tom Malinowski, New Jersey 7th District, assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor in the Obama administration,

Max Rose, New York 11th District, Army combat officer in Afghanistan, Ranger-qualified, Bronze Star and Purple Heart,

Mikie Sherrill, New Jersey 11th District, ten years as Navy helicopter pilot, Russia policy officer for the Atlantic Fleet, then federal prosecutor,

Elissa Slotkin, Michigan 8th District, a CIA agent in Iraq, then worked at the National Security Council for Bush and Obama, and as an assistant secretary of defense,

Abigail Spanberger, Virginia 7th District, eight years in the CIA as an operations officer in Europe, speaks five languages, previously a postal inspector (policeman for the Postal Service).

The influx of new members of Congress with recent experience in the CIA or military or civilian national security positions is unprecedented for the Democratic Party in the more than four decades since the Vietnam War era. The 11 include seven military veterans, all but one an officer—two each from the Army, Navy and Marines, one from the Air Force—two former CIA agents, and two who worked as civilian decision-makers in the State Department and National Security Council.

Seven military-intelligence Democrats fell just short of winning seats, with one not yet conceding, Gina Ortiz Jones, an Air Force intelligence officer who challenged Republican incumbent Will Hurd, a former CIA agent, in the 23rd Congressional District of Texas. Ortiz Jones trailed Hurd by 1,150 votes out of more than 200,000 cast (0.5 percent), and she has the right to request a recount given the closeness of the contest.

Other military-intelligence Democrats who lost narrowly, and their margin of defeat, include Dan Feehan in the 1st District of Minnesota (0.4 percent), Dan McCready in the 9th District of North Carolina (0.6 percent), Joseph Kopser in the 21st District of Texas (2.8 percent), George Scott in the 10th District of Pennsylvania (2.8 percent), Mary Jennings Hegar in the 31st District of Texas (3.0 percent) and Amy McGrath in the 6th District of Kentucky (3.2 percent).

The remaining 12 of those whom the WSWS has identified as the “CIA Democrats” lost by wider margins, ranging from 6.6 percent for Brendan Kelly in the 12th District of Illinois to 23 percent for Jesse Colvin in the 1st District of Maryland. Richard Ojeda, one of the most heavily publicized of the military-intelligence candidates, lost by 12.8 percent in the 3rd District of West Virginia, the heart of the Appalachian coalfield. The former Army Airborne major immediately announced the formation of a committee to explore a possible run for the presidency.

There appears to be a regional component in the relative success or failure of the military-intelligence candidates. Nine of the eleven elected won seats in the Northeast, in states from Virginia through Maine along the Eastern Seaboard. Only one won in the Midwest, Slotkin in Michigan, and one in the West, Crow in Colorado. None won seats in the South, although five lost narrowly in that region.

The regional disparity has some political significance. The Northeast has traditionally been a center of antiwar sentiment. The Democrats gained no political advantage

there by running candidates drawn from the military-intelligence apparatus, especially given that none of these candidates made any show of opposition to the wars of which they had been part. Rather, the military-intelligence apparatus gained by having its candidates slotted into districts that were likely to be won by the Democrats in the event of a national swing against the Republican Party and the Trump administration, as seen in the November 6 midterm.

The result is that in the Northeast, of 15 Republican seats captured by the Democrats, nine went to military-intelligence candidates. In the other three regions, there were only two military-intelligence candidates among the 25 Democrats winning Republican seats.

The newly elected CIA Democrats have begun to attract considerable media attention, after an election campaign in which the high proportion of military-intelligence candidates seeking Democratic congressional nominations was largely disregarded or directly downplayed by the corporate-controlled media.

Five of the 11 newly elected CIA Democrats are women, a fact which is endlessly celebrated by the media, although there is no reason to believe that female national-security officials are any less ruthless and bloodthirsty than their male counterparts. Both the former CIA operatives elected November 6, Elissa Slotkin and Abigail Spanberger, are women, as are the two former Navy officers, helicopter pilot Mikie Sherrill and warship commander Elaine Luria, and the former Air Force captain, Chrissy Houlahan.

Slotkin did three tours of duty in Baghdad for the CIA, then worked in the White House on Iraq policy under both Bush and Obama, before a stint as an assistant secretary of defense where she had responsibility for drone warfare, among other murderous tasks. She has now emerged as a media favorite, the subject of a gushing 3,000-word front-page profile in the *Detroit Free Press*, followed by an invitation to appear on NBC’s Sunday interview program “Meet the Press,” as one of two representatives of the incoming freshman class of congressmen and congresswomen.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact