

Biden choice for CIA director gets bipartisan support

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The choice of President Joe Biden to head the CIA was received with bipartisan applause at a hearing of the Senate Intelligence Committee Wednesday. William J. Burns is a veteran of decades of skullduggery for American imperialism, in the course of a three-decade career at the State Department.

His 33 years in government, 1981-2014, included the Reagan administration, the first Bush administration, the Clinton administration, the second Bush administration and the bulk of the Obama administration. During those years, the United States military invaded Grenada, Lebanon, Panama, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria, and US diplomats supervised paramilitary operations in many other countries, including Nicaragua, El Salvador, Ukraine, Georgia, Pakistan and much of Africa.

Burns played major roles in important theaters of conflict, serving three years as the US ambassador to Jordan and five years as US ambassador to Russia. In such posts, particularly, the State Department and the CIA are virtually interchangeable, both in personnel and in function. He was also at key positions in the State Department itself, particularly during the latter part of his career, which culminated in the number two position, deputy secretary of state, under Hillary Clinton and John Kerry.

In this position, Burns played the lead role 2013-2014 in secret talks with Iran, which set the stage for public talks in 2015 that led to the nuclear treaty signed the following year. By that time, Burns had left the State Department to head the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, itself one of the key institutions for the promotion of US foreign policy goals. (Named after its founder, Andrew Carnegie, the robber baron who once controlled the US steel industry, it has branches in Brussels, Moscow, Beirut, Delhi and Beijing, and acts

as a reserve force for the State Department).

Despite the Republican denunciations of the Iran deal, none of the Republican senators on the Intelligence Committee made an issue of it during the hearing. Instead, there was fulsome praise for Burns as a veteran of the national-security apparatus who could be relied on by politicians of both parties. The *New York Times* described the session as “far more of a coronation than a confrontational question-and-answer session.”

The Republican vice chairman of the committee, Marco Rubio of Florida, praised Burns for his “lengthy and distinguished career” and said he would regard him “as a partner.” Roy Blunt of Missouri, chairman of the Republican conference, said he would vote to confirm Burns, in a vote expected next week.

In his prepared remarks to the committee, Burns laid special stress on US policy towards China, saying, “If confirmed, four crucial and interrelated priorities will shape my approach to leading CIA: China, technology, people and partnerships.” He laid less stress on what he described as “an aggressive Russia, a provocative North Korea and a hostile Iran,” indicating that these countries did not provide a challenge of the same dimensions as China to the assertion of US interests around the world.

He told the committee an “adversarial, predatory Chinese leadership poses our biggest geopolitical test,” adding that he would seek to expand the CIA’s recruitment of agents fluent in Mandarin. “This is not like the competition with the Soviet Union in the Cold War, which was primarily in security and ideological terms,” he said. “This is an adversary that is extraordinarily ambitious with technology and capable in economic terms as well.”

Burns, who speaks Russian, Arabic and French, said

that Russia was a “declining power,” but added, “Putin’s Russia continues to demonstrate that declining powers can be just as disruptive as rising ones and can make use of asymmetrical tools, especially cybertools, to do that.”

It is noteworthy that despite the pretense of vast, unbridgeable differences between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, Biden’s nominees in the national-security area have received overwhelming bipartisan confirmation. This includes Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin (confirmed 93-2), Secretary of State Antony Blinken (confirmed 78-22), UN Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield (confirmed 78-21) and Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines (confirmed 84-10). When Burns comes to a vote next week, he may outdo Austin.

The bipartisan support exposes the claims of Biden apologists like Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, and his pseudo-left supporters, that the president can be pushed to the left by political pressure. In the critical area of foreign policy, where the global interests of American imperialism are at stake, Biden has selected a team that consists largely of warmongers and their apologists.

General Austin, of course, was commander of US forces in Iraq and then head of Centcom, which controls all US forces in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan. Both Burns and Thomas-Greenfield were career diplomats who defended the US invasion and conquest of Afghanistan and Iraq for more than a decade. Haines and Blinken were on the National Security Council in the Obama administration, the White House cockpit for launching US wars in Libya and Syria.

Personnel is policy, and Biden’s choice of national-security staff demonstrates the priorities of his foreign policy, with US imperialism now shifting its attention from the Middle East to Russia and China.

In his speech, delivered virtually to the Munich Security Conference last week, Biden cited, as though reciting proven facts, “Russian recklessness and hacking into computer networks in the United States and across Europe and the world.”

Appearing on a Sunday talk show, Biden’s National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said that the response to alleged Russian hacking, “will include a mix of tools seen and unseen, and it will not simply be sanctions.” The result would be, he threatened, that “we will ensure

that Russia understands where the United States draws the line on this kind of activity.”



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