Reinforcements for the CIA Democrats in the 2022 elections

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Some two dozen Democratic candidates for Congress, running as challengers to Republican incumbents or as would-be successors to retiring Democratic incumbents, are drawn from the military-intelligence apparatus. This phenomenon, which the WSWS first analyzed and exposed in 2018 in our much-read series "The CIA Democrats," is becoming an increasingly important factor in American official politics.

Eleven military-intelligence candidates were elected in 2018 as part of the Democratic takeover of control in the House of Representatives. Their numbers increased by one in 2020, as one of the 11 lost his bid for reelection, but two new military-intelligence Democrats were elected. This year, the size of the "caucus" could nearly double, even in an election in which the Democratic Party as a whole may well lose ground.

The influx of military-intelligence operatives into the ranks of the Democratic Party in Congress is now an ongoing political trend. There were 30 such candidates nominated by the Democrats in 2018, 11 of whom won. There were 35 such candidates in 2020, including the 11 incumbents, and 12 won, a slight increase despite the election being a poor one for the Democrats. In 2022, the total number of such candidates stands at 34: in addition to 11 incumbents, there are 23 more candidates drawn from the CIA, Pentagon and State Department.

These figures suggest that the influx of Pentagon and CIA operatives into Congress, by means of the Democratic Party, is not an accidental phenomenon, but the outcome of a definite policy, which has two components. First, the Democratic Party leadership is deliberately cultivating military-intelligence candidates and creating opportunities for them to run in Democratic-leaning congressional districts where they are likely to be elected. Second, sizeable sections of the military officers corps, the CIA and the State Department see the Democratic Party as their preferred vehicle for advancing the interests of American imperialism, to which they have devoted their own careers.

As was the case in our 2018 series and its follow-up in 2020, all the information presented here is gathered from publicly available sources, including Wikipedia and Ballotpedia, and particularly from the campaign web sites established by each candidate. Also considered are the published lists from the Democratic and Republican congressional campaign committees, identifying which campaigns they view as truly competitive and where significant party resources will be expended.

As before, we must point out that these Democratic candidates are far from seeking to conceal their role in unpopular wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, or in the skulduggery of the intelligence world, dominated by political subversion, illegal surveillance and outright murder (whether by drone-fired missile or the old-fashioned knife in the back). They positively glory in it, with combat veterans posting photos of themselves in military gear, preferably in some foreign landscape. The intelligence agents are more discreet in terms of photographs and other information, as is to be expected, but no less celebratory in describing their "service."

As a preliminary, let us review who is still in Congress from the initial intake in 2018, and who is not. There are two departures from the original 11.

Max Rose, who commanded an Army unit in several deployments in Afghanistan, was elected in 2018 in the 11th District of New York, which includes Staten Island and part of Brooklyn. He was defeated for reelection in 2020 by Republican Nicole Malliotakis. Rose is the Democratic nominee for the seat again in 2022 in a rematch with Malliotakis, with the district considered slightly more favorable to the Democrats than before because of redistricting.

Conor Lamb, a judge adjutant general in the Marine Corps, won a special election in early 2018 and then reelection in November of that year in the 17th Congressional District of Pennsylvania (western suburbs of Pittsburgh, Beaver Falls, Allegheny Valley). Reelected in 2020, he sought the Democratic nomination for the vacant US Senate seat this year and lost the primary in a landslide to Lieutenant Governor John Fetterman. He will leave Congress at the end of this term.

The other nine were reelected in 2020 and are seeking reelection again in 2022. Four are considered heavy favorites to win, including **Jason Crow** (82nd Airborne, commanded Army paratroopers in Iraq) in Colorado, **Chrissy Houlihan** (Air Force captain) in Pennsylvania and **Mikie Sherrill** (Navy helicopter pilot) and **Andy Kim** (Pentagon adviser, headed Iraq desk at the National Security Council) in New Jersey. The five others are considered in some danger, with only slight edges over Republican challengers, including **Jared Golden** (Marine Corps, Afghanistan) in Maine, **Tom Malinowski** (State Department) in New Jersey, **Elaine Luria** (Navy commander) and **Abigail Spanberger** (CIA agent) in Virginia, and **Elissa Slotkin** (CIA agent, White House aide, Pentagon official) in Michigan.

In 2020, offsetting the defeat of Rose, two more military-intelligence candidates won seats, for a net increase of one in the ranks of this group. **Jake Auchincloss** won a nine-candidate primary in Massachusetts with only 25 percent of the vote, in the heavily Democratic Fourth Congressional District in the southwest Boston suburbs. He had been an Army captain commanding troops in Helmand Province in Afghanistan, and later led an elite reconnaissance force in anti-drug operations in Panama.

Also in 2020, former State Department official **Sara Jacobs** won a safe Democratic seat in San Diego opened up by the retirement of incumbent Susan Davis. Jacobs ran for and lost a contest for the Democratic nomination in an adjacent district in 2018, when she was profiled in the original series on the CIA Democrats. Jacobs should perhaps have an asterisk, since along with her years in the State Department under Hillary Clinton and John Kerry, she is the granddaughter of billionaire Qualcomm founder Irwin Jacobs, and therefore has access to unlimited campaign funds.

Both Auchincloss and Jacobs are expected to retain their seats easily in the November vote.

With the subtraction of Conor Lamb earlier this year, the number of CIA

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Democrats seeking reelection in the House is back to the original total of 11 going into the November 8 general election. This figure could be reduced somewhat or as much as double, depending on the outcome at the polls.

There are 23 new military-intelligence candidates running as Democratic nominees for Congress this year, a substantial proportion, nearly 10 percent, of the 252 available Democratic nominations. (There are 435 seats in Congress, but 183 Democratic incumbents are seeking reelection.)

The proportion is even higher if we set aside safe Republican seats and consider only those which the Democratic Party views as competitive. In these districts, numbering 56, there are 12 military-intelligence candidates, more than 20 percent of the total. Six of these are running in districts carried by Joe Biden in 2020, six in districts narrowly won by Donald Trump.

Twelve military-intelligence candidates in competitive seats

Who are these 12, and where are they running?

Jackie Gordon is the Democratic nominee for New York's Second Congressional District, on Long Island, against first-term incumbent Andrew Garbarino. Gordon retired after a 29-year career in the Army military police, which included tours of duty in combat zones in Iraq and Afghanistan. Her campaign website adds that she also served as "an operations officer at Guantanamo Bay," the US base which is the site of a notorious prison and torture center.

Gordon, who is African American, was elected to the Babylon Town Council while still on active duty and retired from the Army Reserve in 2014 with the rank of lieutenant colonel. She was the Democratic candidate in 2020 for the seat left open by the retirement of longtime Republican Rep. Peter King, losing narrowly to Garbarino, and is now running against him again. She had no primary opposition.

Max Rose is running in New York's 11th Congressional District (Staten Island-Brooklyn) for the third consecutive election, having won in 2018 and lost in 2020, as explained above. In 2018, his campaign website described him as "a proud veteran of the U.S. Army." It continued: "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."

According to our profile in 2018 following his victory in the Democratic primary, "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."

Pat Ryan won a special election in August in New York's 19th Congressional District, filling the vacancy created when two-term Democratic Representative Antonio Delgado was appointed lieutenant governor of New York. In November, because of redistricting, Ryan is seeking election in the 18th Congressional District, which has much different boundaries, further south in the Hudson Valley, and is heavily Democratic, making Ryan the favorite to win.

After an education at West Point, Ryan deployed twice to Iraq as an Army intelligence officer, "including a tour as the lead intelligence officer for an infantry battalion of 1,000 soldiers and officers responsible for ground operations in Mosul," according to his 2018 campaign website. In that year, he ran in the Democratic primary for Congress in the 19th district, but lost to Delgado, a millionaire lawyer. He then ran for and won the position of Ulster County executive and held that position until becoming a member of Congress.

Francis Conole is the Democratic nominee in New York's 22nd Congressional District, which is based on the city of Syracuse. He is a career Navy officer, graduating from the Naval Academy and serving on board several warships before joining the Office of Naval Intelligence. He was later deployed with Army Special Forces in a combat zone in Iraq.

After the US withdrawal from Iraq, he obtained a master's degree in National Security Studies from the Naval War College and worked as a policy adviser for two secretaries of defense, Ash Carter, a Democrat, and James Mattis, a Republican. His area of responsibility was "U.S. Defense Policy for Jordan, Lebanon, and Israel, drafting strategy that protected U.S. interests and strengthened our partnerships in the Middle-East," according to his campaign website.

Conole is favored to win the open seat created when the Republican incumbent, four-term representative John Katko, retired at the age of 60. Katko was one of the 10 Republican House members who voted to impeach Trump after the January 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol. As a result, he was facing multiple right-wing challengers in the Republican primary, as well as contesting a district that had voted for Biden and had been redistricted to make it even more favorable to the Democrats.

Ashley Ehasz is running against incumbent Republican Brian Fitzsimmons in the First Congressional District of Pennsylvania, based in Bucks County, the northeast suburbs of Philadelphia. While Fitzsimmons, a three-term incumbent, is a former FBI agent, Ehasz was an Apache helicopter pilot serving in Kuwait, Iraq and South Korea in the course of her Army career. Her website boasts, "If elected, Ashley would be the first woman serving in Congress to have graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point."

The website continues: "Upon graduating West Point, Ashley was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant within the U.S. Army Aviation branch… she trained to become an AH-64D Apache Longbow helicopter pilot, and graduated in January 2012 as the only woman in her Apache class. From there, she was stationed in Fort Bliss, Texas with the 4th Battalion, 501st Attack Reconnaissance Battalion. There, she served as a platoon leader in both a line unit and an aviation maintenance unit, deploying to Kuwait under Operation Spartan Shield. Later, as the battalion logistics officer and pilot-in-command, she deployed once again to Kuwait and Camp Taji, Iraq, with Operation Inherent Resolve. Ashley then commanded two aviation troops… deploying to South Korea in 2017."

Chris DeLuzio, a former Navy officer and Iraq War veteran, is running to succeed CIA Democrat Conor Lamb in the 17th Congressional District of Pennsylvania. Lamb gave up the western Pennsylvania seat to run for US Senate. According to his campaign website, after DeLuzio graduated from the US Naval Academy, "he was commissioned as an active-duty surface warfare officer in the U.S. Navy. Chris's military service included three deployments, including a tour of duty as a U.S. Army Civil Affairs Officer in Iraq."

DeLuzio then obtained a law degree, clerked for a federal judge, and worked at the Brennan Center for Justice, specializing in election security and cybersecurity as well as developing contacts with the trade union bureaucracy through an effort to organize the faculty at the University of Pittsburgh. He lives in the northwest suburbs of the city, part of the 17th Congressional District. The contest with Republican Jeremy Shaffer for the seat left open by Lamb is expected to be a close one.

Dan Davis, a graduate of the US Air Force Academy and former operations officer, is running to succeed longtime incumbent Democrat G. K. Butterfield in North Carolina's First Congressional District, in the northeastern part of the state. Butterfield retired this year after 38 years in Congress. Redistricting made this heavily Democratic district, with a large black population, far more competitive, but Davis is still favored to win.

After a military career that included coordinating operations at Andrews Air Force Base outside Washington DC—a critical and highly sensitive

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role since this base is the primary route for all presidential travel—Davis "returned to eastern North Carolina an assistant professor of Aerospace Studies at East Carolina University instructing national security affairs and leadership courses," according to his campaign website. He entered politics in 2010, winning a heavily Democratic seat in the state senate which he has held ever since.

Jeff Jackson is another military officer turned North Carolina state senator. He is the Democratic candidate in the 14th Congressional District, which is newly formed because of population growth in the state, and includes northern portions of Mecklenburg County (Charlotte suburbs) and Gaston County to its north.

According to his campaign website, Jackson "enlisted after the attacks of September 11th, trained at Ft. Bragg, and served in Afghanistan. He continues to serve today as a Major in the Army National Guard. He is currently in his 19th year of military service." He was elected to the state senate in 2014, but drills monthly with the 113th Sustainment Brigade of the National Guard.

Eric Lynn, a former Pentagon security consultant, is running in Florida's 13th Congressional District to replace Democratic incumbent Charlie Crist, who gave up the seat to run for governor against incumbent Ron DeSantis. The district comprises St. Petersburg, Clearwater and some adjoining suburbs. Lynn was appointed by President Barack Obama as a senior adviser to the secretary of defense, and he continued to work into the Trump administration.

His campaign website notes: "During six years of service at the Pentagon, Eric advised three Secretaries of Defense… During his tenure, Eric made more than 50 overseas trips with Defense Secretaries and senior military leadership, including working with the U.S. Military on the Obama Administration's Middle East Peace Mission. While abroad, Eric met with heads of state and military leadership throughout the world to combat terrorism, discourage radicalism, promote peace, and coordinate with our allies on national security. Eric was the Pentagon's lead official on the Iron Dome Project," the Israeli anti-missile system.

John Lira, a former Marine and Iraq war veteran, is the Democratic candidate in the 23rd Congressional District of Texas, against incumbent Republican Tony Gonzales. This is one of the largest districts in terms of land area, extending from San Antonio to El Paso, and encompassing the US-Mexico border along the Rio Grande as far south as Laredo. It includes the small city of Uvalde, where 19 schoolchildren and two teachers were slaughtered by a deranged gunman last May.

Lira's campaign logo carries the slogan "From foreign battlefields to Congress." His website notes that his great uncle Alfonso Valdez died in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, and that four years later he enlisted in the Marine Corps. His 11 years as a Marine included participation in the 2003 invasion of Iraq under President George W. Bush, after which he volunteered for a second deployment a year-and-a-half later.

Since leaving the military, Lira has been heavily involved in promoting "entrepreneurship" for military veterans and advocating for "national service," a precursor to reestablishing the draft. His website explains, "John also worked at the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service, created by Senators John McCain and Jack Reed to develop policies aimed at reviving an ethos of service in America."

Kermit Jones, a former Navy medic and White House fellow, is the Democratic candidate in the Third Congressional District of California, which has no incumbent because of redistricting. While he has worked as a medical doctor for the past several years, Jones has a highly political background, as evidenced by his years in Washington D.C.

According to his website, "After the tragedy of 9/11, I wanted to do my part and serve my country, so after completing medical school, I joined the U.S. Navy to become a flight surgeon. I deployed to Iraq with a Marine squadron that took injured service members and Iraqi civilians to safety. After returning from Iraq, I served as a White House Fellow under President Obama, working with the Secretary of Health & Human Services to improve quality of care for our veterans."

Jay Chen, a former military intelligence officer, is challenging one-term Republican incumbent Michelle Steel in the 45th Congressional District of California, in the Orange County portion of the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area, along the Pacific coast. Steel narrowly defeated first-term Democrat Harley Rouda in 2020. Like John Lira, Chen's campaign logo affirms his military background in its title: "Jay Chen—Veteran for Congress."

His campaign website declares (in all caps to underline the importance of bipartisanship), "IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVES, IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU ARE A DEMOCRAT OR A REPUBLICAN, YOU WORK TOGETHER TO COMPLETE THE MISSION, AND JAY HAS SERVED HONORABLY FROM THE KOREAN PENINSULA TO THE MIDDLE EAST.

"As part of Operation Inherent Resolve Lieutenant Commander Chen led an intelligence team and brought justice to the terror group ISIS, and he played a key role in the military's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Middle East."

A mercenary and a CIA agent run against Marjorie Taylor Greene and Elise Stefanik

The remaining 11 military-intelligence candidates are not expected to win, but in some cases they are challenging high-profile Republicans, like Elise Stefanik, the number three leader of the House Republicans, and fascist Marjorie Taylor Greene, which ensures that their campaigns will receive extensive publicity.

Marcus Flowers is running against Greene in the 14th Congressional District of Georgia, the northwest corner of the state. He has spent nearly 30 years in the Army and as a military contractor and State Department official deployed around the world. An article in the *New Republic* that focused on his murky record as a military contractor ("not Blackwater," according to Flowers) notes that he had worked at one point for DynCorp, another notorious employer of mercenaries.

A campaign statement given in response to the article reads: "I spent several years working in logistics and procurement in combat zones. That included mentoring and training the Iraqi and Afghan National Army in how to safely move and account for equipment, people, and materials. That included at one point meeting with Afghan warlords to negotiate safe passage of critical infrastructure through territories under their control."

As the campaign ad shown above demonstrates, Flowers is actually attacking the fascist Republican incumbent from the right, denouncing her as a stooge of Russian President Vladimir Putin and affirming his support for the US-NATO war in Ukraine, which threatens the nuclear annihilation of humanity.

The candidate challenging Stefanik in New York's 21st Congressional District, in the Adirondack area, is **Matt Castelli**, a former CIA agent. According to one local news report, "Castelli said he 'straddled' the agency's operational and analytical wings as a targeting specialist and, later, a leader of various teams." A "targeting specialist" would be an agent who identifies individuals to be assassinated by drone-fired missiles.

He was apparently good at this grisly task. His campaign website declares, "Matt's success at the CIA led to the opportunity to serve as Director for Counterterrorism at President Obama's National Security Council. In that role, he developed strategy, policy, and operations to keep America safe from terrorism and extremism. His work degraded Al Qaeda and ISIS, and strengthened security cooperation with our allies. Matt stayed in this role for the first year of the Trump White House before

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returning to CIA..."

Castelli's campaign against Stefanik bears all the hallmarks of a high-level state operation. He remained in Washington after leaving the CIA and only moved back to New York state in 2021, relocating to the Adirondack area, where he had never lived, to establish residency before seeking the Democratic nomination to challenge Stefanik. He was quickly endorsed by Democratic local leaders in all 18 counties in the district. After he won the party primary with 81 percent of the vote, the *New York Times* published a flattering profile of the previously unheard-of, newly minted political figure.

The remaining nine military-intelligence candidates, all heavy underdogs, include the following:

Max Della Pia, a career Army Reserve officer specializing in logistics, is running in New York's 23rd Congressional District (Buffalo suburbs, southern counties along the Pennsylvania border) against Republican Nick Langworthy, for the seat previously held by Republican Chris Jacobs.

Steven Holden, a four-tour veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, is challenging incumbent Claudia Kenney in New York's 24th Congressional District, which incorporates a large swath of rural territory around Syracuse and Rochester, as well as the Finger Lakes region.

Matt Kilboy is running against incumbent Republican David Joyce in Ohio's 14th Congressional District, comprising the northeast corner of the state. Kilboy was a Navy nurse at the Guantanamo Bay detention and torture center, then served as an adviser to the Pentagon and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Joseph Alfonso is the Democratic candidate in Michigan's 4th Congressional District against incumbent Bill Huizenga. The district covers the southwest portion of the state, including Battle Creek, Kalamazoo and St. Joseph. Alfonso is a Marine veteran whose military service was focused on logistics, including in the Middle East. He emphasizes his military record, as shown in his campaign logo, and also highlights that he is married to a Marine veteran.

Patrick Schmidt is running in the 2nd Congressional District of Kansas (Topeka and eastern Kansas, outside Kansas City) against incumbent Jake LaTurner. Schmidt is a young former naval intelligence officer who only left the military in mid-2021 to move back to Topeka and run for Congress. According to his website, Schmidt was stationed on the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan "supporting the battle group's intelligence team defending U.S. interests from China and Russia."

Daryl Scott is the Democratic candidate in the 7th Congressional District of South Carolina, where Republican Russell Fry ousted incumbent Tom Rice after Rice's surprise 2021 vote to impeach Trump. Scott is a career Army officer, retiring as a major after 24 years in the South Carolina National Guard, including one deployment to Iraq.

Corinna Robinson is running in Florida's 18th Congressional District against incumbent Republican Brian Mast. After enlisting in the Army at the age of 17, her 25-year career in the Army military police included Officers Candidate School, tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, and command of Special Forces troops. Then, according to her website, she "led the Anti-Terrorism and Force Protection Directorate at the Pentagon, leading teams responsible for protecting high-risk personnel and safeguarding over 100 facilities."

Isaac McCorkle is challenging incumbent Republican Ken Buck in the 4th Congressional District of Colorado, his second campaign for that position. After an 18-year career in the Marines, largely in special ops, with four combat deployments, he uses the Marine motto "Semper Fi" as his campaign slogan.

Max Steiner is running in the 1st Congressional District of California against longtime Republican incumbent Doug Lamalfa. He deployed to Iraq in the Army infantry, later transitioning to the reserves, before working for the State Department and then the RAND Corporation, a notorious national security contractor.

Some political conclusions

The coming together of the Democratic Party and the Pentagon-CIA axis entirely refutes the notion, peddled assiduously by Senator Bernie Sanders, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and pseudo-left groups like the Democratic Socialists of America, that it is possible to push the Democratic Party to the left or even capture control of it and transform it into a vehicle for progressive social reform. The Democratic Party is one of the two major parties of American imperialism and Wall Street, the most reactionary forces on the planet. It cannot be reformed.

The military-intelligence Democrats in Congress are already far more influential as well as more numerous than the much more publicized "squad" identified with AOC, Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar. That will be reinforced by the outcome of the 2022 elections, whatever the fate of individual candidates.

One episode in particular stands out. In September 2019, the initial reports came out of Trump's phone call to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky threatening to delay military aid if Zelensky did not help him in collecting political dirt on former Vice President Joe Biden. Seven Democratic representatives, all first-term and six from the CIA Democrats group, published an op-ed column in the *Washington Post* calling for a formal impeachment inquiry.

The six included two ex-CIA agents, Elissa Slotkin of Michigan and Abigail Spanberger of Virginia, and four former military officers, Elaine Luria of Virginia, Mikie Sherrill of New Jersey, Chrissy Houlahan of Pennsylvania and Jason Crow of Colorado.

Their statement declared: "To uphold and defend our Constitution, Congress must determine whether the president was indeed willing to use his power and withhold security assistance funds to persuade a foreign country to assist him in an upcoming election. If these allegations are true, we believe these actions represent an impeachable offense."

This declaration had a huge impact in Washington political circles. Given the identity of the signatories to the column, it was little less than an ultimatum from the CIA, the Pentagon and the State Department to address Trump's undermining of an effort to strengthen the military position of the Ukrainian government, which was critical to the longer term national security planning of American imperialism.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi cited the column as decisive in influencing her to give the green light to the House Intelligence Committee and House Judiciary Committee, under Adam Schiff and Jerry Nadler, respectively, to open investigations into the Trump phone call and related actions in withholding US aid to pressure the Ukrainian regime.

The full significance of this first drive to impeach Trump can be better appreciated now, under conditions of the US-NATO war against Russia, using Ukraine as its proxy force. As the WSWS noted at the time, pointing to the disparity between the brief delay in weapons shipments to Ukraine and the scale of the Democratic response:

> Given the enormous political cost of impeachment to those who initiated it, what could possibly explain the urgency and ferocity with which the entire national security establishment responded to a delay in the distribution of weapons to Ukraine?
>
> Is there a timetable for using these weapons in combat? Is the United States planning a provocation that would thrust Ukraine into a major new military offensive?

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There have been other important interventions. Former CIA agent Abigail Spanberger of Virginia played an outsize role after the congressional Democrats' poor showing in 2020, denouncing the supposed advocates of the "defund the police" slogan (who appear to have numbered zero in the Democratic caucus) and demanded of the Democratic Party leadership: "We need to not ever use the words 'socialist' or 'socialism' ever again."

The other former CIA agent in the group, Elissa Slotkin of Michigan, has become a major spokesman for the House Democrats on national security issues and has been repeatedly promoted and profiled in the national media. Her reelection campaign in a Lansing-based district is the most expensive in the country, already costing over $20 million for Slotkin and her Republican opponent combined.

The CIA Democrats have all been appointed to top committee positions dealing with the military and intelligence agencies and their budgets, far more frequently than their counterparts elected in the same year but from non-military-intelligence backgrounds.

Jason Crow of Colorado has emerged as perhaps the most influential of this group, named by Pelosi in January 2020 as an impeachment manager, as well as to positions on both the House Armed Services Committee and the House Intelligence Committee in January 2021, an unprecedented combined role for a second-term representative.

With the installation of these former military-intelligence officials on the committees that oversee their operations, the CIA, Pentagon and State Department are becoming quasi-autonomous arms of the state. Their budget requests are to be vetted in detail by their own former personnel now sitting as members of the supposedly "independent" legislative branch. Rather than the separation of powers, as envisioned by those who drew up the constitutional structure of the United States, we have the concentration of power in the hands of the most lethal and anti-democratic agencies of the executive branch.

This elevation of the military-intelligence apparatus is characteristic not merely of the CIA Democrats themselves but of the Democratic Party as a whole. The Democrats have undertaken, over several decades, to cut off any association with antiwar or anti-militarist sentiment, which they had sought to capture and neutralize during the period extending from the Vietnam War to the US interventions in Central America during the Reagan and first Bush administrations.

As late as 1991, a majority of Democrats in both the House and Senate voted against authorizing George H. W. Bush to go to war against Iraq. But from 1992 on, with the nomination of Bill Clinton and Al Gore, both supporters of the Persian Gulf War, every Democratic presidential candidate has either openly espoused hawkish views on national security issues, or, like Barack Obama, been directly associated with the murky world of US intelligence operations.

In 2016 and 2020, the Democratic candidates for president, Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden, were publicly supported against Trump by hundreds of former generals, admirals and CIA officials. The entire focus of the "opposition" to Trump by the Democratic Party was his divergence from longstanding US foreign policy goals, particularly against Russia. After the failure of the Mueller investigation to confirm Democratic claims that Trump was a stooge of Vladimir Putin, the 2019-2020 impeachment drive sought to revive the same arguments in a slightly different form.

Meanwhile, the task of containing and diverting popular antiwar sentiment has been taken up, in a nationalistic and isolationist form, by Trump and his fascist acolytes. This accounts for much of his enduring support in rural areas, where the burden of US militarism, in terms of death, maiming and psychic wounds, has fallen particularly heavily.

This history confirms that the central political task facing the American working class is to break free of the reactionary framework of the two-party system, in which both parties defend the interests of Wall Street, the financial oligarchy and its national-security machine, and establish its political independence. This means the building of a mass independent political movement of working people and youth based on socialist and internationalist principles.

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