Democratic Party runs more than 60 military-intelligence candidates for Congress

Part three

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This is the third part of a five-part series.

Military intelligence and counter-terrorism

While there are no self-acknowledged CIA agents among the new crop of Democratic candidates drawn from the national-security apparatus, there are a large number with intelligence careers, including the Defense Intelligence Agency, Army Intelligence, Naval Intelligence, the National Security Agency and the FBI. These are, it should go without saying, highly political agencies, steeped in hostility to any form of socialist or anti-imperialist sentiment. In light of that, when reviewing these candidates, it is necessary always to consider the question: what accounts for their decision to enter politics as Democratic candidates for Congress, and for the Democratic Party's welcoming response?

Luke Bronin won the Democratic primary in the 1st Congressional District of Connecticut, ousting 14-term incumbent John Larson. While Bronin was a two-term mayor of Hartford, and his challenge to the 78-year-old Larson was portrayed as merely a generational clash, that hardly exhausts the subject. Before running for mayor of Hartford in 2016—two years before the initial influx of military-intelligence operatives into the Democratic congressional contests—Bronin was a career intelligence and counter-terrorism official.

As a Navy intelligence officer, he deployed to Afghanistan as part of the US occupation regime. His main focus was on tracking down "terrorists" through their financial operations, including the corruption of the US puppet government in Kabul. On his return to the US, he later served in the Obama administration as deputy assistant secretary for terrorist financing and financial crimes.

As the Democratic nominee in a district the Democrats have held for more than 67 years, Bronin is the prohibitive favorite to win in November and take a seat in the House in January.

Less well-placed are three longtime intelligence and counter-terrorism officials running as Democratic candidates in traditionally Republican districts. Two of the three, however, have enough funding to sustain a campaign that could have an impact in the event of a Republican collapse.

Alan Bradstock is running against four-term Republican Guy Reschenthaler in the largely rural 14th Congressional District of Pennsylvania. He enlisted in the Air Force and was deployed to the Middle East during the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War. On his return, he embarked on a career as an FBI special agent, and "became a supervisor in the Counterterrorism Division, where he coordinated terrorism financing investigations at CIA Headquarters," according to his campaign website.

The website's account continues: "Alan also served abroad as Deputy Legal Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa, working closely with Canadian law enforcement and intelligence agencies." After retiring, Bradstock "supported the U.S. Intelligence Community as a contractor specializing in budget, strategy, and program management."

In the 15th Congressional District of Pennsylvania, in the western and central part of the state, the Democratic candidate **Ray Bilger** has a nearly identical career profile. He was also deployed in the military in Desert Shield and Desert Storm (1990-1991). He then became a security officer and intelligence analyst, "leading teams for the Air Force, National Security Agency, and State Department," according to his campaign website. "Most recently, from 2015-2017, he was NSA Technical Director for Cyber Analysis."

Lee McInnis, the Democratic candidate in the 3rd Congressional District of Alabama, is another career military intelligence operative, but without the campaign funding of the other two. He is running against 12-term incumbent Republican Mike D. Rogers. McInnis joined the US Army after college and trained as an Arabic linguist, serving for six years in Army Intelligence. After that, according to his campaign website, he "spent 28 years in the Defense Intelligence Community, including multiple overseas deployments and culminating as Acting Director of Intelligence for NATO/USA Special Operations in Afghanistan."

Since such operations consisted largely of raids to kill "suspected" Taliban, the intelligence work would have consisted of identifying families, or entire villages, to be targeted for military massacres.

McInnis adds: "I spent extensive time overseas, including time in Qatar, Bahrain, Iraq, and Afghanistan. For my service I received multiple awards, including the Joint Staff Civilian Commendation Medal and the Defense Intelligence Agency's Director Intelligence Medal."

Don Coover is the Democratic candidate in the 2nd Congressional District of Kansas, opposing first-term Republican Derek Schmidt. The district covers the eastern portion of the state, including the state capital Topeka, and some suburbs of Kansas City. His campaign had raised more than $700,000 by June 30 and the race is considered competitive.

Coover graduated from the US Military Academy at West Point, then went on active duty as a military intelligence officer for a total of 10 years. He also trained as a pilot. According to his website, "Don served in Korea with an aviation intelligence unit as a pilot and cryptographic operations officer, where he was responsible for intelligence gathering, analysis, and reporting. After his tour in Korea, he was assigned to Special Projects in the TRADOC Combined Arms Test Activity at Fort Hood, Texas."

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There are three former military intelligence officers running as Democrats for congressional seats in Texas.

Caitlin Rourk is running in the 10th Congressional District against Republican Chris Gober, for the seat held by retiring Republican Michael McCaul. The district is a mixed rural and suburban area that stretches from Austin to College Station, the location of Texas A&M University. Rourk was commissioned as a military intelligence officer through Army Officer Candidate School. According to her web site, she "served full time in the Texas Army National Guard at Joint Forces Headquarters in Austin, where she supported emergency responses to natural disasters, COVID-19, civil unrest operations, and multiple border mobilizations."

Kevin Burge is the Democratic candidate in the 24th Congressional District of Texas, a suburban area between Dallas and Ft. Worth, against three-term Republican incumbent Beth Van Duyne. He enlisted in the Marines after the 9/11 attacks and was twice deployed to Iraq (which, of course, had nothing to do with 9/11).

According to Burge's account on his website: "Later, I worked at the Defense Intelligence Agency, then deployed again, this time to Afghanistan where I led security teams protecting U.S. intelligence personnel in the field. Stateside, I earned my Master's Degree in Sustainable Development, kept my Top Secret/SCI clearance, and worked my way to the White House Situation Room, representing the White House as the Room's technical advisor for its renovation under President Biden."

Justin Early is the Democratic candidate in the 31st Congressional District of Texas, for the seat held by 12-term incumbent Republican John Carter. The district is north of Austin, and includes Killeen, site of the huge Ft. Hood military base, one of the largest in the US.

Early enlisted in the Army after high school and spent eight years as a paratrooper before transitioning to military IT work. According to his own account, "I served as a paratrooper at Fort Bragg and later as a LAN Systems Administrator at the Defense Intelligence Agency in the Pentagon. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, I was proud to play a key role in our national security during one of our country's most pivotal moments." After leaving the military, he has worked as a cybersecurity architect at Dell.

State Department and White House

A notable feature of the new crop of military-intelligence Democrats is the number that have held high-level positions in the White House, the State Department, or both. These are not military positions, but do involve setting and executing national security policy at the highest levels of the capitalist state. And State Department postings are frequently the cover given to CIA agents deployed overseas.

Rachel Wallace, the Democratic candidate in Pennsylvania's 9th Congressional District, is running against four-term incumbent Republican Dan Meuser. The central Pennsylvania district, which stretches from Reading west to Hazleton, is one of the main battlegrounds in the November election, with the two parties pouring in $2.6 million by June 30, a sum sure to be dwarfed in the fall.

Wallace began working in the State Department at age 26, as a speechwriter and communications specialist, before transitioning to the Biden White House, where she rose to the position of chief of staff for the Office of Management and Budget, at age 34. She returned to her hometown of Pottsville, PA and then jumped into the high-profile race against Meuser. Democratic Party leaders cleared the field for her, insuring her nomination.

Christopher Backemeyer, the Democratic candidate in the 1st Congressional District of Nebraska, had a 20-year career at the State Department, but offers no details about where he was stationed. He was clearly well connected, moving to the White House National Security Council in the Biden administration, and ending as a national security adviser in the office of Vice President Kamala Harris.

Backemeyer is challenging two-term Republican incumbent Mike Flood in the district which includes the city of Lincoln and much of eastern Nebraska. The race has become unexpectedly competitive, with Backemeyer actually leading in one poll, and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee beginning to promote him.

Another national security aide with White House experience is **Jessica Killin**, the Democratic candidate in the 5th Congressional District of Colorado. She is challenging first-term Republican incumbent Jeff Crank in the district which includes Colorado Springs, home of the Air Force Academy.

After an ROTC scholarship to college, she became a paratrooper in the Army, rising to the level of captain, stationed overseas in military police missions in the Balkans and other European NATO operations. After working as an executive at USAA, the military-based insurance company, she returned to the national security apparatus as an aide to several congresspeople, eventually becoming an adviser to Doug Emhoff, husband of Vice President Kamala Harris.

These political connections have led to a flood of cash and political backing for what was initially an underdog campaign in a conservative district. Killin had raised $3.1 million, compared to Crank's $2.2 million, as of June 30, and she was placed in the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee's "Red-to-Blue" program, making her campaign a top target for donors and endorsements.

James Martin, the Democratic candidate in Florida's 21st Congressional District, on the Atlantic Coast north of Palm Beach, also has vice-presidential connections. He is running against five-term Republican incumbent Brian Mast. Martin graduated from the Coast Guard Academy and was deployed both to combat zones in the Middle East and the Caribbean Sea and Eastern Pacific Ocean.

Another young soldier talent-spotted by the Democratic Party, he was transferred to the White House during the Biden administration. According to his campaign website, "His last assignment on active duty was the Chief of Staff for National Security Affairs and Executive Secretary of the Office of the Vice President at the White House from 2022-2025, where he served both Vice President Harris and Vice President Vance." He remains a commissioned lieutenant commander in the Coast Guard Reserve.

Michael Masuda is the Democratic candidate in the 5th Congressional District of California, running against nine-term Republican incumbent Tom McClintock. The district runs along the California-Nevada border south from Sacramento. His campaign website traces his career from a college degree in electrical engineering to working in the military-intelligence apparatus: "he worked as an engineer at the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory where he helped develop technology that keeps American soldiers safe and ensures the U.S. military remains the most capable in the world. In 2021, he was selected for the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Science and Technology Policy Fellowship and joined the U.S. Department of State as a Foreign Affairs Officer."

Carmela Conroy is a career State Department official who was the Democratic candidate in the 5th Congressional District of Washington state in 2024 and was nominated again this year. She is running against incumbent Republican Michael Baumgartner, who defeated her in 2024. At that time, the WSWS gave this account of her career:

Conroy is a retired career Foreign Service officer, who went to

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law school, became a local prosecutor in Spokane, then went on to a career in which she “has built connections with veterans, active-duty military personnel, and professionals in national security.”

Her campaign website gives no further account, but there are other published reports that detail her State Department activities, including in New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Japan, including Okinawa, site of the huge US military base. She held high-level positions in Washington coordinating the US response to the Rohingya refugee crisis in Burma, and at the State Department’s Operations Center after the 9/11 attacks. In 2011, she received the Agency Seal Award from the CIA for her performance in interagency collaboration.

To be continued

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