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www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

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By Patrick Martin

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CIA Democrats call for aggression against Russia, run pro-war campaigns in 2018 congressional races

The Democratic Party is widely favored to win control of the House of Representatives in the US midterm elections November 6, with projections that it will gain 30 to 50 seats, or even more, well above the net gain of 23 required for a majority.

The last time the Democratic Party won control of the House from the Republicans was in 2006, when it captured 30 Republican seats on the basis of a limited appeal to the massive antiwar sentiment among working people after three years of disastrous and bloody warfare in Iraq, and five years after the US invasion and occupation of Afghanistan.

In stark contrast, there is not a hint of an antiwar campaign by the Democratic challengers seeking Republican seats in the 2018 elections. On the contrary, the pronouncements of leading Democrats on foreign policy issues have been strongly pro-war, attacking the Trump administration from the right for its alleged softness on Russia and its hostility to traditional US-led alliances like NATO.

This is particularly true of the 30 Democratic congressional nominees in competitive races who come from a national-security background. These challengers, previously identified by the *World Socialist Web Site* as the [CIA Democrats](#), constitute the largest single grouping among Democratic nominees in competitive seats, more than state and local officials, lawyers or those wealthy enough to finance their own campaigns.

The 30 national-security candidates include six actual CIA, FBI or military intelligence agents, six State Department or other civilian national security officials, 11 combat

veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan, all but one an officer, and seven other military veterans, including pilots, naval officers and military prosecutors (JAGs).

The range of views expressed by these 30 candidates is quite limited. With only one exception, **Jared Golden**, running in the First District of Maine, the military-intelligence Democrats do not draw any negative conclusions from their experience in leading, planning or fighting in the wars of the past 25 years, including two wars against Iraq, the invasion of Afghanistan, and other military engagements in the Persian Gulf and North and East Africa.

Golden, who is also the only rank-and-file combat veteran—as opposed to an officer—and the only one who admits to having suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, criticizes congressional rubber-stamping of the wars of the past 20 years. “Over the past decade and a half, America has spent trillions on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and on other conflicts across the globe,” his campaign website declares. “War should be a last resort, and only undertaken when the security interests of America are clearly present, and the risks and costs can be appropriately justified to the American people.”

These sentiments hardly qualify as antiwar, but they sound positively radical compared to the materials posted on the websites of many of the other military-intelligence candidates. In some ways, Golden is the exception that proves the rule. What used to be the standard rhetoric of Democratic Party candidates when running against the administration of George W. Bush has been entirely scrapped in the course of the Obama administration, the first in American history to have been engaged in a major military conflict for every day of its eight years.

All the other national-security candidates accept as a basic premise that the United States must maintain its dominant world position. The most detailed foreign policy doctrine appears on the website of **Amy McGrath**, who is now favored to win her contest against incumbent Republican incumbent Andy Barr in the Sixth Congressional District of Kentucky.

McGrath follows closely the line of the Obama administration and the Hillary Clinton presidential campaign, supporting the Iran nuclear deal that Trump tore up, embracing Israel, warning of North Korea’s development of nuclear weapons, and declaring it “critical that the US work with our allies and partners in the region to counter China’s advances” in the South China Sea and elsewhere in Asia.

But Russia is clearly the main target of US national-security efforts, in her view. She writes, “Our Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has testified that Russia is the greatest

threat to American security. Russia poses an existential threat to the United States due to its nuclear weapons and its behavior in the past several years has been disturbing. Russia's aggression in Georgia, Crimea, Ukraine, and Syria has been alarming. It's becoming more assertive in the Arctic, likely the most important geostrategic zone of competition in the coming decades. The US should consider providing defensive arms to Ukraine and exerting more pressure on Moscow using economic sanctions."

She concludes by calling for an investigation modeled on the 9/11 Commission into alleged Russian interference in the 2016 elections.

Five other national-security candidates focus on specific warnings about the danger of Russia and China, thus aligning themselves with the new national security orientation set in the most recent Pentagon strategy document, which declares that the principal US national security challenge is no longer the "war on terror," but the prospect of great power conflicts, above all with Russia and China.

Jessica Morse, a former State Department and AID official in Iraq, running in the Fourth District of California, blasts the Trump administration for "giving away global leadership to powers like China and Russia. Our security and our economy will both suffer if those countries are left to re-write the international rules."

Former FBI agent **Christopher Hunter**, running in the 12th District of Florida, declares, "Russia is a clear and present danger to the United States. We emerged victorious over the Soviet Union in the Cold War. We must resolve anew to secure an uncompromising victory over Russia and its tyrannical regime."

Elissa Slotkin, the former CIA agent and Pentagon official running in Michigan's Eighth Congressional District, cites her 14 years of experience "working on some of our country's most critical national security matters, including U.S.-Russia relations, the counter-ISIS campaign, and the U.S. relationship with NATO." She argues that "the United States must make investments in its military, intelligence, and diplomatic power" in order to maintain "a unique and vital role in the world."

Max Rose, a combat commander in Afghanistan now running in New York's 11th Congressional District (Staten Island and Brooklyn), calls for "recognizing Russia as a hostile foreign power and holding the Kremlin accountable for its attempts to undermine the sovereignty and democratic values of other nations." Rose is still in the military reserves, and took two weeks off from his campaign in August to participate in small-unit drills.

Joseph Kopser, running in the 21st District of Texas, is another anti-Russian firebrand, writing on his website, “As a retired Army Ranger, I know first hand the importance of standing strong with your allies. Given Russia’s march toward a totalitarian state showing aggression around the region, as well as their extensive cyber and information warfare campaign directed at the U.S., England, and others, our Article 5 [NATO] commitment to our European allies and partners is more important than ever.” He concludes, “Since the mid-twentieth century, the United States has been a principal world leader—a standard that should never be changed.”

Four national-security candidates add North Korea and Iran to China and Russia as specific targets of American military and diplomatic attack.

Josh Welle, a former naval officer who was deployed to Afghanistan, now running in the Fourth Congressional District of New Jersey, writes, “We have to stand together in the face of threats from countries like North Korea and Iran. The human rights violations and nuclear capabilities of these countries pose a direct threat to the stability of this world and therefore need to be met with strong military presence and a robust defense program to protect ourselves.”

Tom Malinowski, former assistant secretary of state for human rights, running in New Jersey’s Seventh District, calls for maintaining economic sanctions on Russia “until it [stops its aggression in Ukraine](#) and [interference in our democracy](#),” effusively endorses the state of Israel (whose government actually interferes in US elections more than any other), and calls for stepped up sanctions against North Korea.

Mikie Sherill, a former Navy pilot and Russian policy officer, running in New Jersey’s 11th District, writes, “I have sat across the table from the Russians, and know that we need our government to take the threat they pose seriously.” She adds to this a warning about “threats posed by North Korea and Iran,” the two most immediate targets of military-diplomatic blackmail by the Trump administration. She concludes, referring to North Korea’s nuclear program, “For that reason I support a robust military presence in the region and a comprehensive missile defense program to defend America, our allies, and our troops abroad.”

Dan McCready, an Iraq war unit commander who claims to have been born again when he was baptized in water from the Euphrates River, calls for war to be waged only “with overwhelming firepower,” not “sporadically, with no strategy or end in sight, while our enemies like Iran, North Korea, Russia, and the terrorists outsmart and outlast us.” He is

running in North Carolina's Ninth Congressional District, adjacent to the huge military complex at Fort Bragg.

One military-intelligence candidate cites immigration as a national-security issue, echoing the position of the Trump administration, which constantly peddles scare stories that terrorists are infiltrating the United States disguised as immigrants and refugees. That is **Richard Ojeda**, running in the Third Congressional District of West Virginia, who publicly boasts of having voted for Trump in 2016, in the same election in which he won a seat in the West Virginia state senate running as a Democrat.

Ojeda writes on his web site, "We must also ensure that terrorists do not reach American soil by abusing our immigration process. We must keep an up to date terror watch list but provide better vetting for those that go onto the watch list."

A career Army Airborne officer, Ojeda voices the full-blown militarism of this social layer. "If there is one thing I am confident in, it is the ability of our nation's military," he declares. "The best way to keep Americans safe is to let our military do their job without muddying up their responsibilities with our political agendas."

He openly rejects control of the military by civilian policy-makers. "War is not a social experiment and I refuse to let politics play a role in my decision making when it comes to keeping you and your family safe," he continues. "I will not take my marching orders from anyone else concerning national security."

Only one of the 30 candidates, **Ken Harbaugh**, a retired Air Force pilot running in the Seventh Congressional District of Ohio, centered on the industrial city of Canton, acknowledges being part of this larger group. He notes, "In 2018, more vets are running for office than at any moment in my lifetime. Because of the growing inability of Washington to deal responsibly with the threats facing our nation, veterans from both sides of the aisle are stepping into the breach."

Referring to the mounting prospect of war, he writes, "Today, we face our gravest geopolitical challenge since 9/11. Our country remains at war in Afghanistan, we have troops engaged in North Africa, Iraq and Syria, and Russia continues to bully our allies. Meanwhile, North Korea has the ability to directly threaten the American mainland with nuclear missiles." He concludes, "we need leaders with the moral authority to speak on these issues, leaders who have themselves been on the front lines of these challenges."

These statements, taken cumulatively, present a picture of unbridled militarism and aggression as the program of the supposed "opposition" to the Trump administration's own saber-rattling and threats of "fire and fury like the world has never seen."

Perhaps even more remarkable is that the remaining 17 national-security candidates say nothing at all about foreign policy (in 11 cases) or limit themselves to anodyne observations about the necessity to provide adequate health care and other benefits to veterans (two cases), or vague generalities about the need to combine a strong military with diplomatic efforts (four cases). They give no specifics whatsoever.

In other words, while these candidates tout their own records as part of the national-security apparatus as their principal credential for election to Congress, they decline to tell the voters what they would do if they were in charge of American foreign policy.

Given that these 17 include intelligence agents (**Abigail Spanberger** and **Gina Ortiz Jones**), a National Security Council Iraq war planner (**Andy Kim**), and numerous other high-level State Department and military commanders, the silence can have only the most ominous interpretation.

These CIA Democrats don't want to tell voters about their plans for foreign policy and military intervention because they know these measures are deeply unpopular. They aim to gain office as stealth candidates, unveiling their program of militarism and war only after they take their seats, when they may very well exercise decisive influence in the next Congress.