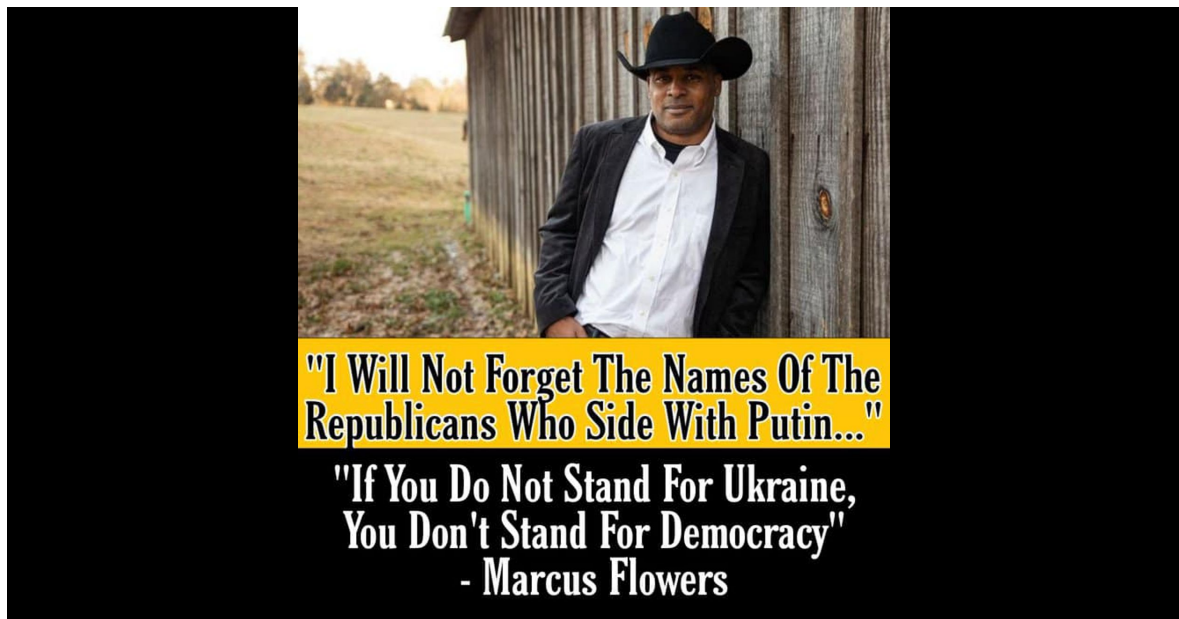*Patrick Martin*
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Reinforcements for the CIA Democrats in the 2022 elections: Part two

This is the second part of a two-part series. Part one was posted on Thursday, October 6.

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 ad for Marcus Flowers linking his Republican opponent to Russia.

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 returning to CIA…"

Castelli was counterterrorism director for the National Security Council under Obama and later Trump.

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.
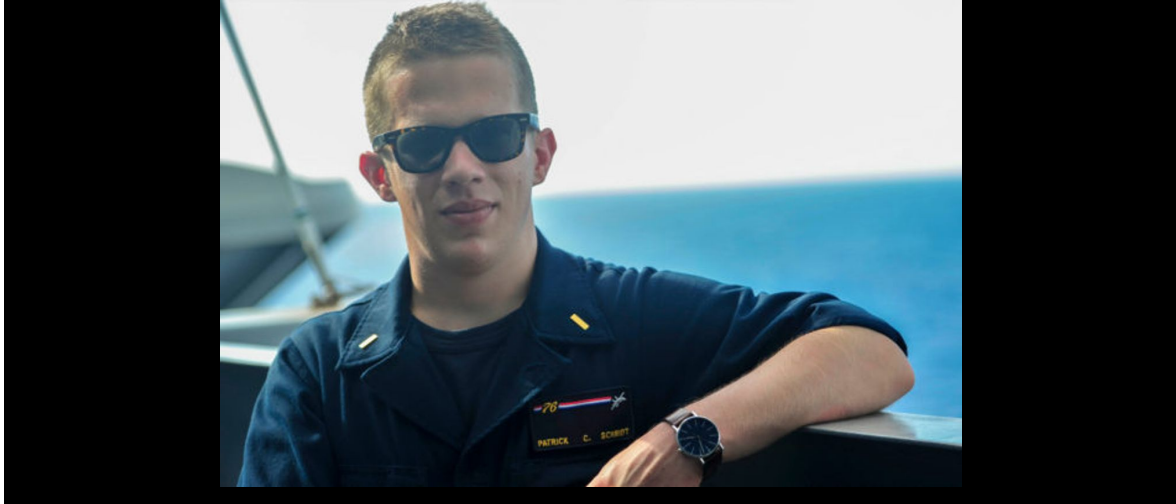

Alfonso's campaign logo centers on his military role

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."

Patrick Schmidt was a Naval Intelligence officer on board the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan.

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?

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.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi announces the House managers for the first impeachment of Donald Trump, with Jason Crow at far right. [AP Photo]

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.

Concluded

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