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War Party Is Ready for 2016

By Justin Raimondo

February 24, 2015

Walter B. Jones is seventy-two years old, but the feisty Republican congressman representing North Carolina's third congressional district has no plans to retire. Asked by *Roll Call* if he's going to be running again, he answered "Absolutely!" and said fundraising has already started, adding: "I like to be a thorn in people's ass."

Yes, that's Jones all over – a thorn in the War Party's very vulnerable backside. He represents a district with the most military bases in the entire country, and yet this militantly anti-interventionist Republican has managed to beat back repeated challenges from within his own party.

Jones, you'll recall, was virulently pro-war in the run up to the invasion of Iraq: when the French refused to support the war, it was he who demanded the congressional cafeteria change the French fries on their menu to "Freedom fries." As the Iraq disaster unfolded, however, and the lies that got us into that war were revealed, he changed his tune quite dramatically from "Onward Christian Soldiers" to "Taps." Particularly affected by the heartbreaking letters he received from families of soldiers sent to the battlefield, he answered every single one – and made his opposition to the war into a personal crusade.

The neoconservatives in the GOP establishment targeted him for political destruction but he beat back a challenge from their chosen carpetbagger, one Taylor Griffin, despite the War Party funneling over \$1 million into the campaign. Griffin didn't dare confront Jones directly on the

issue of war and peace: instead, he concentrated on the ridiculous assertion that Jones is "too liberal" for the district. Yet FreedomWorks, a group that campaigns to elect Tea Party-oriented candidates, rated him the most conservative member of the North Carolina delegation: the American Conservative Union, which has been rating the conservative bona fides of members of Congress for decades, puts him in the top 25 percent. In the end, the voters didn't buy Griffin's propaganda, but the margin was only six points – a thin one for a 20-year veteran officeholder.

Griffin is angling for another try, and he's sure to get support from the same pro-war types who funded his campaign last time: hedge fund manager and fanatical warhawk Paul Singer, the "Emergency Committee for Israel," and Seth Klarman, another billionaire for endless war.

The same people are out to target likely Republican presidential candidate Sen. Rand Paul, and they are raising money hand over fist. The *New York Times* reports:

"Though Mr. Paul will not formally announce his campaign until April, prominent Republican officials and groups are already organizing to undercut his approach. One of the party's biggest donors, the Las Vegas casino magnate Sheldon Adelson, has told associates he is open to underwriting an effort to stopping Mr. Paul, should he gain traction in the primary."

Rand has these people in a panic, and they are lining up their artillery for the coming battle. The start of the GOP primary season has so far witnessed the founding of no less than six interventionist vehicles especially tailored for this election season. Former Bush administration UN Ambassador John Bolton, the Otto von Bismarck of the War Party, has organized three such groups, the latest being the "Foundation for American Security and Freedom." Bolton's groups are targeting the GOP in an effort to purge anti-interventionists and elect neocons. Bolton is also supposedly running his own presidential campaign, with the alleged need for military intervention practically everywhere his signature issue. He's already raised millions from the usual suspects, and is poised to raised millions more from the same chickenhawk/Israel Firster crowd.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, whose pro-war views are very far from closeted, is flirting with a presidential run, citing his favorable ratings in his home state of South Carolina and making a pilgrimage to Iowa, where he lectured voters on the alleged need for more military spending. He, too, has his own nonprofit war lobbying group, which he's given the overly butch name of "Security Through Strength." His presidential aspirations are a joke, but the War Party thinks that by flooding the arena with cheerleaders for endless intervention they can drown out any voices of sanity. But can turning up the volume defeat the voice of reason?

This coalition of the warmongers has yet another appendage, created by former Rep. Mike Rogers, who led the assault on Rep. Justin Amash's effort to defund the National Security Agency's vast spying apparatus. His group, dubbed "Americans for Peace, Prosperity, and Security," has as its mission to elect candidates "who understand the importance of engagement" – war being the only sort of "engagement" thugs like Rogers comprehend.

"The combined efforts of these groups," the *Times* informs us, "along with the shift of rank-and-file Republicans toward hawkishness, could isolate Mr. Paul. This is will be most vividly

apparent once debates begin this year. With Republican candidates increasingly attacking Mr. Obama for what they see as his unwillingness to project American strength, Mr. Paul's support for the administration's policies on such issues as negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program will stand out – and force him into some awkward situations."

The only awkward position is portraying Obama as some kind of noninterventionist – a President who destroyed Libya, tried to intervene in Syria (until the American people rose up and demanded Congress vote no), and has taken us back into Iraq, re-fighting the most unpopular war since the Vietnam conflict. The Republican wing of the War Party thinks it can win the debate by casting it in purely partisan terms, but they forget one thing: *Obama isn't running this time around*. Instead, the likely Democratic nominee is one Hillary Rodham Clinton, who still refuses to recant her vote in favor of the Iraq war (a bit of stubbornness that arguably cost her the nomination in '08) and who is widely perceived as the architect of the utterly disastrous US intervention in Libya.

The falsity of this partisan dichotomy is underscored in the *Times* article when none other than Richard Perle is dragged in to give it his imprimatur: "You're not going to find any of the Republicans, even those who might well have behaved like Obama, standing up and defending Obama," babbled Perle, whose resurfacing ought to be greeted as one would greet the appearance of a crocodile in the pool. What Perle doesn't say is that even Jeb Bush is backing away from his own brother – and the foreign policy baggage associated with George W. Bush – heatedly declaring he's his "own man." Dubya wasn't even invited to attend the last GOP national convention, and I doubt he'll show up at this one – with good reason.

As for Barack Obama, he was never anti-interventionist, not by a long shot – as many on the left discovered too late. Whether his ostensibly "antiwar" stance during the 2008 election was simply an opportunistic ploy, or his "wrong war in the wrong place" line was a clever way to market his real views, is irrelevant: sellout or fake-out, Obama's two terms in office revealed his true colors as one of the most interventionist presidents in modern times. Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Somalia, and the reinsertion of US troops back into Iraq – not to mention meddling in Ukraine – demonstrate this beyond any doubt. Instead of being the "antiwar president," Obama has succeeded in cementing a pro-interventionist consensus in the Democratic party, with the Center For a New American Security and the Center for American Progress, the two leading Democratic-leaning thinktanks from which the administration has recruited its foreign policy "experts," solidly in the interventionist camp.

The War Party's game plan is clear enough: to make the 2016 presidential campaign a race between two interventionists, thus precluding any real choice as far as foreign policy is concerned. As the writer and editor Garet Garrett put it some sixty years ago:

"Between government in the republican meaning, that is, Constitutional, representative, limited government on the one hand, and Empire on the other, there is mortal enmity. Either one must forbid the other or one will destroy the other. That we know. Yet never has the choice been put to a vote of the people."

And the War Party wants to keep it that way. The question is: will Americans let them?

While we here at Antiwar.com definitely do not endorse any particular candidates, we have a duty to inform our readers about their foreign policy views. We are starting to do that in a systematic way with today's edition, and we'll ramp up our coverage in the months to come – because foreign policy is going to be a big part of the campaign.

And this is true not just on the Republican side but also – if Jim Webb gets into the race – on the Democratic side. Webb, a passionate opponent of the Iraq war, with impeccable military credentials and a general distaste for chickenhawks, is bound to spice up this election season with plenty to say of interest to our readers.

Yes, it's going to be a major show, so get out the popcorn, kick back, and follow our coverage – but before you do, let's make sure we *can* cover this important process. ***Because if we don't make our fundraising goal for this quarter, there won't be any coverage of anything – period.***

The response to our matching funds campaign has been a bit dispiriting, to say the least. At this rate, we just won't make it – and Antiwar.com will be in considerable trouble. Indeed, the future of this web site – and the tremendous gains we have made – will be put in serious doubt. Instead of expanding our scope, we may be forced to radically cut back on our coverage – with the distinct possibility of complete dissolution looming in the background.

No, I'm not just trying to scare you. Our financial crisis is very real – and that's why I'm appealing to you directly and bluntly. ***We need your tax-deductible donation and we need it now.*** Both the liberty movement and the peace movement – really, the same movement – are at a crucial crossroads: faced with an enemy armed with tremendous – almost unlimited – resources, we need your financial support to make it over this rather large obstacle on the road to ultimate success.

The War Party has millions – nay, *billions!* They don't have to dun the rather thin ranks of their grassroots supporters for the money to do their dirty work. They just have to make a few calls to the hedge fund billionaires and tacky casino owners who pay their bills. We, on the other hand, depend on people like you – ordinary Americans who are sick unto death of perpetual war.

Please, help us in our battle to defeat the War Party. We don't need millions to do it – we just need the basic tools to carry on our fight. The American people are with us: we just need to remind them of the disasters brought on by the War Party in the recent past, and the rest will take care of itself.