



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on October 24, 2011

Post Calls GOP Presidential Candidates “Unified” Against Iraq Pullout

A news story, remarkable for its readily apparent inaccuracy, surfaced from the Washington Post on Friday under the headline: "GOP presidential field unified in opposition to Iraq withdrawal." The story was about the supposedly uniform response of the Republican presidential candidates to the announcement from the Obama White House that all U.S. military personnel will be withdrawn from Iraq at the end of this year, in accordance with the Status of forces Agreement signed between the government of the United States and Iraq in 2008, the last year of the Bush presidency.



The announcement marked the formal end of efforts by the Obama administration to persuade the Baghdad government to allow a few thousand U.S. troops to remain in the country to help with security and continue training of Iraqi police and military personnel. According to reports, the sticking point was the U.S. insistence upon and Iraq's refusal to accept legal immunity for Americans in Iraq. In other words, our country would not allow Iraq to try Americans in Iraq under Iraqi law for crimes they might commit in that country.

And according to the *Post* story, written by Karen DeYoung, "Republican presidential candidates spoke with one voice in reaction to President Obama's announcement of a full U.S. withdraw from Iraq this year. They were against it."

Reluctant though we might be to rain upon her neatly unified parade, could someone send Ms. DeYoung or one of her editors Ron Paul's phone number? Or the [contact information for his campaign](#)? They seem to have lost it. They appear also to be unaware that Rep. Paul, who opposed the much advertised and overhyped Iraq War since before it started, has been calling for the withdrawal of U.S. forces in Iraq from the time they went in. "We marched right in, we can march right out," he has said time and again. He has also called for the withdrawal of U.S. military forces from other foreign lands all around this great big world of all, a world that Paul, not unreasonably, believes we as a nation cannot afford to police and support. Perhaps that much consistency in a candidate for public office is difficult for the *Washington Post* to comprehend.

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Indeed, it may even be a little awkward to acknowledge that stand, since the *Post*, if memory serves, provided a fair amount of the editorial cheerleading for the march into Iraq during the much ballyhooed run-up to that ill conceived war in 2002 and early 2003. So someone who has consistently opposed our military presence there — as Senators Kerry and Clinton did not and President Obama no longer does — and is still running for President might be a bit of an embarrassment to that great Washington newspaper. So better to ignore Ron Paul and the other non-interventionist in the race, former New Mexico Governor Gary Johnson.

The rest of that "unified" GOP field is, frankly, an embarrassment. There are never enough wars for them and no war, apparently, lasts long enough to satisfy them. We have been in Iraq for close to nine years now and were frequently bombing the country for a dozen years before that. We have been in Afghanistan for more than 10 years. Yet many of the same war hawks who oppose withdrawal from either of those countries are still looking abroad for other nations to attack and other wars in which to throw American lives. Nor is this interventionist disease limited to the current crop of presidential candidates. Senator John McCain, the GOP standard-bearer in the last presidential election, has been casting his keen, bomber-trained eyes about the globe for new opportunities for military intervention.

"Now that military operations in Libya are ending, there will be renewed focus on what practical military operations might be considered to protect civilian lives in Syria," the Arizona Senator told a World Economic Forum meeting in Jordan. McCain was speaking at the Dead Sea, which seems an appropriate enough place for him. The Syrian crackdown on pro-democracy protests has reportedly killed 3,000 people and McCain has warned Syrian President Bashar al-Assad that he could go the way of Moammar Gadhafi, who last week was captured and killed by rebel forces, aided during the past several months by NATO air strikes.

"There are even growing calls among the opposition for some foreign military intervention," McCain said of the Syrian bloodshed. "We hear these pleas for assistance. We are listening to and engaging with the (opposition) National Council," he added.

In the summer of 2008, McCain announced, during a battle between Russia and Georgia over South Ossetia, that "We're all Georgians now." Really. When did we join Georgia? And who elected this guy President? Why is McCain now making this announcement about a possible military intervention in Syria? Is he sitting in on the war councils at the Obama White House? Was he acting as Obama's envoy (or errand boy) on this mission?

And it is, if possible, even worse in the world of neo-conservative punditry. At that reliable warhorse of a journal, [The Weekly Standard](#), William "the Conqueror" Kristol has issued a call for bombing attacks on Iran in retaliation for an alleged Iranian plot to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to the United States. Kristol may have a point, after all. For all we know the information about that Iranian plot might be almost as good as the "intelligence" reports of some years ago about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Besides, writes Kristol, who was among the most vocal and persistent advocates of war with Iraq, "This Iranian regime has the blood of American soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan on its hands." The irony of that statement, coming from the likes of Kristol, is no doubt lost on the intrepid .com warrior. The title of his editorial — "Speak Softly...and Fight Back"—is obviously a takeoff on the famous Teddy Roosevelt slogan, "Walk softly and carry a big stick." But Kristol is a different kind of Rough Rider. He talks belligerently and carries a laptop.

As does Jonah "the Warrior" Goldberg at *National Review*. Goldberg, surprisingly, is not saying we should, as Sen. McCain once suggested (in his parody of the Beach Boys song, "Barbara Ann") "bomb,



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bomb, bomb, bomb bomb Iran" (though he wouldn't mind if we did). He just thinks we should make the Iranians think we might bomb them at any time. His biggest fear is that Obama will observe international law and respond through diplomatic channels, while implicitly taking a military response "off the table."

"It's hardly controversial to say that the Obama administration prefers legalistic, multilateral, and diplomatic solutions to abiding problems rather than military ones," Goldberg wrote in a recent [column](#).

It's enough to make one wonder what planet Goldberg and his like-minded colleagues have been living on for the past decade. His Nobel Peace Prize notwithstanding, Obama is either waging war or dropping bombs of "humanitarian intervention" in six or seven countries now and has just sent troops to Uganda. Yet to hear the Republican war hawks tell it, you might think he's a leftover flower child from the McGovern campaign (when Obama was in grade school). Listen long enough to these desktop commandos and you might almost believe that Obama's response to the next military crisis will be to ask us all to please join hands and sing "Kumbaya."

In the semi-conservative Granite State, home of the first-in-the-nation presidential primary elections, the right-wing lite New Hampshire *Union Leader* worried in a recent editorial that Ron Paul's plan to bring our overseas troops home would leave many of them unemployed. In an op ed response, Paul's national campaign chairman, Jesse Benton, politely pointed out the obvious.

"On the troops, let us be clear: bringing our brave men and women home would not turn them out of the military," Benton wrote. "Those troops would be stationed here, in the service of our national defense, safeguarding our borders instead of Pakistan's. And when and if they choose to leave the service, they would enter a private sector that was not being taxed and inflated dry to police and support the rest of the world."

Agree with it or not, that message is clear and should be easy enough for even college-schooled (but not necessarily educated) newspaper reporters, editors, and publishers to understand.



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