Written by **Jack Kenny** on February 19, 2015

Jeb Offers More Bush World Chaos

Appearing before the Chicago Council on Global Affairs Wednesday, undeclared presidential candidate Jeb Bush (shown) acknowledged "there were mistakes made in Iraq" and insisted he is his "own man," but otherwise gave no indication he would depart from the practice of intervening militarily around the globe to "enforce peaceful stability" in far-off lands.

"I love my father and my brother," the former Florida governor said of Presidents George Herbert Walker Bush and George W. Bush during the question and answer session that followed his prepared remarks. "I admire their service to the nation and the difficult decisions they had to make. But I am my own man — and my views are shaped by my own thinking and own experiences."

Bush did not say whether he considered his brother's decision to invade Iraq and carry out "regime change" there among the mistakes made during the war many predicted would be quick and easy. U.S. forces battled insurgents there for nearly nine years and left at the end of 2011 with the security of Iraq and the future of its democratic government still very much in doubt. He did note that reports of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction turned out "not to be accurate."

"Not creating an environment of security after the successful taking-out of Hussein was a mistake, because Iraqis wanted security more than anything else," Bush said. But he praised his elder brother's decision to send additional troops in the "surge" of 2007, calling it one of "the most heroic acts of courage politically that any president's done." Otherwise he stuck to his previously stated intention to not "re-litigate the past" regarding the last Bush administration and to focus instead on the future. "New circumstances require new approaches," he said.

Yet his new approaches sound like more of George W. Bush's "global democratic revolution." "The United States has an undiminished ability to shape events and build alliances of free people," he said. "We can project power and enforce peaceful stability in far-off areas of the globe."

The United States has surely not been bashful about projecting power in the world, but the results in far-off places such as Iraq and Afghanistan seem a far cry from "peaceful stability." Reviewing the results of military interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen, Kevin Drum at the left-wing MotherJones.com has concluded: "It's been nothing but disasters since 9/11, and there's no reason at all to think we've learned how to do things better in the intervening years. Bush started big wars, and Obama has started small ones, but the result has been the same."

Bush blamed Obama for withdrawing U.S. combat forces from Iraq in keeping with the December 2011 deadline set three years earlier by the Status Of Forces Agreement the Baghdad government and the

George W. Bush administration. Obama failed to build on the success of the surge and "created the void" now being filled by ISIS and other terrorist groups in the region, Bush said. Despite his determination to not "re-litigate the past," Democrats are not about to let pass the younger Bush's defense of his brother's unpopular war.

"That's the problem with Jeb Bush," Mo Elleithee, communications director for the Democratic National Committee said in a statement published Wednesday. "Most Americans believe that if we knew then what we know now, it would have been a mistake to invade Iraq. Jeb Bush, despite what we know now, thinks the only mistake was getting out."

One place where Bush apparently believes the United States can and should "enforce peaceful stability" is in the nation of Iran. He criticized Obama for not taking a sufficiently hard line in negotiations with the Tehran government over its nuclear program:

> Prevention of nuclear weapons in Iran was once a unifying issue with an American foreign policy. Leaders of both parties agreed to it. When he launched his negotiations, President Obama said that was the goal — stop Iran's nuclear program. Now we're told the goal has changed and the point of these negotiations isn't to solve the problem, it's to manage it.

Like many Republicans and Democrats in Washington, Bush speaks of "nuclear weapons" and "Iran's nuclear program" as though the two things were synonymous. Warnings of Iran on the verge of producing a nuclear bomb go back at least as far as 1979. Yet two National Intelligence Estimates from all 16 U.S. intelligence agencies, in 2007 and again in 2011, said there was no evidence that Iran was developing nuclear weapons. One might reasonably expect a little more caution from one who has acknowledged, however belatedly, that those famous reports of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq turned out "not to be accurate."

Mentioning his five trips to Israel, Bush placed himself firmly in the corner of Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu, who has repeatedly called for tougher sanctions, backed by threats of military force against Iran. Bush endorsed House Speaker John Boehner's invitation to Netanyahu to address a joint session of Congress on March 3, saying he looks forward to hearing what the Israeli leader has to say. Since the subject will be Iran, it seems unlikely Netanyahu will say anything different from what he has said on previous visits to Washington.

Bush is apt to arouse opposition from privacy advocates and civil libertarians on both the Left and the Right with the blanket endorsement he issued Wednesday of the NSA's dragnet collection of billions of phone calls and electronic messages sent and received by Americans every day. Bush called that surveillance a "hugely important program" to defend the country from terrorists like those affiliated with the Islamic State, "perhaps the greatest security threat that we now face for our own homeland."

Bush spoke of "shortfalls in our defense spending," indicating a desire to increase the Pentagon budget. He inflated the number of extremists fighting for the Islamic State, referring in his prepared remarks to ISIS as "a fighting force of more than 200,000 battle-tested men." A spokesman later explained Bush meant to say 20,000.

"Taking them out is the strategy," Bush said during the question and answer session, though he did not say how. He gave no hint as to whether he would support sending U.S. ground forces against the Islamic State.

While any discussion of foreign policy by Jeb Bush is bound to give rise to comparisons with his brother's administration, it was the first President Bush who got the United States enmeshed in Middle

East conflicts with his decisions to station more than half a million U.S. troops on Muslim holy ground in Saudi Arabia and to drive the Iraqi army out of Kuwait. Bush presented the liberation of Kuwait as the beginning of a "new world order, an order in which a credible United Nations can use its peacekeeping role to fulfill the promise and the vision of the UN's founders."

Jeb Bush, with his boundless optimism about the nation's "undiminished ability to shape events" and "enforce peaceful stability in far-off areas of the globe" appears ready to expand upon a "new world order" that might more accurately be called a "Bush world chaos."

Photo of Jeb Bush: AP Images

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