



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on May 5, 2011

## Obama's New Security Team, Old Establishment Faces

President Obama has nominated a new national security team that has veteran establishment credentials and appear to create an even tighter nexus between intelligence agencies and the military. Obama announced the following appointments April 28:



**Secretary of Defense:** Current CIA Director Leon Panetta (left) will replace Robert Gates, a rare cabinet holdover from the Bush administration. Panetta is a longtime Washington insider, having [served](#) as a Chief of Staff and OMB Director under President Bill Clinton and a congressman from California. Panetta will not be the first CIA officer to take over the Department of Defense, as Gates' [official biography](#) notes that "Secretary Gates joined the Central Intelligence Agency in 1966 and spent nearly 27 years as an intelligence professional" including serving as CIA director 1991-93.

**CIA Director:** Army General David Petraeus, currently serving as U.S. Commander in Afghanistan (Formally called the "International Security Assistance Force"), will retire from the U.S. Army and replace Panetta as CIA Director. Petraeus is a member of the establishment organization, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR).

**U.S. Commander in Afghanistan:** U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. John Allen will become commander of allied forces in Afghanistan, replacing Gen. Petraeus (CFR). Like Petraeus, Allen is a member of the establishment organization, the Council on Foreign Relations

**U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan:** Veteran diplomat Ryan Crocker (CFR), a former ambassador to Iraq and Pakistan, would serve as the new Ambassador to Afghanistan, replacing retired Army Lt. Gen. Karl Eikenberry (also CFR).

I've worked closely with most of the individuals on this stage, and all of them have my complete confidence, Obama [said](#) April 28 as he announced his appointments. Given the pivotal period that were entering into, I felt it was absolutely critical that we have this team in place so we can stay focused on our mission. I cannot think of a group of individuals better suited to lead our national security team during this difficult time." Each of the appointments will have to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

Obama stressed that he had pressed Gates to remain as Secretary of Defense longer, despite the fact that he had served under Republican President Bush. "When I took office, Bob Gates had already served under seven presidents, and he carried a clock that counted down the days, hours, and minutes until he could return to Washington state with his wife, Becky," Obama [said](#). "At some point along the way, Bob



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threw out that clock.”

“Today we are a nation at war,” Leon Panetta [told](#) reporters after his nomination, a phrase Obama repeated during his announcement. “And job one will be to ensure that we are the strongest military power in the world to protect that security that is so important to this country.” Since the nominations were announced, the killing of Osama bin Ladin has eliminated the putative reason for U.S. military engagement in the Islamic world, as the American invasion of Afghanistan was predicated on the need to eliminate the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks in New York City and Washington, DC.

But President Obama gave little indication that a reduction in the U.S. military presence around the world would be reduced during his April 28 [announcement](#) of his appointments. “As people across the Middle East and North Africa seek to determine their own destiny, we must ensure that America stands with those who seek their universal rights, and that includes continuing to support the international effort to protect the Libyan people. And here at home, as we make the hard decisions that are needed to reduce Americas debt, we cannot compromise our ability to defend our nation or our interests around the world.”



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