



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on August 25, 2014

Rand Paul Calls “Gung Ho” Hillary a War Hawk

Senator Rand Paul (shown) has not yet announced he’s running for president, but he is all but daring the Democrats to nominate “war hawk” Hillary Clinton for a race he predicts will be “transformational.”

“If you wanna see a transformational election in our country, let the Democrats put forward a war hawk like Hillary Clinton, and you’ll see a transformation like you’ve never seen,” the junior senator from Kentucky and likely GOP presidential contender said in an interview aired Sunday on *Meet the Press*. Paul, who has often been at odds with hawkish members of his own party over his opposition to military interventions, said the public is increasingly coming to agree with that position.



“I think the American public is coming more and more to where I am,” said Paul, whose father, former Texas Congressman Ron Paul, ran unsuccessfully for the Republican nomination in 2008 and 2012 as an antiwar libertarian. Both Pauls opposed the U.S. war in Iraq and the nation-building mission in Afghanistan, and the Kentucky senator believes a war-weary nation will be leery of Clinton, who supported the Iraq and Afghan missions, as well as the U.S. and allied air war over Libya while serving as President Obama’s secretary of state.

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“I think that’s what scares the Democrats the most,” said Paul, “is that in a general election, were I to run, there’s gonna be a lot of independents and even some Democrats who say, ‘You know what, we are tired of war. We’re worried that Hillary Clinton will get us involved in another Middle Eastern war, because she’s so gung-ho.’”

The senator was the subject of a feature report during the weekly news hour, as an NBC camera crew shot video of him in Guatemala, where Paul, an ophthalmologist, was performing eye surgery as one of 28 American volunteers on a humanitarian mission to the impoverished nation organized by the Moran Eye Center in Utah. Guatemala might seem an odd locale for a presidential hopeful who’ll be looking for votes in Iowa and New Hampshire in 2016, but *Meet the Press* let it be known that Paul’s advertising agency was also there taping the senator’s work among the Guatemalans, along with a film crew from Citizens United, the conservative political action committee whose anti-Hillary documentary in 2008 became embroiled in a legal dispute that led to the controversial Supreme Court decision overturning limits on independent expenditure ads in the McCain-Feingold campaign reform law.

“Top Republicans eyeing a run for president in 2016 have spent a lot of time in two key battleground states: 20 visits to Iowa, 10 more to New Hampshire,” said interviewer/narrator Chris Jansing. “But so far, only Paul has turned a foreign country into a unique photo op.” Jansing and the cameras followed Paul into a makeshift operating room in Salama, a remote town about three hours north of Guatemala



City.

“There is no doubt about the humanitarian aspect of this trip,” Jansing said. “Paul performed dozens of pro bono cataract surgeries over three days, in a region where there are only two eye surgeons for 800,000 people. Chronicling it all are [sic] Paul’s advertising team.” Paul was then shown recording the tagline for a campaign commercial, “I’m Rand Paul, and I approve this message.” In an interview, Paul, whose first venture as a political candidate won him his senate seat with an upset victory in 2010, pointed out he had been doing pro bono surgeries since long before he got into politics.

“But not in a foreign country,” Jansing replied.

“Right. Well, I’ve been operating on kids from Guatemala for, you know, it — I think the first kids I operated on were 1996. This isn’t something new that we’re doing.”

Later, the *Meet the Press* panel discussed what effect the Guatemalan mission might have on the doctor-senator’s image before caucus and primary, and possibly general election, voters in 2016.

“The rap on Rand Paul is that he’s an isolationist,” said David Ignatius, echoing the common “rap” against anyone who opposes needlessly going to war. “And to see him out [in] Guatemala, helping people, not talking about carrying guns or dropping bombs but fixing people’s eye problems, that’s part of the pitch he’s going to make. Whether the American people will trust this man, who says, you know, ‘I’m speaking to a country that’s tired of war,’ with national security at a time of growing crisis, is a big question.”

“He reminds me of doctors I had who are very matter-of-fact, and I think that’s where he gets it, that you know he sees a problem and he fixes it and he moves on,” said Ed O’Keefe of the *Washington Post*, who nonetheless said it “could be very difficult” to translate that into a political message on the campaign trail. Questioning whether his experience in Guatemala would change Paul’s views on foreign policy and immigration, Jansing said, “I don’t think we’re going to see a sea change there.”

Paul’s call of gradual elimination of all foreign aid is “a perfect case of how a person can have good intentions but how an ideology can cause terrible misery,” said Michael Gerson, a former speechwriter for President George W. Bush. “He will have to explain that.” It might also be the case that a Paul candidacy might force some of his more conventional rivals to explain how much foreign aid actually alleviates poverty and misery in foreign lands, and how much goes to support lavish lifestyles of Third World dictators. If Paul’s work in Guatemala does become part of the narrative of a presidential campaign for president, it might inspire others to offer their time and talents in similar missions, whether they vote for Paul or not. That might do more good than all the dollars of declining value our government spreads around the world in foreign and military aid.

A doctor running for president is still something of a novelty. Former Vermont Governor Howard Dean was one in 2004 and Ron Paul, an obstetrician, was another. The next campaign for president might reveal whether, and to what extent, Dr./Sen. Rand Paul, who has helped people see in Guatemala, can persuade voters in the United States to see things his way on foreign and domestic policy.

Photo of Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.): AP Images



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