



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on June 25, 2012

Romney's Weekend With Establishment Bush-era Warmongers

Presumed GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney recycled establishment Bush-era foreign policy neoconservative apparatchiks June 23-24 in a [weekend retreat](#) at the Chateaux at Silver Lake in Park City, Utah, where Romney feted some 800 of his top political contributors. The gathering featured addresses by former Bush administration officials Karl Rove and Condoleezza Rice, and highlights the concerns non-interventionists have about what a Romney administration foreign policy would look like.



The Atlantic magazine [summed](#) the weekend event up this way: "The price of admission to the retreat? Only donors who gave \$50,000 or raised \$100,000 were welcome, and even then they had to pay their own way there. The three-day retreat featured panels and discussions designed to entertain conservative donors. [Former Bush administration Secretary of State Condoleezza] Rice gave a speech about foreign policy that was apparently very critical of the President and received rave reviews. Nearly 800 people attended."

[Attending](#) the event were Rice and James Baker III (the elder Bush's Secretary of State), both members of the establishment/interventionist New York-based Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), as well as a host of other Bush era and other establishment GOP functionaries: Karl Rove, Mary Matalin, John McCain (CFR), Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal, Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell, Wisconsin Congressman Paul Ryan, former Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, former Florida Governor Jeb Bush, *Weekly Standard* publisher and Fox News commentator Bill Kristol (CFR), South Dakota Senator John Thune, U.S. House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, and former Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty.

The weekend served partly as a reward for contributors, and partly as a rallying cry to continue the money train into the Romney campaign. Romney has raised significantly less money than the incumbent President Barack Obama, according to [fundraising reports](#) to the Federal Election Commission. "The president and the Democratic National Committee had about \$147 million on hand on May 31, compared with \$107 million for Mr. Romney and the Republican National Committee," the *Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) June 24.

Romney, unlike Obama and his GOP rival Texas Congressman Ron Paul, has relied mostly on a few wealthy contributors who donate the maximum legal donation of \$2,500. "During the primaries, his campaign has raised 60 percent of its money from people who gave the maximum legal amount of \$2,500, according to the Campaign Finance Institute," the *Washington Post* [reported](#) June 23.

Romney's neoconservative foreign policy advisors caught the attention of former Secretary of State Colin Powell, who [told](#) MSNBC's Joe Scarborough back in May that the advisers are "quite far to the



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right.”

Romney’s neoconservative foreign policy advisors have also caught the attention of the anti-war left. Ari Berman of the hard-left magazine *The Nation* [noted](#) on May 2 that “Romney’s team is notable for including Bush aides tarnished by the Iraq fiasco: Robert Joseph, the National Security Council official who inserted the infamous ‘sixteen words’ in Bush’s 2003 State of the Union message claiming that Iraq had tried to buy enriched uranium from Niger; Dan Senior, former spokesman for the hapless Coalition Provisional Authority under Paul Bremer in Iraq; and Eric Edelman, a top official at the Pentagon under Bush.”

The role of neoconservative advisers has been evident on the Romney campaign’s themes and website, as Romney has called for increasing military funding and threatened war against Iran. The Romney 2012 campaign [website](#) boasts: “We cannot rebuild our military strength without paying for it. Mitt will begin by reversing Obama-era defense cuts and return to the budget baseline established by Secretary Robert Gates in 2010, with the goal of setting core defense spending — meaning funds devoted to the fundamental military components of personnel, operations and maintenance, procurement, and research and development — at a floor of 4 percent of GDP.”

Four percent of our [\\$15.5 trillion GDP](#) is \$618 billion, \$100 billion less than the two-war-bloated defense budget of 2012. But it is also more than Obama projects to spend as he winds down the Iraqi and Afghan wars.

The United States currently spends more on the military than any other country, more even than the next 10 biggest military spenders combined. According to the Swedish-based [Stockholm International Peace Research Institute](#), the U.S. spends about 40 percent of all money expended on the military globally.

On Iran, Romney has [called for](#) stronger sanctions against the Iranian government and claimed that “U.S. policy toward Iran must begin with an understanding on Iran’s part that a military option to deal with their nuclear program remains on the table. This message should not only be delivered through words, but through actions.”

Berman [noted](#) in his *Nation* column that Romney’s famed [“etch-a-sketch”](#) lack of principle may be the key war-mongering neoconservatives need to get back into power in the executive branch of the federal government. “Romney’s malleability is an advantage for his neocon advisers, giving them an opportunity to shape his worldview, as they did with Bush after 9/11.”

Photo of Romney arriving for private dinner during donors’ conference: AP Images



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