

The national security handmaidens of those presidents, especially those who served Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon and Ford, were supposedly the best and brightest that Harvard and Yale and Princeton could contribute.

Presidents right up to today's like to surround themselves with such self-assured and certain men, men whose eagerness to find war the answer to most problems often grows in direct proportion to their lack of experience in uniform or combat.

This small history lesson can be read as a cautionary tale to President Barack Obama's team as it oversees an excruciating slow-motion end of one war, Iraq, and a pell-mell rush to wade ever deeper into another one in the mountains and deserts of remote and tribal Afghanistan.

The story grows out of a battle in the very beginning of the American takeover of the war in South Vietnam in the fall of 1965 when a defense secretary, Robert S. McNamara, counted the bodies and the beans and offered his president two directly opposing options.

In the wake of the Ia Drang Valley battles of November 1965—the first major collision between an experimental airmobile division of the U.S. Army and regular soldiers in division strength from the People's Army of North Vietnam—President Johnson ordered McNamara to rush to Vietnam and assess what had happened and what was going to happen.

Up till then, just more than 1,000 Americans, mostly advisers and pilots, had been killed in Vietnam since Ovnand and Buis. Then, in just five days 234 more Americans had been killed and hundreds wounded in the Ia Drang. McNamara took briefings from Gen. William Westmoreland, the top U.S. commander in Vietnam, and from Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge and assorted spy chiefs and diplomats. Then he flew to An Khe in the Central Highlands and was briefed on the Ia Drang battles by then Lt. Col. Hal Moore, who had commanded on the ground in Landing Zone XRAY in the Ia Drang.

On the plane home to Washington, McNamara dictated a Top Secret/Eyes Only memo to Johnson dated Nov. 30, 1965. In that report he stated that the enemy had not only met but had exceeded our escalation of the war and we had reached a decision point. In his view there were two options:

Option One: We could arrange whatever diplomatic cover we could arrange and pull out of South Vietnam.

Option Two: We could give Gen. Westmoreland the 200,000 more U.S. troops he was asking for, in which case by early 1967 we would have more than 500,000 Americans on the ground, and they would be dying at the rate of 1,000 a month. (He was wrong; the death toll would reach over 3,000 a month at the height of the war). "All we can possibly achieve (by this) is a military stalemate at a much higher level of violence," McNamara wrote.

On Dec. 15, 1965, the president assembled what he called the "wise men" for a brainstorming session on Vietnam. He entered the Cabinet room holding McNamara's memo. He shook it at McNamara and asked: "Bob, you mean to tell me no matter what I do, I can't win in Vietnam?" McNamara nodded yes; that was precisely what he meant.

The wise men sat in session for two days. Participants say there was no real discussion of McNamara's Option One—it would have sent the wrong message to our Cold War allies—and at the end there was a unanimous vote in favor of Option Two—escalating and continuing a war that our leaders knew we could not win.

Remember. This was 1965, 10 years before the last helicopter lifted off that roof in Sai-

gon. It's a hell of a lot easier to get sucked into a war or jump feet first into a war than it is to get out of a war.

There's no question that Obama inherited these two wars, Iraq and Afghanistan, from the Bush/Cheney administration. But the buildup in Afghanistan and the change in strategy belong to Obama and his version of the best and brightest.

The new administration has dictated an escalation from 30,000 U.S. troops to more than 60,000, and even before most of them have actually arrived commanders on the ground are already back asking for more, and why not? When you are a hammer everything around you looks like a nail.

Some smart veterans of both Iraq and Afghanistan, on the ground now or just back, say that at this rate we will inevitably lose the war in Afghanistan; that the situation on the ground now is far worse than Iraq was at its lowest point in 2006 and early 2007. They talk of a costly effort both in lives and national treasure that will stretch out past the Obama administration and maybe the two administrations after that.

Obama needs to call in the "wise men and women" for a fish-or-cut bait meeting on his two ongoing wars. Let's hope that this time around, there's an absence of the arrogance and certainty of previous generations of advisers. Let's hope that they choose to speed up the withdrawal of combat troops from Iraq and get out before the Iraqi people and leaders order us to leave. Let's hope, too, that they weigh very carefully all the costs of another decade or two of war in Afghanistan.

Failing that, they should at the very least begin an immediate drive to increase the number of available beds in military and Veterans Administration hospitals and to expand Arlington National Cemetery and the national military cemeteries nationwide.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps the column's most salient point is its description of a time in 1965 when Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara presented President Lyndon Baines Johnson with a top secret memo. It indicated that the United States had reached a decision point with two available options. The first option was to arrange diplomatic cover and to pull out of South Vietnam. The second option was to increase the number of American troops by 200,000, bringing the total to more than 500,000 Americans on the ground.

Regarding this second option, Mr. McNamara stated, "All we can possibly achieve is a military stalemate at a much higher level of violence." I want to repeat that.

Regarding the second option, Mr. McNamara stated, "All we can possibly achieve is a military stalemate at a much higher level of violence."

From that time when President Johnson chose to escalate and to continue the war until its conclusion, America suffered 56,000 more casualties.

Mr. Speaker, President Obama's administration has reached a similar decision point with regard to Afghanistan. Last month, on June 25 of 2009, I joined Congressman JIM MCGOVERN in offering an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act that would have required the Secretary of Defense to submit a report to Congress which outlines an exit strategy for our Armed Forces in Afghanistan.

While I regret that this amendment was not approved, I still believe it's critical for the current administration to clearly articulate benchmarks for success and an end point to its war strategy in Afghanistan. The men and women of our military who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan have done a magnificent job. Many have been deployed four or five times.

Let's not forget, as General Petraeus has said, "Afghanistan has been known over the years as the graveyard of empires. We cannot take that history lightly."

That is why it is so important for this current administration to have an end point to its strategy in Afghanistan. This strategy must be articulated sooner rather than later so we can avoid going down the path of other failed empires, and so we can avoid the tragedy and the mistake of Vietnam, when elected officials in Washington never articulated an end point or an understanding of what was to be achieved.

Mr. Speaker, I have Camp Lejeune and Cherry Point Marine Air Station, Camp Lejeune being a Marine base, and I have Seymour Johnson Air Force Base. I've talked to many of all ranks in the Marine Corps. They're willing to go back and to go back again and again and again, but we're getting to the point where we're about to break our military. It is time that the new administration has an end point to whatever we're trying to achieve in Afghanistan.

With that, Mr. Speaker, before I close, as I do frequently on the floor, I tell you without pride that I've signed over 8,000 letters in the last 6 years because of my mistake in giving President Bush the authority to go into Iraq. So I close tonight by asking God to please bless our men and women in uniform. I ask God to please bless the families of our men and women in uniform, and I ask God, in his loving arms, to hold the families who have given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq. Mr. Speaker, I close by asking three times: God, please, God, please, God, please continue to bless America.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

WORK WITH THE GOP ON HEALTH CARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, The Hill newspaper today reports that President Obama is pointing his finger at the Republicans, at the GOP, for the

stalled health care bill. The last time I checked, the Democrats were in control of the House; they have a 60–Member majority in the Senate, and they control the White House. Clearly, the finger needs to be pointed in a different direction or needs to be reeled in.

I wonder who the President will blame next for double-digit unemployment and for a doubled national debt. We were promised that the Democrats' \$1 trillion stimulus experiment would immediately create jobs and that unemployment would not rise above 8 percent, but in June alone, almost a half a million jobs were lost. This has driven unemployment to its highest level in 26 years.

Where are Democrats going to point their finger on that one, Mr. Speaker?

What happens when the \$646 billion energy tax that the leadership in this House has rammed through raises energy costs on every American family by over \$3,100 and when this energy tax is seen in home utility bills and at the gas pumps, costing up to 7 million Americans their jobs? They're going to lose their jobs. Which direction will the President then point his finger, Mr. Speaker?

When the administration's multitrillion-dollar health care experiment is shoved down our throats before August, costing, as the CBO says, more than 750,000 jobs, I ask again: Which direction will the President point his finger?

The bottom line is that, instead of playing the blame game, I urge congressional leadership and this administration not to ignore the recent deficit and the unemployment news. I urge them to scrap this multitrillion-dollar government health care experiment and takeover. I urge them, instead, to work with us Republicans. Work with us across the aisle to develop a health care plan that helps small businesses create jobs instead of taking away jobs and one that gives Americans better access to lower insurance costs. Work with us to rein in spending and to rein in this egregious, outrageous Federal debt. Work with us to institute meaningful reforms that will truly stimulate the economic growth and that will create jobs for all Americans and that will not just create more bureaucracy. Work with us, Mr. Speaker, Madam Speaker, Democratic colleagues. Work with Republicans.

We are accused by the Democrats of being the Party of No, n-o, but Republicans are the Party of Know, k-n-o-w. We know how to create jobs and how to stimulate the economy. We know how to lower the costs of all health care expenses for Americans all across this Nation. We know how to help small businesses by leaving dollars in their pockets, by cutting their tax base and by giving them the money they need to create new jobs and to buy inventory. We know how to stimulate the economy by leaving dollars in people's pockets so that they can invest in their children's futures and in their children's college education funds, so they

can pay off credit card debts, so they can buy new cars and buy new homes. Those are the things that will create a stronger economy.

The Republicans have presented alternative after alternative to the Democrats' plan, but our plans are being quashed by the Democratic leadership, and won't see the light of day. It's not fair to the American people that their Representatives are shut out of the debate.

Mr. Speaker, we need to return to regular order. We need to go through what historically has happened in this House so that we have appropriations bills that are presented here with an open rule so that Members can present their amendments. We need to go through regular order, and we need to stop bringing big bills to this floor through the suspension process where they don't have any vetting in the committee process. We need to return to regular order and to go back to what this country was founded upon, and that's freedom and democracy.

THE PRESIDENT PROMISED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, the President over the past few days has been telling the American people, Trust me. This health care plan we're talking about is going to be a great thing for America. It's not going to cost Americans a lot of money. It's going to provide better quality of care, and nobody will be left out.

So I decided to go through what the President has promised on other occasions just to see if he deviates from his plans when it's more convenient for him. For instance, let's just go through some of the things he has promised.

He said Americans and the Members of Congress would get 5 days to read bills that were going to affect the American people. We've had bills that we didn't get until 3 a.m. in the morning that were 1,100-pages long, and we had to vote on them that very same day. There's no way to read 1,100 pages of legalese and have them understood in just a few hours.

He said no lobbyists would be in his administration. There are lobbyists, a number of them, in his administration. He said no taxes on those making under \$250,000. That's not true. We've already levied taxes on people making under \$250,000.

He said no earmarks and no pork-barrel projects. In the omnibus spending bill which he signed recently, there were 8,000 pork-barrel projects in that bill. He said there was going to be openness in the health care debate. There has been not a great deal of openness, and a lot of it has been conducted behind closed doors. He said the people were going to see almost every aspect of it because he was going to have roundtable discussions throughout the entire debate.

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He said he was going to cull spending and there would be no new taxes on people under \$250,000. This is the highest amount of spending since World War II. There's been \$1.4 trillion in new taxes. He said he was going to cut each budget of each cabinet by a hundred million dollars. That has not yet been accomplished. He said he was going to try to block and oversee the problems with the TARP plan, that \$700 billion. He said there would be no Big Government, but there's been a takeover of the auto industry, the financial industry, the energy industry, the health care industry, and it's the largest budget in history that he proposes.

He said that he would allow people to withdraw from their 401(k) accounts without any penalty if they were unemployed and having a difficult time. That was not in the stimulus bill. He said there would be a \$3,000 tax credit for every person hired by business. That was not in the stimulus bill.

And then, of course, we come to the health care plan. He said this plan is going to be very good for America, and I want all of my colleagues to take a good look at this plan of the Democrats' health care proposal which the President supports. All of the white spots are new agencies that are going to be making determinations about people's health care. It looks more like a roadmap that's been messed up. You can't figure it out. You have to go from here over to there to get health care, and it's going to cost a great deal of money.

In fact, the plan is supposed to cost, we believe, between 1 and 3 trillion dollars, that's 1 and 3 trillion dollars that we don't have that's going to have to be raised through tax increases and fees, and this is going to be part of it. They're going to end up taxing everybody for this health care plan.

And finally, this is going to result in about 4.7 million jobs lost, because when small business in America has to pay for this conglomeration of health care, they're going to have to cut back on employment of their employees, and a lot of those jobs will probably go overseas.

This is a terrible thing for America right now. And the reason I bring all of the things up that the President has promised, he's promising the American people a very good health plan. Trust him, everything is going to be fine. There is nothing to worry about. And yet it's going to cost so much money, it's going to cost rationing of health care, and it's going to cost everybody in this country and the future generations a great deal of money that we don't have. And I think that is a heck of a legacy to leave to our young children and our posterity.

I want to end by reading what was in the Wall Street Journal on the front page: Congress' chief budget scorekeeper casts a new cloud over Democrats' efforts to overhaul the Nation's health care system, telling lawmakers