



Weekly National Security Working Group Update

Congressman Jim Jordan (R-OH), RSC Chairman
Congressman Trent Franks (R-AZ), NSWG Chairman

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The National Security Working Group (NSWG) is comprised of Trent Franks, 2nd, AZ; Connie Mack, 14th, FL; Duncan Hunter, 52nd, CA; Allen West, 22nd, FL and John Fleming, 4th, LA. We look forward to providing RSC members updates on national security issues and matters using this forum. We welcome your inputs.

- Iraq supports a nuclear Iran (Rep Franks)

Joby Warrick of the Washington Post reported last week that Iraq supports Iran seeking nuclear technology.¹ While it has been known that Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki is supporting Iran's nuclear ambitions, what is emerging in the fast changing dynamics of the Middle East is that other countries may begin to publically support Iran because they judge the Obama Administration unwilling to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear armed nation and they fear Iran using nuclear weapons on them if they publically speak against the regime in Tehran.

A glaring concern of the Arab Spring is the possibility of widespread sectarian violence that may begin between Middle Eastern countries. Shiite Muslims in Iran, Iraq and Syria may be the target of Sunni-led insurgencies across the region. Iraq, which has a majority Shiite population, may erupt into violence if the Bashar al-Assad regime (Shiite minority) in Syria falls to the Sunni majority who has been repressed for decades. The Iraqi Sunni minority may seek independence from the leadership in Baghdad with the support of other Sunni led nations (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan). Countries are beginning to choose sides predominantly in line with sectarian divisions. Iraq's leadership has stated their support for Iran seeking nuclear technology. Which other countries will follow out of fear of reprisal from an unstable government in Tehran? If Iran is to be prevented from holding the Middle East hostage, the Obama Administration must make it clear that America will prevent Iran from gaining nuclear weapons by any necessary means, including direct American military intervention.

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- Egyptian Military Fires on Peaceful Christian Protesters (Rep Fleming)

In February of this year, the Egyptian military took the reins of government following the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak, who had ruled Egypt for 30 years. Egypt was the second country of the "Arab Spring" to oust its longtime dictator, after Tunisia did so in January. Although the military promised a speedy transition to democracy, it has used ongoing demonstrations and unrest as a pretext for delaying elections. On October 9, 2011, Egyptian security forces opened fire on unarmed Coptic Christian protesters and deliberately drove armored vehicles into the crowds of civilians, killing 26 and wounding hundreds. The Copts had been protesting the failure of the military to prevent attacks on their churches. According to the *Washington Post*, Muslims and Christians attending a funeral for the victims have begun calling for the dismissal of Field Marshal Mohammed Hussein Tantawi, the Egyptian military chief.

Egypt's Coptic Christians have been treated as second-class citizens for generations. If violent Islamist groups take power following Egypt's elections, and the military remains complicit in their actions, as they did when the Israeli embassy was attacked last month, the situation of the Copts may become even less secure. While interim Egyptian Prime Minister Essam Sharaf has promised to investigate the violence, the United States needs to hold his government accountable for these actions. As the second largest recipient of American foreign aid, much of which goes to the Egyptian military, President Obama and Congress need to insist that any future support be tied to the government's protection of religious minorities, a peaceful and timely transition to democracy, and continued adherence to the peace treaty with Israel. In the post-Mubarak era, we must use our considerable leverage to demand that Egypt become a peaceful democracy that respects its citizens and its neighbors.

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¹ Warrick, Joby. (2011, October 8). Iraq, siding with Iran, sends essential aid to Syria's Assad. Washington Post. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com>

- Do not raise revenue on the backs of the brave men and women of the armed forces (Rep West)

Recent statements by the Administration of President Barack Obama propose significant changes to the military retirement system that would potentially enact a 401(K) style system for a service member's retirement package. While no actual legislative proposal has been drafted, the idea of these types of sweeping changes is very concerning.

The military retirement pension plan dates back to the Revolutionary War when a pension plan for disabled veterans was established by the United States Congress in 1792. Pension legislation for all surviving veterans was passed in 1818, in which money was shifted from the national treasury to individuals who were perceived as having the right to preferential treatment. The recipients were entitled to these payments because the pensions were viewed as delayed payments for the people who served during the American Revolution. The purpose of the military retirement package is to induce top-quality people to serve a career in uniform in the face of extraordinary demands and sacrifices that few civilians are willing to endure for one term of service - much less 20 or 30 years.

The last decade of war demonstrates that, if anything, military service conditions today are even more arduous than they were when the current program was created. Without this strong career incentive package, the career military force likely would have suffered under the incredible stresses of the last decade. The Federal Government places no limits on the sacrifices that may be demanded from those who serve a career in uniform. That reality requires a reciprocal obligation by the Federal Government to provide a substantial, consistent and predictable compensation and retirement package consistent with the extraordinary nature of the service.

George Washington said that "the willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive veterans of early wars were treated and appreciated by our nation." There are an estimated 1.1 million active duty service members who put their lives on the line to protect our freedoms. This represents less than 1 percent of the United States population. The military retirement pension package is a promise our country made to these Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines. At a time when our military and their families face multiple deployments while struggling through a weak economy, now is not the time to raise revenue on the backs of the brave men and women of our armed forces.

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- "Revalidating" the Nation's Amphibious Capability (Rep Hunter)

Last month the Marine Corps convened an "Amphibious Capability Working Group" that for three months will conduct "a revalidation" of their amphibious operating concept and determine how that impacts their role in the Armed Services and employment strategy going forward. We must determine the forces we need to respond to the threats we face before we can create an effective defense budget. If this Group produces a detailed, well developed document complete with a proposed Marine Expeditionary Brigade structure and required amphibious shipping assets, we will finally be able to more accurately authorize procurement and appropriate funding.

Employment of the Marine Corps by the Combatant Commanders over the last ten years has provided clear evidence that the Nation needs an amphibious capability to respond quickly when an unexpected crisis arises. Marine Expeditionary Units carried on amphibious vessels and launched via amphibious landing craft, heavy lift helicopters, and MV-22(s) have responded off the coast of counties in crises ranging from: a historic long range deployment of forces using aviation and amphibious assets to fight terrorists in Afghanistan; to Non-Combatant Evacuations in Lebanon; to Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief in Pakistan; to enforcement of a No-fly Zone in Libya.

Yet, the Marine Corps, due to budgeting constraints, was forced to cancel their replacement Amphibious Assault Vehicle program. The Navy is building its two newest big deck amphibious ships without well decks, a requirement for launching amphibious craft. The Marine Corps' current requirement to deploy two Marine Expeditionary Brigades is 38 amphibious ships. We currently have 29 ships and current spending cuts caused by sequestration could cause that number to dwindle to 23. The Marine Corps, and the other services for that matter, must do what the Administration has refused to do, conduct their own analysis of what they need to execute their statutory missions. Then, and only then, will we be able to justify defense spending to properly resource those requirements.

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