



## **Romney's foreign policy team is jam-packed with neo-conservative smirkers**

By: Meteor Blades

September 13, 2012

Neoconservative Dan Senor who was assigned as senior adviser to vice presidential nominee

Paul Ryan flew from the West Coast Thursday to try and sweep up the shrapnel from Mitt Romney's

historic stupidity over the Benghazi slayings.

Mitt Romney stepped in it Wednesday and sank right up to the upturned edges of his pathetic smirk with his remarks about the Obama administration's response to the slaying of Americans in Benghazi. As Jed Lewison and Hunter have pointed out, he proved conclusively, in a manner clear to everyone from here to Timbuktu, that he is unfit morally and intellectually to be president.

But well before he tried to turn the cowardly attack on the U.S. ambassador and consular employees into an extension of his previous attack on Barack Obama as the "most feckless president since Carter," Romney had shown that he was not the guy sane citizens want to be answering 3 AM or 3 PM foreign policy phone calls. Most telling in that realm are Romney's choices for advisers in such matters, knuckle-dragging ultrahawks.

The roster is packed with George W. Bush retreads. Ari Berman took a look at them a few months ago and found:

Romney is loath to mention Bush on the campaign trail, for obvious reasons, but today they sound like ideological soul mates on foreign policy. Listening to Romney, you'd never know that Bush left office bogged down by two unpopular wars that cost America dearly in blood and treasure. Of Romney's forty identified foreign policy advisers, more

than 70 percent worked for Bush. Many hail from the neoconservative wing of the party, were enthusiastic backers of the Iraq War and are proponents of a US or Israeli attack on Iran. Christopher Preble, a foreign policy expert at the Cato Institute, says, "Romney's likely to be in the mold of George W. Bush when it comes to foreign policy if he were elected." On some key issues, like Iran, Romney and his team are to the right of Bush. Romney's embrace of the neoconservative cause—even if done cynically to woo the right—could turn into a policy nightmare if he becomes president.

Indeed. Heading up the list of those advisers is John Bolton. Romney's public statements reflect his views more than any other. Even though he didn't sign the 1997 mission statement of the Project for a New American Century, Bolton has been lockstep with those who did. That was the first major organization to state neo-conservative imperialist objectives nakedly, though neo-conservatives were well on their way to getting their hands on the levers of U.S. foreign policy with the second incarnation of the Committee on the Present Danger in 1976.

Nine of Romney's advisers did sign that PNAC mission statement and/or one of its several public policy letters. They are Paula Dobriansky, Vin Weber, Daniel Senor, Eliot Cohen, Eric Edelman, John Lehman, Donald Kagan, Robert Kagan and Aaron Friedberg. These guys couch their philosophy in the boilerplate of democracy, but they have never shied away from the term "imperialism." These guys have Romney's ear. These guys whose advice has cost so many thousands of lives of Americans and others are telling the GOP candidate that Russia (which they sometimes call the "Soviet Union") is the most important geostrategic threat to the United States. These guys tell us Iran should have been bombed yesterday. These guys want the Bush Doctrine times 10 to be the basis of U.S. policy abroad. They have no qualms about how to implement it. Torture? No problem. In their eyes, international law like the Geneva Conventions is a quaint relic.

One of Romney's key advisers, the guy assigned to shepherd vice presidential candidate Paul Ryan until Nov. 6, left off that job Wednesday to deal with "foreign policy developments," a euphemism for the fall-out from Romney's smirk. Senor, as we reported here, is a co-founder of the Foreign Policy Initiative, the closest thing to a successor of PNAC.

Chris Good and Shushannah Walshe reported that while Senor was on the way to the East Coast to meet with Romney, he led a foreign policy briefing for Ryan on the plane yesterday from Seattle along with Jamie Fly, executive director, Foreign Policy Initiative and Reuel Marc Gerecht from the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, another neo-conservative outfit.

Senor's role is more than foreign policy adviser. He was the chief spinner of news for the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq under viceroy L. Paul Bremer. He was quoted in Rajiv Chandrasekaran's book of life in the Green Zone of Baghdad in that period, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City*, as saying: "Off the record, Paris is burning. On the record, security and stability are returning to Iraq." Expect to hear something similar from Team Romney now that the campaign is ablaze.