

# The Hotline

March 14, 2012 Wednesday

## Should I Stay or Should I Go?

Senior GOPers on March 13 "rebuffed calls from some in their party to reassess the war in Afghanistan in the wake of a series of setbacks, while" the WH "said it is staying the course and reminding voters that the course is to bring the troops home."

GOP hawks on Capitol Hill "are worried that some in their party are playing to the public in the heat of a campaign instead of putting" nat'l "security first, while longtime GOP critics of the war see the momentum on their side." This comes after ex-Speaker **Newt Gingrich** (R) questioned if the war was "'doable'" and ex-Sen. **Rick Santorum** (R-PA) "called for a reassessment in the wake of the massacre" of Afghan women and children by a single U.S. soldier.

Sen. **Lindsey Graham** (R-SC) said he supports Gen. **John Allen's** plan to withdraw troops and transition to Afghan control by 2014 but not earlier.

Graham: "I've been very disappointed in Newt Gingrich's statements. We've got enough people in politics who are looking to polls and blowing with the wind. I'm not interested in nominating someone who doesn't understand the strategic importance of Afghanistan. I think Republicans are making emotional decisions. Being war-weary is understandable. Republicans and Democrats, everyone in America is war-weary, but the enemy is not. ... If we speed up the withdrawal because of political concerns in November, then you are undercutting the general and we're going to fail."

Sen. **Rand Paul** (R-KY), "who along with Sen. **Mike Lee** (R-UT) signed a letter urging an accelerated withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, said the push to keep the war going is waning" in GOP ranks.

Paul: "The sooner we come home the better. They are an unappreciative ally, if they are an ally. ... We have won the war, we liberated the Afghan people 10 years ago, we killed (Osama) bin Laden, we disrupted the terrorists, and I see no purpose in staying. We are throwing good money after bad. We have enormous deficits here. We have bridges that go unrepaired in Kentucky, and we're sending money overseas."

Senate Min. Leader **Mitch McConnell** (R-KY): "It's important to remember the reason we went there and what happened when the Taliban was running the country. I know it's been a very challenging period, but I think we ought to stick with the plan that has been laid out by the administration" (**Dennis, Roll Call**, 3/14).

Unlikely Allies

"**Cato Institute** scholars are not exactly thrilled that liberal activists are siding with

them in their battle against **Charles** and **David Koch**. Even as the libertarian think tank works furiously to round up a coalition to help it fight a lawsuit filed by the billionaire brothers that would vastly expand their control over the organization, campaign finance reformers are not particularly welcome."

United Republic, an Occupy Wall Street-inspired group fighting corporate money in politics, organized a rally in front of Koch Industries headquarters in Washington, D.C., with activists from another "campaign finance watchdog group with liberal tendencies," Common Cause, March 13.

Cato senior fellow **Jerry Taylor**: "Thanks, but no thanks. We don't have any complaints with money in politics; we think the more money in politics the better. ... I'm sure a lot of people and a lot of interest groups will be tempted to use this struggle to advance their agendas."

United Republic comm. and outreach dir. **Zaid Jilani**: "A think tank providing independent analysis is very different from a think tank that simply does something on behalf of a political party or a corporate donor. We certainly have a disagreement with them about the role of money in politics ... but I also have a number of friends at Cato who are privately supporting us" (**Lorber, Roll Call**, 3/14).