

Source: <http://www.lobelog.com/a-chronology-of-the-war-against-chuck-hagel/>

The smear campaign against Chuck Hagel did not begin on Dec. 14, 2012. The former Nebraska senator's opposition to war as the preferred means of conducting foreign policy made him a maverick during the post-9/11 Bush years. Although most Republicans agreed with Hagel's socially conservative positions on domestic issues, his nuanced approach to foreign policy -- and his view that diplomacy was a more efficacious means of securing long term US interests than sending in troops with an unclear and/or undefined strategic objective -- set him apart from many of his fellow party members.

Some criticism of Hagel began to surface in 2007, when he briefly considered running for president as a Republican. In an effort to thwart his candidacy and undermine his potential candidacy, the National Jewish Democratic Council (NJDC) compiled a list of petty grievances that would constitute the core of most neoconservative excoriations of Hagel, persisting in cyberspace long after the NJDC had scrubbed all references to them from its website. Hagel ultimately decided not to run, but he also chose not to support the GOP nominee, John McCain. He derided McCain's vice presidential designate, Sarah Palin. While Hagel stopped short of explicitly endorsing Obama for president, his wife made no secret of the fact that she intended to vote for McCain's Democratic rival.

After Obama won the 2008 presidential election, neoconservative attacks on Hagel resumed, with the aim of preventing his appointment to a cabinet post in the newly elected administration. Hagel's name was floated as a possible Secretary of State or Secretary of Defense, with Obama eventually appointing his challenger for the Democratic nomination, New York Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, to head the State Department. Obama also decided to keep Bush's Defense Secretary, Robert Gates, at his post for another year or so. Hagel was instead appointed to co-chair the president's intelligence advisory board, although his name kept coming up amid speculation in 2009, and again in 2010, that Gates would step down.

During his two terms as a US Senator from Nebraska, Hagel's refusal to sign various [AIPAC](#)-drafted letters presented to members of Congress outlining positions on the Middle East, compiled in 2007 by the NJDC, became, in the hands of the [Republican Jewish Coalition](#) and the neoconservative media, *prima facie* evidence of Hagel's unsuitability for a position in Obama's cabinet. That Obama would even consider Hagel also indicated Obama's alleged perfidy. (The fact that about a quarter of other prominent Democratic as well as Republican senators also did not sign these letters has usually been obscured, with most attention given to Hagel and Richard Lugar.)

Beginning in 2009, attacks on Hagel were redirected from his stated (and presumed) foreign policy positions, to his support for the new liberal Jewish lobby, J Street. This further devolved into false charges of support for terrorism and endorsement of groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas. In 2010, the [Emergency Committee for Israel](#) (ECI) targeted Hagel's endorsement of retired Navy Admiral Joe Sestak for Senate in one of the ECI's first public-relations battles. When Hagel's name came up as a possible contender for Secretary of Defense after Obama's re-election in 2012, the weapons for an assault against Hagel were already loaded, aimed and ready to fire,

beginning with charges of anti-Semitism, "appeasement of Iran," and hostility toward Israel, then devolving into accusations of homophobia.

The following chronology of the smear campaign against Chuck Hagel, past and present, is intended to be representative, rather than exhaustive. It traces back numerous accusations currently being made against Hagel to their earliest dubious sources. Its intention is to provide other researchers a starting point or a supplement to their own research in progress, as well as offer anyone who has just begun following this issue an overview of, and some insights into, the ideological nature and sources of neoconservatives' hostility to Hagel's nomination. Its aim is also to explain why Hagel's defenders -- left, right and center; peace activists and military veterans; staunch supporters of Israel and critics of its policies -- believe that more than just the nomination and confirmation of a superbly qualified candidate for a top Defense post is at stake in the days ahead.

Chuck Hagel's nomination will be a test case of the process of, and basis for, the selection, vetting, evaluating, and confirming of top US policymakers by a dysfunctional and divided legislative branch of government. It will also demonstrate whether a handful of manipulative ideologues are capable of, and can get away with, substituting smears, derision and character assassination for thoughtful consideration of -- and debate about -- US national security interests and needs (and what they ought to be) in the second decade of the 21st century, as well as how to best serve them. It is in this spirit that this chronology has been compiled.

### **Hagel and Middle East Foreign Policy**

July 19, 2002. Chuck Hagel, Washington Post op-ed: [We Shouldn't Make Arafat the Issue](#).

Young Palestinians need to see their future in a peaceful, fully functioning state with economic opportunities and democratic institutions. If they do not, and instead see violence and destruction as the only way forward, the long-term consequences will be great. We could lose the next generation of Arab and Muslim youth and the future of the Middle East to radical politics and anti-Americanism. Such a development would destabilize our allies, including Israel, and threaten relationships vital to America's global interests. This is all the more reason why we cannot hold the Middle East peace process hostage by making Yasser Arafat the issue. The United States cannot excuse Arafat for his failings as a leader, his complicity in terrorism, and his inability to make the tough choices for peace.

The Palestinian people and our friends in the Arab world have paid the price for Arafat's corruption, intrigues and limitations. They know their future does not lie with Arafat. But if we are serious about reform in the Palestinian Authority, then we must allow the Palestinians and the Arabs to deal with Arafat. Credible alternative Palestinian leadership will not step forward in response to a perceived American-Israeli demand for Arafat's removal. Change must come from within."

July 31, 2006. *CNN.com International*, ["Key Republican Breaks with Bush on the Mideast."](#)

Urging President Bush to turn all U.S. efforts toward "ending this madness," a leading Republican senator Monday broke with the Bush administration and called for an immediate cease-fire in the Mideast. "The sickening slaughter on both sides must end and it must end now," Nebraska Sen. Chuck Hagel said. "President Bush must call for an immediate cease-fire. This madness must stop."\*

Sept. 2006. PJV#15, Philadelphia Jewish Voice op-ed (no author named) [Eighty-Eight Senators Condemn Hezbollah: Ten Republicans break ranks on Israel.](#)

In a bipartisan letter to European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana, 88 Senators called on the E.U. to add Hezbollah to its terrorist list -- adding to the chorus of the 209 members of the House who cosigned a similar letter to Solana.....

Unfortunately, twelve U.S. Senators failed to sign a bipartisan letter calling on the European Union (E.U.) to add Hezbollah to its list of terrorist organizations. Most troubling, the top two Republicans on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Chairman Richard Lugar (R-IN) and Senator Chuck Hagel (R-NE), and the top Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, Chairman John Warner (R-VA), were not among the 88 Senators who signed the letter.

"When it comes to Israel and the Jewish community, the hypocrisy of Republicans in Congress is just overwhelming. How is it that Republicans in the Senate can claim to be supporters of Israel when almost 20 percent of their caucus -- including their top two Members on the Foreign Relations Committee and top Republican on the Armed Services Committee -- apparently does not think that Hezbollah should be on the E.U. list of terrorist organizations," asked NJDC Executive Director Ira Forman. "While Democrats are out there trying to punish Israel's enemies and ensure that she has a right to defend herself, these ten Republican senators have no problem with the international community treating Hezbollah as a legitimate organization. Shame on them."...

The following Senators failed to sign letter condemning Hezbollah:

- Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN)
- Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV)
- Senator Lincoln Chafee (R-RI)
- Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK)
- Senator Larry Craig (R-ID)
- Senator Pete Domenici (R-NM)
- Senator Michael Enzi (R-WY)
- Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH)
- Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 2nd ranking Senator Chuck Hagel (R-NE)
- Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman, Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN)
- Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman, Senator John Warner (R-VA)

March 12, 2007. National Jewish Democratic Council compiles a [list of complaints](#) against Hagel. It subsequently removed the grievances from the NJDC website, but was screen-captured and

preserved by ad man and Breitbart.com columnist, [Jeff Dunetz](#), and will serve as the basis for future "opposition research" on Hagel's positions on Israel and Hezbollah:

#### Indecisive Senator Hagel has Questionable Israel Record

As Senator Hagel sits around for six more months and tries to decide whether to launch a futile bid for the White House, he has a lot of questions to answer about his commitment to Israel. Consider this:

- In August 2006, Hagel was one of only 12 Senators who refused to write the EU asking them to declare Hezbollah a terrorist organization.

- In October 2000, Hagel was one of only 4 Senators who refused to sign a Senate letter in support of Israel.

- In November 2001, Hagel was one of only 11 Senators who refused to sign a letter urging President Bush not to meet with the late Yassir Arafat until his forces ended the violence against Israel.

- In December 2005, Hagel was one of only 27 who refused to sign a letter to President Bush to pressure the Palestinian Authority to ban terrorist groups from participating in Palestinian legislative elections.

- In June 2004, Hagel refused to sign a letter urging President Bush to highlight Iran's nuclear program at the G-8 summit.

Here's what the *National Review* wrote about Hagel's stance on Israel in 2002:

*"There's nothing Hagel likes less than talking about right and wrong in the context of foreign policy. Pro-Israeli groups view him almost uniformly as a problem. "He doesn't always cast bad votes, but he always says the wrong thing," comments an Israel supporter who watches Congress. An April speech is a case in point. "We will need a wider lens to grasp the complex nature and consequences of terrorism," said Hagel. He went on to cite a few examples of terrorism: FARC in Colombia, Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines, and the Palestinian suicide bombers. Then he continued, "Arabs and Palestinians view the civilian casualties resulting from Israeli military occupation as terrorism." He didn't exactly say he shares this view — but he also failed to reject it."*

And here's what the anti-Israel group, CAIR wrote in praise of Hagel:

*"Potential presidential candidates for 2008, like Hillary Clinton, John McCain, Joe Biden and Newt Gingrich, were falling all over themselves to express their support for Israel. The only exception to that rule was Senator Chuck Hagel ..." [Council on American-Islamic Relations, 8/28/06]*

Posted by [NJDC Staff](#) on March 12, 2007 at 11:59

Aug. 7, 2007. *Commentary*. Max Boot, "[We're all Neocons Now](#)": "One of the most interesting things about this year's Republican field is that there is not a single major candidate who is running on a foreign policy platform markedly at odds with President Bush's. Chuck Hagel could have run as an antiwar candidate, but so far he's stayed out of the race, presumably because he knows he has no chance of winning."

Nov. 3, 2008. *New Yorker*, Connie Bruck. [Odd Man Out: Chuck Hagel's Republican Exile](#). "Several of Hagel's close friends told me they believed that if McCain won the election he would ask Hagel to serve in his Cabinet, as either Secretary of Defense or Secretary of State, and that Hagel would agree, despite their differences. In February, 2006, in an article in the *New York Sunday Times Magazine*, Joseph Lelyveld asked McCain whether he would consider asking Hagel to be his running mate or a member of his Administration, and he quoted McCain as saying, "I'd be honored to have Chuck with me in any capacity. He'd make a great Secretary of State."

Nov. 5, 2008. *Huffington Post* (no author specified), "[Chuck Hagel: Obama's Secretary of Defense?](#)"

[Chuck Hagel](#), Republican senator from Nebraska, is rumored to be on the short list for President-Elect Obama's cabinet. Obama has said that he'd like to reach across the aisle in his cabinet picks and for a period Hagel was rumored to be on the short list for VP...Hagel has said that he will be retiring from the senate, which might leave him available to fill Gates' vacancy after Gates leaves office, which may not be immediately following inauguration. [Several sources](#) have listed Hagel as a possible cabinet member, specifically in the Secretary of Defense position. Bill Richardson, who is [also](#) a cabinet candidate has said that [Hagel would work well](#) in an Obama cabinet. [Hagel](#) has also left himself open to be recruited by President-Elect Obama, according to a source. While the source wouldn't give up much, there was no denying that there has always been an open channel of communication with the Obama campaign, since Biden was picked to become future VP. Biden and Hagel are very good friends -- both as Senate colleagues on the Foreign Relations Committee and as close personal friends who talk often.

Nov. 6, 2008. *CNN*, John Helton and Kristi Keck, [Obama transition began before election day](#). "Obama's national security team is another priority as the country fights wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It could also be an area where he goes outside his party for an appointee. Republican Sen. Chuck Hagel and current Defense Secretary Robert Gates are among the names floating around for that team. Hagel, who was elected to the Senate in 1996 and is a Vietnam veteran, has been a fierce critic of the Bush administration's handling of the Iraq war."

After Obama announced that Gates would remain Defense Secretary for another year and Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton would become Secretary of State, criticism of Hagel ceased.

March 14, 2009. *Boston Globe*, Bryan Bender and Sarah Stockman, [Top Officials Urge Dialogue with Hamas](#). Hagel was one of ten signatories to a letter to Obama [advocating](#) negotiations with Hamas--a letter composed by [Henry Siegman](#), Executive Director of the American Jewish

Congress for nearly three decades, an ordained Orthodox rabbi, a US army chaplain awarded a bronze star during the Korean War and at the time president of the [US/Middle East Project](#) (USMEP). Siegman also authored a [2006 article](#) for the *New York Review of Books* stating that negotiating with Hamas was Israel's last chance for peace. Hagel's co-signatories included two former presidential national security advisers, Brent Scowcroft and Zbigniew Brzezinski; former Fed Chair Paul Volcker; JFK's special counsel Ted Sorensen; former House International Relations Committee chairman Lee Hamilton, a Democrat; former Bush #41 UN ambassador Thomas Pickering; World Bank president James Wolfensohn; Carla Hills, a US trade representative during the Ford administration; and another former Republican senator, Nancy Kassebaum Baker. [Jennifer Rubin](#) would [fume](#) derisively in *Commentary* on August 25, 2010--when Hagel's name was again being floated for Secretary of Defense-- "Last year, Hagel [signed a letter](#) urging Obama to open direct negotiations with Hamas, a position so extreme that Obama hasn't (yet) embraced it."

### **Hagel, Obama and J Street**

Gates stayed on. But on Oct. 28, 2009 *Foreign Policy's* Josh Rogin reported: [Hagel to Lead Obama's Intelligence Oversight Panel](#).

Former Nebraska Senator **Chuck Hagel** will soon have a new role in the Obama administration, he will be named co-chair of [President's Intelligence Advisory Board](#). In that capacity, Hagel will be charged with overseeing the work of the intelligence agencies for the president and investigating violations of law by the clandestine community. The panel, formerly known as the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, was renamed and stripped of some of its powers in 2008 by the George W. Bush administration.

...Hagel was rumored for a high level appointment when Obama was elected. A Vietnam veteran, he was at times [said to be](#) up for the position of Secretary of Defense or ambassador to a major ally such as Japan. Initially a supporter of the decision to invade Iraq, over the course of the war Hagel became one of the GOP's fiercest critics of Bush administration war policies, [famously saying](#) in 2007, "It is my opinion that this is one of the most arrogant, incompetent administrations I've ever seen personally or ever read about."

Steve Clemons, foreign policy head at the New America Foundation, announced Hagel's move at the Tuesday evening gala dinner hosted by the Jewish policy organization J Street as part of their first annual conference.

Mention of the upstart pro-Israel organization J Street was a red flag for the neoconservative right. On Oct. 28, 2009, the *Weekly Standard's* [Michael Goldfarb](#) unleashed the 2007 litany of complaints by the NJDC, using them against Hagel but also against the Democratic president, writing in a snide screed headlined, [NJDC: Obama Appointee Has Questionable Israel Record](#):

Josh Rogin [reported](#) today that former Senator Chuck Hagel will serve as co-chair of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board. Hagel was also the keynote speaker at last night's J Street gala dinner. Naturally, Hagel is not a big supporter of Israel (this seems to be a theme among J

Street speakers). The Republican Jewish Coalition had some fun pointing reporters to an old statement from their rivals at the National Jewish Democratic Council [see above, March 12, 2007]

The next day, Goldfarb followed up with [NJDC Weighs in on Hagel Appointment \(update w/RJC in response\)](#):

Yesterday the [Republican Jewish Coalition](#) was taunting its Democratic rival, the National Jewish Democratic Council, over the appointment of former Republican Senator Chuck Hagel to serve a co-chair of the President's National Intelligence Advisory Board. As the RJC was quick to point out after [news of the appointment broke](#), the NJDC had put out several statements over the years blasting Hagel for his "[questionable Israel record](#)." In particular, Hagel had refused to sign a series of letters that had broad bipartisan support and which focused on a range of issues of great importance to the Jewish community. He had refused to sign a letter in August 2006 asking the EU to declare Hezbollah a terrorist organization. In 2004, Hagel had refused to sign a letter urging President Bush to highlight Iran's nuclear program at the G-8 summit.

NJDC executive director Ira Forman responded by blasting his counterpart at the RJC, Matt Brooks. Brooks, Forman said, is "not concerned with little issues like shame or hypocrisy." Forman said that RJC had plenty of opportunities to question Hagel's record when Hagel was serving in the Senate. "Apparently [the RJC] just recently had a revelation" about Hagel's foreign policy views. But neither was Forman prepared to denounce Hagel again now that the shoe was on the other foot. "Anybody who's looking for purity from us is going to be disappointed," Forman said in the course of declining to criticize the appointment.

Still, Forman isn't a fan of Hagel. He suggested that NJDC would publicly oppose Hagel's nomination for a position with more authority. "If [Hagel] was taking a policy role, we'd have real concerns," Forman said. And Forman indicated that his group would oppose Hagel's appointment to any position that had influence over U.S.-Israel relations.

While the RJC may not have "even a little credibility to attack" this appointment, as Forman says, the bipartisan show of discomfort with Hagel's foreign policy views suggests Hagel is not destined for a bigger role in this administration.

An interesting postscript to this story is the fact that Hagel's appointment was announced at J Street's gala dinner on Tuesday night just before Hagel delivered the keynote speech at that event. NJDC is an explicitly partisan, Democratic organization, while J Street aspires, or at least claims to aspire, to bipartisan influence. Still, the fact that Forman remains dubious of Hagel's pro-Israel credentials while J Street--an organization struggling to convince itself and others that it really is pro-Israel--offers the former Nebraska senator a prime speaking slot at its inaugural conference is yet more evidence of the contradictions that are [tearing J Street apart](#)....

Oct. 28, 2009. The Republican Jewish Coalition (RJC) [attacks](#) Hagel for "some disturbing indications that he sees those who support a strong and safe Israel as having dual loyalties."

In an interview quoted in Aaron David Miller's book on the peace process called *The Much Too Promised Land*, Hagel said: "The political reality is that... the Jewish lobby intimidates a lot of people up here."

In mid-December 2012, Hagel's enemies seize upon Hagel's reference to the "Jewish lobby" quote as evidence of Hagel's anti-Semitism and thus his unsuitability as Secretary of Defense. Miller will object to the quotes as having been [hijacked](#). The RJC attack also seizes upon a comment extracted from Hagel's [interview](#) with Miller, which was also ripped from its context and distorted beyond recognition, particularly in light of Hagel's frequent use of "I'm a United States Senator," which he also [adapted to numerous other situations](#) (see Nov. 6, 2012 below) .

Hagel then described a meeting he had in New York with a group of supporters of Israel, one of whom suggested Hagel wasn't supportive enough of Israel. Hagel said he responded: "Let me clear something up here if there's any doubt in your mind. I'm a United States Senator. I'm not an Israeli senator. I'm a United States Senator. I support Israel. But my first interest is, I take an oath of office to the constitution of the United States. Not to a president, not to a party, not to Israel."

These extracted and redacted Hagel quotes, particularly his reference to "the Jewish lobby" will resurface and generate controversy in mid-December 2012.

### **Hagel's Endorsement of Joe Sestak**

July, 2010. The [Emergency Committee for Israel](#) is launched by [William Kristol](#) as a 501(c)(4) SuperPAC that can raise unlimited funds for advocacy and is not required to disclose its donors.

July 12, 2010. *Politico*, Ben Smith. [Group to Oppose Obama's Mideast Policies](#).

Leading conservatives will launch a new pro-Israel group this week with a scathing attack on Rep. [Joe Sestak](#), the Democratic Senate candidate in Pennsylvania, the first shot in what they say will be a confrontational campaign against the Obama administration's Mideast policy and the Democrats who support it.

The Emergency Committee for Israel's Leadership unites two major strands of support for the Jewish state: The hawkish, neoconservative wing of the Republican Party, many of whom are Jewish, and conservative Evangelical Christians who have become increasingly outspoken in their support for [Israel](#). The new group's board includes Weekly Standard Editor William Kristol and Gary Bauer, the former Republican presidential candidate who leads the group American Values, as well as Rachel Abrams, a conservative writer and activist...

The new committee declined to disclose its funding — as a 501(c)(4) advocacy organization, it isn't required to — but said it had raised enough to air its first ad, starting this week, on Fox and CNN and during a Philadelphia Phillies game. The ad attacks Sestak for signing a letter criticizing Israel's blockade of Gaza while not signing a defense of Israel circulated by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and for appearing at a fundraiser for the Council on American Islamic



Relations, which it describes as an “anti-Israel organization the FBI called a ‘front group for Hamas.’” CAIR denied the 2008 allegation, and no charges were ever brought against it.

Aug. 23, 2010. *Washington Post*, Chris Cilliza. "[Chuck Hagel and the 'me for me' Endorsement](#)" endorsing a Democrat in a high profile Senate contest could well help Hagel -- sending a clear signal to the Obama Administration about the very loose ties that he retains to the Republican party. Hagel has made no secret of his interest in serving in the Obama Administration and was mentioned as a possible successor to National Intelligence Director **Dennis Blair** when he resigned in May. ([Hagel currently serves as the co-chairman](#) of the [President's Intelligence Advisory Board](#).) And, with Defense Secretary **Robert Gates making clear last week that he would like to step down in 2011, the timing of Hagel's Sestak endorsement has to be more than coincidental. ([Hagel was mentioned as a possible Secretary of Defense in the immediate aftermath of the 2008 election](#) but the President chose to keep Gates on.)**

Aug. 23, 2010. *Commentary*, Jennifer Rubin, [Sestak Struggling](#).: Rubin repeats and reiterates the comments and criticisms in her Oct. 28, 2009 article. "Sestak has suffered on three counts: his ultra-liberal voting record, the generally toxic political environment for the Democrats, and a certain incoherence in his own campaign. A case in point is the endorsement by former Sen. Chuck Hagel. This comes at a time when Sestak has labored to rebut attacks on his own Israel record and on his keynote address for CAIR. But Hagel seems a particularly poor messenger for Sestak. The [National Democratic Jewish Council](#) explained in 2007 ... [see above, March 12, 2007]

Aug. 24, 2010, Politico, Ben Smith. [Hagel in the Mix](#).

The case for Hagel, one source tells me, is being made by National Security Adviser Jim Jones, and it's not a weak one. With Gates's departure, Obama loses a high-profile Republican defender on the national security front, and there are few Republicans of stature who could easily be pictured in the job.

Hagel would provide some of the same political cover as Gates, shielding Obama if Petraeus or the generals complain about a lack of White House commitment to Afghanistan or other defense issues. And he has other assets. Being one of the Senate club might ensure an easy confirmation. He's also ideologically in sync with Obama, to a degree at least: He opposed the war in Iraq, has spoken of the need to leave Afghanistan, and — though this is hazier territory — has infuriated supporters of Israel for a refusal to sign on to the many statements of support on the Hill for the Jewish State, and by suggesting the more dispassionate approach to that conflict that — on some days — Obama seems to prefer.

This is the context for the fierce [attacks](#) on Joe Sestak, incidentally, for accepting Hagel's endorsement: It's a warning signal that whatever the other merits, confirmation would hardly be a cakewalk. He's taken fire from [Democrats](#) as well as Republican for his Middle East politics, and with both that process and Iran on the front burner, his appointment would likely concentrate debate on those issues.

Aug. 25, 2010, *Commentary*, Jennifer Rubin. [For Secretary of Defense?](#)

Chuck Hagel made news by endorsing Joe Sestak, but quite apart from Sestak there is reason to examine Hagel's record. The administration, it seems, is seriously considering him for secretary of defense when Robert Gates retires. Yes, Hagel – the Republican opposed to the Iraq war and who's compiled an anti-Israel record that brought appropriate condemnation from [Jewish Democrats](#)— is in the mix, according to news reports....it is unclear, with a nuclear-armed Iran looming and a more Republican Senate in the offing, whether Hagel would be confirmable. His national security record would be hard to defend, even by Democrats wishing to support the faltering president.

For example, in 2006, when Hezbollah's attacks provoked Israeli retaliation and the war in Lebanon, [Hagel](#) screeched for the president to demand an immediate cease-fire, arguing it was essential in order to "enhance America's image and give us the trust and credibility to lead a lasting and sustained peace effort in the Middle East." Our credibility, in his eyes, depends on the United States's preventing Israel from defending itself.

Last year, Hagel [signed a letter](#) urging Obama to open direct negotiations with Hamas, a position so extreme that Obama hasn't (yet) embraced it.

On Iran, Hagel was one of two senators in [2004](#) to vote against renewal of the Libya-Iran sanctions act. ("Messrs. Hagel and Lugar ... want a weaker stance than most other senators against the terrorists in Iran and Syria and the West Bank and Gaza and against those who help the terrorists. They are more concerned than most other senators about upsetting our erstwhile allies in Europe — the French and Germans — who do business with the terrorists.")

Aug. 25, 2010. Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Ron Kampeas. [Hagel for defense: The pros and the cons](#) relies largely on Rubin and the Republican Jewish Coalition to slam Hagel.

Aug. 31, 2010. NJDC pushes back with an [Emergency Committee for Israel Fact Sheet](#) against ECI, decrying the dangers of making Israel a wedge issue. While pointing out the most egregious examples of ECI's hostility to Obama, to Congressman Rush Holt and to Sestak, it does not mention Hagel or ECI's flaunting of the NJDC's 2007 statement on Hagel.

January 2012. [The Center for American Freedom](#), another 501(c)(4) is [formed](#) with [Michael Goldfarb](#), a former McCain staffer and writer for the *Weekly Standard*, at its helm, with the objective of emulating the success of the progressive Center for American Progress. Goldfarb is also a partner at the lobbying and public relations firm Orion Strategies, LLC. Among CAF's tools for generating and disseminating its political messaging is the *Washington Free Beacon*, which also fronts for the Taiwan lobby, according to a [report](#) in *The Nation*. The *Washington Free Beacon*, founded and chaired by Goldfarb, will become CAF's primary means of funneling anti-Obama diatribes and gossipy Hagel taunts into the right wing media and mainstream press: Adam Kredo, a former staffer for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, will write anti-Hagel screeds, which quoted in the *Weekly Standard* and in Jennifer Rubin's "Right Turn" blog in the *Washington Post*.

Sept. 28, 2012. *Washington Post* op-ed, William J. Fallon, Chuck Hagel, Lee Hamilton, Thomas Pickering and Anthony Zinni, [Iran talk: What's in a war?](#)

If the United States attacks, it could set back for several years Iran's ability to build a nuclear weapon. If the objective were large-scale damage to Iran's military and weapons capability, the United States could achieve substantial success. But without large numbers of troops on the ground, we doubt that U.S. military attacks from the air — even if supplemented by other means such as drones, covert operations and cyberattacks — could eliminate Iran's capability to build a nuclear weapon, unseat the regime or force it to capitulate to U.S. demands...

Though not the only way to achieve these objectives, a U.S. attack would demonstrate the country's credibility as an ally to other nations in the region and would derail Iran's nuclear ambitions for several years, providing space for other, potentially longer-term solutions. An attack would also make clear the United States' full commitment to nonproliferation as other nations contemplate moves in that direction. The costs are more difficult to estimate than the benefits because of uncertainty about the scale and type of Iran's reaction.... While a U.S.-led attack on Iran might be quietly welcomed by the leaders of many Arab states, and certainly by Israel, it would most likely be greeted with hostility from wide swaths of the region's Muslims. Other consequences might include the increased likelihood of a decision by Iran to build a nuclear weapon; more instability in a region still seeking its footing; and the opportunity for extremist groups such as al-Qaeda to attract recruits."

Nov. 6. In a [television interview](#) with KVNO News, Hagel explains:

I used to say when I was asked about an issue, or questioned whatever the issue was, that I didn't support somebody strongly enough or I support him too much. And I said, 'Wait a minute. I'm a United States Senator. I'm a United States Senator representing the state of Nebraska.' That means I'm representing in the United States Senate, in a larger way, all 310 million Americans. And by the way, they're Democrats, they're Republicans and they're Independents. They're of all religions and all colors, same people in Nebraska.

### **Campaign Against Hagel's Nomination as Secretary of State, Dec. 2012 - Jan. 2013**

Dec. 4. Reuters (via Yahoo News), Matt Spetalnick. [Obama to fill key posts in weeks, Hagel on Pentagon short list.](#)

President Barack Obama is expected to announce his nominees for secretaries of state and defense in the next two weeks, with former Republican Senator Chuck Hagel on the short list of potential choices to head the Pentagon, senior administration officials said on Tuesday....

The choice of Hagel, a moderate on foreign policy who currently co-chairs Obama's Intelligence Advisory Board, would give the president a Republican in his Cabinet at a time when he is trying to win bipartisan cooperation from congressional Republicans on taxes and spending to avoid a looming "fiscal cliff." It is also possible that Hagel's name was being floated to show Obama's willingness to reach across the aisle, even if he ultimately does not nominate him. A social

conservative and strong internationalist who co-chaired John McCain's failed Republican presidential campaign back in 2000, Hagel might seem an unlikely pick were it not for his dissent years ago on the Iraq war launched under former President George W. Bush, a Republican. That war was the issue on which Obama also rose to national prominence.

Hagel served two terms in the Senate, representing Nebraska, and left in 2008. He is a professor at Georgetown University. Since he left the Senate, Hagel has been a big critic of his own party. He told the Financial Times newspaper in 2011 that he was "disgusted" by the "irresponsible actions" of Republicans during the debt ceiling debate....

Dec. 13. Bloomberg News, Hans Nichols. [Hagel Said to Top Obama's List to Take Over at Pentagon.](#)

Former Republican Senator Chuck Hagel has emerged as the leading candidate to become President [Barack Obama](#)'s next secretary of defense and may be nominated as soon as this month, according to two people familiar with the matter. Hagel, who served as an enlisted Army infantryman in [Vietnam](#), has passed the vetting process at the White House Counsel's office, said one of the people. The former Nebraska senator has told associates that he is awaiting final word from the president, said the other person. Both requested anonymity to discuss personnel matters. Other contenders are Michele Flournoy, former defense undersecretary for policy, and [Ashton Carter](#), deputy defense secretary, administration officials have said....

Hagel "has the political skills to navigate some really treacherous waters," said former Nebraska Senator [Bob Kerrey](#). "He'll enjoy wide respect in the military himself, and for a civilian leader, that's important." "He enjoys the confidence of the president and has a good relationship with the Senate," he said. "He stayed very close to the current operational needs of the military."...

In the Senate, Hagel's committee assignments included Foreign Relations and the Select Committee on Intelligence. He retired after two terms, keeping a promise he made when he first ran for the Senate. Upon leaving office he joined the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service as a distinguished professor.

Obama considered naming Hagel to his cabinet during the president's first term. Hagel was mentioned after the 2008 election as a contender to head the State Department and [Veterans Affairs](#).

Like Obama, Hagel was a critic of the war in [Iraq](#). He joined then-candidate Obama on an overseas trip that included stops in Iraq and Afghanistan in July 2008. Obama in 2009 named Hagel as the co-chairman of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board, an independent, nonpartisan panel that makes recommendations on improving the performance of U.S. intelligence gathering. He's also chairman of a separate oversight board that reviews U.S. intelligence compliance with laws and the Constitution.

Dec. 13. *Politico*, Leigh Munsil. [10 Facts About Chuck Hagel](#). "The potential front-runner for Defense secretary in President Barack Obama's second term is a familiar Washington face, but

has stayed largely out of the public spotlight since retiring from the Senate." Among them: Hagel's having been a Vietnam veteran and a critic of Bush foreign policy; consideration of Hagel for Defense Secretary during Obama's first term; his friendship with VP Joe Biden; his co-authorship of the new GI bill; and the criticism directed at him by the Zionist Organization of America and the Republican Jewish Coalition.

Dec. 13. [Breitbart.com](#) columnist and ad man [Jeff Dunetz](#) boasts in a blog post titled [Will the NJDC Oppose Terrorism Loving, Israel-Hating Chuck Hagel's Appointment As Sec of Defense?](#) that he has preserved [list of grievances](#) against Hagel put forward by the NJDC (see above March 12, 2007), which had been long been removed from the NJDC website -- the basis for nearly all of the "opposition research" on Hagel's positions on Israel and Hezbollah.

Dec. 13. Daniel Halper, in a blog post in *The Weekly Standard* quotes an e-mail from an unidentified "top Republican Senate aide" which [declares](#), "Send us Hagel and we will make sure every American knows he is an anti-Semite."

When asked to elaborate, the aide writes, "Hagel has made clear he believes in the existence of a nefarious Jewish lobby that secretly controls U.S. foreign policy. This is the worst kind of anti-Semitism there is." The top aide Republican Senate aide passes along this quotation from Hagel: "The political reality is that ... the Jewish lobby intimidates a lot of people up here." The quotation attributed to Hagel appeared in Aaron David Miller's 2008 book *The Too Much Promised Land*.

This is the same distorted quote from Hagel's [interview with Aaron David Miller](#) in 2008, that had been seized upon by the Republican Jewish Coalition (see above, Oct. 28, 2009). Miller vigorously [objects](#) to the distortion of the quote and its misuse against Hagel to Ali Gharib, Open Zion editor at the *Daily Beast*.

Dec. 14. *The Weekly Standard's* William Kristol publishes "[An Introduction to the Reading of Hagel](#)", a fact sheet circulating widely on Capitol Hill, that "details the record on a number of issues of former GOP senator Chuck Hagel, a leading candidate to be nominated by President Obama as the next secretary of defense." It reiterates the NJDC objections to Hagel in 2007, and again calls attention to the distorted quote from Hagel's [interview with Aaron David Miller](#) (see above, Dec. 13, and Oct. 28, 2009).

Dec. 17. In *The Wall Street Journal*, Bret Stephens, in [Chuck Hagel's Jewish Problem](#), charges that Hagel's use of the term "Jewish lobby" was "ripe" with the odor of anti-Semitism.

"...President Obama may nominate Mr. Hagel to take Leon Panetta's place at the Pentagon. As a purely score-settling matter, I almost hope he does. It would confirm a point I made in a column earlier this year, which is that Mr. Obama is not a friend of Israel. Perhaps the 63% of Jewish-Americans who cast their votes for Mr. Obama last month might belatedly take notice. Alternatively, maybe some of these voters could speak up now, before a nomination is announced, about the insult that a Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel would be. Jewish Democrats like to

fancy their voice carries weight in their party. The prospect of this nomination is their chance to prove it."

Dec. 18. *Washington Post* Editorial Board, "[Hagel is not the right choice for defense secretary.](#)"

Mr. Hagel's stated positions on critical issues, ranging from defense spending to Iran, fall well to the left of those pursued by Mr. Obama during his first term — and place him near the fringe of the Senate that would be asked to confirm him.

The current secretary, Leon Panetta, has said the defense "sequester" cuts that Congress mandated to take effect Jan. 1 would have dire consequences for U.S. security. Mr. Hagel took a very different position when asked about Mr. Panetta's comment during a September 2011 [interview with the Financial Times](#). "The Defense Department, I think in many ways, has been bloated," he responded. "So I think the Pentagon needs to be pared down."

While both Republicans and Democrats accept that further cuts in defense may be inevitable, few have suggested that a reduction on the scale of the sequester is responsible. In congressional testimony delivered around the same time as Mr. Hagel's interview, members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said the sequester would lead to "a severe and irreversible impact on the Navy's future," "a Marine Corps that's below the end strength to support even one major contingency" and "an unacceptable level of strategic and operational risk" for the Army.

Mr. Hagel was similarly isolated in his views about Iran during his time in the Senate. He repeatedly voted against sanctions, opposing even those aimed at the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, which at the time was orchestrating devastating bomb attacks against U.S. troops in Iraq. Mr. Hagel argued that direct negotiations, rather than sanctions, were the best means to alter Iran's behavior. The Obama administration offered diplomacy but has turned to tough sanctions as the only way to compel Iran to negotiate seriously.

Dec. 18. Jennifer Rubin, *Washington Post*, [EXCLUSIVE: ADL Pans Possible Hagel Pick](#), quotes a disparaging e-mail in which Abe Foxman, who (somewhat ironically, or perhaps oxymoronicly) heads the Anti-Defamation League, comments on the prospect of Hagel's selection as Defense Secretary:

"Chuck Hagel would not be the first, second, or third choice for the American Jewish community's friends of Israel. His record relating to Israel and the U.S.-Israel relationship is, at best, disturbing, and at worst, very troubling. The sentiments he's expressed about the Jewish lobby border on anti-Semitism in the genre of professors John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt and former president Jimmy Carter."

Dec. 18. Dana Milbank, dissenting from the seemingly rampant opposition to Hagel at the *Washington Post*, [defends Hagel](#): "Hagel's occasional criticism of the Israeli military's excesses...isn't indicative of anti-Semitism, or even of anti-Israel sentiments. It's indicative of an infantry sergeant who isn't opposed to war (he voted for the conflicts in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq) but knows the grim costs of going to war without a plan. And it's indicative of a

decorated military man who, unlike some of his neocon critics, knows that military action doesn't solve everything."

Dec. 19. Ron Kampeas, *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* (via [JewishJournal.com](http://JewishJournal.com)), [The Hagel Dialectic: Defenders and Detractors Tussle Over Israel Record](#), writes:

The expected nomination of former Sen. Chuck Hagel as the next defense secretary has sparked an outcry from segments of the pro-Israel community....

The prospect of a Hagel nomination has set off alarm bells in much of the pro-Israel community, with broadsides aimed at him in conservative publications like the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Weekly Standard* and *Commentary*. The Republican Jewish Coalition has circulated bullet points noting Hagel's departures from pro-Israel orthodoxies during his Senate career, including his refusal to sign on to letters supporting Israel and calling for increased isolation of Iran and its surrogate in Lebanon, Hezbollah. The RJC list resembled a similar one circulated by its Democratic counterpart, the National Jewish Democratic Council, in 2007, when Hagel was briefly considering a run for the presidency. The NJDC president, David Harris, declined to comment on Hagel last week, saying he would not have anything to say until there was a formal announcement. Hagel is not the only name circulating as a possible defense secretary, although he has gotten the most attention. Some pro-Israel Democrats have circulated the attack pieces to journalists, reflecting anxieties among hawkish Democrats who had defended Obama against charges that he would distance himself from Israel in his second term. Hagel, who says he is a supporter of Israel, has questioned the efficacy of Iran sanctions and has called for engagement with Hamas. He has also been outspoken against the prospect of military engagement with Iran. "I think talking about going to war with Iran in fairly specific terms should be carefully reviewed," he said in 2010 at a forum organized by the Atlantic Council, a foreign policy think tank that he chairs. "And that's pretty dangerous talk."

Rep. Shelley Berkley (D-Nev.), a stalwart supporter of Israel who is retiring from Congress after losing a Senate bid, issued a statement Tuesday opposing a Hagel nomination. "The bottom line is that Chuck Hagel's dismal record on issues affecting the Middle East stands in sharp contrast to the stated policies of our nation and he would be the wrong choice for America's next secretary of defense," Berkley said.

Hagel's Jewish defenders said his independence recommended him. "Hagel understands the shared values" between Israel and the United States, said Aaron David Miller, a former U.S. Middle East negotiator who is now a vice president at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington. "He believes in a special relationship but not an exclusive relationship." Miller conducted the interview with Hagel that was cited by Foxman. It was published in his 2008 book, "The Much Too Promised Land."

Robert Wexler, a former congressman who was a top Jewish surrogate for Obama in both the 2008 and 2012 elections, said that trashing Hagel based on views that did not necessarily jibe with the pro-Israel community would damage Israel's cause. "It's entirely appropriate to question the nominee on their issues related to Israel, and certainly the groups should engage in the

political process,” Wexler said in an interview. “But to suggest that an American senator who served his nation honorably is somehow disqualified because he may possess a different point of view regarding what is best for America in terms of engagement with Iran or Hamas -- I don't think is appropriate.”

J Street, the dovish Israel policy group that advocates for an enhanced U.S. role in Middle East peacemaking, also defended Hagel. “Sen. Hagel was among the first in his party to realize that the U.S. occupation of Iraq had turned into a quagmire that was taking thousands of American and tens of thousands of Iraqi lives without a clear strategic rationale,” J Street said in a statement. “He took a brave stand against the majority in his own party and led a crucial debate that helped pave the way for President Obama to withdraw American troops from Iraq.”

Hagel and Obama are not completely aligned on the particulars of Obama’s defense policy, but broadly they have been allies. As senators, both men were sharply critical of President George W. Bush’s Iraq policies, and on Iran and Syria they have both emphasized negotiation and diplomacy as a critical component in inducing rogue nations to back down from belligerent postures.

Hagel’s positions have time and again landed him on the wrong side of a pro-Israel community noted for its long memory. The American Jewish Committee noted that Hagel was the lone senator out of 100 that refused in 1999 to join a letter to then-Russian President Boris Yeltsin threatening to cut assistance if he did not take substantive steps to quash anti-Semitism. “This was an issue of motherhood and apple pie,” the AJC’s spokesman, Ken Bandler, told JTA. “The concern we had 13 years ago still stands today.”

Not helping Hagel’s cause is his prickliness about the role of pro-Israel groups on the Hill. In 2007, he told the Arab American Institute that he had dropped his bid for the presidency because a pro-Israel donor had told him that if he wanted funding his support for Israel should be “automatic.” “First, I am an American senator,” Hagel said to applause. He also said he would not sacrifice his friendships in the Arab world to please pro-Israel groups. “No relationship should be founded on holding hostage other relationships,” he said.

Dec. 19. *Politico*, Tim Mak, [Chuck Hagel allies fire back; critics push for Michele Flournoy](#) cites support for Hagel from several former ambassadors, among them Nicholas Burns, Ryan Crocker and Edward Djerejian; high level military officer including Brig. Gen. Stephen Cheney, and retired Adm. William Fallon; former State Dept. spokesperson P.J. Crowley. Notably, “Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), who is Jewish, said he did not object to what has become one big point of contention about Hagel: an allusion to the “Jewish lobby,” in reference to advocates for Israel in Congress and elsewhere. “I think he’d be very good. ... You need someone intelligent to help cut that budget.” Mak also quoted three unidentified “defense lobbyists” who were “unenthusiastic” about Hagel and mentioned criticism of Hagel in the neoconservative media.

Dec. 21. *Times of Israel*, Haviv Rettig Gur, [Senior former officials – including ambassadors to Israel – support Hagel appointment.](#)



A group of top-ranking American ex-diplomats has come out strongly in support of the potential nomination of former senator Chuck Hagel for secretary of defense.

“Each of us has known the senator over the past 20 years and has found him invariably one of the best informed leaders in the US Congress on the issues of US national security,” read a letter of support released Thursday that was signed by the group of former officials, including several former ambassadors to Israel and other Middle Eastern countries.

Hagel, a decorated Vietnam veteran, millionaire entrepreneur and two-term Republican senator from Nebraska, is considered the front runner for the Defense post, according to reports late last week that are thought to have been leaked by the White House. The reports have generated a [growing chorus of opposition](#) from conservatives who oppose Hagel’s foreign policy views; [pro-Israel activists](#), including many Democrats, who object to [Hagel’s past opposition](#) to measures such as increased sanctions on Iran, labeling Hezbollah a terror organization, and more; and women’s groups who have urged President Barack Obama to appoint a woman to the position or risk seeing a cabinet without a single woman in its top posts.

On Thursday that chorus was joined by Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL), who is reportedly concerned about Hagel’s past support for ending the US boycott on Cuba’s communist regime. Rubio’s spokesman Alex Conant told the Washington Free Beacon that “promoting democracy in Latin America is a priority for Senator Rubio, and he’s put holds on other administration nominees over the issue. If President Obama were to nominate Senator Hagel for a cabinet position, I’m sure we would have questions about Cuba positions.”

In response, the group of senior former officials have penned an open letter declaring, “We support, most strongly and without qualification, President Obama’s reported intention to nominate Senator Chuck Hagel to be the next secretary of defense.”

The signatories are:

- Nicholas Burns, former undersecretary of state for political affairs, ambassador to NATO and Greece
- Ryan Crocker, former ambassador to Iraq and Afghanistan
- Edward Djerejian, former ambassador to Israel and Syria
- William Harrop, former ambassador to Israel
- Daniel Kurtzer, former ambassador to Israel and Egypt
- Sam Lewis, former ambassador to Israel
- William H. Luers, former ambassador to Venezuela and Czechoslovakia

- Thomas R. Pickering, former undersecretary of state for political affairs, ambassador to Israel and Russia

- Frank G. Wisner, former undersecretary of defense for policy, ambassador to Egypt and India.

The letter responds to some conservative critics who have complained in recent days about Hagel's opposition to the Iraq War.

"Senator Hagel's political courage has impressed us all," the diplomats write. "He has stood and argued publicly for what he believes is best for the United States. When he was attacked for opposing the war in Iraq as 'unpatriotic,' he replied, 'To question your government is not unpatriotic – to not question your government is unpatriotic.'"

Hagel's "credentials for the job are impeccable," they insist. "Time and again he chose to take the path of standing up for our nation over political expediency. He has always supported the pillars of American foreign policy – such as: a strong NATO and Atlantic partnership; a commitment to the security of Israel, as a friend and ally; a determination to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons; and the defense of human rights as a core principle of America's role in the world."

Support for Israel is mentioned twice in the letter, an indication of the growing concern in pro-Israel circles about the nomination. Hagel "has invariably demonstrated strong support for Israel and for a two-state solution and has been opposed to those who would undermine or threaten Israel's security," the former diplomats write. "We can think of few more qualified, more non-partisan, more courageous or better equipped to head the Department of Defense at this critical moment in strengthening America's role in the world. If he is nominated, we urge the speedy confirmation of Senator Hagel's appointment."

Dec. 23. National Journal, Michael Hirsh. [White House Wavers on Hagel, Considers Others for Defense.](#)"

The White House's revised characterization of Hagel's standing came after what was, for the former Republican senator, a particularly discouraging series of comments on the Sunday-morning talk shows. Outgoing Connecticut Sen. Joe Lieberman, an independent, told CNN's "State of the Union" that it would be "a very tough confirmation process," while on NBC's "Meet the Press," Hagel's former fellow Republican in the Senate, Lindsey Graham, said Hagel's would be "a challenging nomination." Graham added: "I don't think he's going to get many Republican votes."

While much of the criticism centers on questions of whether Hagel has been a strong enough supporter of Israel and tough enough on Iran--as well as past comments he made about gay people--he is also paying, in part, for his bluntness and bravery in advocating unpopular positions during his 12 years in the Senate. Hagel's gutsy and prescient stand against his own party and President George W. Bush in the run-up to the Iraq invasion—and his criticism of the war's management afterwards—all but cost him his political career, turning him from a possible GOP presidential contender into a pariah within his party.

...in what appears to be another failed trial balloon, Obama may be calculating that the political cost of pushing through a Hagel nomination at a time of critical talks over fiscal issues may be too high.

Dec. 20. ECI launches [video ad](#) against Hagel's nomination.

Dec. 20. Chad Griffin, head of Human Rights Campaign (HRC) [criticizes](#) a 1998 comment Hagel made in 1998 about an openly gay philanthropist, James Hormel, who President Bill Clinton wanted to nominate as Ambassador to Luxembourg. Although Hagel did not oppose the nomination, the remark, made in an interview, becomes the next line of attack against Hagel, particularly by progressives.

Dec. 21. Eleven senior [Retired Military Brass Say Hagel Would be 'a Strong Leader in the Pentagon'](#):

"He is a decorated Vietnam veteran, a successful businessman, a leader in Ronald Reagan's Veterans Administration and, since his election to the Senate in 1996, one of the country's leading voices on foreign policy. He would bring a long term strategic vision to the job and the President's Cabinet. ... **Most importantly, we believe that the person who can best lead the Pentagon is one who understands the importance of the challenges that our warfighter faces.**"

Dec. 24 (went to press on Dec. 14) *Weekly Standard*, William Kristol, [The Hagel Thesis](#).

As we go to press on Friday, December 14, former Republican senator Chuck Hagel appears to be the leading candidate to become the next secretary of defense. Anti-Israel propagandists are thrilled. Stephen Walt, junior partner of the better-known Israel-hater John Mearsheimer, writes that if President Obama nominates Hagel, it will be "a smart move." Why? Because, "unlike almost all of his former colleagues on Capitol Hill, he hasn't been a complete doormat for the Israel lobby." Indeed, a Hagel pick would "pay back Benjamin Netanyahu for all the 'cooperation' Obama received from him during the first term." Furthermore, Walt writes approvingly, Hagel is "generally thought to be skeptical about the use of military force against Iran."

Hagel certainly does have anti-Israel, pro-appeasement-of-Iran bona fides. While still a senator, Hagel said that "a military strike against Iran, a military option, is not a viable, feasible, responsible option." Hagel, one of only two senators who voted in 2001 against renewing the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, also voted in 2007 against designating the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps a terrorist organization and opposed the Iran Counter-Proliferation Act.

Hagel also has a record of consistent hostility to Israel over the last decade. He boasted in 2008 that, unlike his peers, he wasn't intimidated by "the Jewish lobby." The next year, he signed a letter urging President Obama to open direct negotiations with Hamas. Later in 2009, he revisited another of his longstanding foreign policy fixations—his belief in the good intentions of the Assad regime—and told a J Street conference, "I believe there is a real possibility of a shift in

Syria's strategic thinking and policies. . . . Syria wants to talk—at the highest levels—and everything is on the table.”

All of this helps explain why, when Hagel was appointed to an advisory board at the beginning of Obama's first term, Ira Forman, Obama's 2008 campaign Jewish outreach director and former head of the National Jewish Democratic Council, acknowledged, “If [Hagel] was taking a policy role, we'd have real concerns.”

Well, secretary of defense is a policy role. President Obama *should* have real concerns about putting him there. Democratic senators should have real concerns about confirming Hagel if President Obama is foolish enough to nominate him. There are, after all, plenty of Obama-supporting potential nominees for secretary of defense who are qualified for the job. Some have already served in the Defense Department in Obama's first term, like Deputy Secretary Ash Carter and former undersecretary Michelle Flournoy. The Weekly Standard would expect to differ with such nominees on many issues. But they wouldn't be out on the fringes like Chuck Hagel.

Why is President Obama tempted by the prospect of nominating Hagel? Because Hagel was a *Republican* senator. The Obama political types think they'd get credit for bipartisanship by appointing Hagel. And they think they would avoid a confirmation fight because Hagel's former GOP colleagues wouldn't dare oppose him: senatorial courtesy, party solidarity, and all that.

Whether Hagel is nominated is above all a test for President Obama. Is he serious about having Israel's back? Is he serious about preventing Iran from getting nuclear weapons?

It's a test as well for pro-Israel, anti-nuclear-Iran Democrats. Will they go along with a major policy role for a man they know shouldn't be in one?

But a Hagel nomination is also a test for Republicans. Does senatorial clubbiness trump the good of the country? Do former party ties trump the importance of having a sensible and mainstream secretary of defense over the next four years?

The Weekly Standard salutes the Republican senators who stood up against the prospect of U.N. ambassador Susan Rice as our next secretary of state. But let's be clear: Chuck Hagel would do far more damage at Defense than Rice would have done at State. To have blocked Rice and then roll over for Hagel would be a disgrace. It would even give some credence to the thesis that Rice fell victim to a kind of sexism and certainly to old-boy-network-ism. So, if President Obama goes ahead and advances what we might call a Hagelian thesis, Republicans have an obligation to embrace their role as Obama's antithesis, and to block him. The synthesis we'll end up with—a mainstream liberal at the Pentagon—will still be problematic, but will better serve the nation that the older Hegel once called “the land of the future, where, in the ages that lie before us, the burden of the World's History shall reveal itself.”

Dec. 26. Foreign Policy. Aaron David Miller asks [Is Chuck Hagel Toast?](#)

...accusing someone of hating Jews in general because they criticize Israeli government policy in particular is all too common. In some cases, perhaps it's even true. But not in Hagel's. Hagel spoke to me about shared values and the importance of Israeli security too. And those who have known him over the years, including many of my former colleagues, all believe he feels the same. Independent and at times sharply critical of Israeli policies, yes; someone who has endemic hostility toward Israel, as Rep. Eliot Engel recently [charged](#), let alone whose views are borderline anti-Semitic, no. I like the way Richard Robinson, a Norfolk, Nebraska steel distributor who's Jewish and considers Hagel a very close friend, [put it](#): "I think that anyone who insinuates he's anti-Israel or anti-Semitic is full of crap."

Dec. 26. *The Hill*, Brent Budowsky, [Chuck Hagel for DOD](#).

The latest endorsement received by former Republican Sen. Chuck Hagel to be secretary of Defense comes from four former national security advisers: Brent Scowcroft, James L. Jones, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Frank Carlucci. This quartet of national security leaders has served presidents of both parties, including Republican Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush and Democratic Presidents Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama.

Hagel is one of the finest people I have ever known in public life, along with President Obama's excellent nominee to be secretary of State, Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.). Hagel (Neb.) embodies the highest American ideal of service: service in war, service in peace, service in government, service in military life and service in civilian life, as well as a powerful lifetime commitment to go many extra miles supporting those who wear the uniform and their families at home. in military life and service in civilian life, as well as a powerful lifetime commitment to go many extra miles supporting those who wear the uniform and their families at home...Hagel knows how to wage war, how to win wars, how to end wars and how to avoid wars that may be unwise. This is why Hagel wins such strong support from national security advisers who served previous administrations, and from a number of leading retired military commanders and former U.S. ambassadors to Israel.

He is a public servant of rock-solid integrity who would be highly qualified to be secretary of State, secretary of Defense, director of National Intelligence or any other high-level position essential to protecting our nation. I believe it is particularly important that Obama ignore the dishonest campaign of defamation and disinformation that is being run, mostly by neoconservatives who know far less about war than Hagel, who have far less experience in war than Hagel and who are far less skilled than Hagel at both winning wars that should be fought and avoiding wars that should not be fought...the more firmly the president rejects these attacks, the better.

Dec. 27. Log Cabin Republicans anti-Hagel ad in *New York Times*, Section A: "Chuck Hagel: Wrong on gay rights, wrong on Iran, wrong on Israel. Tell President Obama that Chuck Hagel is wrong for Defense Secretary. [n.b. *non sequitur*...] Help us create a stronger and more inclusive Republican Party."

Dec. 27. *National Journal*, Michael Hirsh. [Chuck Hagel Broke Party Lines on Iraq. Is He Now Being Punished?](#) "

In his Pulitzer-winning book *Profiles in Courage*, which told the stories of eight U.S. senators who defied their parties and public opinion to stand up for what they believed was right, John F. Kennedy wrote: "A man does what he must--in spite of personal consequences, in spite of obstacles and dangers and pressures--and that is the basis of all human morality." At a time when Republican leadership in Washington seems to be all but absent, and courage nonexistent, perhaps we should remember that an antiabortion GOP senator with a respectable lifetime rating of 84 from the American Conservative Union made the same choice, a decade ago, as the heroic figures portrayed in JFK's book. In the process, Chuck Hagel effectively sacrificed his political career for his beliefs—which, by and large, turned out to be right.

Let's not kid ourselves or the reading public. Hagel may have said some questionable things about Iran, Israel, and "the Jewish lobby" over the years. But it is largely because of his sin of defiance a decade ago, and for the bigger sin of getting the biggest strategic choice of the 21st century right when so many others—both Republicans and Democrats—got it wrong that Chuck Hagel is persona non grata on Capitol Hill today. Given the rising resistance to him, it is looking less likely that Hagel will be the next Defense secretary (after all, President Obama hasn't even nominated him yet). But if that's the case, we at least ought to be clear on the reasons...

Dec. 27. *Foreign Policy*, Josh Rogin. [Republican Senators were For Hagel Before They Were Against Him](#):

...Hagel's critics have been mounting a [relentless media campaign](#) against his potential nomination, accusing him of being an [anti-Semite](#), a homophobe, and weak on Iran. A loose conglomeration of interest groups, conservative writers, and national newspaper [editorial boards](#) have also attacked Hagel, alleging he wants to cut the Pentagon budget and accusing him of poor management skills. The effort has included documenting the "concerns" of several GOP senators about the nomination.

To "allege that Hagel is somehow a Republican -- that is a hard one to swallow," Sen. **John McCain** (R-AZ) [said last](#) week, criticizing Hagel's long-ago reference to a "Jewish lobby" and his record on Iran sanctions. That's quite a change from the sentiments McCain and his GOP Senate colleagues expressed about Hagel the last time his name was mentioned for high office, when he resigned from the Senate in 2008. At that time, presidential candidate McCain said he and Hagel were "close and dear friends" and that Hagel [could have a place](#) in a McCain administration. "I'd be honored to have Chuck with me in any capacity," McCain [told](#) the *New York Times* in 2006. "He'd make a great secretary of state." In the summer of 2008, Hagel traveled with then candidate Obama and Sen. **Jack Reed** (D-RI) on a trip to Iraq, and rumors swirled that Obama might choose Hagel as his running mate. McCain was all for the idea. "I don't know anything about that," [McCain said](#) about the idea of Obama picking Hagel for vice president, "except to say Chuck Hagel is a distinguished veteran and a very dear and close friend of mine and I cherish his friendship and have for many, many years." McCain also said it was good that Obama chose to bring Hagel to Iraq, because even though the two Vietnam veterans had developed opposing

views on the Iraq war, McCain said Hagel "has military experience (and) knowledge of these issues." He also said Hagel was a "respected leader in America" who "served his country admirably, with honor and distinction."

If nominated and confirmed, Hagel would become the first enlisted soldier to ever lead the Pentagon. But now, as the nomination looms, Republican senators have gone so far as to question Hagel's military experience and his credibility with our troops in uniform. "I don't know how you can nominate someone and make them secretary of defense who has had so much disrespect for the military," Sen. **Dan Coats** (R-IN) [told](#) an Indianapolis radio station last week. "And said so many public things in opposition to the military, what it stands for, the values that it holds. Chuck has alienated an awful lot of people." Coats's argument, which mimics [the attack ads](#) of right-wing groups, is that Hagel is somehow to the "left" of Obama on crucial national security issues and that Hagel has moved away from his conservative principles since leaving office. "[I]deologically [Hagel] has moved from a conservative Republican coming out of Nebraska to someone that looks like they are out of the most leftist state in the country and exceeding even a lot of Democrats, who also have concerns about his ideology and where he is coming from," Coats said.

But Hagel's positions on things like unilateral sanctions, the use of force abroad, and the role of America [are the same](#) as they were in 2008. He has taken no votes that would indicate a policy shift and he has authored no papers that show a departure from his long held views. By contrast, his former GOP colleagues have completely changed their tune on Hagel in the four years since he left the Senate. During speeches on the floor to commemorate his retirement in 2008, several senior GOP senators praised Hagel effusively.

"In two terms in the Senate, Chuck has earned the respect of his colleagues and risen to national prominence as a clear voice on foreign policy and national security," said Senate Minority Leader **Mitch McConnell** (R-KY). "He has consistently fought to expand free trade, particularly with Vietnam. Chuck's stature as a leading voice in foreign affairs has earned him a reputation, in just 12 years in the Senate, as one of Nebraska's great statesmen. This is a tribute to his intelligence, hard work, and devotion to a country that he has served his entire adult life."

"When Senator Hagel came to the Senate, his actions often reflected his experience as a combat veteran. He did what he believed was best for the men and women in uniform, and he defended his positions forcefully," said Senate Minority Whip **Jon Kyl** (R-AZ). "Senator Hagel has continued to protect and defend the country, notably through his work on the Foreign Relations and Intelligence Committees. He had strong opinions, and he was never shy about letting them be known."

"Senator Hagel's heroism and service serving side by side with his brother in Vietnam is one of the most fascinating, heroic stories of any member of the Senate," said Sen. **Lamar Alexander** (R-TN). "With that sort of independent background, you can imagine he brought to this body a sense of independence, a great knowledge of the world... [H]e understands the world better than almost anyone, and he works hard at it. He has been independent in his views, willing to criticize those he thought were wrong, including those in his own party. ... We will miss Senator Hagel."

To those who worked with Hagel in the Senate, the GOP's turn against their former boss is a betrayal of the comity and mutual respect the Nebraska lawmaker and his GOP colleagues shared for so many years. "Hagel and his former GOP colleagues may have differed strongly on some issues, but there was no disputing his deep credibility on matters of foreign policy or national security," one former Hagel staffer said. "These recent attacks amount to a mix of revisionist history and political gamesmanship, not a substantive examination of his record. And I think most of his former colleagues know that. This whole dynamic is a product of the trial-balloon method; it will change dramatically if he is actually the nominee."

Dec. 28, *The American Conservative*, Patrick J. Buchanan, [Why the War Party Fears Hagel](#).

To the *Weekly Standard*'s Bill Kristol, however, Hagel is a man "out on the fringes," who has a decade-long record of "hostility to Israel" and is "pro-appeasement-of-Iran." Lest we miss Kristol's point, *Standard* blogger Daniel Halper helpfully adds that a "top Republican Senate aide" said, "Send us Hagel, and we will make sure every American knows he is an anti-Semite."

The *Wall Street Journal*'s Bret Stephens continued in this vein. "Prejudice ... has an olfactory element," he writes, and with Hagel, "the odor is especially ripe." Stephens is saying that Chuck Hagel reeks of anti-Semitism.

Hagel's enemies contend that his own words disqualify him. First, he told author Aaron David Miller that the "Jewish lobby intimidates a lot of people up there" on the Hill. Second, he urged us to talk to Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran. Third, Hagel said several years ago, "A military strike against Iran ... is not a viable, feasible, responsible option."...

Israel negotiated with Hezbollah to retrieve the remains of airman Ron Arad and traded 1,000 Palestinian prisoners in a deal with Hamas for the return of Pvt. Gilad Shalit. And we can't talk to them? If Hagel's view that a war with Iran is not a "responsible option" is a disqualification for defense secretary, what are we to make of this statement from Robert Gates, defense secretary for Bush II and Obama: "Any future defense secretary who advises the president to again send a big American land army into Asia or into the Middle East or Africa should 'have his head examined,' as Gen. (Douglas) MacArthur so delicately put it."

If Hagel were an anti-Semite, would he have the support of so many Jewish columnists and writers? If he were really "out on the fringes," would national security advisers for presidents Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush I and Obama be in his camp?

Neocon hostility to Hagel is rooted in a fear that in Obama's inner councils his voice would be raised in favor of negotiating with Iran and against a preventive war or pre-emptive strike. But if Obama permits these assaults to persuade him not to nominate Hagel, he will only be postponing a defining battle of his presidency, not avoiding it.

For Bibi Netanyahu is going to be re-elected this January. And the government he forms looks to be more bellicose than the last. And Bibi's highest priority, shared by his neocon allies, is a U.S. war on Iran in 2013.



If Obama does not want that war, he is going to have to defeat the war party. Throwing an old warrior like Chuck Hagel over the side to appease these wolves is not the way to begin this fight. Nominate him, Mr. President. Let's get it on.

Dec. 28. *Times of Israel*, Haviv Rettig Gur, [How the Hagel nomination battle became a fight over the Israel Lobby](#).

...As his own proponents repeatedly note, Hagel “[styles himself an independent thinker](#).” He has bucked Washington’s “conventional wisdom” more often than not, supporting further engagement with Iran’s ayatollahs, ending the embargo on Cuba, imposing steep cuts to the defense budget, and more. His independence has extended to endorsing Democratic candidates for national office. He is, to borrow from former friend and present-day detractor Sen. John McCain, a true maverick. And he doesn’t hide it, either. Shortly before leaving the Senate in January 2009, he told a local Nebraska newspaper, “I think the case could be made that I am the true Republican and that the party came loose of its moorings. I’ve heard so many times from Republicans that, ‘You’re right, but why do you have to say it?’ And I say: ‘I’m going to tell you what I think.’”

The chairman of the Republican Party in Nebraska [has suggested](#) the feeling that Hagel isn’t quite at home in the party is mutual. “There was just so much disdain for Senator Hagel. It wasn’t so much his policy positions as the way he conducted himself, appearing on every Sunday talk show, attacking President Bush day in and day out,” said the chairman, Mark Fahleson. “It wasn’t the Nebraska way. He did burn a lot of bridges at the end.”

The end of Hagel’s political career was directly tied to his views – [according to his own wife](#). “Hagel decided to leave the Senate in 2008,” [relates](#) the New Yorker’s Connie Bruck. “His wife, Lilibet, told me at that time that his life with his Republican colleagues in the Senate had become difficult. ‘It’s the intangibles, as you know — the way someone says hello to you, the way they might walk right past you, the way in a small group they make eye contact with everyone but you.’ His position in the Republican caucus, she said, ‘has been a little like a skunk at a garden party.’”

As Bruck noted in her favorable profile of Hagel’s views and the nomination fight, “the Israel lobby led the charge against Hagel, but there is plenty of animus for him in the broader Republican party, too.... In 2007, he and his friend Joe Biden... sponsored a resolution opposing the ‘surge’ and calling for a transition to a limited US military mission in Iraq.... The committee approved the resolution; Hagel was the only Republican to vote in favor. ‘I was called a “traitor,” and I was called “disgusting,”’ Hagel told me when I wrote about him in 2008. “Shut your mouth, you’re a Republican!” Which I always found astounding—to equate war based on your politics, as a Democrat or a Republican.”

There is surely something admirable in Hagel’s independence, and his unconventional views have enriched the public debate – and should continue to do so. But nowhere is it written that the candidate with the minority positions, who has bucked his party and his constituents and lost his Senate seat for it, must therefore be given the keys to the kingdom or to the kingdom’s military. It is possible to admire Hagel’s courage, to welcome an open debate about, for example, Hezbollah’s

political role in Lebanon, the embargo on Cuba, the efficacy of the sanctions on Iran, and all other issues in which Hagel is a minority voice, without assuming that this courage makes him qualified to be secretary of defense.

Republicans are angry at Hagel for the straightforward conspiracy-free reason that he wasn't a particularly good Republican. Among Democrats, too, there are those who are incensed over a possible Hagel nomination. Many Democrats [are openly wondering](#) why a reelected Democratic president feels compelled to appoint, for the third time in just two Democratic administrations, a Republican to run the Defense Department. "There's a bizarre tradition of sorts where Democratic presidents suddenly act like Republicans are right – that only they can run our national affairs – and thus appoint Republicans to head the Pentagon," the left-wing website Daily Kos complained last week. Some Democrats have been advocating for the appointment of former undersecretary of defense for policy Michele Flournoy, with one "senior Democrat" telling Newsweek's Eleanor Clift as early as November 9 – five weeks before the leak of Hagel's possible nomination – that Flournoy is "brilliant, smart as hell, has deep knowledge across the defense issues – personnel, weapons systems, strategy, she knows how to run the Pentagon, and she's very well-liked." Hagel, though a twice-wounded veteran, does not bring to the table anything remotely resembling Flournoy's level of defense policy experience.

And opposition has even come from gay rights groups, including the Human Rights Campaign. Though Hagel has apologized for comments made in the 1990s that seemed to denigrate gays, the criticism has continued from some quarters of the gay rights movement, especially on the right. In the latest critique, published in a full-page ad in the New York Times on Thursday, the pro-gay rights Republican group Log Cabin Republicans [urged supporters](#) to "tell President Obama that Chuck Hagel is wrong for Defense Secretary" and expressed support for "a stronger and more inclusive Republican Party." Hagel's supporters have responded vigorously to the agitation of the Israel lobby, and in the process perhaps sought to crowd out opposition to Hagel that can't be as easily dismissed as illegitimate and – Zbigniew Brzezinski said it outright – disloyal.

In the end, the debate over Hagel has now been framed in a way that will do the most damage to the pro-Israel community in Washington. If Hagel wins the nomination, the pro-Israel community has "lost" and is weakened. If he loses, the nefarious Jewish lobby has struck again, denying a patriotic American – one who wanted nothing more than to serve as an American senator, [rather than an Israeli one](#) – his rightful place because he sought too much independence from the cabal.

And that, perhaps, is the major victory achieved by Hagel's supporters in this political fight. As the pro-Hagel camp has noted time and again, the fight itself has damaged Israel's standing in Washington. Of course, that's a self-fulfilling prophecy that some pro-Hagel advocates are working hard to make happen.

It is already difficult to complain about Hagel's actual policy views even as he is being considered for one of the top policymaking posts in the free world, as such complaints have been deemed beside the point. It is even hard to note that Hagel's views are in the minority in American politics, since this has been characterized as penalizing a brave man for his courage. And no part

of the story is deemed relevant – such as widespread popular support for Israel or the active campaign among Democrats for a Democratic nominee – unless it is a story about the reprehensible Israel lobby.

The mere fact that William Kristol [opposed Hagel's possible nomination](#) has become the primary argument for its approval. And there, perhaps, lies another secret to the Israel lobby's mysterious influence: its vast, looming presence in the imagination of its opponents.

Dec. 30. *Washington Post*, Rachel Weiner. Retiring Massachusetts Congressman Barney Frank, who is gay as well as Jewish, had no problems with Hagel's comments about Jews, but vilifies Hagel for a comment made in 1993 uncovered from his detractors: "In 1998, Hagel opposed the nomination of a gay philanthropist, James Hormel, to be ambassador to Luxembourg, saying that an "openly aggressively gay" diplomat might be ineffective. Under [pressure](#) from gay rights groups earlier this month, he said those comments did not reflect his views and [apologized](#) for them."

Dec. 30. Politico, Donovan Slack, [Obama Still Considering Hagel](#):

"I've served with Chuck Hagel. I know him. He is a patriot," Obama said during an interview broadcast Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press." "He is somebody who has done extraordinary work both in the United States Senate, somebody who served this country with valor in Vietnam - and is somebody who's currently serving on my intelligence advisory board and doing an outstanding job." The president specifically addressed comments Hagel made in 1998, when he called an ambassador pick "openly aggressively gay," suggesting he was unfit to serve. "He apologized for it," Obama said, referencing a statement Hagel issued earlier this month. "And I think it's a testimony to what has been a positive change over the last decade in terms of people's attitudes about gays and lesbians serving our country."

Jan. 2. *Algemeiner*, Moshe Philips, "[Israel Better Brace for Secretary of State John Kerry](#)." (Also see Jan. 4, [John Kerry's Record on Israel--in Letters](#))

President Obama's decision to nominate Senator John Kerry as his next Secretary of State will prove to be a disaster for Israel. The choice of the American Jewish establishment to vehemently protest the expected nomination of former Senator Chuck Hagel while granting Kerry a free pass for his anti-Israel behavior follows their longtime pattern. Hagel is a Republican who has a history of making foolish remarks regarding Israel and has long been seen as an independent thinker on Middle East policy with a non-interventionist outlook.

Kerry, however, is the much bigger problem for Israel. Hagel as Secretary of Defense will be tasked with handling military issues. Kerry will be in a position to effect policy as it impacts Israel, set an overall tone for the United States in the Middle East and be a key player in future negotiations. When it comes to criticizing Democrats who are hostile to Israel the Jewish elites have a history of weakness. From Jesse Jackson to Jimmy Carter to Barack Obama, Democrats are treated with kid gloves and given the benefit of the doubt while pro-Israel Republicans are never given their due praise...

Jan. 2. *Washington Post*, Jennifer Rubin, "[Why is Hagel Still in the Mix?](#)"

Let's start with an issue that should concern the Obama administration and its allies, namely the significant policy differences between Hagel and the president. President Obama believes in tough sanctions against Iran; Hagel does not. The president insists that he wants good relations with Israel (and thereby can influence its decision-making with regard to Iran); Hagel has displayed a poisonous animosity toward the Jewish state. Hagel has advocated direct negotiations with Hamas; Obama has never gone this far. The difficulty in articulating to foes and friends our positions on an array of issues is greatly magnified when a critical cabinet official has a long track record of disagreement with the president, or at least what the president says is his current policy.

More to the point, liberals and decidedly unconservative Republicans have become aware of a more troubling issue: Hagel really has no skills and no experience in what will be his primary responsibility. (Some even suggest that Hagel is part of a [rope-a-dope](#) strategy to ease the way for someone who really does have credentials, Michele Flournoy.)

Jan. 2. *Baltimore Sun*, Ray McGovern op-ed, [Obama Needs Hagel in Pentagon](#). McGovern praises the choice of Hagel based upon his military experience that is too often lacking in Defense Secretaries.

Mr. Obama's better-late-than-never, Kennedy-like decision to pull almost all U.S. troops from Afghanistan by 2014 has already drawn fire from neocon pundits like Max Boot, who argue for keeping major U.S. bases near key cities like Kandahar, the birthplace of the Taliban and the most populous Afghan city after Kabul. Who remembers General McChrystal's cringe-worthy promise to pacify Marja, some 100 miles from Kandahar, as a dress rehearsal for taking Kandahar itself? In early February 2010, he proudly told [The New York Times](#), "We've got a government in a box, ready to roll in." Right. Mr. Obama will be offered more hare-brained schemes like that. Mr. Hagel would likely recognize them for what they are. He has "been there, done that," having volunteered for Vietnam, with two purple hearts to prove it. Mr. Hagel has explained his overall attitude in these words: "Committing a nation to war, asking our men and women to make sacrifices that no other Americans will ever be asked to make, is a deadly serious decision. War is not an abstraction.

Jan. 3, 2013. *Washington Free Beacon* Staff, [Hagel Nabs Coveted 9/11 Truther Endorsement](#), slamming Ray McGovern's endorsement not on its assessment of Hagel but exclusively on controversial stances taken by McGovern on other issues.

Jan. 3. *Weekly Standard*, Daniel Halper, [9/11 Truther Endorses Hagel](#). [Reproduces Free Beacon item verbatim.]

Jan. 3. *Washington Free Beacon*, Adam Credo, "[The Saga of Hagel and Haifa](#)" claims Hagel as USO CEO wanted to shut down Haifa, and accuses him of saying "Let the Jews pay for it" if they wanted to keep it open. Ironically, [an article from the Jerusalem Post](#) dated Aug. 22, 1989, uploaded by the *Free Beacon* to sustain the complaint that the Haifa USO was nearly shut down

under Hagel's auspices instead noted that the "decorated Vietnam veteran" took the voluntary service organization from a \$1 million deficit, when he became its president in 1987, to a financial position of being "\$ 1.8 million in the black." *The Jerusalem Post* also pointed out that the Haifa USO was kept open thanks to an outpouring of community support, while ten other USO centers in the Mediterranean were closed, and that Hagel had declared his intent to make it "the southern anchor of its Mediterranean operation."

Jan. 4. Hagel's nomination is believed to be imminent, according to nearly all mainstream media sources. CNN reports that [Leading Foreign Policy Voices Mount Pro-Hagel Defense](#):

Former members of Congress and foreign policy professionals are coming to the defense of former Republican Sen. Chuck Hagel, who's [expected to be tapped](#) as the nominee for Defense Secretary. Known as the Bipartisan Group, they have letters published in several publications defending Hagel, who has come under harsh criticism from some members of Congress and conservative activists over past positions not supporting sanctions against Iran and what some of them consider a dovish defense point of view. Also some pro-Israel [lobbyists](#) believe he has not been supportive enough of the Jewish state. Hagel also opposed the surge of troops in Iraq pushed by the Bush administration.

In one of its letters the group said, "We write to you, Mr. President, in support of Senator Hagel because we believe our polarized political life is much in need of leaders with the kind of bipartisanship and independence of conscience and mind that Chuck Hagel's service to our country has exemplified."

Among its notable members are Former National Security Advisers Zbigniew Brzezinski and Brent Scowcroft, Former Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci, Former Undersecretary of State Thomas Pickering, Former Sens. David Boren, Nancy Kassebaum-Baker and Gary Hart.