



Chuck Hagel



Former Secretary of Defense



Chuck Hagel served as the 24th Secretary of Defense from February 2013 to February 2015. During his tenure, he directed significant steps to modernize America's partnerships and alliances, advance the rebalance in Asia-Pacific, bolster support for European allies, and enhance defense cooperation in the Middle East while overseeing the end of America's combat mission in Afghanistan. In addition, he led major initiatives for service members and their families, including increasing resources for suicide prevention, combating sexual assault, and accounting for missing personnel. Further, Secretary Hagel improved partnerships with the Department of Veterans Affairs, to include health record interoperability, service treatment record transferability, and continuity of mental health services and support. Secretary Hagel launched the Defense Innovation Initiative to better prepare the Pentagon for future threats, and enacted comprehensive reforms to the Nuclear Enterprise and Military Health system. He is the only Vietnam veteran and the first enlisted combat veteran to serve as Secretary of Defense.

Hagel served two terms in the United States Senate (1997-2009) representing the state of Nebraska. Hagel was a senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations; Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs; and Intelligence Committees. He Chaired the Foreign Relations International Economic Policy, Export and

Trade Promotion Subcommittee; and the Banking Committee's International Trade and Finance, and Securities Subcommittees. Hagel also served as the Chairman of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China and the Senate Climate Change Observer Group.

Previously, Secretary Hagel was a Distinguished Professor at Georgetown University, Co-Chairman of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board, Chairman of the Atlantic Council, Chairman of the United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee, and Co-Chairman of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Corporate Council. He served as a member of the Secretary of Defense's Policy Board, Secretary of Energy's Blue Ribbon Commission on the Future of Nuclear Power, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) Board of Directors and Systemic Risk Council; as a Senior Advisor to Gallup; and on the Advisory Boards of Corsair Capital, Deutsche Bank America, M.I.C. Industries, Bread for the World, Bonnie J. Addario Lung Cancer Foundation, Center for the Study of the Presidency, Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission, George C. Marshall Foundation, Georgetown's Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Global Strategy Forum, Global Zero, Hamilton Project, Initiative for Global Development, Lung Cancer Alliance, International Center for the Study Of Radicalization and Political

Violence, National Bureau of Asian Research's Next Generation Leadership Board, Ploughshares Fund, U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, U.S. Institute of Peace Middle East Senior Working Group, U.S. Middle East Project, America Abroad Media, American Security Project, and The Washington Center.

Prior to his election to the U.S. Senate, Hagel was president of McCarthy & Company, an investment banking firm in Omaha, Nebraska. In the mid-1980's, Hagel co-founded VANGUARD Cellular Systems, Inc., a publicly traded corporation. He was President and CEO of the World USO, Private Sector Council (PSC), and Chief Operating Officer of the 1990 Economic Summit of Industrialized Nations (G-7 Summit). Hagel also served as Deputy Administrator of the Veterans Administration under President Ronald Reagan and Deputy Commissioner General of the 1982 World's Fair.

He is the author of the book, *America: Our Next Chapter* and was the subject of a 2006 book by Charlyne Berens entitled, *Chuck Hagel: Moving Forward*.

A graduate of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Hagel and his wife, Lilibet, have a daughter (Allyn) and son (Ziller).

Chuck Hagel



Chuck Hagel.

*Congressional Pictorial Directory of the
110th Congress*

Chuck Hagel, in full Charles Timothy Hagel (born October 4, 1946, North Platte, Nebraska, U.S.), American Republican politician who served as a U.S. senator from Nebraska (1997–2009) and as secretary of defense (2013–15) in the administration of Pres. Barack Obama. He was the first enlisted veteran to head the

Pentagon.

When Hagel was 16, his father, a veteran of World War II, died suddenly at the age of 39. Hagel was the oldest of four boys, and he supported his family through a number of jobs, including as a door-to-door salesman for Encyclopædia Britannica. After studying at the Brown Institute for Radio and Television in Minneapolis (1966–67), he was drafted into the U.S. Army. He volunteered to fight in the Vietnam War

rather than accept a safer assignment in Germany and rose to the rank of sergeant. He earned two Purple Hearts and other decorations by the time of his discharge in 1968.

Hagel later attended the University of Nebraska, graduating with a B.A. in history in 1971. He became active in politics as an administrative assistant for Republican Representative John Y. McCollister of Nebraska, eventually becoming McCollister's chief of staff (1971–77). In 1981–82 he served as deputy administrator of the Veterans Administration.

During the 1980s and '90s he pursued a successful career in business, cofounding a management consulting firm (1982) and a cell-phone carrier (1984) and serving as president of McCarthy and Co., an investment banking firm (1992–96). He was also head (1987–90) of the United Service Organizations (USO), which provides social services to members of the U.S. armed forces and their families.

He was elected to the Senate from Nebraska in 1996 and won reelection six years later with 83 percent of the vote, the largest margin of victory in a federal election in Nebraska's history. As a senator, Hagel generally supported the positions of the Republican Party, voting against gay rights legislation and new environmental regulations and voting in favour of lower taxes and new restrictions on access to abortion. In 2002 Hagel voted in favour of a Congressional resolution authorizing the use of military

force against Iraq, but he later regretted his vote, and indeed became a vocal critic of the Iraq War (2003–11). He notably opposed Pres. George W. Bush's plan to send large reinforcements of ground troops to Iraq in 2007, a strategy known as "the surge," and even advocated military withdrawal. Hagel often compared the Iraq War to the Vietnam War, describing both as misguided wars of choice. He consistently warned against military adventurism and advocated a foreign policy based on engaging allies rather than acting unilaterally. After retiring from the Senate in 2009, Hagel taught in the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University and advised the Obama administration on intelligence and defense policy.

In January 2013 Hagel was nominated by Obama to succeed Leon Panetta as secretary of defense. Hagel's nomination was opposed by several Republican senators because of his position on the surge and his perceived lack of support for Israel. After intense and protracted debate, he was confirmed by the Senate in February 2013 by a vote of 58 to 41. Once in office, he oversaw budget cuts to his department and the continued drawdown of U.S. troops in Afghanistan. However, his response to a number of national security crises—notably the rise of the Islamic insurgent group ISIL—drew criticism. In November 2014 it was

announced that Hagel would be stepping down, and three months later he was succeeded by Ashton Carter.

André Munro

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Chuck Hagel: Solemn Vietnam Memorial turns 35

Mar 25, 2017



Sen. Chuck Hagel, R-Neb., left, walks with Betty Jean Pulliam, national president of the American Gold Star Mothers, during a ceremony marking the 25th anniversary of the groundbreaking of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Monday, March 26, 2007, in Washington.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The writer served in Vietnam in 1968. He later served as deputy administrator of the Veterans Administration, as a U.S. senator from Nebraska and as the 24th secretary of Defense. He is chairman of the 35th Anniversary of The Wall Committee.

Today marks 35 years since we broke ground for what was to become the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., known now as the Wall. I was one of the speakers that day and am one of the nearly 3 million Americans who served in Vietnam.

The Wall was born out of conflict and division. As we stand back and think about when the Wall was built, it's a remarkable accomplishment. The Vietnam War was the most divisive war in recent U.S. history and up until Iraq and Afghanistan, our longest war. It bitterly divided America and drove an incumbent president out of office.

Yet seven years after Congress pulled the plug on further financing the Vietnam War in 1975 and ended America's involvement in Vietnam, The Wall was built with no government funds. This is even more remarkable when we remember that there were no World War II or Korean War memorials in Washington, D.C., at the time.

It happened because of many people and many factors, but principal among them were two driving forces: an unknown Army infantryman wounded in Vietnam by the name of Jan Scruggs and his committed founding board — and two World War II veterans who were U.S. senators, Charles “Mac” Mathias of Maryland and John Warner of Virginia.

Every step of the way to getting the Vietnam Memorial built was entangled in controversy — from the war itself to the design of the memorial. But, when we step back for a moment, we realize that the Wall's design was appropriate for that war and that time in our history.

The Wall was built 35 years ago because of what I've just noted, but also because America was beginning to separate the war from the warrior. It was a historic and defining time, matched by historic and defining leaders.

It is the story of America. It is important to remember that The Wall has never been about the war, but rather about the people who served. The requirement for the design to include the names has proven the value of remembering the individual sacrifice, and that is what makes the Wall different from other memorials.

We build memorials not to glorify war, but to remember and honor those who served and sacrificed. The Wall allows current and future generations to understand the hard lessons learned and legacies of the Vietnam War.

The Wall has enabled the healing of a generation and of our nation. It is a tangible symbol of national dialogue and reflection.

Through the Wall, we remember those who sacrificed all, those who served, those who waited and those who continue to serve today.

NATION-NOW

Trump's treatment of families of the fallen 'sickens' Chuck Hagel

Hagel: Trump's calls sickening and offensive

Author: Nation Now

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WASHINGTON — President Trump's treatment of families of fallen troops "sickens" former Defense secretary Chuck Hagel, who labeled his recent calls and other statements "beneath the dignity of the presidency."

Hagel, in an interview with USA TODAY, reacted to Trump's call to a widow of a soldier killed in Niger, his promise to the father of another fallen soldier to write a \$25,000 check and his reference to John Kelly, his chief of staff, and his son who was killed in action in Afghanistan. Trump also swiped at former President Barack Obama, suggesting, inaccurately, that he hadn't placed calls to the kin of troops killed in action.

Former Defense secretary Chuck Hagel said more needed to be done with the problem of sexual harassment in the military.

"I'm offended by the way he's handled it," said Hagel, who served as Defense secretary under Obama. Hagel, a decorated veteran of the Vietnam War, was also a Republican senator from Nebraska. "You just don't use the families of the fallen to score political points, especially to take jabs at your predecessor. I'm very unhappy about this," he said.

The issue erupted after Trump called the widow of Army Sgt. La David Johnson who died in the ambush Oct. 4 along with three other soldiers. Rep. Frederica Wilson, D-Fla., said Trump had been disrespectful in the call, quoting the president as saying, "I guess he knew what he signed up for, but I guess it still hurt."

Trump accused Wilson of lying, saying he had proof, which the White House later acknowledged did not exist. Wilson has stood by her account of the call.

Kelly defended Trump during an appearance in the White House briefing room on Thursday, saying he was "stunned" by Wilson's comments. He blamed Wilson, not Trump, for politicizing the issue. Kelly spent an hour at Arlington National Cemetery to compose himself, he said.

Hagel made some condolence calls himself, although he said he deferred to the White House where Obama made several calls. Instead, Hagel said he wrote letters to the families of fallen troops, taking time to learn a bit about each of those killed. Doing so, Hagel said, was a "sacred duty."

"I wrote those myself," Hagel said. "I wanted to know something about each of the troops."

Hagel found it especially troubling, he said, that Trump exploited Kelly, a retired four-star Marine general who lost his son, Robert, a Marine lieutenant, in 2010. The White House stated that Obama did not call Kelly. Kelly and his wife did attend a reception for families of fallen troops, and was seated with then-First Lady Michelle Obama.

“Particularly as commander-in-chief to do this to score political points,” Hagel said. “This is one issue in which all Americans should be able to come together. There should be complete unity.”

Kelly did not receive a call from Obama, he said, but indicated that he did not expect one.

"The President's Choice"

While Hagel took umbrage at Trump’s response, the father of a soldier killed in 2006 in Iraq, said he didn’t receive a call from then-President George W. Bush, nor did he expect it. Steve Castner, 71 of Cedarburg, Wis., said getting troops better equipment — armored vehicles, for instance, that may have saved his son Stephen’s life — was more important than a condolence call.

Army Spc. Stephen Castner, 27, died July 24, 2006, when a roadside bomb tore apart his Humvee in Iraq.

“Expressions of condolences in a generalized way, taking a trip to Arlington National Cemetery or a few select calls,” Castner said. “That’s all the president’s choice. You can’t expect him to drop everything and place condolence calls to everybody. That’s the bottom line as far as I’m concerned.”

What mattered far more to Castner, he said, was the response of Wisconsin’s governor and National Guard and Pentagon officials who began fielding vehicles with better armor to Guard units protecting convoys.

“It was a constructive and necessary step,” Castner said.

Eventually, because of Stephen Castner’s death and those of hundreds more troops, the Pentagon embarked on a \$45 billion program to replace every Humvee with Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) trucks.

Those vehicles became the military’s top priority under then-Defense Secretary Robert Gates who has credited them with saving the lives and limbs of thousands of troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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Advice for the next president

Hagel, former defense secretary, says international relations will need patching quickly

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Rose Lincoln/Harvard Staff Photographer

“Politics is still a noble business,” said former U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel. “I think this country is so much better than what the world is seeing.

By Christina Pazzanese, Harvard Staff Writer

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The divisive 2016 U.S. presidential election has debased and damaged the nation’s political system and has allies and adversaries alike seeing a weakened United States, a development that has prompted great international uncertainty that the next president will need to undo, says [Chuck Hagel](#), former U.S. secretary of defense.

“There’s not a leader that I’ve talked to or a senior representative of a government that is not necessarily in some state of panic, but [has] a lot of concern about where is all this going,” said Hagel, a decorated Vietnam War veteran who was defense secretary from 2013 to 2015, during a talk Tuesday evening at the Harvard Kennedy School with veteran ABC News reporter [Ann Compton](#), now a resident fall fellow at the [Institute of Politics](#).

“How is the United States going to be able to lead over the next four years,” Hagel asked, “after you’ve just come through this? Will the United States abdicate its traditional, post-World War II leadership? Is it now too much of a burden for the

United States?”

The next president will need to address these questions quickly and reclaim the nation’s undisputed global standing, he said.

“The whole campaign [has been] a lowest common denominator of doom. That’s not who Americans are. We’re a hopeful, positive nation that sees a new president, a new administration with some renewal, some hope, some new possibilities,” he said. “I’m not sure the world buys into that now.”

Hagel, a two-term Republican U.S. senator who also served as co-chair of the President’s Intelligence Advisory Board during President Barack Obama’s first term, urged the next president to immediately go to Capitol Hill and meet with legislators, visit with European and Asian leaders, and meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

“We’re seeing a new world order being defined right now” similar to the period after World War II. “The big difference is [that] the United States is not the dominant and only economic power that is leading” this reorganization.

About 100,000 Iraqi-led coalition troops entered the northern Iraqi city of Mosul this week to retake the city from ISIS, an effort Hagel thinks will be successful. But he cautioned that given the complex and “combustible” dynamics in the region with the Turkish army, Iranian Shia militia, Kurdish forces, and U.S. special advisers all converging on a small area, what happens after Mosul is liberated is the bigger question.

“How will that city be rebuilt? Who will govern? Who will be in charge? Who will protect it?” Hagel wondered in an interview with the Gazette beforehand. “Those are tough issues because they’ve got deep religious-cultural-ethnic issues and divisions to deal with, so this is just the beginning of a very complicated process.”

With Russia perhaps meddling in a U.S. election, along with its incursion into Crimea and Ukraine, its role protecting Syria’s President Bashar Assad, and its aggressive provocations toward the U.S. military in recent months, Hagel said meeting face-to-face with Putin must be among the next president’s first moves once in office.

“Engagement, it seems to me, is the only way we’re going to try to ‘de-conflict’ with Russia,” Hagel told the Gazette.

Despite Russia’s formidable nuclear capabilities, it is still inferior militarily and economically relative to the United States. “They’ve got huge problems. They’re going to continue to have huge problems. But right now, they’re causing a lot of trouble in the world. Just look at Ukraine and Europe, and what we’ve been forced to have to do there with NATO, and it won’t get better, I think, unless we reach out.”

Though accommodating Putin shouldn’t necessarily be on the table, talking through conflicts should be a priority. “I think we’re smarter and wiser to make that effort first, because the alternative is more military and more escalation, and that’s not in anyone’s interest anywhere.”

With American intelligence and military officials fingering the Russian government as the culprit behind hacked WikiLeaks emails of Hillary Clinton’s campaign and of Democratic groups, current Defense Secretary Ashton Carter has promised substantial retaliation in the coming weeks.

“Cyber is a very, very significant threat to the security of this country,” Hagel told the Gazette. “We have tremendous cyber retaliatory capability, but once you put that in motion, ... you better be very certain of what you’re doing and what you are attempting to do and why you want to do it, but, more importantly, to what end? Where do you want this to go?”

“Russia cannot eventually win these kinds of contests against the United States,” he added. “Can Russia inflict a lot of damage? Yes, absolutely.”

Hagel's tenure as secretary was rocky, marred by political forces in the White House and in Congress. He endured a bitter confirmation process in which fellow Republicans fought the nomination, culminating in Sen. Ted Cruz falsely accusing Hagel of taking \$200,000 from North Korea and being Iran's preferred nominee.

"I was an easy target to kind of use me to vilify Obama. And there's a history. I didn't support John McCain in 2008" because of his stance on the Iraq War, Hagel said.

While in office, congressional "sequester" cuts slashed billions from the Defense Department budget, and tensions between the Pentagon and the White House over strategy in Afghanistan and Syria boiled over. Negative stories about Hagel were leaked to the press, some observers believe by the White House, after his resignation.

Hagel says that he doesn't regret taking the job and that politics is simply an unavoidable reality for major positions in Washington, D.C.

"You have to understand that. Doesn't mean you like it. Doesn't mean it's fair. It's not fair, but I thought that job was important enough and worthy enough ... For me, it was a great privilege to be able to help and do things for our troops and our country and serve in a new way. I certainly didn't need another title or another job," he said. "That's why I've always, in my public roles, taken an attitude like, 'Fire me. I don't need this job.' "

Hagel said he had a good relationship with Obama and remains close friends with Vice President Joe Biden, despite his party affiliation.

"I never saw the job of secretary of defense as a partisan job," Hagel told students.

He and Obama clashed publicly over the infamous "red line" threat Obama made to Assad over the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Hagel supported and began preparing to launch missile strikes on Damascus after Assad used poison gas on Syrian civilians in 2013, killing 1,400. Obama stunned the world by rejecting a military response by the United States.

"A lot of people believe the reason the Russians are there is because President Obama did not do what he said he was going to do," Hagel said. The United States "never had a coherent policy" in Syria, he said, which led to a political vacuum filled by ISIS. It's a position he first staked out in a controversial 2014 memo to Secretary of State John Kerry and national security adviser Susan Rice, triggering a showdown within the administration.

Asked about Obama's legacy, Hagel said it's "premature" to say how the conflict in Syria will define part of his administration.

"Decisions a president makes in the public view and the optics aren't necessarily always the reasons that the president made those decisions," he said. "Often, they're made with longer-term consequences in mind and have effects the public can't always see." He added, "Until you get away from it, you don't really have a clear picture."

He declined to reveal whom he supports for president, but said he's not surprised at the dark, angry tenor of the election given the economic and national security worries felt by disillusioned U.S. voters, compounded by turbulence in the world.

"Politics is still a noble business," said Hagel, who represented Nebraska in the Senate from 1997 to 2009. "I think this country is so much better than what the world is seeing. We're going to be in for a few more difficult years, but we will turn it around and we'll be a better country for it."

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Hagel Initiatives Enable Veteran, Military Support Organizations

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone C. Marshall Jr., DoD News, Defense Media Activity / Published Jan. 16, 2015

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel has set policy emphasizing the importance of relationships with veteran and military service organizations, as well as military support nonprofits, through initiatives to give the groups access to service members and their families.

The defense secretary signed two policy memorandums in December directing Defense Department leaders to implement standardized procedures to allow veteran, military and military-support nonprofit organizations better access to provide support to troops and military families.

Critical Importance

“National VSOs and MSOs,” Hagel said in one memo, “are a critical component of our overall framework of care for our service members throughout all phases of their military service, but especially their transition to civilian life and veteran status.”

Nonprofit non-federal entities, he said, can be of critical importance to service members throughout their careers, and within the bounds of law and regulation, it’s in the department’s interest to maintain strong and positive relationships with them.

“These memos serve to re-emphasize those privileges granted under the law or flexibilities authorized under current DoD policy,” Hagel said. These initiatives direct immediate implementation of additional measures to facilitate consistent delivery across DoD, he said.

The directives, Hagel said, also provide clarity to installation commanders on adjudicating requests for space or services.

Points Emphasized

In a letter sent to retired Army Gen. Gordon R. Sullivan, president of the Association of the United States Army, and other nonprofit organizations, the defense secretary laid out six aspects of the initiatives which are designed to remove “unnecessary barriers and inconsistencies” in dealing with these organizations.

-- Installation commanders will provide available space and associated services on military installations allowing national VSOs and MSOs to provide VA-accredited representation services to transitioning service members.

-- All requests and decisions on installation access, use of space or logistical support will be made in writing.

-- Installation commanders are directed to be welcoming and supportive of nonprofit organizations that enhance morale and readiness of the force, and are consistent with mission requirements and security constraints.

-- Training and education will be provided in regular pre-command, judge advocate and public affairs officer training courses to educate personnel on the authorities and flexibilities associated with procedures and support to both accredited VSOs

and MSOs, and military support nonprofit organizations.

-- DOD will use consistent and standard procedures to process requests for installation access with new tools and templates provided to aid in consistent and fair assessment and adjudication of requests for access and space.

-- Commanders are authorized to use official command communication channels, including Transition Assistance Program materials, to inform service troops of the availability of services and support on the installation provided by VSOs, MSOs and military-supporting nonprofits.

Maintain Relationships

Hagel expressed pride in what he termed a major accomplishment, and explained the importance of the directives.

“These directives underscore my belief that events and support provided by VSOs, MSOs and military-support nonprofits can be critically important to the welfare of our service members and families,” he said.

The department must maintain positive relationships with those organizations, Hagel said,

to facilitate their delivery of services to military personnel who need them.

(Follow Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone Marshall on Twitter: @MarshallDoDNews)

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The Real Reason Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel Got Booted

By Michael T. Klare

NOVEMBER 26, 2014

Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel's surprise resignation has largely been ascribed to his lack of assertiveness on key issues and a frosty relationship with President Obama, but it must be seen against a backdrop of growing war fever in Washington. Although Obama has been noticeably reluctant to become militarily involved in Iraq, Syria and Ukraine, he is coming under increasing pressure from both Democrats and Republicans to employ tougher measures in all three. Hagel is believed to have supported such moves in private conversation with the president, but he has not done so in public. By replacing him now, Obama appears to be signaling his intention to adopt a more activist military posture through the appointment of a more vigorous secretary.

Hagel, a former enlisted soldier who served in Vietnam, is well liked by combat troops but was never fully welcomed by Obama's inner circle. Moreover, he had faced strong opposition from Senate Republicans during his confirmation hearing—in part for remarks alleged to be anti-Semitic or insufficiently supportive of Israel—and so entered the administration with diminished political clout. As secretary, he has largely embraced White House policy on Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan, but without conspicuous ardor.

Until last spring, Hagel's principal task was to oversee the drawdown of American forces in Iraq and Afghanistan in accordance with the president's stated desire to avoid entanglement in future regional conflicts—a policy Obama described as “don't do stupid stuff.” After Russia seized Crimea and ISIS seized Mosul, however, the president's non-interventionist stance came under fierce attack from Republicans as well as some Democrats, including Hillary Clinton. In an August interview published in *The Atlantic*, Clinton lambasted Obama, saying, “Great nations need organizing principles, and ‘Don't do stupid stuff’ is not an organizing principle.”

In fact, “don't do stupid stuff” is a perfectly valid organizing principle, placing the onus of persuasion on those who advocate aggressive overseas actions (see Klare, “Why Hillary Clinton Is Wrong About Obama's Foreign Policy”). But it is not a particularly compelling argument for winning public support in what appears to be an especially threatening moment—and one in which irresponsible Republican war-mongering fills the airwaves. The fact that the current chaos in Iraq is largely a product of the misguided invasion undertaken by President Bush in 2003 doesn't seem to register in this hothouse atmosphere.

With public concern over ISIS and its brutal tactics (including the beheading of two Americans) on the rise, and with few in Washington willing to back his stance, Obama has upped the ante in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan. In September, he announced the onset of an extended air campaign against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, along with the deployment of 1,500 US military advisers to help rebuild the shattered Iraqi army; on November 7, three days after the midterm election, he announced the deployment of an additional 1,500 advisers. On November 21, moreover, *The New York Times* revealed that Obama had approved an extended combat mission for US forces in Afghanistan. And while the president has repeatedly stated

that he has no intention to deploy US combat forces in Iraq—no “boots on the ground,” as it is put—senior military officials, including chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey, have indicated that planning is under way for just such a move. “I’m not predicting at this point that I would recommend that [Iraqi troops] would need to be accompanied by US forces, but we’re certainly considering it,” he told the House Armed Services Committee on November 13.

Whatever Obama’s hesitations, it is becoming increasingly evident that he sees no recourse but to order ever more aggressive action in Iraq and Syria—not only against ISIS, but also against the Assad regime. The Republicans in Congress, soon to assume control of the Senate, are already beating the war drums, calling for increasingly vigorous moves. At an appearance at the Halifax International Security Forum on November 22, Senator John McCain—soon expected to assume the chairmanship of the Armed Services Committee—called for a larger military presence in Iraq, more support for anti-Assad forces in Syria, a semi-permanent US military presence in Afghanistan and expedited arms deliveries to the Ukrainian military.

By all accounts, Hagel supports stronger action. But his retiring demeanor and recent association with the Iraq and Afghanistan troop drawdowns make him an unlikely leader of the newly galvanized military establishment. Evidently, Obama has chosen to put a more vigorous, authoritative figure at the Pentagon’s helm. Among those widely discussed as a successor to Hagel is a senior Democratic policymaker with a hawkish reputation: former Deputy Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter. The selection of someone like Carter would provide Obama with a fresh, reliable partner in managing the reassertion of American military power. (Another hawk, former Under Secretary of Defense Michèle Flournoy, was widely considered a top candidate until she took her name out of the running.)

For six exhausting years, President Obama has sought to reduce Washington’s reliance on military action to secure its major objectives abroad. As recently as last May, he famously told graduating cadets at West Point, “Just because we have the best hammer does not mean that every problem is a nail.” But now, with the resignation of Hagel and the escalating US role in Iraq and Syria, it seems that he has chosen to lift the hammer.

Michael T. Klare TWITTER Michael T. Klare is a professor of peace and world-security studies at Hampshire College and the defense correspondent of The Nation.