

CIA's Hidden Hand in 'Democracy' Groups

Special Report: Documents from the Reagan presidential library reveal that two major institutions promoting “democracy” and “freedom” – Freedom House and National Endowment for Democracy – worked hand-in-glove, behind-the-scenes, with a CIA propaganda expert in the 1980s, reports Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Freedom House and the National Endowment for Democracy stress their commitment to freedom of thought and democracy, but both cooperated with a CIA-organized propaganda operation in the 1980s, according to documents released by Ronald Reagan's presidential library.

One document showed senior Freedom House official Leo Cherne clearing a draft manuscript on political conditions in El Salvador with CIA Director William Casey and promising that Freedom House would make requested editorial “corrections and changes” and even send over the editor for consultation with whomever Casey assigned to review the paper.

In a “Dear Bill” letter dated June 24, 1981, Cherne wrote: “I am enclosing a copy of the draft manuscript by Bruce McColm, Freedom House's resident specialist on Central America and the Caribbean. This manuscript on El Salvador was the one I had urged be prepared and in the haste to do so as rapidly as possible, it is quite rough. You had mentioned that the facts could be checked for meticulous accuracy within the government and this would be very helpful.

“If there are any questions about the McColm manuscript, I suggest that whomever is working on it contact Richard Salzman at the Research Institute [an organization where Cherne was executive director]. He is Editor-in-Chief at the Institute and the Chairman of the Freedom House's Salvador Committee. He will make sure that the corrections and changes get to Rita Freedman who will also be working with him. If there is any benefit to be gained from Salzman's coming down at any point to talk to that person, he is available to do so.”

Cherne, who was chairman of Freedom House's executive committee, also joined in angling for financial support from a propaganda program that Casey initiated in 1982 under one of the CIA's top covert action specialists, Walter Raymond Jr., who was moved to President Ronald Reagan's National Security Council staff.

In an Aug. 9, 1982 letter to Raymond, Freedom House executive director Leonard R. Sussman wrote that “Leo Cherne has asked me to send these copies of Freedom Appeals. He has probably told you we have had to cut back this project to meet financial realities. We would, of course, want to expand the project once again

when, as and if the funds become available. Offshoots of that project appear in newspapers, magazines, books and on broadcast services here and abroad. It's a significant, unique channel of communication" precisely the focus of Raymond's work.

According to the documents, Freedom House remained near the top of Casey's thinking when it came to the most effective way to deliver his hardline policy message to the American people in ways they would be inclined to accept, i.e., coming from ostensibly independent sources with no apparent ties to the government.

On Nov. 4, 1982, Raymond wrote to NSC Advisor William Clark about the "Democracy Initiative and Information Programs," stating that "Bill Casey asked me to pass on the following thought concerning your meeting with [right-wing billionaire] Dick Scaife, Dave Abshire [then a member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board], and Co.

"Casey had lunch with them today and discussed the need to get moving in the general area of supporting our friends around the world. By this definition he is including both 'building democracy' and helping invigorate international media programs. The DCI [Casey] is also concerned about strengthening public information organizations in the United States such as Freedom House.

"A critical piece of the puzzle is a serious effort to raise private funds to generate momentum. Casey's talk with Scaife and Co. suggests they would be very willing to cooperate. Suggest that you note White House interest in private support for the Democracy initiative."

The importance of the CIA and White House secretly arranging private funds was that these supposedly independent voices would then reinforce and validate the administration's foreign policy arguments with a public that would assume the endorsements were based on the merits of the White House positions, not influenced by money changing hands.

In effect, like snake-oil salesmen who plant a few cohorts in the audience to whip up excitement for the cure-all elixir, Reagan administration propagandists salted some well-paid "private" individuals around Washington to echo White House propaganda "themes."

In a Jan. 25, 1983 memo, Raymond wrote, "We will move out immediately in our parallel effort to generate private support" for "public diplomacy" operations. Then, on May 20, 1983, Raymond recounted in another memo that \$400,000 had been raised from private donors brought to the White House Situation Room by U.S. Information Agency Director Charles Wick. According to that memo, the money was

divided among several organizations, including Freedom House and Accuracy in Media, a right-wing media attack organization.

When I wrote about that memo in my 1992 book, *Fooling America*, Freedom House denied receiving any White House money or collaborating with any CIA/NSC propaganda campaign. In a letter, Freedom House's Sussman called Raymond "a second-hand source" and insisted that "this organization did not need any special funding to take positions on any foreign-policy issues."

But it made little sense that Raymond would have lied to a superior in an internal memo. And clearly, Freedom House remained central to the Reagan administration's schemes for aiding groups supportive of its Central American policies, particularly the CIA-organized Contra war against the leftist Sandinista regime in Nicaragua.

In an Aug. 9, 1983 memo, Raymond outlined plans to arrange private backing for that effort. He said USIA Director Wick "via [Australian publishing magnate Rupert] Murdoch [sic], may be able to draw down added funds" to support pro-Reagan initiatives. Raymond recommended "funding via Freedom House or some other structure that has credibility in the political center." [For more details, see Consortiumnews.com's "[Murdoch, Scaife and CIA Propaganda.](#)"]

Questions of Legality

Raymond remained a CIA officer until April 1983 when he resigned so in his words "there would be no question whatsoever of any contamination of this" propaganda operation to woo the American people into supporting Reagan's policies.

But Raymond, who had been one of the CIA's top propaganda and disinformation specialists, continued to act toward the U.S. public much like a CIA officer would in directing a propaganda operation in a hostile foreign country.

Raymond fretted, too, about the legality of Casey's role in the effort to influence U.S. public opinion because of the legal prohibition against the CIA influencing U.S. policies and politics. Raymond confided in one memo that it was important "to get [Casey] out of the loop," but Casey never backed off and Raymond continued to send progress reports to his old boss well into 1986.

It was "the kind of thing which [Casey] had a broad catholic interest in," Raymond said during his Iran-Contra deposition in 1987. He then offered the excuse that Casey undertook this apparently illegal interference in domestic affairs "not so much in his CIA hat, but in his adviser to the president hat."

As the Casey-Raymond propaganda operation expanded during the last half of Reagan's first term, Freedom House continued to keep Raymond abreast of its work

on Central America, with its attitudes dovetailing with Reagan administration's policies particularly in condemning Nicaragua's Sandinista government.

Freedom House also kept its hand out for funding. On Sept. 15, 1984, Bruce McColm writing from Freedom House's Center for Caribbean and Central American Studies sent Raymond "a short proposal for the Center's Nicaragua project 1984-85. The project combines elements of the oral history proposal with the publication of The Nicaraguan Papers," a book that would disparage Sandinista ideology and practices.

"Maintaining the oral history part of the project adds to the overall costs; but preliminary discussions with film makers have given me the idea that an Improper Conduct-type of documentary could be made based on these materials," McColm wrote, referring to a 1984 film that offered a scathing critique of Fidel Castro's Cuba.

"Such a film would have to be the work of a respected Latin American filmmaker or a European. American-made films on Central America are simply too abrasive ideologically and artistically poor."

McColm's three-page letter reads much like a book or movie pitch, trying to interest Raymond in financing the project: "The Nicaraguan Papers will also be readily accessible to the general reader, the journalist, opinion-maker, the academic and the like. The book would be distributed fairly broadly to these sectors and I am sure will be extremely useful.

"They already constitute a form of Freedom House samizdat, since I've been distributing them to journalists for the past two years as I've received them from disaffected Nicaraguans."

McColm proposed a face-to-face meeting with Raymond in Washington and attached a six-page grant proposal seeking \$134,100.

According to the grant proposal, the project would include "free distribution to members of Congress and key public officials; distribution of galleys in advance of publication for maximum publicity and timely reviews in newspapers and current affairs magazines; press conferences at Freedom House in New York and at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.; op-ed circulation to more than 100 newspapers ; distribution of a Spanish-language edition through Hispanic organizations in the United States and in Latin America; arrangement of European distribution through Freedom House contacts."

The documents that I found at the Reagan library do not indicate what subsequently happened to this proposal. McColm did not respond to an email request for comment about the Nicaraguan Papers plan or Cherne's earlier letter

to Casey about editing McComb's manuscript. Raymond died in 2003; Cherne died in 1999; and Casey died in 1987.

But it is clear that Freedom House became a major recipient of funds from the National Endowment for Democracy, which Casey and Raymond helped create in 1983.

Financing Propaganda

In 1983, Casey and Raymond focused on creating a funding mechanism to support Freedom House and other outside groups that would engage in propaganda and political action that the CIA had historically organized and paid for covertly. The idea emerged for a congressionally funded entity that would serve as a conduit for this money.

But Casey recognized the need to hide the strings being pulled by the CIA. "Obviously we here [at CIA] should not get out front in the development of such an organization, nor should we appear to be a sponsor or advocate," Casey said in one undated letter to then-White House counselor Edwin Meese III as Casey urged creation of a "National Endowment."

A document in Raymond's files offered examples of what would be funded, including "Grenada – 50 K – To the only organized opposition to the Marxist government of Maurice Bishop (The Seaman and Waterfront Workers Union). A supplemental 50 K to support free TV activity outside Grenada" and "Nicaragua – \$750 K to support an array of independent trade union activity, agricultural cooperatives."

The National Endowment for Democracy took shape in late 1983 as Congress decided to also set aside pots of money – within NED – for the Republican and Democratic parties and for organized labor, creating enough bipartisan largesse that passage was assured.

But some in Congress thought it was important to wall the NED off from any association with the CIA, so a provision was included to bar the participation of any current or former CIA official, according to one congressional aide who helped write the legislation.

This aide told me that one night late in the 1983 session, as the bill was about to go to the House floor, the CIA's congressional liaison came pounding at the door to the office of Rep. Dante Fascell, a senior Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee and a chief sponsor of the bill.

The frantic CIA official conveyed a single message from CIA Director Casey: the language barring the participation of CIA personnel must be struck from the bill, the aide recalled, noting that Fascell consented to the demand, not fully

recognizing its significance.

What the documents at the Reagan library now make clear is that lifting the ban enabled Raymond and Casey to stay active shaping the decisions of the new funding mechanism.

The aide said Fascell also consented to the Reagan administration's choice of Carl Gershman to head the National Endowment for Democracy, again not recognizing how this decision would affect the future of the new entity and American foreign policy.

Gershman, who had followed the classic neoconservative path from youthful socialism to fierce anticommunism, became NED's first (and, to this day, only) president. Though NED is technically independent of U.S. foreign policy, Gershman in the early years coordinated decisions on grants with Raymond at the NSC.

For instance, on Jan. 2, 1985, Raymond wrote to two NSC Asian experts that "Carl Gershman has called concerning a possible grant to the Chinese Alliance for Democracy (CAD). I am concerned about the political dimension to this request. We should not find ourselves in a position where we have to respond to pressure, but this request poses a real problem to Carl.

"Senator [Orrin] Hatch, as you know, is a member of the board. Secondly, NED has already given a major grant for a related Chinese program."

Besides clearing aside political obstacles for Gershman, Raymond also urged NED to give money to Freedom House in a June 21, 1985 letter obtained by Professor John Nichols of Pennsylvania State University.

A Tag Team

From the start, NED became a major benefactor for Freedom House, beginning with a \$200,000 grant in 1984 to build "a network of democratic opinion-makers." In NED's first four years, from 1984 and 1988, it lavished \$2.6 million on Freedom House, accounting for more than one-third of its total income, according to a study by the liberal Council on Hemispheric Affairs that was entitled "Freedom House: Portrait of a Pass-Through."

Over the ensuing three decades, Freedom House has become almost an NED subsidiary, often joining NED in holding policy conferences and issuing position papers, both organizations pushing primarily a neoconservative agenda, challenging countries deemed insufficiently "free," including Syria, Ukraine (in 2014) and Russia.

Indeed, NED and Freedom House often work as a kind of tag-team with NED financing “non-governmental organizations” inside targeted countries and Freedom House berating those governments if they crack down on U.S.-funded NGOs.

For instance, on Nov. 16, 2012, NED and Freedom House joined together to denounce legislation passed by the Russian parliament that required recipients of foreign political money to register with the government.

Or, as NED and Freedom House framed the issue: the Russian Duma sought to “restrict human rights and the activities of civil society organizations and their ability to receive support from abroad. Changes to Russia’s NGO legislation will soon require civil society organizations receiving foreign funds to choose between registering as ‘foreign agents’ or facing significant financial penalties and potential criminal charges.”

Of course, the United States has a nearly identical Foreign Agent Registration Act that likewise requires entities that receive foreign funding and seek to influence U.S. government policy to register with the Justice Department or face possible fines or imprisonment.

But the Russian law would impede NED’s efforts to destabilize the Russian government through funding of political activists, journalists and civic organizations, so it was denounced as an infringement of human rights and helped justify Freedom House’s rating of Russia as “not free.”

The Russian government’s concerns were not entirely paranoid. On Sept. 26, 2013, Gershman, in effect, charted the course for the crisis in Ukraine and the greater neocon goal of regime change in Russia. In a Washington Post op-ed, Gershman called Ukraine “the biggest prize” and explained how pulling it into the Western camp could contribute to the ultimate defeat of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

“Ukraine’s choice to join Europe will accelerate the demise of the ideology of Russian imperialism that Putin represents,” Gershman wrote. “Russians, too, face a choice, and Putin may find himself on the losing end not just in the near abroad but within Russia itself.”

With NED’s budget now exceeding \$100 million a year – and with many NGOs headquartered in Washington – Gershman has attained the status of a major paymaster for the neocon movement with his words carrying extra clout because he can fund or de-fund many a project.

Thus, three decades after CIA Director William Casey and his propaganda specialist Walter Raymond Jr. struggled to arrange funding for Freedom House and other organizations that would promote an interventionist agenda, their

brainchild the National Endowment for Democracy was still around picking up those tabs.

[For more details, see Consortiumnews.com's "[The Victory of Perception Management](#)" and "[Murdoch, Scaife and CIA Propaganda](#)" or Robert Parry's [Lost History](#).]

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). You also can order Robert Parry's trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America's Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).

Resisting a Navy Base on China's Periphery

The idyllic island of Jeju off the southern tip of South Korea is the unlikely front line in a possible future military confrontation with China – as a major new naval base is constructed there despite determined opposition from peace activists who were joined by former U.S. intelligence analyst Elizabeth Murray.

By Elizabeth Murray

If someone had told me earlier in 2014 that I would be rising daily at 6 a.m. and by 7 a.m. performing a series of deep meditative bows before a massive naval base being built on the island of Jeju, just off the southern tip of South Korea I would have shaken my head in disbelief. Who, me? A non-morning person who knows next to nothing about South Asia? Sorry, wrong number!

But, for ten days in November 2014, there I stood, in the early morning, in front of the naval base bowing, kneeling, touching my forehead to the ground, and then rising up again, 100 times in a row, in unison with Korean nuns, priests, local activists, and my fellow members of the "Jeju 10" our group of ten "peace and justice" folk invited by Father Bill Bichsel, known as Bix, of the Tacoma Catholic worker to take part in a witness and solidarity mission to Jeju island.

It was Bix's second trip to Jeju in solidarity with resistance against the base; both Bix and Brother Gilberto

Perez of the Bainbridge Island Buddhist monastery had come to Gangjeong in 2013. Having been deeply moved by the Jesuit and Catholic community's strong support for the resistance movement, they decided to bring along an entire delegation this time!

Of course the village welcomed Bix like a dearly beloved grandfather; their affection was evident in the way they carefully tucked blankets around him on chilly, windy days as he sat in his wheelchair, holding up signs that read "No Naval Base on Jeju!" Later, that same genuine warmth and affection would be showered on us all.

We performed our daily deep bows in synch with 100 contemplative meditations broadcast in Korean over a loud-speaker set up in a tree across the road. Among the prayerful thoughts that we knelt and bowed to:

"Holding in my heart the knowledge that truth gives freedom to life," I make my first bow.

"Believing that the first step toward solving any problem is self-reflection," I make my second bow.

"Looking back upon my foolishness of living without understanding the root meaning of life," I make my third bow.

And so on, till the hundredth verse. It is a reverent ritual, the embodiment of prayer in action. At times I seemed to be in an altered state; such was the feeling of the physical act of bowing down to the ground in a deeply spiritual and intellectual enmeshing of love and resistance against the military-industrial machine.

Martin Luther King Jr. wrote that "Nonviolent resistance is a courageous confrontation of evil by the power of love," and that phrase embodied my state of consciousness.

Performing these deep bows can be physically taxing yet each time there was an ache or stress in my leg muscles, I thought about the pain and frustration of my Gangjeong village hosts who have been fighting this base for seven long years.

My little discomforts seemed trite and insignificant by comparison and they were something I resolved to bear cheerfully for the privilege of being a witness and a co-activist among these courageous resisters, who have seen their beautiful tangerine groves, pristine ocean life, and sacred sites such as Gureombi Rock sacrificed to corporate greed (Samsung has the primary corporate contact for the base construction) and the evil designs of Empire.

Perhaps more tragic than the loss of their farmland and environmental treasures has been the destruction of the village's social fabric. Activists explained that the South Korean Navy, having been firmly rebuffed by two other villages approached as potential sites of the naval base, resorted to stealth, bribery and deception to obtain the consent of a key group of Gangjeong villagers for the construction of the naval base.

As a result, many families have been torn apart over the issue; there are parents and children who no longer speak to each other; longtime friends who turn the other way when they pass each other on the streets. The issue of the naval base has also divided the village haenyo, the women divers who set out in boats each day to collect the day's catch of seafood (Jeju island has a matriarchal society, embodied by these strong, mostly middle-aged women who are the breadwinners of their families) and who once were a tightly-knit social group.

We're told that some of the villagers who accepted bribes from the South Korean Navy of as much as \$100,000 and who initially favored the construction of the naval base have come to regret their stance now that they witnessed the environmental degradation as well as the destruction of shrines and farmland over the years.

However, they have been warned that if they speak out publicly against the base, they will be forced to pay back all the money they received a nearly impossible feat for most, who live by simple work such as fishing and farming, and who could never hope to amass such a sum. In other words, people have been silenced through intimidation.

Despite staunch resistance over the past seven years to block construction, the base is roughly 70 to 80 percent complete. Activists are facing the unpleasant reality that the base is likely to be a *fait accompli* and have begun to discuss how the resistance will continue in the future.

Catholic Father Moon Cheong-Hyun a gentle, kindly, bearded priest in his middle 70's who was badly injured in 2012 while protesting when a policeman pushed him off the side of the pier is overseeing the construction of a Peace Center that will become the focus of nonviolent resistance activities after the base is completed.

Already the activists have modified their tactics to be far less confrontational than they were at the beginning of the naval base construction; while thousands participated in vigorous protests when construction began several years ago, those numbers have dropped off, and the relatively small core of remaining resisters, after having endured multiple imprisonments after confrontations with

authorities, have concluded that they can be more effective outside of prison than inside a jail cell.

Strategic Location

Jeju's strategic location a mere 300 miles from mainland China suggests that the new naval base will become a key component of the missile defense system that the United States is building up in the Asia-Pacific region as part of its "pivot toward Asia."

While the South Korean government denies that the naval base at Jeju is part of U.S. strategic policy that confronts China, it is a well-known fact that, under the terms of its Status of Forces agreement, Washington can deploy its military forces at any South Korean military facility which will shortly include Jeju naval base and it is only a matter of time before U.S. naval personnel will become a fixture at the base.

The deepwater port currently under construction at Gangjeong village is being designed to accommodate multiple nuclear-armed Trident sub-marines, the Aegis destroyer combat system, naval carriers, and other massive warships.

The militarization of Jeju will greatly increase the likelihood that the tiny, jewel-like island with crystal clear waters home to several UNESCO World Heritage Sites and a popular destination for nature-lovers and honeymooners will become a pawn in any future conflict between the United States and China.

This stark reality flies in the face of the South Korean government's claim that the base is necessary for the South Korean people's "national security." Indeed, by ratcheting up regional tensions, the base's existence will make the lives of people of Jeju Island and the South Korean mainland far less secure, and much more vulnerable to military conflict.

The population of Jeju Island is especially sensitive to the prospect of a U.S. presence on the island; between 1948 and 1949, at least 40,000 Jeju residents were massacred by South Korean forces that came under the control of the U.S. Army Military Government in Korea.

This little-known atrocity is memorialized in a dramatically beautiful, poignant Peace Park, which our delegation visited. We learned that any mention of the post-World War II massacre was forbidden in South Korea until 2006, when former President Ro Moo-Hyun issued a formal apology to the people of Jeju and declared it an "Island of Peace."

In a supreme irony, the following year the government announced that Gangjeong village had been selected as the site of a future naval base. Many South Koreans

still remain unaware of the 1948 massacre; a young South Korean woman who accompanied us to the Peace Park expressed shame and anger that she had never heard about the massacre before, and that it was not being taught in the schools.

Just as with the 1948 massacre, the truth about the Jeju naval base and its negative social, environmental, and political impacts on the island is still very hard to come by. The mainstream media in South Korea and billboards on Jeju Island tout the base's construction as an "eco-friendly" installation that will host cruise ships and attract tourists.

Little is mentioned about the military tensions this base is bound to provoke in the region, or the impact that 3,000 new naval base personnel will have on life in Gangjeong village, whose population numbers only 2,000. Efforts to construct new housing for navy personnel has been temporarily halted due to a 24-hour protest vigil in front of the site, amid strong local opposition.

Forward-thinking anti-base activists in Jeju have made common cause with fellow activists in Okinawa and Taiwan, as well as with the international community at large. They have learned about problems with drugs, prostitution, rape, and other ills that accompany the presence of U.S. naval installations in Okinawa and Taiwan, as well as on the South Korean mainland. They worry about the fate of their traditional community with the impending arrival of foreign military personnel at some point in the future.

Accompanying these threats to the villagers' quality of life are the threats to marine life, including coral reefs, the Indo-Pacific bottle nose dolphin (now less than 114) and local fish. Pollution from the base construction has already destroyed much of the fish habitat in the immediate vicinity of the base, forcing the haenyo the women sea-divers who bring in the daily catch to the village to take their boats much farther out to sea in order to catch fish.

Harm to Jeju

Several prominent personalities from around the world and from mainland South Korea have drawn attention to the great harm that the naval base will bring to Jeju. Among these figures is the South Korean film critic Yang Yoon-mo, who permanently relocated to Jeju from the South Korean mainland to in order to draw attention the naval base construction and engage in acts of resistance against the naval base.

Father Bix visited Yang last year during Yang's hunger strike while in he was in prison for opposing the naval

base. Yang, who has since been released, spoke to our delegation about his

continued dedication to the resistance and discussed the reasons for his hunger strike (read more at www.savejejunow.org).

Following our morning action of 100 bows, we would breakfast together with the local activists, sharing stories and learning about each other. Later on, we would rejoin them in front of the naval base for the daily outdoor Mass and Rosary, during which we blocked the entrance to the gate for 15-minute intervals; police would then remove us by lifting up our chairs and carrying us to the side in order to let construction trucks pass.

As soon as they moved all of us and departed, we would re-position ourselves in the middle of the road. This sequence repeated itself until the Mass and the Rosary were completed, then the solemnity was broken up with joyful street dancing as we continued to prevent trucks from entering the base. The dancing is an integral part of the protest, to banish the inevitable frustration and anger that has manifested itself amid the materialization of the naval base.

The lively movements demonstrate the sheer joy that comes with resisting evil and standing up for life, love, and community even in the face of the overwhelming might of Empire.

The strong role of the Catholic Church in the resistance movement is embodied in the person of Bishop Peter Kang, who leads the Jeju diocese; a dedicated number of nuns and priests in the diocese is assigned full-time to the resistance activities. Their participation in the morning bows and the daily outdoor Mass provides a strong spiritual base to the resistance.

One afternoon our delegation traveled to Jeju City to have an audience with Bishop Kang. His fervent and unswerving dedication reminded me of the courageous Liberation Theology movement that swept throughout Latin America in the 1980's, in which Catholic clergy joined together with the poor, oppressed and disenfranchised to stand up for their rights in a resolute but nonviolent manner.

Our motley crew of local and international activists was frequently a focus of attention to passerby. Passengers on tour buses craned their necks to see what the commotion was about. People frequently focused on me because of my dolphin costume (which I wore in order to draw attention to the endangered Indo-Pacific bottle nose dolphin), and they snapped photo as if we were tourist attractions or some unusual novelty.

At one point, a small boy of about three years old stopped by with his family and insisted on taking part in our communal street dancing to him this was clearly a party! Then, after pointing in my direction and asking his parents for

approval, he rushed up to me for a big hug clearly mistaking me for a Walt Disney character!

It's clear that the daily manifestation of peaceful resistance to the naval base has had a positive effect on the attitudes of many of the police and security forces assigned to monitor our actions. I was told this is why the authorities rotate the young policemen and policewomen who are brought in from the South Korean mainland on a regular basis; they fear they might "go native" and begin to sympathize with the nonviolent resisters.

Even so, their witnessing of our daily bows, prayers, singing and joyful dancing, as well as the unity and solidarity between the local resisters and the international groups that regularly visit Gangjeong, cannot but be an inspiration, and many of us noticed this clearly in their facial expressions and body language.

On the morning of our last day in Gangjeong, as I prepared my kneeling mat in front of the naval base for the prayer of 100 bows, a tight-lipped security guard who had silently observed our actions over the previous week, suddenly bowed and in perfect English greeted me with "Good morning."

Caught off-guard, and not quite believing what I'd just heard, I responded with "Annyeong hasayeo," the standard Korean greeting. He made direct eye contact, smiled, bowed again, and repeated in crisp English, "good morning."

I have found great inspiration among the people of Gangjeong village and their resistance to the naval base, and have learned a great deal about the importance of peace, love, and solidarity in effective collective action. I remain optimistic that their nonviolent yet resolute ways will plant seeds for transformation that will bear fruit in the future.

May their steadfastness be an example to all of us who aspire to peaceful change, and may they continue to find support from all corners of the earth as they continue their quest for justice.

Elizabeth Murray served as Deputy National Intelligence Officer for the Near East in the National Intelligence Council before retiring after a 27-year career in the U.S. government. She is a member of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPs) and has been involved with Ground Zero since 2012. [This article originally appeared in the Ground Zero newsletter.]

The Challenge of Ending Wars

Official Washington's "tough-guy-ism" the one-upping macho rhetoric about how to respond to foreign crises makes it hard for leaders to avoid wars and perhaps even harder to end wars, a dilemma addressed by ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

Americans are not very good at ending their involvement in wars. No, that's not a pacifist statement about a need to stop fighting wars in general. It is instead an observation about how the United States, once it gets involved, for good or for ill, in any one war, has difficulty determining when and how to call it a day and go home.

A major reason for this difficulty is that Americans are not Clausewitzians at heart. They tend not to see warfare as a continuation of policy by other means, but instead to think of war and peace as two very different conditions with clear dividing lines between them.

Americans thus are fine with wars that have as clear an ending as the surrenders of the Axis powers in World War II, which continues to be for many Americans the prototype of how a war should be begun, conceived, and concluded. But America's wars since then have not offered conclusions this satisfying.

The one that came closest to doing so was Operation Desert Storm in 1991, which swiftly and decisively achieved its declared objective of reversing the Iraqi swallowing of Kuwait. Even that victory, however, left an unsatisfying aftertaste in some (mostly neocon) mouths, because Saddam Hussein remained in power in Baghdad.

It thus is difficult for U.S. leaders, even if they are capable of thinking in disciplined Clausewitzian terms, to explain and to justify to the American public, and to the political class that makes appeals to that public, the wrapping up of an overseas military involvement without a clear-cut, World War II-style victory. This is a problem no matter how well-founded and justified was the original decision to enter a war.

Other dynamics are commonly involved in such situations, including the one usually called mission creep, the tendency in an overseas military expedition for one thing to lead to another and for one's military forces gradually to take on jobs beyond the one that was the original reason for sending them overseas. Any nation can get sucked into mission creep, but Americans are especially vulnerable to it.

The yearning for clear-cut and victorious conclusions to foreign military adventures is one reason. Others are the American tendencies to see any problem overseas as a problem for the superpower to deal with, and to expect that if the United States puts its minds and resources to the task it can solve any problem overseas.

Some insights about this subject can be gleaned from comparing two big recent U.S. military expeditions: the one in Iraq from 2003 to 2011 and the one in Afghanistan that began in 2001 and continues today. There is no comparison between the two regarding the original reasons for initiating them, and in that sense it is unfortunate how much the two came to be lumped together in subsequent discussion.

One was a war of aggression with a contrived and trumped-up rationale; the other was a direct and justified response to a lethal attack on the United States. Iraq really was the bad war and Afghanistan the good one. But as time and costs dragged on and Afghanistan became America's longest war ever, it gradually lost support among Americans and Afghans alike.

The failure in Afghanistan was in not finding, and taking, a suitable off-ramp. The off-ramp that should have been taken was reached within the first few months of the U.S. intervention, after the perpetrators of the 9/11 attack that was the reason for the intervention had been roused from their home and their sometime allies, the Afghan Taliban, had been ousted from power.

Regardless of what would have happened in Afghanistan after that, there would not have been a return to the pre-September 2001 situation there, both because the Taliban would have no reason to ally again with a bunch of Arab transnational terrorists who had brought about such a result, and because the United States' own rules of engagement changed so much that no such return would be allowed to occur whether or not U.S. troops were on the ground.

No good off-ramp was found with the Iraq War, and there never was going to be a really good one, given how ill-conceived the war was in the first place and how little thought the makers of the war had given to the post-invasion consequences.

The U.S. administration that perpetrated the war did a political finesse of the problem, using a surge of force to reduce the violence in the civil war enough to be able to say that they did not leave Iraq falling apart, and then setting with the Iraqi government a schedule for U.S. withdrawal that would have to be implemented by the next administration.

That set the stage, of course, for promoting the myth that the war had been

“won” by the time power was handed over in the United States and for blaming the subsequent administration, when it duly implemented the withdrawal schedule it had been given, for all the later indications that the war clearly had not been “won.”

It also set the stage, now that the United States has troops back in Iraq, for talk about the need for a “long-term American presence” to avoid repeating the supposed mistake of cutting and running. How long is “long-term” does not get specified. In other words, no off-ramp is identified. In other words, it’s again the familiar problem of not knowing how and when to wind up involvement in a foreign war.

The error committed in Afghanistan, of missing the ramp and turning what had been a justified response to an attack on the U.S. homeland into an endless attempt at nation-building in a country thousands of miles away, risks being repeated in Iraq.

The problem of ISIS, the reason for the latest intervention in Iraq, will go away, but not in a sufficiently clear-cut manner to satisfy the American yearning for victory and for drawing bright lines to mark the division between war and peace. There won’t be a surrender ceremony on the deck of a tugboat, let alone a battleship.

The Obama administration needs to articulate as clearly and specifically as possible what the off-ramp will look like, a formulation such as “ultimately destroy” ISIS doesn’t cut it. Public opinion needs to be prepared for a departure from Iraq that makes sense in terms of the specific U.S. interests served while being much less satisfying than securing someone’s unconditional surrender or complete and unambiguous destruction. If departure is not to come from anything but impatience and exhaustion, the only other alternative is an endless U.S. military presence.

And an endless presence is no solution at all. It certainly is not from the standpoint of wise use of U.S. resources. Nor would it be from the standpoint of solving Iraq’s problems, given how any such solution depends on political accommodation of differences among Iraqis themselves, and given the resentments that arise from the inevitable damaging effects of the use of U.S. military force, another lesson from the war in Afghanistan.

Paul R. Pillar, in his 28 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to be one of the agency’s top analysts. He is now a visiting professor at Georgetown University for security studies. (This article first appeared as a blog post at The National Interest’s Web site. Reprinted with author’s permission.)

