

December 4, 2006

Senator  
Armed Services Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC

Dear Senator:

As individuals and organizations concerned with human rights, we are writing to urge you to reject President George W. Bush's nomination of Robert Gates as Secretary of Defense. Mr. Gates has been involved in violations of U.S. and international law that should make him ineligible to hold this high office, including (but not limited to):

1. Involvement in the CIA mining of the Nicaraguan port of Corinto and execution of Contra war against Nicaragua ruled illegal by the International Court of Justice at The Hague;
2. Lying to the Senate about knowledge of the illegal activities known as the Iran/Contra scandal in violation of the Arms Export Control Act and the Boland Amendment;
3. Providing chemical weapon components to Iraq during Iran/Iraq war; and
4. Tailoring intelligence on the Soviet Union, according to former Secretary of State George Shultz.

Mr. Gates was the second-in-command and right-hand of CIA Director Bill Casey in the 1980s when the CIA mined Nicaragua's harbors and organized, trained and supplied the *contras* trying to overthrow the Nicaraguan government. According to former CIA analyst Melvin Goodman, who was interviewed on the radio/TV program "Democracy Now!" on November 9, "There was a record of Bob Gates creating intelligence out of whole cloth and urging Bill Casey to take even more provocative measures than the CIA and the Reagan administration was proposing toward Central America, particularly toward Nicaragua." Goodman went on to say, "Remember, the CIA was involved in the mining of the harbor in Corinto, which was clearly an act of war. And Bill Casey never briefed this to the Senate Intelligence Committee. And, of course, Gates prepared all of Casey's testimony at this time."

Independent counsel Lawrence E. Walsh in his autobiography wrote, "We told them [the Senators] that we did not think we had enough corroborating information to indict Robert Gates, but that his answers to these questions had been unconvincing. We did not believe that he could have forgotten a warning of North's diversion of the arms sale proceeds to the Contras. The mingling of two covert activities that were of intense personal interest to the president was not something the second-highest officer in the CIA would forget."

Evidence indicates that Mr. Gates was part of the Republican efforts to stall release of the US Embassy hostages held in Iran during the administration of President Jimmy Carter until after the November 1980 election in order to prevent the Carter administration from claiming a successful outcome. Goodman said that the Russian government reported in 1993 to Rep. Lee Hamilton, who was in charge of the investigation of the so-called "October surprise," that "these contacts [by the Iranians] with the Republicans had occurred, the Soviets at that point had intelligence on it, and that Bob Gates was one of the people involved in it." The hostages were released on the day Ronald Reagan was inaugurated.

Even more serious are the accusations that Gates was involved in the sale of weapons to Iraq in the early 1980s including cluster bombs and precursor chemicals for weapons of mass destruction. Journalist Robert Parry, also speaking on "Democracy Now!" on Nov. 9, said that these were the chemicals "that Saddam Hussein allegedly used in his chemical weapons that were deployed against the Iranians and other targets in Iraq. So, Gates was allegedly involved in all those kinds of -- that's the very secretive side of US foreign policy that Casey was overseeing, but Gates was ... his man handling some of the details."

We believe that Mr. Gates must be required during his nomination hearing to answer questions from Senators on all of these topics and we urge you not to accept incomplete answers or obfuscations. Upon the completion of the hearing, we urge you to recommend that Robert Gates' nomination to be our nation's next Secretary of Defense be rejected by the Senate.

Sincerely,

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