

Intelligence analysts who have briefed Sen. John McCain on international issues generally report that he is not very knowledgeable about most parts of the world, despite of his years of experience in government and his campaign's insistence that one of his principal strengths is foreign-policy expertise. When speaking with an area specialist or expert, McCain is primarily interested in stating his own perceptions and is not generally regarded as an attentive listener. Analysts do not like briefing him because he becomes angry and sometimes personally offensive when someone contradicts his view. One analyst stated that McCain's alleged expertise on international issues is essentially bogus. He speaks no foreign language, and his international experience derives from brief postings at military bases, junkets while serving as Navy liaison to the Senate, and the misfortune of his rather more extensive stay in the Hanoi Hilton.

As a congressman, McCain served on committees dealing with Department of the Interior issues, Indian affairs, and the problems of aging—all areas of particular interest to his Arizona constituents. As a senator, he has served on the three committees dealing with the armed services, Indian affairs, and commerce. He is regarded as an expert on the military, both because of his background and due to a genuine interest. But McCain's only foray into foreign affairs as a senator has been his chairmanship of the International Republican Institute, a controversial quasi-public arm of the Republican Party engaged in democracy promotion overseas. McCain's position with IRI requires him to make an occasional speech on policy, but he has no hands-on role and is not much interested in particular issues. One of the private contributors to IRI is the notorious private mercenary firm Blackwater USA, which donated \$15,000 to the group's coffers in 2005 and 2006 and in return received a contract for \$18 million to protect IRI workers overseas.

McCain's foreign travel in recent years has been in the security and diplomatic cocoon that has become normal for someone with a senator's status. His comments during and after visits to Iraq have been lampooned in the media for being completely disconnected from the situation on the ground. Like George W. Bush, McCain has not been inclined to vacation outside the United States, and he appears to have little curiosity about the world and its peoples. According to the analysts who have interacted with McCain, his recent misstatements about various Muslim groups and other foreign-policy issues are not slips. They reflect a real lack of interest in other countries that makes it impossible for him to empathize with their problems, leading to a monochromatic view of the world and the facile assumption that it is always better to solve issues dealing with foreigners by dropping bombs.

McCain, whose foreign-policy advisers are exclusively neocons, receives regular briefings from the distinguished scholars at the American Enterprise Institute, which are presumably more to his taste than the less colorful information provided by the \$42 billion per year intelligence community.

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not only for us in our own time, but for all people in every time."

While Lieberman may not be acting out of pique, that doesn't mean his politics are untainted by ambition. One former Connecticut colleague attests that Lieberman has long felt touched by destiny: "He always had this vision he would be the first Jewish president, and things were just going to work out." Until Florida, they did. McCain's improbable nomination gives Lieberman another chance. Jepsen states bluntly, "He has to rise with McCain. ... McCain likes him and no one is more indebted to him ... it's his ticket to the next step up."

Lieberman rebuffs speculation about his position in a McCain administration, but he does drop hints. In his speech at the Paul H. Nitze School at Johns Hopkins University, Lieberman identified himself with Nitze, a hawkish Democrat who served in the Truman and Kennedy administrations. To combat anti-interventionists in both parties, Nitze helped to reconstitute the Committee on the Present Danger, which lobbied against détente and the SALT II agreement. While remaining a Democrat, Nitze later served as Reagan's chief negotiator in arms reduction treaties and as a special adviser to the president and his secretary of state. Lieberman seems eager to follow in Nitze's footsteps.

In reality, Lieberman's wish to see two American political parties with "strong national security wings" is a desire to see dissent from anti-interventionism forever discredited. McCain's primary victory has temporarily secured hawks' supremacy in the GOP. And while Lieberman may never again influence his party in a direct manner, a McCain victory in November, aided by Lieberman, could be used to frighten Democrats into accepting the neoconservative view of history: that doves will always lose, that America is fundamentally an activist nation. It's up to Democrats to prove him wrong. ■

Keeping Up With Jones

The North Carolina congressman shows that antiwar conservatives can win—for now.

By W. James Antle III

LATE LAST YEAR, Walter Jones looked like he might lose his seat in Congress. The seven-term Republican's emergence as a fierce critic of the Iraq War had angered some erstwhile supporters back home. He had a serious primary opponent in Onslow County Commissioner Joe McLaughlin. Influential Beltway conservatives were beginning to set their sights on Jones as well.

A \$500-a-head McLaughlin for Congress fundraiser at Arent Fox's downtown law offices last November wasn't attended by an overflow crowd. The best known and most hawkish journalist on hand, David Frum, was there as a cosponsor rather than a reporter. But amidst the hors d'oeuvres and friendly banter, there was a sense of optimism that Jones could be beaten. The most hopeful may have been McLaughlin himself. "I've hammered in signs for Walter Jones," he told me. "But he's gone too far. People in the district are ready for a change."

Some people, perhaps, but not a majority of Republican primary voters. On May 6, Jones dispatched McLaughlin by nearly 20 points. He carried all but three out of 17 counties, including Onslow County, home to both McLaughlin and the Second Marine Division at Camp Lejeune. Incumbency and a familiar family name—between the congressman and his father, someone named Walter Jones has served in North Carolina's House delegation for all but two years since 1966—surely helped. "Being an incumbent is always a plus unless he's been walking around kicking people in the shins," explains Bob

Pruett, Republican chairman for the Third Congressional District, who was neutral in the primary.

Yet Jones didn't always seem like a shoo-in. The Third District houses three military bases and a large number of veterans. President Bush won there in 2004 with 68 percent of the vote. It is, to put it mildly, not the most hospitable environment for opposing the war, and initially Jones didn't: he voted to authorize the use of force against Iraq. In 2003, taking a cue from the Carolina-based Cubbie's restaurant chain, Jones sought to have French fries rechristened "freedom fries" on Congressional menus to protest France's stand against the invasion. French toast also fell casualty.

But Jones soon began to have second thoughts. After attending the funeral of Marine Sgt. Michael Bitz, who left behind a 2-year-old and newborn twins when he was killed in action, the congressman began writing letters to the families of each service member who died in Iraq. Doubts about prewar intelligence gnawed at him, and he continued studying the matter. By June 2005, Jones was persuaded that the war had been launched in error and was co-sponsoring a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq.

This conversion cost Jones the top Republican position on the Armed Services Committee's Readiness subcommittee, though ranking member Duncan Hunter did grant his request to sit on the Oversight subcommittee. But the political reaction back home was more troubling. McLaughlin, a photogenic and gregarious former Army officer, announced

his primary challenge in May 2007. Ronald Cherubini, chairman of the Onslow County GOP, withdrew his support from Jones. "Disloyalty is something you just can't tolerate," he told *The Politico*. "That's the way military people look at it."

"Most of the polls taken at activist events showed Congressman Jones to be in serious trouble," says Pruett. McLaughlin won straw polls at Republican dinners in five different counties and released his own district-wide polling showing the race neck and neck. The freedom fries at Cubbie's turned against Jones too. Owner Neal Rowland took down the congressman's pictures and offered to host McLaughlin's election night party. "Things are moving as we want [in Iraq]," he told the *Raleigh News and Observer*. "We're bringing democracy to them."

The McLaughlin campaign sought to link Jones to left-wing groups like MoveOn.org, Code Pink, and the American Civil Liberties Union. "They tried to paint him as a liberal," says Jonathan Morris, assistant professor of political science at East Carolina University. McLaughlin quickly capitalized on votes and statements that would allow him to expand this critique beyond the war. Jones received low grades on the Club for Growth's anti-pork report card and supported overriding President Bush's veto of the Water Resources Protection Act. He also voted for Democratic energy and farm bills that Americans for Tax Reform deemed a violation of the Taxpayer Protection Pledge, including a tax increase on some U.S. subsidiaries of for-