

Is Gen. Mattis Headed for a Disaster?

Secretary of Defense James “Mad Dog” Mattis’ reputation as a war-fighter is unimpeachable, but his political and personnel judgment—not so much.

Almost since the day he was confirmed, Mattis has engaged in guerrilla war with President Trump’s White House staff to advance his plans to bring Democrats and anti-Trump Republicans into the top echelons of the Pentagon.

As part of this guerrilla war, Mattis is blocking some rock-star conservative talent that the White House slated for appointments at the Pentagon. One is Mira Ricardel, a former Boeing executive and Bush Pentagon alum who helped with the Trump transition.

And as Gen. Mattis continues to nix a long list of names offered by the White House team, he hasn’t been bashful about pushing for the appointment of Democrats and anti-Trump Republicans.

First, Gen. Mattis flirted with appointing Michele Flournoy, formerly the third-ranking civilian in the Pentagon under President Barack Obama, and the person expected to run the Pentagon had Hillary Clinton won the presidency, as his deputy.

The Wall Street Journal’s Kimberley Strassel reported Mattis also looked to recruit from Ms. Flournoy’s liberal-hawk think tank, the Center for New American Security. And he pushed for some names who hail from Never Trump backgrounds, including Mary Beth Long, an official in George W. Bush’s Pentagon.

Then he wanted Obama’s Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Ambassador Anne W. Patterson, as his

undersecretary.

During the Obama years, Patterson was ambassador to Egypt and a prominent supporter of ousted Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood, a group Trump may designate as a terrorist organization.

This would also be the same Ambassador Anne W. Patterson who defended the Palestinian Authority practice of paying salaries to terrorists in prison, saying, "They have to provide for the families ... this is not correct. According to PA law and in practice, the PA does not give stipends to terrorist prisoners' families but salaries to the terrorist prisoners themselves."

Why anyone in the Trump administration would put forward an Obama mouthpiece like Anne Patterson for a high position at the Trump Pentagon defies the imagination.

Part of the problem is that anyone like Patterson who advanced into a high position in the U.S. national security apparatus during the past eight years, is to a great degree compromised by careerism and association with the failed strategies and policies of Obama.

But the answer to that is to appoint the outsiders from the "Red Team" who opposed the Obama administration from Capitol Hill and the conservative think tanks, something Gen. Mattis apparently refuses to do.

The tug-of-war between Mattis and the White House over his choice of Democrats and anti-Trump Republicans has meant that not a single undersecretary or deputy secretary to the Defense Department has been nominated to a post.

Democratic Rep. Seth Moulton, (D-Mass.), an Iraq war veteran who served under then-Gen. Mattis in the first of four tours of duty in the Marines said of Mattis, "I know he is someone who will actually stand up to President Trump. Before Trump

realizes this himself, Democrats would be wise to have this debate and then grant an exemption to confirm him as our next secretary of defense.”

Rep. Moulton was apparently right, but the general has chosen the wrong ground upon which to make his stand.

Apparently, Gen. Mattis buys the ridiculous idea that there are only so many national security and foreign policy experts out there, and those who openly or privately opposed Trump’s candidacy are the only ones available to fill the jobs.

Staffing the Pentagon with the same people who created today’s national security disaster and expecting them to fix it is a recipe for complete failure, but this is apparently where Gen. Mattis is heading. {eoa}

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