

Financiers Try ‘Swift Boating’ War Hero Murtha—Again

by Anita Gallagher

The Wall Street predators have targetted senior Democrats in Congress, like Rep. John Murtha (D-Pa.), for defeat in November, with a vicious campaign of scandal-mongering. The financier establishment wants no resistance to slashing the living standards of Americans to “Dark Age” levels in the ongoing collapse.

The “financial locusts” represented by the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, Fox News, the *Washington Post*, Rupert Murdoch’s *New York Post*, and “Boot Murtha” neocon columnist Michelle Malkin, are united in trying to create a scandal and promote an opponent to get Murtha out.

In 2006, Murtha was the target of a “Swift Boat” campaign, which rivalled that run against John Kerry in 2004. In 2008, the financiers have gone back to the “Swift Boat” playbook to oust Murtha, who, since 2006, has chaired the powerful Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, which controls all military spending. Murtha’s record—ranging from his promotion of economic development, and its advocates like Hillary Clinton, to his opposition to anti-Constitutional policies on law enforcement and the war—provides the best explanation of why he has become such a target.

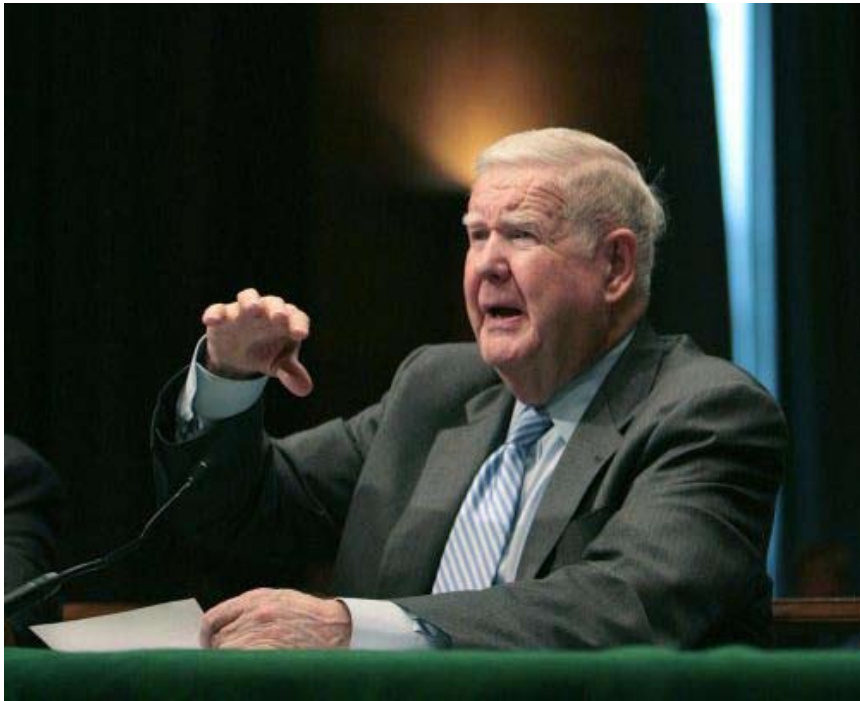
Murtha as a Local ‘FDR’

Murtha was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1974, the first Vietnam combat veteran to be elected to Congress. In fiscal 2008, Murtha was one of the initiators of the largest funding increase in history

for the Department of Veterans Affairs—an additional \$3.7 billion over the President’s request. He has consistently promoted the military’s true interests, and opposed the perpetual war doctrine of Cheney’s Chickenhawks.

When Murtha arrived in Congress in 1975, the 12th district, which runs from Johnstown to Pittsburgh, was reeling from shutdowns in the steel and coal industries that had sustained Western Pennsylvania until that time. In 1977, Johnstown experienced its third catastrophic flood in a century; and in 1983, had the highest unemployment rate in the nation—24%. Due to Murtha’s strenuous efforts to bring high-tech jobs in military-associated industries, health, and other areas to the district, unemployment was reduced to 5%. Murtha has worked on infrastructure development, especially water, sewage, and bridges.

In the early 1990s, the U.S. Justice Department tried to exempt Federal prosecutors from ethics rules, which allowed a number of prosecutors to hide evidence, bribe witnesses, and set up innocent people for prosecution. The successful passage of the McDade-Murtha bill to bring this abuse under control infuriated those who wished to get rid of political enemies by false prosecution, and to keep the electorate out of it. The fact that Murtha was never charged in the ABSCAM frameup they tried against him in the 1970s, and that he fought to dismantle this capability, drives these networks berserk.



www.murtha.hours.gov

Decorated war hero Rep. John Murtha, shown here testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2007, is the target of a dirty campaign by right-wingers and neo-Swift-Boaters controlled by Wall Street financiers.

Support for Hillary Clinton

Before Pennsylvania's April 22 primary, Murtha was Democratic Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's most active Congressional supporter. He and Gov. Ed Rendell mobilized for Clinton throughout the state, and brought her back into the race with a big win, that ran to a 70% margin in blue-collar Western Pennsylvania. She travelled from one post-industrial town to another with Murtha, and talked about creating jobs and restoring the living standards of the "invisible Americans." Had Clinton lost in Pennsylvania, the anti-Clinton forces were prepared to move in for the kill with demands that she drop out of the race, and to make it financially impossible for her to continue her campaign. Heavy pressure had been applied to the New York delegation, as well as to Clinton's African American supporters, to cross over and endorse Barack Obama after the Super Tuesday primary March 4.

No to Cheney's War

On Nov. 17, 2005, Murtha, a highly decorated 37-year member of the U.S. Marines, who retired with the rank of colonel, and one of the strongest supporters of the U.S. military in Congress, had stunned Washington

with his H.J. Res. 73, calling for American troops to be redeployed from Iraq. Murtha said, "The U.S. cannot accomplish anything further in Iraq militarily. It is time to bring the troops home." Loss of life, atrocities, and a "hollowed-out" military would be the price of not doing so, Murtha warned. After voting for the war authorization in 2002, Murtha made a complete about-face, based on frequent discussions with commanders on the ground, while others stuck with Chickenhawk Cheney's "permanent war" doctrine. In 2006, Murtha was awarded the prestigious John F. Kennedy "Profiles in Courage" Award, which annually honors a public official who rises above popular opinion to act in the national interest.

The 2008 Version of 'Swift Boat'

In 2006, Murtha was a target of a "Swift Boat" operation run on behalf of his opponent in that year's campaign, Diana Irey. Following her brother-in-law's conviction on child pornography charges in Florida in 2007, Irey did not challenge Murtha again.

Desperate to find a candidate to challenge Murtha in 2008, the financiers again turned to the "Swift Boat," apparat; the updated version was to run a veteran against war hero Murtha. Lacking someone who lived in the district, in late 2007, they seized on a Lt. Col. William Russell, who lived in Virginia, and who would not retire from the Army until Aug. 1, 2008.

Right-wing networks collected petition signatures to qualify Russell for the Republican primary ballot in April. However, local Republican officials rejected Russell as their candidate, and threw him off the ballot through signature challenges. The apparat behind Russell then swung into action, organizing a mass mailing to write in Russell's name. Right-wing-associated direct mail firms were retained by Russell's campaign as his chief means of fundraising—direct mail to a national neocon list. Russell's website extolled his homespun "porch visits" in Johnstown, while what Hillary Clinton had memorably called the "vast, right-wing conspiracy" carried out massive direct-mail efforts. Then, the neocon press, such as Murdoch's Malkin, mobilized to



hillaryclinton.com/Sophia Paris

Murtha campaigned throughout the Western Pennsylvania Rust Belt with Hillary Clinton, bringing her a decisive victory in the April 22 primary. Shown, Murtha and Clinton at a rally in Uniontown, March 24, 2008.

attack Murtha and tout carpetbagger Russell's candidacy nationally.

Russell's campaign violated the letter and the spirit of the "Open Letter" directive of Joint Chiefs of Staff head Adm. Michael Mullen in late Spring, in which he had admonished members of the military that they must remain apolitical (see box). Russell appeared in the media and raised funds, while actively serving in the Reserves; on his campaign website and in brochures, he was pictured in uniform, and identified as Lt. Col. William Russell: These are violations of Article 88 of the Military Code.

Russell's campaign activity is now under investigation by the Judge Advocate General and Inspector General of the Command of the U.S. Army Reserves in Ft. McPherson, Georgia. Public affairs acting chief Scott Ferguson informed this news service on Sept. 4 that the probe will not be completed "for months," despite the election scheduled for Nov. 4—and that no information will be made public before the entire investigation is completed. The slow-paced investigation is not the first favor that Russell has received from a right-wing faction in the military. During his activation from approximately April 1 to July 31, he was assigned to a chemical unit in Johnstown—where he wished to run for Congress—despite the fact that this

was outside his military occupational specialty. The question of who arranged this for his campaign is one of the issues under investigation.

Russell's Fundraising Profile

Russell's campaign raised \$918,000 from Jan. 1 through June 30, 2008, from individuals through direct mail, according to his Federal Election Commission (FEC) reports. In the 1st Quarter 2008, only \$34,409 of \$214,168—16%—of that was "itemized"—with names, addresses, employers, and occupations reported. Only 8% of the identified contributors of that \$34,000 were from Pennsylvania—a sampling which shows that a national mailing list of "Swift Boat" donors was used to foist Russell on the 12th Congressional District.

In the 2nd Quarter, only \$137,835 of \$669,534—21%—of the money raised, was itemized. Only 10% of the contributors were from Pennsylvania, providing another sampling which shows that out-of-state money is being raised to defeat Murtha and install a carpet-bagger.

On May 15, FEC campaign finance analyst Robin Kelly wrote to Russell's treasurer: "Your report disclosed \$185,575.09 in unitemized contributions..." She required the campaign to either amend the report with more data, or to "clarify that for the contributions in question, the aggregate total ... for each contributor does not exceed \$200." FEC spokesman Bob Birkenstock told *EIR* that the fact that the FEC sent the inquiry, showed that the Commission considered the campaign's high number of un-itemized contributions to be unusual.

Col. Donahue Speaks Out In Support of Murtha

Lieutenant Colonel Hal Donahue (USAF-ret.) served in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, on the staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Since retiring after 20 years in the military, he has been employed as a vice president of several major energy companies. He now devotes his time to assisting military veterans and working to elect veterans and their supporters to all levels of political office. Lieutenant Colonel Donahue wrote the following statement for EIR on Sept. 10.