When John McCain Gets Something Wrong He Wants More! His New Advice About U.S. Decision To Arm Syrian Rebels

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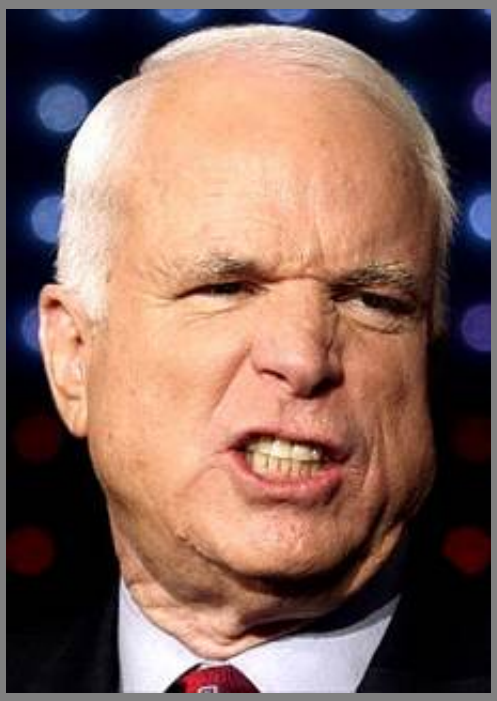
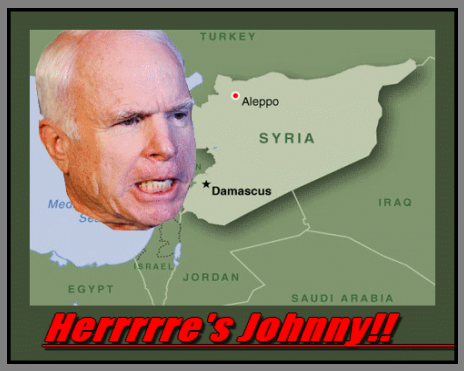


Michael Matthew Bloomer. August 25, 2013.



Today, Senator John McCain criticized President Obama for not doing enough with his decision to provide weapons assistance to certain Syrian opposition groups. From the Senate floor, McCain read from his and Senator Lindsey Graham's joint statement:

"Using standoff weapons, without boots on the ground, and at minimal risk to our men and women in uniform, we can significantly degrade Assad's air power and

ballistic missile capabilities and help to establish and defend safe areas on the ground," they said. "In addition, we must begin a large-scale effort to train and equip moderate, vetted elements of the Syrian opposition with the game-changing weapons they need to shift the military balance against Assad's forces." [Washington Times]

We've heard much of this talk and rationalizing before. McCain, the Senate's most senior one-trick war horse, has repeatedly - incessantly - deployed bluster and power mythology rather than attend to the lessons of a now long record of reality "on the ground" in American adventures and misadventures in Vietnam, in Beirut, in Somalia, in Iraq, in Afghanistan. In Libya, McCain wanted America to go it alone, but it was NATO that carried the battle. President Obama wisely stayed his hand and chose to use Libya both as a marker for a renewed U.S. suspicion of "going it alone," and as a decision to rely on a coalition whose interests were most affected.

McCain's call for using "stand-off weaponry" sounds good: it's a powerful technology and a ground troop-sparing tactic. With drones now familiar, improved, and often disreputable one might agree., if one were unconcerned about civilian casualties. Well, Libya is not Syria. Syria's political and military significance *dwarfs* Libya's. It has nothing to do with size. A list for Assad's Syria includes:

- *** direct Iranian assistance; Russian weaponry and its U.N. patronage; and a voluble border with Israel that has erupted in violence during the Syrian Revolution.**
- *** Geographically, Syria shares active borders with Israel, Jordan (chock full of Syrian refugees), Turkey (threatened with its own unrest and a member of NATO), Iraq, and Lebanon (sharing with Syria Israel's northern border, and alive with Assad's active fifth column, Hezbollah, already all-in in Assad's support).**
- *** Russia looms less pliable than during the Libyan intervention. With tens of thousands of Russian citizens in Syria, and innumerable commercial, military, and cultural interests formed over its more than 40 years of association. Russia provides**

Syria is like a military-grade ammunition depot already surrounded by high winds and raging fire, firebreak neutralized, and with few, if any, fire companies available. No forecast of rain. John McCain wants to fire "stand-off" rockets at it.

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The post below was published here on February 1, 2013 during Chuck Hagel's SecDef nomination hearing. John McCain used military power to explicitly misrepresent Chuck Hagel's record and , undoubtedly without knowing it, to *im*plicitly misrepresent his own.

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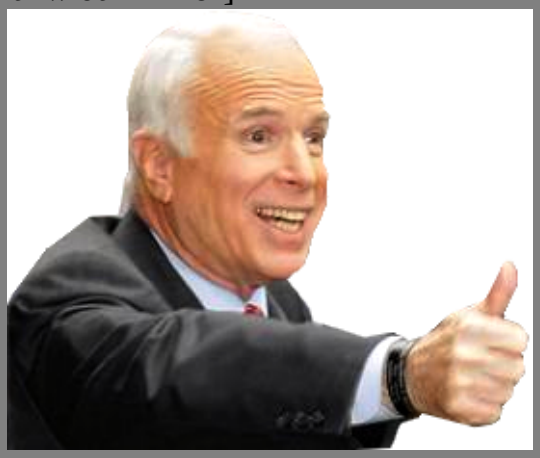

'This is *my* thumb, people. It's *my* thumb! Show me *yours*!!!!![/caption]

"Were you right or wrong, Senator?"

John McCain to Chuck Hagel about
Hagel's disagreement with the Iraq surge
Originally published here, February 1, 2013

At the Senate "advise and consent" confirmation hearing yesterday John McCain had so little self-knowledge that he asked Chuck Hagel *"Were you right or wrong, Senator?"* about Hagel's lack of support for the Iraq military surges. As President George H.W. Bush said about Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, "This shall not stand," so here's my small list drawn from of a huge number of examples of John McCain's wrongness legacy:

- *"Were you right or wrong, Senator?"*
  - "[Saddam Hussein] is hell-bent on acquiring these weapons of mass destruction in the view of any expert.
  - And, by the way, our intelligence has consistently not been accurate. Not in 1981, when the Iraqis bombed the reactor; not in 1991, when we were astonished at the degree of development that he had achieved in developing weapons of mass destruction, the stage of successes he had reached in that area. And so I don't know where he is in the stage of development, but there's very little doubt in my mind that he would use it." Face the Nation, September 2002
- *"Were you right or wrong, Senator?"*
  - "We're going to prevail and we will win and it'll be one of the best things that's happened to America and the world in a long time 'cause it'll reverberate throughout the Middle East." --on the Iraq war, "Meet the Press" interview, March 3, 2003
- *"Were you right or wrong, Senator?"*

    - "[T]here's no doubt in my mind that we will prevail and there's no doubt in my mind, once these people are gone, that we will be welcomed as liberators." March 24, 2003, edition of *Hardball* -- several days after the U.S.-led coalition had invaded Iraq
- *"Were you right or wrong, Senator?"*
    - “Nobody in Afghanistan threatens the United States of America.” Hannity & Colmes, April 10, 2003
- *"Were you right or wrong, Senator?"*
    - *"Well, then why was there a banner that said mission accomplished on the aircraft carrier?"* John McCain, responding to assertion by Fox News' Neil Cavuto that "many argue the conflict isn't over," June, 11, 2003
- *"Were you right or wrong, Senator?"*
    - Excerpts from *Past the Point of Justifying*, his Op-Ed, *The Washington Post*, John McCain, June 15, 2003:
    - Like many Americans, I am surprised that we have yet to locate the weapons of mass destruction that all of us, Republican and Democrat, expected to find immediately in Iraq. But do critics really believe that Saddam Hussein disposed of his weapons and dismantled weapons programs while fooling every major intelligence service on earth, generations of U.N. inspectors, three U.S. presidents and five secretaries of defense into believing he possessed them, in one of the most costly and irrational gambles in history? ...

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      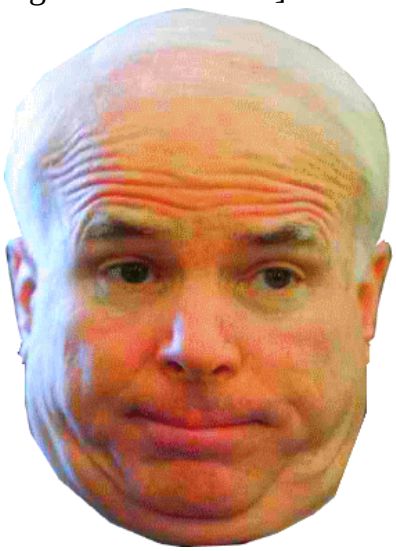

      Well, if you want *facts* from *me you'll* have to explain *yourself*."[/caption]
    - Critics today seem to imply that after seven years of elaborately deceiving the United Nations, Hussein precipitated the withdrawal of U.N. inspectors from his country in 1998, then decided to change course and disarmed himself over the next four years, but refused to provide any realistic proof that this disarmament occurred.

    - I am not convinced.
- *"Were you right or wrong, Senator?"*
    - The facts on the ground are we went to Afghanistan and we prevailed there." Wolf Blitzer Reports, April 1, 2004
- *"Were you right or wrong, Senator?"*
    - "Could I add, it was in Afghanistan, as well, there were many people who predicted that Afghanistan would not be a success. So far, it's a remarkable success**."** CNN, March 2, 2005
- *"Were you right or wrong, Senator?"*
    - "Afghanistan, we don't read about anymore, because it's succeeded**."** Charlie Rose Show, October 31, 2005
- *"Were you right or wrong, Senator?"*
    - "There are neighborhoods in Baghdad where you and I could walk through those neighborhoods today."
    - McCain also said that the US is "beginning to succeed in Iraq" and an early pull out would result in an "unmitigated disaster of incredible proportions," and "we will see chaos and genocide in the region and we will be back and they will follow us home." Bill Bennett's Morning in America radio show, March 26, 2007
- *"Were you right or wrong, Senator?"*
    - McCain complimented "deputy commander-in-chief" Cheney's "hard-headed clear thinking" and guidance on Iraq **a**t a July 16, 2004, campaign rally in Lansing, Michigan. McCain continued: "We are very fortunate that our president in these challenging days can rely on the counsel of a man who has demonstrated time and again the resolve, experience, and patriotism that will be required for success and the hard-headed clear thinking necessary to prevail in this global fight between good and evil."

      [caption id="attachment_4282" align="alignright" width="255"]

I get no respect I tell ya. I found out there was only one way to look smart, hang out with Ted Cruz. I'm so dumb ... I worked in a pet shop, and people kept trying to teach me to fetch. No respect. I tell ya.[/caption]

- *"Were you right or wrong, Senator?"*
  - "Make it a hundred...That would be fine with me." --to a questioner who asked if he supported President Bush's vision for keeping U.S. troops in Iraq for 50 years, Derry, New Hampshire, Jan. 3, 2008
- *"Were you right or wrong, Senator?"*
  - "He's (for) health for the mother. You know, that's been stretched by the pro-abortion movement in America to mean almost anything. That's the extreme pro-abortion position, quote, 'health.'" about President Obama's support for protection of a mother's health in abortion decisions, presidential debate, Long Island, New York, Oct. 15, 2008
- *"Were you wrong, Senator?"*
  - "I think she's most qualified of any that has run recently for vice president, tell you the truth." --on Sarah Palin, interview with Don Imus, Oct. 22, 2008
- *"Were you right or wrong, Senator?"*
  - "[Sarah Palin] knows more about energy than probably anyone else in the United States of America. ... And, uh, she also happens to represent, be governor of a state that's right next to Russia." --after being asked about Sarah Palin's foreign policy experience, interview with WCSH-6, Portland, OR, Sept. 12, 2008
- *"Were you right or wrong, Senator?"*
  - "I also know, if I might remind you, that [Palin] is commander of the Alaska National Guard. In fact, you may know that on Sept. 11 a large contingent of the

Alaska Guard deployed to Iraq and her son happened to be one of them. So I think she understands our national security challenges." touting Sarah Palin's foreign policy credentials, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Sept. 17, 2008

- *"Were you right or wrong, Senator?"*
    - "My friends, we've got them just where we want them." on Barack Obama and the state of the presidential campaign, Virginia Beach, Virginia, Oct. 13, 2008