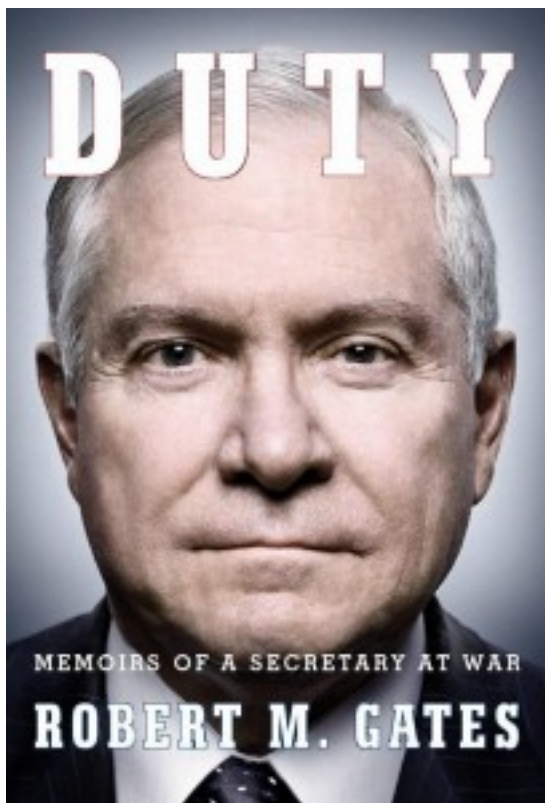


By Ray McGovern

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In the early 1970s, I was chief of the CIA's Soviet Foreign Policy Branch in which Robert M. Gates worked as a young CIA analyst. While it may be true that I was too inexperienced at the time to handle all the management challenges of such a high-powered office, one of the things I did get right was my assessment of Gates in his Efficiency Report.

I wrote that if his overweening ambition were not reined in, young Bobby was sure to become an even more dangerous problem. Who could have known, then, how huge a problem? As it turned out, I was not nearly as skilled as Gates at schmoozing senior managers who thus paid no heed to my warning. Gates was a master at ingratiating himself to his superiors.



The supreme irony came a short decade later when we – ALL of us, managers, analysts, senior and junior alike – ended up working under Gates. Ronald Reagan's CIA Director William Casey had found in Gates just the person to do his bidding, someone who earned the title "windsock Bobby" because he was clever enough to position himself in whatever direction the powerful winds were blowing.

To justify the expensive military buildup of the 1980s and the proxy wars that Reagan wanted fought required judging the Soviet Union to be ascendant and marching toward world domination. In that cause, Gates was just the man to shatter the CIA's commitment to providing presidents with objective analysis. He replaced that proud legacy with whatever "information" would serve the White House's political needs.

As Casey's choice to head the CIA analytical division and then serve as deputy CIA director, Gates showed himself to be super-successful at weeding out competent analysts, especially those – like Melvin A. Goodman – who knew the Soviet Union cold and recognized its new President Mikhail Gorbachev for the reformer he was.

Those analysts who refused to toe Gates's line – which required judging Gorbachev to be a phony and ignoring signs of the coming Soviet collapse – lost their jobs to more malleable managers who saw things the Gates way. Goodman was one senior analyst who quit in disgust.

Yet, those CIA bureaucrats, who were more interested in personal promotion than promoting the truth, thrived under the Casey-Gates regime. The likes of John McLaughlin and Douglas MacEachin, whom Gates put in charge of Soviet analysis, wormed their way to the top of the agency. However, since the CIA had blinded itself to signs of the change that Gorbachev represented, the agency missed the fall of the U.S.S.R. in 1991.

Despite that stunning embarrassment, Gates's acolytes suffered no career damage. After all, they were simply regurgitating the "wisdom" of Gates, who – after he moved over to President George H.W. Bush's National Security Council staff – had kept insisting to the very end that the Soviet Communist Party would NEVER lose power.

So, it should have come as no surprise two decades later that many of those same CIA bureaucrats who had been promoted under Gates would be part of the malleable managerial ménage that did President George W. Bush's bidding in conjuring up fraudulent intelligence to "justify" the disastrous war on Iraq in 2003.

Then, Gates, who says in his new memoir *Duty* that he supported the invasion of Iraq, was brought back into government in 2006 as Defense Secretary to oversee the war's escalation, the much-touted "surge," which led to the deaths of another 1,000 U.S. soldiers and countless more Iraqis but failed to achieve the political and economic reconciliation that Bush had set as its top goal.

I wrote about Gates back then – as well as when he was reappointed as Defense Secretary by President Barack Obama in 2009 – so I decided that there were more useful things for me to do than, once again, expose Gates. More useful things like exposing [other mendacious miscreants](#), like Director of National Intelligence James Clapper and National Security Agency Director Keith Alexander.

The mainstream U.S. news media was again falling short (surprise, surprise) in exposing these current operators, and Gates, after all, left the Official Washington scene in 2011. I also didn't want to risk nausea by reading Gates's latest Apologia pro Vita Sua.

I thought that anyone following the copious reporting on Consortiumnews.com regarding Gates would greet with appropriate skepticism his latest self-serving set of excuses. [See, for instance, "[Robert Gates Double-Crosses Obama](#)."] Plus, the un-malleable Mel Goodman, the only CIA division chief to quit rather than bend to Gates's dishonesty, had just given us an excellent piece titled "[Bob Gates's Mean, Misguided Memoir](#)."

Veterans Deserve the Truth

So, my personal thinking was to give Gates a pass this time around. But then I began reflecting on my experiences over the past three months spending time with U.S. military veterans, including in Gates's new home state of Washington and in North Carolina and Florida, on speaking tours hosted largely by my fellow Veterans For Peace. Most of my hosts are

survivors of the Vietnam War, the Gulf War of 1991, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Most of them still grapple with serious wounds of one kind or another.

Then, when I got home this past weekend from my latest speaking tour, I read Dan Zak's sympathetic-to-Gates [feature story](#) in the Washington Post, describing how Gates wells up with tears when he thinks of the 11,000 troops (Gates's own count) killed or wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan on his watch as Defense Secretary.

That got me to thinking about my hosts and their families and all such survivors of unnecessary warfare. They surely deserve the truth about Gates's self-serving role in prolonging the agony, the killing, and the maiming in both Iraq and Afghanistan – the unconscionable waste of life, the trauma and the missing limbs for which Gates bears huge responsibility.

And it occurred to me that Gates's rapidly written memoir represents a holding action. His hurry to publish, even while the administration that he most recently served is still in office, betokens an unseemly rush to get his turgid version of events on the record, creating a decent interval before Afghanistan implodes, as Iraq is now doing (with 70 killed on Sunday alone).

Eventually the inescapable truth will out – at least for those who can “handle the truth.” Namely, that what happened during the celebrated “surges” in Iraq and Afghanistan amounted to little more than a sacrifice of thousands of U.S. troops on the altar of the unbridled ambition that I observed in the first Efficiency Report that I wrote on Gates.

The many pages of his memoir devoted to how much he loved those troops – and how he has asked to be buried among them at Arlington National Cemetery – amounted to an attempt to anticipate and deflect accusations that he, in actuality, betrayed those young men and women by sending more of them to die just to buy time for President Bush and other politicians to slip out of Washington before the ultimate defeats in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Americans also deserve to know how presidents from Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush through George W. Bush and Barack Obama cynically used Gates's skills and ambitions to give them political cover for their own dirty work, from the waste of countless billions in taxpayer dollars on excessive military spending to the justification and prosecution of misguided and feckless wars.

That's why I feel I must break my promise to myself that I would not devote one additional minute to exposing this Teflon-coated charlatan, Robert Gates. Why? Because nowhere has the Fawning Corporate Media been quite so fawning as in their misbegotten adulation of "wise man" Gates.

Five years ago, for example, the late "dean of the Washington press corps," Washington Post columnist David Broder, hailed Gates as "incapable of dissembling." It is too late to disabuse Broder of his fantasy on Gates. But it may not be too late to inform those still interested in the real Bobby Gates that it would be much closer to the truth to say that Gates was "incapable of not dissembling."

Toward that end, I have dug out just three articles that I have authored in recent years in an attempt to put Robert M. Gates in some honest context. They are: "[Gates and the Urge to Surge](#)"; "[Afghan Lessons from the Iraq War](#)"; and "[How to Read Gates's Shift on the Wars](#)".