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President Obama is expected to announce a major shuffling of his national security team today. Under his plan, CIA Director Leon Panetta will move to the Pentagon to replace the retiring Robert Gates. Gen. David Petraeus will become the new head of the CIA. U.S. Marine General John Allen will be nominated to become the U.S. commander in Afghanistan, a position currently held by Petraeus. And Ryan Crocker will be nominated to be U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan. Leon Panetta has headed the CIA for the past two years and has led a massive escalation of the use of unarmed drones in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Many analysts say the nomination of David Petraeus to head the CIA will further increase the militarization of the spy agency. We speak with Ray McGovern, former senior CIA analyst and co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity.

JUAN GONZALEZ: President Obama is expected to announce a major shuffling of his national security team today. Under Obama's plan, CIA Director Leon Panetta will move to the Pentagon to replace the retiring Robert Gates. General David Petraeus will become the new head of the CIA. Marine General John Allen will be nominated to become the U.S. commander in Afghanistan, a position currently held by Petraeus. And Ryan Crocker will be nominated to be U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan.

Leon Panetta has headed the CIA for the past two years and has led a massive escalation of the use of unarmed drones in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In 2008, the U.S. carried out 35 drone strikes in Pakistan. In 2010, Panetta's first full year as CIA director, at least 117 strikes occurred. Last year, Panetta defended the legality of the drone attacks.

LEON PANETTA: We have a responsibility to defend this country, and that's what we're doing. And anyone who suggests that somehow, you know, we're employing other tactics here that somehow violate international law are dead wrong. What we're doing is defending this country. That's what our operations are all about.

AMY GOODMAN: Many analysts say the nomination of David Petraeus to head the CIA will further increase the militarization of the spy agency. Petraeus is also a strong backer of drone warfare and the use of the military to carry out intelligence operations. In May 2010 he signed a

secret military order to expand clandestine military operations in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iran and other places in the Middle East and Central Asia in order to, quote, "penetrate, disrupt, defeat and destroy" militant groups.

We're now joined by Ray McGovern, former senior CIA analyst whose duties included preparing the President's Daily Brief and chairing National Intelligence Estimates. He was the daily briefer for then-Vice President George H.W. Bush for years, and he was with the agency for more than a quarter of a century. He's co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity.

So, this is just about to be announced today, Ray McGovern. What's your concern? Panetta from CIA to Pentagon, and Petraeus to replace Panetta at the CIA.

RAY McGOVERN: Well, Panetta is not really a concern. He will do at the Pentagon what he did at the CIA, and that is, act as the lawyer for the department, as he was a lawyer for the agency. He did not take hold. He did not lead the agency. Nor will he lead the Defense Department. He's a—he described himself in his nomination hearings as a creature of the Congress. And so, you can bet on him placating congressional interests and making sure that the military-industrial complex flourishes.

Petraeus is a horse of a different color. That's a problem. How can President Obama look at General Petraeus and say, "Now, how do you think things are going in Afghanistan there, Dave?" What does he expect to hear? "They're going great. As a matter of fact, we're making some progress. But, you know, progress is fragile, and it's reversible." Well, hello. What does that mean?

AMY GOODMAN: Just one second.

RAY McGOVERN: Petraeus knows that it's a fool's—yeah?

AMY GOODMAN: Ray McGovern, we actually have General Petraeus saying just that before the Senate Armed Services Committee in March. Let's go to General Petraeus.

GEN. DAVID PETRAEUS: It is ISAF's assessment that the momentum achieved by the Taliban in Afghanistan since 2005 has been arrested in much of the country and reversed in a number of important areas. However, while the security progress achieved over the past year is significant, it is also fragile and reversible.

AMY GOODMAN: So, Ray McGovern, why does that matter?

RAY McGOVERN: Well, it matters because it betrays that Petraeus knows which end is up here. He used the same phraseology to describe the situation in Iraq. He knows that the war cannot be won. He says every now and then, "We can't win militarily, and so please give me 33,000 more troops." It doesn't make sense. And so, you know, when the President asks him what's likely to happen in Afghanistan or Iraq, or let's say Libya, he's not going to get an unadulterated answer of the kind that Harry Truman insisted on when he set up a civilian intelligence agency with access to all the information on a given issue or country. What the President is entitled to is an unbiased, tell-it-like-it-is opinion. He won't get that from Petraeus.

Now, to their credit, my former colleagues in the Analysis Division—I distinguish the Analysis Division from the operations folks that have been able to discharge duties like torture—the Analysis Division has made some really good strides. They had an honest estimate on Iran. They said that Iran stopped working on a nuclear weapon in mid-2003 and have not resumed it. You wouldn't know that from reading the *New York Times* or listening to Hillary Clinton. And they also said, at the end of last year, two estimates, one on Afghanistan and one on Pakistan. Afghanistan, we'll never prevail there, unless we can get the Pakistanis to seal the border and really cooperate with us. The one on Pakistan said there's not a snowball's chance in hell that we can persuade the Pakistanis to cooperate with us, because they see their interests in Afghanistan in a completely different way. It has to do with India. And nothing Hillary Clinton or Mike Mullen can say to the Pakistanis are going to persuade them that they shouldn't really worry about India, they should worry just about terrorists. It isn't going to work. And so, our young people are being chewed up. They're being sent over there by a poverty draft. It's unconscionable what's happening—not to mention what's happening to the militants that are being subjected to drone and other attacks.

Now, Panetta—Panetta says he's defending the United States by shooting Hellfire missiles out of drones over Afghanistan—over Pakistan? Tell me how that works. Would some senator please ask Panetta, "How does it work? How are you defending the United"—you know what

he's doing? He's creating more terrorists. And that's provable by just the interrogators who interrogate people who are caught in Iraq and in Afghanistan. "Why did you come there?" "We came there because of the drones. We came there because of Guantánamo. We came there because of Abu Ghraib." We create our own terrorists. And Panetta is not—Petraeus is not going to be able to tell the President that, because he's not a disinterested party.

JUAN GONZALEZ: Well, Ray McGovern, a couple of questions in terms of, one, the personality here and also the policy. The move of Petraeus over to the CIA, some people are speculating that President Obama was, in essence, trying to prevent the possibility of Petraeus becoming a vice-presidential candidate for some Republican—for some Republican presidential candidate in the coming year. And also, this whole issue of the increased militarization of the CIA, as it increasingly takes on more of a war-making function, not just an intelligence or a small operations function?

RAY McGOVERN: That's exactly right. Now, Harry Truman, I imagine, is jumping up and down from his new perch up there in the pearly gates. This is not at all what he intended in creating the CIA. He wanted an analytic group to tell him what was going on in the world. And before he died, he wrote an op-ed for the *Washington Post*, which said, "What's happened to my CIA?" So, what's happened here is the militarization of the CIA. They're at the beck and call of the military authorities. There are some analysts hanging on and issuing requirements so that they can decide, for example, what's going on with the Iranian nuclear program. But it's not a good—it's not a healthy situation to have another—another military person come in there.

Now, as far as—I think Obama is being too clever by half. Petraeus is back in town, or will be this summer. He doesn't really owe much allegiance to Obama. He's made fun of him. I—remember where you heard it first. I don't think he wants to be vice president; I think he wants to be president, if not running in 2012, then the next time around. And he's well positioned now, within the ambiance here of Washington, to pull all the levers, get all the support he needs, especially from the neocons, whom he has assiduously courted, and be in position to get on the ticket. And I think that's what he's after. And I think Obama, from that point of view, made a terrible mistake.

AMY GOODMAN: Ray McGovern, I want to thank you for being with us, former senior CIA analyst whose duties included preparing the President's Daily Brief. He briefed the Vice President, George H.W. Bush, for a very long time.