



May 28, 2008

PERSONA

Congressman Vic Snyder  
Chairman  
House Armed Services Committee  
1330 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Snyder,

The answer to your two questions in your May 21, 2008 letter is "no" in both cases.

The recent New York Times attack on the credibility of television news commentary by senior retired military officers was badly sourced and a disservice to objective journalism. Too bad this great newspaper, which I have read faithfully since I was a 17 year Cadet at West Point, has seemingly developed a reflexive bias against the US Armed Forces. Jason Blair, Judith Miller, unsubstantiated personal attacks on Senator McCain, articles suggesting that our returning Iraq war veterans are murderous in nature, the insulting "General Betray us" issue--- all challenge the journalistic reputation of the Times. It would be a shame for this superb American newspaper to end up with a reputation as never having met a soldier they couldn't dislike.

To be fair to the Editors of the New York Times--- I was barely mentioned in the article. My prominent photos were just unfairly capitalizing on my high national NBC visibility. My multiple emails to the reporter were totally ignored in his story--- but must have resonated with the reviewing editors. Certainly the constant flow of New York Times articles stating my pointed criticisms of the conduct of the war was difficult for the reporter to not mention.

On 2 April 2003 -- the Times reported "General McCaffrey, of the Army, has been among the most openly critical and appears regularly on NBC and MSNBC." My Op-Ed in the Wall Street Journal on 1 April 2003 argued "Defense Secretary Rumsfeld has put us temporarily in a risky position." On 29 July 2003 in another Wall Street Journal article I noted "we risk breaking the back of the US Army and Marine Corps in the coming 24 months." On 29 November 2003 my Op-Ed in the WSJ was titled "Rumsfeld in Denial." On 27 June 2005 my WSJ Op-Ed noted "The US Army and the Marines...are starting to unravel. Congress is in denial and must act. In addition, the American people are losing faith in the statements of our defense department leadership. Support for the war is plummeting along with active-duty and National Guard recruiting." Then on 13 December 2006 in the Washington Post my Op-Ed noted that "We are in a very difficult position created by a micro-managed Rumsfeld war team that has been incompetent, arrogant, and in denial."

Indeed, a Google search of "Rumsfeld and McCaffrey" yields 14,000 hits....all critical of this badly mismanaged war. Hardly the stuff of someone shilling for the Pentagon or currying favor for private financial gain. Where was Congress during this time frame? Where was the New York Times?

My personal commitment to NBC News has been to provide objective, well-informed, non-partisan commentary on national security issues. I am enormously proud of my association with the integrity and accuracy of NBC reporting by TV journalists like Tom Brokaw, Brian Williams, Tim Russert, Jim Miklaszewski, and Richard Engel. Although I am an independent commentator, not a formal NBC employee – I share their commitment to comprehensively and critically informing the American people of the reality facing our combat forces. I am not a reporter. However, I am an expert on national security issues with four combat tours, three purple hearts, and a son who is a combat infantry soldier. I have been privileged to make multiple trips to both Iraq and Afghanistan. I routinely interact on national security issues with the Armed Services, the intelligence community, academia, the US Congress, defense industry, and foreign governments.

It is clear that on-air commentators who claim expertise in any arena must never confuse objective analysis with personal financial gain. The New York Times innuendo to this effect is dishonorable. Many of us serve transparently on the boards of defense related companies precisely because we are experts who add value to corporate governance. This should no more be an impediment to objective analysis than similar involvement by an expert in any other arena of business. If I ever encountered any direct conflict of interest--- I would ensure in speeches, Op-Ed's, or TV and radio commentary that it was disclosed or made explicit.

Finally, although I am committed to absolute integrity and objectivity in public debate – I am not neutral. My every statement and intellectual stance is devoted to a strong national defense and the brave men and women of the Armed Forces who have suffered 34,000 killed and injured while safeguarding us since 9-11.

Thank you for your leadership and for allowing me the opportunity to share these ideas. I would welcome this letter being made a part of the Congressional record.

Very Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "Barry R. McCaffrey", written over a horizontal line.

Barry R. McCaffrey  
General, USA (Ret.)

Enclosures:

*Testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, 17 April 2007*  
*Short Biography – General Barry McCaffrey, USA (Ret.)*



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U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

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May 21, 2008

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General Barry McCaffrey, USA (Ret.)  
BR McCaffrey Associates, LLC  
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Arlington, VA 22206

Dear General McCaffrey:

The Congress, and perhaps even more, the House Armed Services Committee, greatly values the testimony of retired military officers. We benefit so much from the experience, the wisdom, and the candor that comes from those years of past military service. I write because you are one of those individuals who responded to our committee's request to testify, and I know all the members greatly appreciate your service in this different role of contribution to our nation. Thank you for this service.

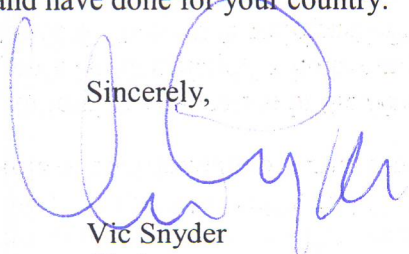
Questions have arisen, however, following publication in the *New York Times* April 20, 2008, of the article, "Behind TV Analysts, Pentagon's Hidden Hand," whether any of the retired military officers who testified before the House Armed Services Committee were part of what appears to have been a Pentagon message operation. The article did not discuss these questions. While I certainly understand and expect a retired officer to both maintain contacts and friendships and to seek out information in preparation for congressional testimony, the description by the *New York Times* goes to a kind of preparation that may in fact negate the candor we hope to hear from our retirees. To resolve the concerns that have been raised, I am writing to all the retired military officers who have testified before the House Armed Services Committee since 2003 to ask the following questions:

1. Were you part of this Pentagon media analysts program as described in the *New York Times*?
2. If so, in preparation for your testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, did you use the Pentagon contacts that were part of this program?

Please feel free to provide us with any additional comments you would like to make. Since these two questions are quite straight-forward, I would hope that a prompt response will be forthcoming.

Thank you again for all you do and have done for your country.

Sincerely,

  
Vic Snyder  
Chairman  
Oversight & Investigations

VFS:lmf