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  - » [Politics](#)
  - » [First Read](#)



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## McCain camp fires back at Obama

**Posted: Wednesday, March 19, 2008 2:20 PM by Mark Murray**

**Filed Under: [2008](#), [Security](#), [McCain](#), [Obama](#)**

**From NBC's Mark Murray**

**McCain** senior adviser Mark Salter just released this statement regarding the [Iraq speech](#) **Obama** gave earlier in the day. If this biting statement by Salter -- often viewed as McCain's alter ego -- is any indication, an Obama-McCain general election might be as contentious as the Obama-**Clinton** primary has been.

"Senator Obama says that ending the war will not be easy, that 'there will be dangers involved.' Yet, in that patented way of his, he declines to name those dangers. Let me enumerate a few: al Qaeda, which is now on the run, will survive, claim victory and continue to provoke sectarian tensions that, while they have been subdued by the 'tactics' of the surge, still exist and are ripe for provocation by al Qaeda, which would almost certainly ignite again civil war in Iraq, a civil war that could easily descend into genocide. To say that invading Iraq was used as a recruiting tool for al Qaeda is one thing. To pretend that our defeat there won't provide an even bigger one is foolish supposition. Iran, which trains Shia extremists and is known to arm and equip Sunni extremists, a fact Senator Obama is apparently unaware of, will also view our premature withdrawal as a victory, as will other countries in the region, and the biggest state supporter of terrorists, a country with nuclear ambitions and a stated desire to destroy the State of Israel, will see its influence in the Middle East grow significantly. These are some of 'dangers,' that our premature withdrawal from Iraq will engender, and they all have the potential to destabilize the entire region. A realistic plan to prevent them from occurring is what people with experience in statecraft call 'strategy,' something Senator Obama has not offered yet.

"Senator Obama, as has also become a habit of his 'new politics,' mischaracterizes John McCain's position by saying McCain did not want to reduce troops because the violence in Iraq was too high, and now do not wish to do so because the violence is down. The reason violence is down is because General Petraeus' counterinsurgency is, which even Senator Obama recognizes, succeeding. Those 'tactics,' are advancing our 'strategy.' Deprive General Petraeus of the resources and manpower to employ those tactics, or worse, leave Iraq altogether, and our strategy will collapse. That is national security 101. John McCain wants American forces to come home when our clear and serious interests at stake in Iraq, which nearly 4,000 Americans have given their lives to secure, are truly safe, when al Qaeda is defeated; Iran's influence is contained, and the potential for a truly cataclysmic civil war in Iraq is remote. That, I think, is what is called 'making us safer.' Senator Obama's plan, if it can be charitably described as one, would do the reverse."

\*\*\* UPDATE \*\*\*

Obama spokesman Bill Burton responds, "We wish the McCain campaign well as they try to figure out the difference between Iran and al Qaeda. Yesterday, Senator McCain said that Iran is "taking al Qaeda into Iran, training them and sending them back," to Iraq. This was shortly after telling talk radio host Hugh Hewitt, "As you know, there are al Qaeda

operatives that are taken back into Iran, given training as leaders, and they're moving back into Iraq." Or does Senator McCain believe the clarification he issued yesterday, "I'm sorry, the Iranians are training extremists, not al Qaeda." Or does he believe the statement that he issued today: "Al Qaeda and Shia extremists -- with support from external powers such as Iran -- are on the run but not defeated." Huh?"

More: "This fall, John McCain will support George Bush Foreign Policy 101: endless war in Iraq; a policy of not talking to adversaries that has not worked; and a disturbing tendency to conflate very different threats. Barack Obama will offer a clean break from the failed policies of the past. He will end the war in Iraq, finish the job in Afghanistan, and focus on the threats of the 21st century."

[Main page](#)

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 **Comments**

Folks, don't be so short sighted. Religious scholars of all ilks - black, white, Jewish, Christian AGREE that, though Wright's comments insult caucasian Judeo-Christians, they are typical of African American sermons. It is a cultural difference. The African American world view at times is critical of our nation, and this comes out during loud, boisterous sermons at times. But that doesn't mean they don't love their nation. They just want to see improvements. Something like criticizing your child's homework so they can do better next time. I am a white Christian, but am keeping an open mind and am trying to understand the greater issues so that our nation CAN unite, and no longer divide. It is our DIVISION as a NATION that has put this country squarely in the toilet. I applaud Obama's speech. It was the most honest, risky and spot-on given by any political candidate in decades. His speech was not poll-tested or vetted to death. It was a risk that will only serve our nation well in the long run because it's forced us to look at the Elephant in the Room. This shows good judgement.

**scj, california** (Sent Wednesday, March 19, 2008 2:25 PM)

Let the games begin. McCain doesn't even know who we're fighting. How can he be a good Commander in Chief? Salter might want to start addressing the fundamental gaffe his boss made yesterday, a gaffe so egregious it makes some Bushisms look brilliant.

**ME, CA** (Sent Wednesday, March 19, 2008 2:26 PM)

GO GET EM' MCCAIN !!!!

In all fairness... A Jr. Sen. NEEDS WAY ---WAY more experience to become President!!

WAY MORE!

**GO GET EM' MCCAIN!!** (Sent Wednesday, March 19, 2008 2:28 PM)

Mark Salter:

Clever response and witty in some places. But this isn't a creative writing contest. 5 years after this war started, your boss STILL doesn't know the difference between the Sunnis, Shiites, and Al Qaeda. I guess that's the Commander in Chief test for at least part of the country. If you know who we're fighting, you're not going to be a good commander in chief.

**Unbelievable** (Sent Wednesday, March 19, 2008 2:28 PM)

McCain and his campaign can twist and turns their words however they see fit, but the bottom line is that they are continuing to deceive the American people into believing that the threats in the Middle East are one and the same.

The truth is that they're not. Removing Saddam from power was the reason Iraq was invaded (or maybe it was WMD). Now that he's gone, there are warring factions (Sunni and Shia) that are trying to win control of Iraq. Iran happens to be sympathetic to the Shia. So there are three different parties involved here, Sunni, Shia, and Iran.

Now Al Qaeda is the radical terrorist group that is responsible for the attacks on 9/11. They planned these attacks from Afghanistan. Afghanistan happens to be a completely different country.

John McCain is doing what George W. Bush has been doing by linking all of these groups together. He is playing us all for fools.

**Enrique, Chicago** (Sent Wednesday, March 19, 2008 2:32 PM)

Great, just what we need--a president who must have 'handlers'. Jurassic Phil Gramm and Jack Kemp to whisper sweet economic nothings in his ear (which one's the good one, btw?); "Salter", whoever that is, to act 'politically'; maybe a lobbyist or three to help?

I guess I can see why HRC is so excited to run against the Repubs, whoever they're offering. But she's showing her colors by trying to screw it all up.

**iowan** (Sent Wednesday, March 19, 2008 2:33 PM)

Is this what Obama haters want? War instead of Wright, huh? You'd tank the country's prosperity to hold on to grudges against a pastor?

These are the same people that opted for 4 more yrs instead of gay marriage. I'd like to believe this honest genuine outrage, but my "spidey sense" tells me it's just BS.

i BET Morning Joe agrees (he wanted 4 more yrs too)

**Dr.Strangedog, MI** (Sent Wednesday, March 19, 2008 2:33 PM)

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