



The Hagel Fiasco

Obama's Pentagon Nominee Plagued By A Disastrous Confirmation Hearing And More Unanswered Questions

HAGEL'S POOR PERFORMANCE AT HIS CONFIRMATION HEARING WAS WIDELY CRITICIZED

Hagel "Seemed At Points At A Loss To Describe Why He Wanted The Job — Or Why President Barack Obama Wanted Him For It." "Senate confirmation hearings are often about the performances. Chuck Hagel delivered a particularly mediocre one. The former Nebraska senator struggled through answers, changed responses and seemed at points at a loss to describe why he wanted the job — or why President Barack Obama wanted him for it." (Josh Gerstein, "Five Takeaways From The Chuck Hagel Hearing," [Politico](#), 1/31/13)

- **The Hearing Did Little To Alleviate Concerns Over Whether Hagel "Has The Conviction And Knowledge To Protect U.S. Security Amid Growing World Turmoil And With A White House Bent On Cutting U.S. Defenses."** "The biggest question hanging over Chuck Hagel's nomination to lead the Pentagon is whether he has the conviction and knowledge to protect U.S. security amid growing world turmoil and with a White House bent on cutting U.S. defenses. His confirmation hearing on Thursday was hardly reassuring." (Editorial, "The Hagelian Method," [The Wall Street Journal](#), 1/31/13)
- **New York Magazine's Jonathan Chait: "The Hearings Cemented A Buffoonish Image Hagel Will Probably Never Shake And Destroyed Whatever Value-Over-Replacement He Could Have Brought As An Advocate Of Obama's Agenda."** (Jonathan Chait, "Whose Terrible Idea Was It to Nominate Hagel, Anyway?" [New York Magazine](#), 2/1/13)
- **Chait: "The Hagel Nomination Has Been A Fiasco."** "As it turned out, the Hagel nomination has been a fiasco. (Clemons's chins-up take that Hagel 'met expectations' is the most optimism any Hagel backers can muster.) It turns out there were reasons beyond the nefarious power of the Israel Lobby or the inexplicable timidity of the Democratic foreign-policy establishment not to nominate Chuck Hagel." (Jonathan Chait, "Whose Terrible Idea Was It to Nominate Hagel, Anyway?" [New York Magazine](#), 2/1/13)

Former Obama Adviser Robert Gibbs Called Hagel "Unimpressive And Unprepared." ROBERT GIBBS: "Let's split this into two buckets. So there were the totally superfluous questions that quite frankly, again, not gonna bear in big measure on what the next defense secretary does. The disconcerting thing obviously for anybody to watch, he seemed unimpressive and unprepared on the questions that quite frankly he knew was coming." (NBC's [Meet The Press](#), 2/3/13)

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NBC's Luke Russert: "So far it seems that Hagel drank the same juice Obama did before the 1st debate." (Luke Russert, [Twitter Feed](#), 1/31/13)

The Daily Beast's Peter Beinart: "hagel's making biden look rhetorically sure-footed." (Peter Beinart, [Twitter Feed](#), 1/31/13)

The Washington Post's Chris Cillizza: "Hagel has been pretty shaky thus far, right?" (Chris Cillizza, [Twitter Feed](#), 1/31/13)

Brookings' Tom Wright: "Not impressed by Hagel so far. This is one of the toughest jobs in govt. He needs to do better." (Tom Wright, [Twitter Feed](#), 1/31/13)

THE GREATEST HITS FROM HAGEL'S CONFIRMATION HEARING

If He Could Turn Back Time...

Hagel: "If I Had A Chance To Go Back On Many Things I've Said..." (Chuck Hagel, Armed Services Committee, U.S. Senate, [Hearing](#), 1/31/13)

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"Hagel Repeatedly Ran Away From His Own Statements" During The Hearing. "What's more, Hagel has said lots of things that Obama does not endorse, most of which Hagel himself no longer endorses, and some of which Hagel says he never believed at all. Hagel repeatedly ran away from his own statements, at one point explaining that he wished he could 'go back and edit that, like many of the things I've said, I would like to change the words and the meaning.'" (Jonathan Chait, "Whose Terrible Idea Was It to Nominate Hagel, Anyway?" [New York Magazine](#), 2/1/13)

- **"Again And Again, Hagel Found Himself On His Heels," Struggling To Defend Past Positions And Retract Prior Statements.** "Given the weeks of acrimonious back-and-forth over his nomination as secretary of defense, former Sen. Chuck Hagel couldn't — or shouldn't — have been taken by surprise by the fusillade of questions he faced Thursday about Israel, Iran and other national security issues. Yet, again and again, Hagel found himself on his heels, offering awkward retractions of his prior statements and repeatedly using garbled phrases that underscored pre-existing doubts about his positions. He seemed like a politician more suited for the revise-and-extend tradition of the Senate than for the YouTube age." (Josh Gerstein, "Five Takeaways From The Chuck Hagel Hearing," [Politico](#), 1/31/13)

Repeated Stumbles On Iran

"Hagel Repeatedly Struggled With Questions About Perhaps The Single Most Important Policy Decision He Will Play A Role In, The U.S. Relationship With Iran..." "Secretary of Defense nominee Chuck Hagel repeatedly struggled with questions about perhaps the single most important policy decision he will play a role in, the U.S. relationship with Iran, during his confirmation hearing on Capitol Hill Thursday morning. Hagel said at one point that he supports 'containment' — typically meant to mean accepting a nuclear-armed Iran — and calling Iran's government 'elected and legitimate.'" (Rosie Gray, "An Off-Kilter Chuck Hagel Fumbles On Iran," [BuzzFeed](#), 1/31/13)

Hagel "Inadvertently" Claimed That The Obama Administration Supports "Containment" And Referred To Iran's "Elected Legitimate Government." "Chuck Hagel stumbled Thursday during questioning on Iran, inadvertently saying the Obama administration supports 'containment' and calling

the country an 'elected legitimate government.' 'I support the president's strong position on containment, as I have said,' the former Republican senator from Nebraska told the Senate Armed Services Committee considering his nomination for Defense secretary." (Tim Mak, "Chuck Hagel Stumbles On Iran Question," [Politico](#), 1/31/13)

- **Repeated Clarifications About His Stance On Containment, "Made Hagel Seem Slightly Confused."** "In a response to a question about preventing Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, Hagel referred to 'containment' — a Cold War-style tactic that is contrary to President Obama's stated favored policy of prevention. Hagel was then passed a note, looked at it, and took back his 'containment' statement, saying that the administration was against that. It was a slip, as Hagel had said previously in the hearing that his position was 'the same as president's, one of prevention and not of containment,' but one that made Hagel seem slightly confused." (Rosie Gray, "An Off-Kilter Chuck Hagel Fumbles On Iran," [BuzzFeed](#), 1/31/13)

Hagel "Seemed Unwilling To Really Justify His Former Stances" On Unilateral Sanctions. "As for his positions on unilateral sanctions — he was against them before he was for them — Hagel has seemed unwilling to really justify his former stances, just arguing that his previous votes were during a different atmosphere." (Rosie Gray, "An Off-Kilter Chuck Hagel Fumbles On Iran," [BuzzFeed](#), 1/31/13)

Hagel Sent "An Inconsistent And Confusing Message" To Iran About The Military Option. "And so on his first outing, Mr. Hagel fell immediately into the trap that Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and several other administration officials have complained about in recent years. He became the latest official to send what many inside the administration fear has been an inconsistent and confusing message to Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, about whether the Obama administration would, if there was no other option, take military measures to prevent Iran from possessing a weapon." (David Sanger, "On Iran, Hagel Muddles The Message," [The New York Times' The Caucus](#), 2/1/13)

"Implausible" Defense Of His Anti-Nuclear Report

Hagel Made The "Downright Implausible" Claim That The Global Zero Report He Co-Authored Did Not Suggest That The U.S. Should Consider Unilaterally Reducing Its Nuclear Arsenal. "Still, some of Hagel's explanations about his views on the nuclear issues seemed downright implausible. Just last year, he signed a report which said repeatedly that the U.S. should consider acting unilaterally to make dramatic reductions in its nuclear arsenal. 'These steps could be taken with Russia in unison ... negotiated in another round of bilateral arms reduction talks, or implemented unilaterally,' the report said. Hagel insisted that, the report's words notwithstanding, he never held such a view. 'It didn't propose or call for anything,' he claimed. 'Bilateral not unilateral ... nothing was ever suggested on a unilateral basis to take down our arsenal.'" (Josh Gerstein, "Five Takeaways From The Chuck Hagel Hearing," [Politico](#), 1/31/13)

AND HAGEL IS STILL WITHHOLDING INFORMATION FROM THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Hagel Missed The Deadline Set By Senate Armed Forces Committee Chairman Carl Levin (D-MI) To Provide Transcripts From Paid Speeches And Financial Information About The Organizations He Has Worked With Over The Past 5 Years. "At Hagel's Jan. 31 confirmation hearing, ranking Republican James Inhofe (R-OK) noted that the committee had requested Hagel provide all of the speeches he had delivered over the last five years, since he left the Senate, including disclosing who paid him for them. Chairman Carl Levin (D-MI) gave Hagel a deadline of Monday at 5 p.m. to provide more information for the record. Hagel testified that many of his speeches were private, not videotaped, and often did not

include prepared remarks, but that he would comply with all legal requirements.” (Josh Rogin, “GOP Senators Call For Delay In Hagel Committee Vote,” [Foreign Policy's The Cable](#), 2/5/13)

Hagel Declined Requests From The Senate Armed Services Committee To Provide Information On Foreign Funding For The Corporate And Nonprofit Organizations He Has Worked With Since Leaving The Senate. “President Barack Obama's nominee for Secretary of Defense, Chuck Hagel, has informed the Senate Armed Services Committee that he will not provide foreign financial details for the corporate and nonprofit organizations he was affiliated with since he left the Senate in 2009. Republican members of the committee asked Hagel last week for information on whether any of the organizations received funding from any foreign government, individual, or corporation — a request he declined late Tuesday in a letter citing confidentiality agreements.” (Zeke Miller, “Hagel Tells Lawmakers He Can't Provide Details On Speaking Engagements, Foreign Funders,” [BuzzFeed](#), 2/6/13)

Hagel Also Told The Committee He Was Unable To Provide Transcripts Or Recordings Of All Paid Speeches He Delivered After Leaving The Senate, And Claimed He Had Not Prepared Written Remarks Before Any Of Those Speeches. “The committee also requested the transcripts or recordings of any paid speeches delivered by Hagel since he left the Senate — a request Hagel also said he could not accommodate. In his letter to lawmakers, Hagel said his contracts stipulated the speeches were off the record and not to be recorded. He added that he never prepared written remarks before his speeches.” (Zeke Miller, “Hagel Tells Lawmakers He Can't Provide Details On Speaking Engagements, Foreign Funders,” [BuzzFeed](#), 2/6/13)