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OBAMA NATIONAL CAMPAIGN CO-CHAIRMAN GENERAL MERRILL McPEAK DISPUTES ANTI-ISRAEL CHARGES FROM REPUBLICAN JEWISH COALITION

March 28, 2008 (Fort Lee, NJ) -- General Merrill "Tony" McPeak, Senator Barack Obama's military advisor and national campaign co-chairman, responds to charges from the Republican Jewish Coalition of "alarming anti-Israel views" that warrant his removal by telling Shalom TV that he has "no criticism of Israel."

Wednesday's RJC attack cites a 1976 *Foreign Affairs* article written by General McPeak that criticized Israel for not returning to the 1967 borders, and a 2003 interview in the *Oregonian* in which he blamed the lack of Middle East peace progress on the undue political influence of American Jews.



"This all stems from an article I wrote in the mid-70s, [and] I urge you to get the article," states General McPeak to Shalom TV's Mark S. Golub. "The Council on Foreign Relations has published it again on their Web site. I will happily buy you dinner anywhere if you can find those words in that article. This is baloney."

"I decided a long time ago that I was on Israel's side," declares General McPeak. "I'm a long-term admirer of Israel and consider myself a friend of Israel."

In an exclusive phone interview, the retired former chief of staff of the US Air Force notes that, even today, he has "fighter pilot friends and buddies in Israel who, I hope, are not alarmed by these scurrilous charges that I regard Israel as the bad guy in the Middle East."

General McPeak does suggest "it would serve everyone's purposes for Israel to remove itself from occupied territories in conditions that represent a negotiated solution agreeable to both sides.

"What Israel's security requires is peace with its neighbors, and a failure to get to a negotiated solution on the occupied territories has prevented peace. There's enough blame on both sides, and even blame for the United States. I would like the United States to play a constructive role to bring about progress in the [peace] process."

The general makes clear he does not hold Israel responsible for failing to return to the 1967 borders, and sees no moral equivalence between terrorists bombing Israeli restaurants and people who want to make peace.

General McPeak also feels that the American Jewish community has not acted inappropriately with respect to US foreign policy in Israel and the Middle East, saying that "American Jewry has some influence, just like [American] Irish have influence about Ireland policy, just like the National Rifle Association has something to say about our arms policy.

"I don't object to interest groups or lobbying groups exercising influence. I think our government takes account of the various kinds of competing interests that are represented in our country, and then acts in a way that is consistent with our own best interest."

Regarding the RJC, General McPeak concludes, "you'll have to check with them [on] what they're trying to do here. Or with the Clinton campaign. This has the smell of politics, doesn't it?"

Shalom TV [www.shalomtv.com] is a mainstream Jewish cable television network seen nationally on Comcast; in New York and New Jersey on Time Warner; and in Pennsylvania on Blue Ridge Communications. The free English-language "Video On Demand" network features news and event coverage, a Jewish film festival, Israel updates and travelogues, kids programs, and Jewish studies. Shalom TV's offices and production facilities are located in the New York City metropolitan area.

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