



11350 Random Hills Road, Suite 800, Fairfax, Virginia 22030 Phone (703) 934-6101 Fax (703) 352-3678

[fff@fff.org](mailto:fff@fff.org) [www.fff.org](http://www.fff.org)

---

## **Thank You, Ron Paul** **by Sheldon Richman**

Ron Paul, a Republican congressman running for president, is saying what needs to be said about the 9/11 attacks and the Iraq war. Clearly, his rivals and the news media can't handle the truth.

At the most recent Republican debate Paul not only repeated his opposition to the illegal and unconstitutional war, but he also identified 50 years of U.S. intervention in the Middle East as "a major contributing factor" in al-Qaeda's attacks in 2001.

"Have you ever read the reasons they attacked us? They attack[ed] us because we've been over there; we've been bombing Iraq for 10 years. We've been in the Middle East," Paul said.

Paul thus becomes the first person in mainstream politics — he's been in Congress many years — to acknowledge that U.S. foreign policy has had bad consequences not only for people in the Middle East but for Americans at home as well. A government cannot take sides in so many deep-seated conflicts for as long as the U.S. government has without acquiring enemies and provoking retaliation.

It doesn't take much knowledge of history and human nature — not to mention the official 9/11 Commission report — to see this. It's about time it was said in such a prominent forum.

Of course, the reaction was stunningly absurd.

FOX News questioner Wendell Goler said in follow-up, "Are you suggesting we invited the 9/11 attack, sir?"

Let's examine the question. To invite something is to desire the thing invited. Paul suggested no such thing. And who is "we"? Goler's question implies that Paul was saying the American people or "America" invited the attacks. But Paul was talking about American policymakers, not the American people. So the question was way off the mark and may have been an attempt to bait Paul.

He wouldn't take the bait. "I'm suggesting that we listen to the people who attacked us and the reason they did it," he said. In other words, the people who masterminded the attack did not say they did it because we Americans are rich or free or non-Muslim. Their grievances relate to systematic U.S. intervention in the region: in particular, the presence of troops near holy sites in Saudi Arabia; a 10-year bombing campaign and killer embargo on Iraq (beginning in 1991), which

cost hundreds of thousands of lives; and support for Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Rudolph Giuliani, also running for the nomination, responded demagogically, "That's an extraordinary statement, as someone who lived through the attack of September 11, that we invited the attack because we were attacking Iraq.... I would ask the congressman to withdraw that comment and tell us that he didn't really mean that."

Of course, Paul never said "we invited the attack." And he didn't back down under Giuliani's grandstanding: "I believe very sincerely that the CIA is correct when they teach and talk about 'blowback.' When we went into Iran in 1953 and installed the shah, yes, there was blowback. A reaction to that was the taking of our hostages and that persists. And if we ignore that, we ignore that at our own risk. If we think that we can do what we want around the world and not incite hatred, then we have a problem."

In saying "blowback," Paul was using the CIA's term for the *unintended* bad consequences of a government operation. He specifically mentioned Iran in 1953, when the Eisenhower administration sent the CIA to help drive an elected secular prime minister from office and return the despotic shah to power. The result was the 1979 Islamic revolution, the seizure of the American embassy, complete with hostages, and close to 30 years of hostility, with war perhaps to come.

U.S. imperialist policies in the Middle East have been good for special interests and power-loving politicians, but bad for the American people. Someone in government has finally had the courage to say so.

Thank you, Ron Paul.

*Sheldon Richman is senior fellow at The Future of Freedom Foundation, author of **Tethered Citizens: Time to Repeal the Welfare State**, and editor of [The Freeman](#) magazine. Visit his blog "Free Association" at [www.sheldonrichman.com](http://www.sheldonrichman.com).*

**This article was originally published in May 2007.**