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## A Wartime President: Obama Moves More Hawkish

By Jason Ditz

November 24, 2014

President Obama has long couched his foreign policy as at least comparatively moderate, presenting everything he does as the half-measure alternative to some senatorial superhawk's demands.

Yet Obama seems to be shifting himself further and further into the position of a hawkish, wartime president, and his actions over the past few days reflect an attempt to reinvent his foreign policy.

After years of talking up the 2014 end to the Afghan War, the end of 2014 is fast upon is. Unwilling to lose one of his defining wars, President Obama was revealed Friday to have issued a secret order extending direct combat in the country through at least the end of 2015. He also made a deal over the weekend that ended a ban on night raids, which have caused a number of Afghan civilian casualties.

Today, he took a further step toward packing his cabinet with hawks, firing Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, a man who was initially hired to end the Afghan War and get the Pentagon's books in order.

The Afghan War isn't ending, and you certainly can't have the Pentagon's books in order when there are brand new wars in Syria and Iraq to throw endless money and escalations at.

Who's coming in to replace Hagel is unclear so far, but the front-runner is Michele Flournoy, who as Undersecretary of Defense presented "ending" the war in Iraq as leaving 60,000 troops there indefinitely.

Hagel was too worried about what stuff cost and whether it made sense, and issued a memo recently complaining that the administration was talking up ousting Syrian President Bashar Assad while all its policies in Syria were expanding his hold.

The administration has made clear those sorts of questions aren't very welcome from the press and the public, and it must be doubly so for cabinet members, who aren't so easily ignored. Whether Flournoy or not, expect the next US Defense Minister not to ask too many questions.