

The Queen's 'honorary knights' in America

by Scott Thompson

Queen Elizabeth II has sought to gain influence in the United States by handing out as a rare currency "Honorary Knight-hoods," which narrowly squeak by constitutional provisions that no American official shall hold a title without approval of Congress. In all, about two dozen such knighthoods have been granted thus far, most recently to the Bush Babies, in recognition of their service in the 1991 British-directed Persian Gulf war.

Here are listed, by order of rank and seniority, some of these knighthoods:

President "Sir" **Ronald Reagan**; Honorary Knight Grand Cross of the Order of Bath (GCB).

President "Sir" **George Bush**; Honorary Knight Grand Cross of the Order of Bath (GCB).

"Sir" **Henry Kissinger**, former secretary of state, Presidential adviser for national security, and former member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board; Honorary Knight Commander of the Order of St. Michael and St. George (KCMG). This rank is normally given to top British diplomats.

"Sir" **Hugh Bullock**, retired investment banker, aged 98, and raving Anglophile; Honorary Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire (GBE) and Honorary Knight of Grace of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem.

"Sir" **Douglas Fairbanks**, actor and military man, who served as aide-de-camp to Lord Mountbatten, as well as performing tasks for NATO, SEATO, and the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff; Honorary Knight of the British Empire (KBE) and member of a dozen other orders of chivalry.

"Sir" **Grayson L. Kirk**, former president, now president *emeritus*, of Columbia University; chancellor *emeritus* of the American Society of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem.

"Sir" **Paul Mellon**, "Lord of Loudoun County"; Honorary Knight of the British Empire (KBE) and Knight of the Order of Orange Nassau.

Gen. "Sir" **Norman Schwarzkopf**, Field Commander of Operation Desert Storm; Honorary Knight of the British Empire (KBE).

Gen. "Sir" **Colin Powell**, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Honorary Knight of the British Empire (KBE).

Gen. "Sir" **Brent Scowcroft**, former Presidential adviser for national security and now George Bush's top adviser;

Honorary Knight of the British Empire (KBE).

"Sir" **Caspar Weinberger**, former secretary of defense; Honorary Knight of the British Empire (KBE).

A lifetime of service

There are fewer than two dozen "Honorary Knights" in the United States. As the director of the Honours Department of the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office put it: "One must not debase the currency. An Honorary Knighthood means either a lifetime of service to the British Empire, or to the furtherance of U.S. relations with the British Empire."

President Bush was awarded the highest level of "Honorary Knighthood" that can be given someone who is not a subject of HM Queen Elizabeth II in one of the 17 countries of the British Empire in which she is queen; this is because Bush has been the most amenable of all Presidents to British policy since Harry Truman, as the Gulf war demonstrated.

The Queen issued special orders so that General Schwarzkopf could receive his "Honorary Knighthood" while still in office, because of his role in Desert Storm. The Queen, as the only figure in the British Empire who can declare war and as the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, had demanded daily briefings from and issued orders to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the "Iron Lady" who is credited with giving President Bush spine during the Gulf war. Immediately after the war, Elizabeth paid an official visit to the United States to distribute awards to Bush, Schwarzkopf, and Powell.

Violation of the Constitution

These "Honorary Knighthoods" try to circumvent the U.S. Constitution, whose Article I, Section 7, states: "No Title of Nobility shall be granted by the United States: And no Person holding any Office of Profit or Trust under them, shall, without the Consent of the Congress, accept any present, Emolument, Office, or Title, of any kind whatsoever, from any King, Prince, or foreign State."

Not only are the knighthoods called "honorary," but the recipient is not supposed to use the title of "Sir," either in the United States or in the British Empire. Moreover, since these are not the Queen's "subjects," but have only given extraordinary service over their lifetime to advance the goals of the British Empire, they are not "dubbed" by the Queen. And, usually, the British Empire waits until after a person has left office to grant them an "Honorary Knighthood."

Still, especially in the case of General Schwarzkopf, where this provision was waived, the U.S. Constitution is clear that a holder of "any Office" may not "accept any present, Emolument, Office, of Title of any kind whatsoever" without the permission of Congress. Presumably, the receipt of "Honorary Knighthoods" by the above-mentioned crowd should keep them from holding office in the future without a specific waiver by Congress.