

## Pro-'surge' group is almost all Jewish

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Four of five members of the board of a campaign promoting President Bush's policies in the Iraq war are Republican Jews. The board of 'Freedom's Watch' includes Ari Fleischer, Bush's former press secretary; Matt Brooks, the executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition; Bradley Blakeman, a senior White House staffer in Bush's first term; and Mel Sembler, a longtime RJC leader and former ambassador to Rome.

Brooks told JTA that the fifth member, William Weidner, a casino operator in Las Vegas, is not Jewish. However, Weidner's wife, Lynn, is Jewish and is active in that city's federation. Blakeman is the group's president. Brooks said it would be a mistake to regard the group as having a Jewish direction.

"It's a coincidence that several of the board members are Jewish," he said, noting that half of the donors contributing to the group's first \$15 million ad campaign are not Jewish.

The ad blitz will promote Bush's 'surge' policy in Iraq ahead of September, when Congress is set to assess the success of the influx of additional U.S. troops into Iraq. Brooks said the aim ultimately is to build a grassroots organization that would promote Republican domestic and foreign policies and would replicate similar groups backing Democrats.

"This is a clear message to conservatives and Republicans and others who see what has happened on the left to let them know with Freedom's Watch that the cavalry is coming," Brooks said.

Of eight donors named Thursday in Politico, a political newspaper, four are Jewish: Sembler; Richard Fox, the chairman of the Jewish Policy Center, an RJC-affiliated think tank; Ed Snider, the founder of the Philadelphia Flyers ice hockey franchise who has been elected to several Jewish Sports Halls of Fame; and Sheldon Adelson, a Las Vegas casino operator who recently launched a giveaway newspaper venture in Israel.

Source: [www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org)

Imagine the storm if a group of Muslims started an organisation in the United States to promote a military 'surge' in Israel?