* add more about Joanne Herring?
  + [(copdr64d)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wobG_68P_LE)

**CHARLIE WILSON WINS THE WAR.**

In the Caesar’s Palace Fantasy Suite hot tub, Charlie Wilson sits naked with three women and an “endless supply” of cocaine. He turns to the right to reach for his whiskey, and he notices several Afghan soldiers in the small television in the corner of the room. The soldiers were on a Dan Rather segment on CBS. He hears one of the warriors tell the interviewer, “if you just give us guns, we can win,” (Crile 2007) referencing the fight against the Soviet Army. The next day, he reads a story datelined from Kabul describing the hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing Afghanistan as Soviet helicopter gunships level villages and slaughter families. He is surprised at the persistence of the Afghan warriors. They murder Russians in the dead of night, hitting them over the head with shovels and stones. Against all odds, there was a growing rebellion under way against the Red Army. (Crile 2003)

**From Stones to Stingers**

In December 1979, the Red Army invaded Afghanistan, beginning the Soviet-Afghan War. The United States refused to let Afghanistan (oil) go, and waged a proxy war, funding the Afghan mujahideen, a group of barefoot, highly religious insurgents. Charlie Wilson, a representative from the second district of Texas, was a major force behind the outcome of the Soviet Afghan War. He had control over of funds for the CIA. Roused by the Afghan story, Wilson called an Appropriations Committee staffer who managed“black appropriations”, the funding for operations of the Central Intelligence Agency. The staffer was named Jim Van Wagenen. In a famous telephone conversation, Wilson in two words ignited the largest covert battle in the history of the Cold War.

“How much are we giving the Afghans?” he asked Van Wagenen.

“Five million,” said the staffer.

“Double it.” (Crile, 2007)

It is important to point out how Wilson so easily crossed the line into this covert area that no one questioned his right to be there or the precedent he was setting. He was the first Congressman to move unsolicited to increase the CIA budget (a right exclusively granted to the president). But this is where he first demonstrated that there could be another power center in the American government, one that could act in a way that was totally unpredictable to drive a U.S. covert policy.

**The Devil’s Chariot**

In response to the pushing of Joanne Herring, an international socialite and activist, Wilson visited Pakistan to tour the U.N.-supported refugee camps in Peshawar. He saw millions of Afghans. Although none of the millions of Afghan residents had a constant source of food or water, all had horrible stories of what caused them to flee their villages, many of which centered around the Satanic gunships from the Communists. Wilson realized there were only Afghans in the refugee camps part he visited—an entire country was fleeing the Communists. Although the camps roused him, it at was his next stop, the Red Cross hospital on the edge of Peshawar, that he committed himself to the cause of the Afghans. Myriad men were laid on hospital cots. Boys with their limbs blown off by Soviet mines designed to look like toys. Many soldiers again described the Russian gunships and asked for a weapon to destroy these vehicles. This fixation on the Soviet MI-24 helicopter (dubbed by the mujahideen as “The Devil’s Chariot”) was even more apparent when Wilson met with a council of Afghan elders.

“We’re going to help you. None of your families will suffer from lack of shelter and food,” Wilson assured them.

“You can keep your bandages and rice,” said the elders. “We need a weapon to destroy the gunships.” (Crile, 2003)

These people did not care for sympathy nor did they care for medicine or charity. They wanted revenge. And they received it, courtesy of Charlie Wilson. After cajoling many Congressman and inveigling out of the United States government millions in ammunition and weapons out of the United States, the Afghans received long-range FIM Stingers and satellite-guided mortars, decimating the Soviet gunships. On February 15, 1989, when the last Soviet soldier walked out of Afghanistan, many echoed the words of Pakistan’s military leader General Zia ul-Haq: “Charlie did it.” Four years later, the CIA itself treated Congressman Wilson to a rare honour inside its headquarters in Langley, Virginia: the Honored Colleague Award. (Crile, 2003) Director Woolsey said in his comments, “History might have been hugely different and sadly different.” (Crile, 2007)

Through his small subcommittee, he became one of the most influential congressmen in American history, winning the war and rapidly advancing the collapse of the Soviet Union.

“I truly believe that this caused the Berlin Wall to come down a good five, maybe ten, years before it would have otherwise. Over a million Russian Jews got their freedom and left for Israel; God knows how many were freed from the gulags. At least a hundred million Eastern Europeans are breathing free today, to say nothing of the Russian people. It's the truth, and all those people who are enjoying those freedoms have no idea of the part played by a million Afghan ghosts. To this day no one has ever thanked them.” (Crile, 2007)