

Rangel's Military Draft Bill Ruffles Hawks' Feathers

by Michele Steinberg

A New Year's Eve commentary in the *New York Times*, "Bring Back the Draft," by Rep. Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.), the ranking Democrat on the Ways and Means Committee and a senior member of the Black Caucus, has the pro-Iraq war "chicken-hawks," and their allies among the uniformed utopians "up in arms." Rangel said he would introduce legislation to restore the military draft—a promise on which he delivered on Jan. 7, the first day of the 108th Congress. Even before the bill was introduced, angry responses against Rangel, and against Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.), also a senior member of the Black Caucus, who supports the bill, appeared in the financier oligarchy's *Wall Street Journal*, accusing them of political opportunism and playing race politics; and came from Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who implied that Rangel is ignorant of the matters of the "professional military."

Apparently, Rangel, who is a decorated Korean War veteran and, during the Vietnam War, was general counsel to the National Advisory Commission on Selective Service (the "draft board"), hit a nerve.

Rangel's move was a welcome dose of reality, as a flood of daily headlines were chronicling the Rumsfeld-ordered deployments of U.S. troops to the Middle East, to take up positions that would be used in a war against Iraq. Well-informed Washington sources told *EIR* that the total of forces, already on location, combined with those deployments which have been announced and are planned for the immediate future, adds up to 100,000 American troops—combat and support. Behind the scenes in Washington, the sources said, complaints are growing that this deployment stretches the violation of "separation of powers" between the Executive and Congress on fighting a war, to the limit. Public criticism

may break out, these sources said.

Rangel's commentary has caused a furor among pro-war utopians, precisely because most of the war-mongers are "chicken-hawks," who have no military experience, and who are in no danger of having their own children involved in a war. Rangel's article noted: "President Bush and his Administration have declared a war against terrorism that may soon involve sending thousands of American troops into combat in Iraq. I voted against the Congressional resolution giving the President authority to carry out this war—an engagement that would dwarf our military efforts to find Osama bin Laden and bring him to justice.

"But as a combat veteran of the Korean conflict, I believe that if we are going to send our children to war, the governing principle must be that of shared sacrifice. . . . Yet the Congress that voted overwhelmingly to allow the use of force in Iraq includes only one member who has a child in the enlisted ranks of the military. . . . I believe that if those calling for war knew that their children were likely to be required to serve—and to be placed in harm's way—there would be more caution and a greater willingness to work with the international community in dealing with Iraq. A renewed draft will help bring a greater appreciation of the consequences of decisions to go to war. . . .

"A disproportionate number of the poor and members of minority groups make up the enlisted ranks of the military, while the most privileged Americans are under-represented or absent. . . .

"*We need to return to the tradition of the citizen soldier—with alternative national service required for those who cannot serve because of physical limitations or reasons of conscience*" (emphasis added).



Rep. Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.), a decorated Korean War veteran, has introduced a bill to restore a mandatory draft for universal military or alternative service. Lyndon LaRouche hailed Rangel's legislation as "the get-real bill." It has stung the Utopian advocates of "professional armies" and imperial wars, like the invasion of Iraq—which Rangel opposes.

Blasting the Chicken-Hawks

Rangel, who was awarded a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star for his service, went even further in several television and radio interviews on Jan. 3. Speaking on National Public Radio, he said, "If indeed the President believes war is necessary in terms of our national welfare, then he has to believe that sacrifices have to be made, and those sacrifices have to be shared. We have to kick up a notch the sense of patriotism and the sense of obligation."

When the host of NBC's Today Show asked, "Are you talking of all those people in the higher echelon, all the way up to the top, not being aware of the cost of minorities? Are you saying that?" Rangel replied: "After you get past Colin Powell, they haven't the slightest clue as to the pain of war, the sacrifice of war."

"Wait a minute!" the interviewer interrupted. "You're talking about Donald Rumsfeld, the Defense Secretary. You're saying he doesn't have an idea of the cost, the pain of war? The President of the United States?"

Rangel responded: "Well, when Rumsfeld gets on television and says, 'We can fight more than one war at a time; we can fight in North Korea; we can fight in Afghanistan; we can fight'—when the President of the United States says, 'I've made a New Year's resolution to eat less cheeseburgers, and not to go to war in Iraq if I can avoid it'—that's no way to be talking about war."

He continued, "When I talk with people who support the war, I ask, 'Do you have any idea, do you know anybody who has anybody in the military that would be exposed to this pain and this sacrifice?' And they don't, because these people are not able to negotiate for themselves. And others have treated this as though it was the French Foreign Legion. After all, they volunteered. They're being paid to fight. And a lot of those kids and their families have been on food stamps."

Representative Conyers was quoted on Jan. 3, "It has unfortunately become the duty of someone else's child to go to war and die, as the privileged evade the tragic consequences of war."

Rumsfeld Shoots Back

Rangel's legislation would reinstitute a draft to compulsory military or alternative national service for men and women aged 18-26, who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents. He said bluntly, "This legislation is necessary to achieve a full sharing of the sacrifice which will be required . . . if the President chooses to invade Iraq." The national service can be defined by the President, for national or homeland security.

Later that day, at the Pentagon briefing, Rumsfeld blew his stack. The same Secretary of Defense—who had in earlier moments repeatedly called for emergency measures, including sacrificing civil liberties, because America is "at war" against terrorism, said that the draft proposal has "notable disadvantages" which a professional military force does not. Relegating "patriotism" to his other press conferences, Rumsfeld complained that under a draft, people would be "forced" to serve, and could earn less than they would in the private sector. And draftees are "churned" through the system, making it very expensive, because they "serve the minimum amount of time."

He made an attempt to refute Rangel and Conyers' assertions that the poor and minorities fill the ranks of the enlisted military. "I do not know that that's historically correct," complained the Secretary. "And I do not know that, even if it were historically correct, that it's correct today."

But the real issue is the deeper one raised by Rangel, that it is time to return "to the tradition of the citizen soldier," which is a tradition that was deliberately marked for destruction by Zbigniew Brzezinski clone, Samuel P. Huntington, in the 1956 book, *The Soldier and the State*, where he insisted that soldiers become automatons, following the orders of a civilian leadership, and that they have *no* political or strategic thoughts or identity. Huntington, who, later, with input from British intelligence operative Bernard Lewis, invented the "Clash of Civilizations" war against Islam, argued that the military should be held to the code: "Ours is not to reason why; ours is just to do and die."

Representative Rangel's proposal is unquestionably a provocation to both the chicken-hawks and to the citizens who have let the utopians bring the United States to the brink of starting a global imperial war, which could go nuclear.