

National Security Mandarins Assail Bush and Cheney

by Jeffrey Steinberg

A prestigious group of several dozen retired American diplomats and military commanders held a standing-room-only press conference in Washington today, to assail the Bush Administration's disastrous foreign and national security policy record, and demand that the Administration be swept out of office in the November elections. The ad hoc group, which calls itself Diplomats and Military Commanders for Change, includes 27 retired generals, admirals and ambassadors, who have served in both Democratic and Republican administrations over the span of the entire post-World War II era.

Among the leading signators on the group's statement, which was read at today's National Press Club event are: Ambassador Chas. W. Freeman, Jr., former U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia; Admiral William J. Crowe, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, former Chairman of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Committee, and former Ambassador to the Court of Saint James; General Joseph P. Hoar (USMC), former Commander in Chief of the U.S. Central Command; Samuel Lewis, former U.S. Ambassador to Israel; Jack Matlock, former U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union; Donald McHenry, former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations; General Merrill McPeak (USAF), former Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force; Phyllis Oakley, former Assistant Secretary of States for Intelligence and Research; and Arthur Hartman, former U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union.

In her opening remarks at the Washington press conference, Ambassador Phyllis Oakley explained that "to be involved in an act that will be seen by many as political if not partisan is for many of us a new experience. As career government officials, we have served loyally both Republican and Democratic administrations. . . . For many of us, such an overt step is very hard to do and we have made our decisions after deep reflection. We believe we have as good an under-

standing as any of our citizens, of basic American interests. Over nearly half a century we have worked energetically in all regions of the world, often in very difficult circumstances, to build, piece by piece, a structure of respect and influence for the United States that has served our country very well over the last 60 years. Today we see that structure crumbling under an administration blinded by ideology, and a callous indifference to the realities of the world around it. Never before have so many of us felt the need for a major change in the direction of our foreign policy. . . . Everything we have heard from friends abroad on every continent suggests to us that the lack of confidence in the present administration in Washington is so profound that a whole new team is needed to repair the damages."

After reading a brief official statement from the group, Ambassador Oakley opened the press conference to questions, which went for nearly one hour. Some of the most dramatic exchanges came in response to questions from two correspondents for *Executive Intelligence Review* who attended the conference. *EIR* White House correspondent Bill Jones pressed the panelists—a dozen of the signators—to "name the names" of the Administration officials who had done so much damage to U.S. national security and prestige worldwide.

Ambassador William Harrop, who served as U.S. ambassador to Israel, Zaire, Kenya and Guinea, before becoming Inspector General of the State Department and Foreign Service, responded. He made it clear that the group holds President Bush personally responsible for taking the advice of the five or six well-known neo-conservatives who have shaped the Administration's disastrous policy course, particularly in Iraq and the larger Southwest Asia region. He characterized Bush as a "forceful President who is in charge," and who



At the press conference of Diplomats and Military Commanders for change, Amb. William Harrop, who served in Israel, Zaire, Kenya, and Guinea and was Inspector General of the State Department, responded to EIR's White House correspondent who asked the group to "name names." Harrop said the group holds President Bush personally responsible for taking the advice of the five or six well-known neo-conservatives, who have shaped the Administration's disastrous policy course,

listens to the neo-cons "because he wants to." Ambassador Harrop made it clear that, while the group has no formal ties to John Kerry or his Presidential campaign, they are committed to the idea that the Bush Administration must be swept from office in November.

EIR Senior Editor Jeff Steinberg put the issue of the torture at Abu Ghraib on the table, asking for the group's perspective on war crime prosecutions of top Bush Administration officials. Ambassador Robert Oakley, former U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, Somalia and Zaire responded. He said that the legal accountability of Administration officials was, in his view, secondary to the moral accountability, which has created a "moral disaster" for the United States. He reminded the audience that the U.S. purportedly went into Iraq to change the regime, because Saddam Hussein had been guilty of atrocious crimes, at places like Abu Ghraib. The invasion, according to Team Bush, was to be a "transforming event," bringing human rights, democracy and other American values to Iraq and to the region as a whole. "What does it say to the Muslim world when the United States engages in the same kinds of torture and crimes at the same Abu Ghraib? This," he concluded, "is a moral and political disaster."

Ambassador Chas. W. Freeman, Jr. continued, recounting his experience as U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Storm in 1991. He said that at that time, the U.S. military had impressed him greatly, and he was proud of

the caliber of the U.S. armed forces. He then charged that the Bush-Cheney Administration had nearly destroyed the U.S. military through the Iraq war fiasco. He said that the kind of occupation duty and internal security work that has been thrust on a totally untrained and unprepared U.S. military and reserve force has been "morally corrosive." This destruction of the U.S. military, he warned, is the "great unspoken disaster of this misadventure" in Iraq.

Debunking the 9/11 Myth

Two other speakers—Ambassador Robert Keeley, former U.S. ambassador to Greece and Zimbabwe; and H. Allen Holmes, former U.S. ambassador to Portugal, former Assistant Secretary of State for Politico-Military Affairs and former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations—both debunked the Bush-Cheney myth that "the world changed irreversibly after 9/11." Both men denounced this as a lie and an excuse to permit the President of the United States to ignore international law and do whatever he wishes.

Ambassador Holmes recounted his five years as a member of the Clinton Administration's working group on counterterrorism, headed by former National Security Council official Richard Clarke. He charged that the Bush Administration used the tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001 to pursue an Iraq war that destroyed all of the international support and good will that had been generated by the American action in Afghanistan to unseat the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. He and other speakers charged that the Bush Administration abandoned the Afghanistan mission in order to go to war against an Iraq that posed no "imminent threat" to the United States or anyone else; and, as a result, both Afghanistan and Iraq are near the breaking point.

While the members of the group said that they have no immediate plans to take their harsh critique, and their call for regime change in Washington, directly to the American people through nationwide tours or other activities, the weight of their attack on the Bush Administration's disastrous track-record, is certain to carry considerable weight—both inside and outside the Washington Beltway. It comes at a moment when the United States Congress is showing a long-overdue willingness to directly challenge the Administration's lies and crimes, and when the U.S. intelligence community—both civilian and military—is becoming increasingly more vocal and active in exposing the "high crimes and misdemeanors" by top ranking White House officials.