

Rumsfeld Reorganizes Pentagon for Fascism

by Carl Osgood

On May 10, 2003, then-Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche warned that legislation that had just been sent up to Capitol Hill by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's Pentagon to allow the Defense Department to rewrite the rules governing its civilian workforce "would be a grave material breach" of the U.S. Constitution, "a leak in the dike which opens the way for the kinds of dictatorial powers assumed by the Adolf Hitler regime on Feb. 28, 1933, powers from which all the principal crimes of the Hitler regime ensued." Almost two years later, on Feb. 14, 2005, that "material breach" bore its first fruit, with the publication in the *Federal Register* of the proposed rules for the National Security Personnel System.

The proposed rules constitute a complete rewrite of the laws that have governed the Civil Service system for the past half-century, and are intended to be a model for the rest of the Federal government. This was long suspected by Federal employee unions and opponents of the legislation in the Congress, but was confirmed by acting Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Dan Blair, who told reporters on Feb. 10 that the new system "gives us much needed momentum to our efforts to transform and modernize the entire Civil Service." He pointed out that with the DoD's new rules, plus the new rules for the Department of Homeland Security and other agencies to which Congress has granted "flexibilities," "more Federal workers will be covered by reformed and modernized systems than the current general schedule."

Blair and Navy Secretary Gordon England, who together oversaw the writing of the new rules, both argued that the so-called reform is needed so that the Pentagon can hire and retain "the best people," people who expect to be paid and promoted based on their performance, such as is common in the private sector. As such, it replaces the general schedule system with a pay-for-performance system, speeds up the hiring and firing process, and places strict limits on collective bargaining and other union rights. On the union rights, Blair said that the aim of the new system is to "change the paradigm from an adversarial relationship to one that is much more cooperative." Ron Sanders, OPM's Associate Director for Policy, further explained that collective bargaining has been retained at the level of local workplaces only. Under the new rules, any department-wide personnel or policy changes that

effect personnel, no longer have to be subject to collective bargaining. Sanders claimed that this is needed because the present law doesn't allow the department to make changes such as introducing new technologies into the workplace, or to prepare for emergencies.

The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), along with four other unions, announced that they would be filing a lawsuit in Federal court to challenge the new work rules. "To call this a 'National Security' system is a joke," said AFGE President John Gage. "If anything, the Rumsfeld plan makes the nation less secure." The unions charge that the DoD did not consult with them, as required by the legislation creating the new system. "Instead of working with the longstanding representatives of the military's loyal civilian employees, the Pentagon apparently would rather duke this out in Federal court," said Gage.

The Army Gets Hit, Too

Meanwhile, Rumsfeld's transformation of the Army has been proceeding on a parallel track. The Army has borne the brunt of Rumsfeld's military transformation under the pressure of the war in Iraq, as is shown by the Fiscal 2006 budget, released on Feb. 7. Much of the cost of reorganizing the Army into Rumsfeld's vision of a "lighter, faster, more lethal force" is still being funded largely through supplemental budget requests. This includes reorganizing the Army's 33 combat brigades into 43 "modular" brigades and temporarily increasing the size of the Army by 30,000 personnel, to 512,400.

A senior Army budget official, briefing reporters at the Pentagon on Feb. 4, left no doubt that it is the Cheney-Rumsfeld perpetual war doctrine that is behind this reorganization. He explained that the supplemental budget request, which was released on Feb. 14, would cover the military costs of the extra 30,000 soldiers, which the Army describes as giving it the "head room" it needs for its reorganization. The budget official explained that "the investment we would conceivably make in a supplemental would be for a force that's deploying in the battlefield and one that comes back that we would reset, and that means, we fix the equipment, overhaul the equipment, and then prepare them to go back again. . . ." The official admitted that without the war, this kind of reorganization of the Army would not be possible. This reorganization is anything but a temporary expedient however. It's intended to be ongoing, just like the war, itself.

In spite of the supplemental spending, the strain on the Army imposed by the Iraq War is nonetheless affecting its baseline. This is acknowledged by Pentagon plans to add \$35 billion to the Army's baseline budget over the next six years, which will be paid for by shifting money from the Navy and Air Force. This, the Army budget official said, is "acknowledgment and support from the Office of the Secretary of Defense to increasing the capability of the Army, to enhance its capability based on the strategic environment that we're in."