

What Is the Army's Future Under Obama?

by Carl Osgood

Nov. 19—The dilemma of the U.S. Army under the Obama Administration was on full display at this year's annual Association of the U.S. Army Conference, in Washington, D.C. Oct. 22-24. First, there is the conflict between the oath that Army officers take to the U.S. Constitution, and its requirement to obey a Commander-in-Chief, even one who flagrantly violates that Constitution by conducting illegal wars, and by stripping away the rights of U.S. citizens. Secondly, the charge delivered at the conference, and implicit in President Obama's "Asia pivot," is to prepare for a potential land war in Asia, something that every sane military leader, from Gen. Douglas MacArthur on, has warned against.

Defending the Constitution

The U.S. military establishment is faced with a President who is, indeed, shredding the Constitution: He went to war in Libya without the consent of Congress; he authorized the targeted killings of American citizens in Yemen without due process; and has expanded the warrantless interception of electronic communications of Americans in violation of the 4th Amendment, among other things. The Congress is failing to carry out *its* Constitutional responsibilities by defending the Constitution and the American people against this lawless President.

Under such circumstances, what is the responsibility of the American military officer who is sworn to defend the Constitution against all enemies foreign and domestic? First, he or she must understand who and what the enemies of the U.S. Constitution are, not just in a limited, present-tense sort of way, but historically. The United States was founded in a war of independence against the British Empire. That empire has changed form and strategy over the past two centuries, but remains, in principle, what it was at the time of the American Revolution: a financier oligarchy which regards the vast majority of the human population as little better than beasts, to be controlled and culled as a farmer con-

trols and culls his herd of cattle. It was against that bestial notion of man that the founders of our nation rebelled, and then sought to found a nation-state that would foster the creative powers of mankind, based on the defense of the general welfare. It is that principle to which the British monarchy remains implacably opposed, and is intent on eradicating from human memory, by methods including mass murder, if necessary.

Today, the system of empire is reaching its bloody conclusion, but whether our republic, and humanity at large, survive its death throes is not yet determined. The British monarchy's response to the bankruptcy and collapse of its financier system is, number one, to demand hyperinflationary bailouts of its banking system; and two, foster wars all over the globe, but in particular, in Southwest Asia and North Africa, wars which have the highest potential for leading to a thermonuclear confrontation with Russia and, secondarily, China.

At such a time of acute danger, the first duty of the military must be to defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign or domestic, and to bear true faith and allegiance to the same. Only then are military personnel responsible to follow the orders of the President, the implication being that if the President issues orders contrary to the officer's first duty, then he is not bound to obey them.

The Army and the Constitution

The responsibilities of the sworn military officer under the Constitution was the subject of a panel discussion led by Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno, at the Oct. 22 Army conference. The broader Army dialogue on the profession of arms actually dates back to 2009-10 and was initiated by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey, when he was head of U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, and stemmed from, among other things, the collapse of discipline and professionalism that characterized the Abu Ghraib scandal in Iraq in 2003-04.

Official investigations blamed the scandal on a



U.S. Navy/Seaman Tatiana Avery

The ultimate outcome of Obama's "Asia pivot" would be a land war in Asia, which every sane military leader since MacArthur has warned against. Here, the aircraft carrier USS George Washington in the Philippine Sea, Oct. 31, 2012.

handful of low-ranking military police soldiers, and on slightly higher-ranking intelligence officers who were conducting interrogations of suspected Iraqi insurgents. More honest inquiries noted the failure of the chain of command itself, up to Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, who was the top U.S. military officer in Iraq at the time, but were hesitant to take on the screw-up factors that were injected into the Army by directives and orders that came from the White House and the Secretary of Defense, starting with determinations shortly after the 9/11 attacks, that individuals taken into custody by the U.S. military in pursuit of the "war on terror" were not entitled to the protections of the Geneva Conventions. The poisoning of the chain of command that led to the abuses at Abu Ghraib began at the top.

The Oct. 22 panel discussion was intended to present how the Army is working to avoid a repeat of such a disaster, by inculcating professionalism in all of its soldiers, from the lowest-ranking private just entering basic training, and the first-year cadet at the U.S. Military Academy, through to the Army's highest levels of post-graduate officer education.

But what about the officer's relationship to the country as a whole, to its civilian leadership, to the population at large, and to the governing principles upon which the country was founded? This question was not addressed until the panel was opened up to questions, and at first, by an individual asking about keeping Army officers from becoming involved in partisan political

activities. Odierno replied that while, "It's important that our young leaders are interested in what's going on in our country," at the same time, officers have to keep in mind that, "We are asked to perform and conduct our missions to the best of our ability without judgment of the political ideas behind decisions, unless we believe it is amoral or unethical, and then it's time to make a decision on whether you want to make a decision or stand by."

"I've often been asked what would make me resign," he said. "It would have to be something I believe is against the best interests of our country." Odierno stressed that "When I have disagreements, I voice them in private. I believe I have the

forums to allow me to do that. Until I believe something is morally and ethically wrong or something that is so detrimental to our army, I will continue to do that. That's what everybody should do."

Then this reporter followed up, asking, "What if the civilian leadership issues orders that are Constitutionally questionable?" It was precisely such directives from outside of the Army that led to the Abu Ghraib scandal.

"What makes it difficult is the word 'questionable,'" Odierno replied. "When they're questionable, they're up for debate. I think it makes it more difficult, and I think it really depends on your view of how it pertains to our ethics, values, and our profession, whether you think it's right or wrong, and that's an individual decision." Odierno felt compelled to reply directly to the Abu Ghraib matter by pointing out that there was a "a total lack of Army professionalism," a lack of leadership, standards and discipline and so on, that had to be addressed. "So, I think when you have a question which is potentially Constitutionally questionable... Now, I'm not sure we thought at the time it was Constitutionally questionable. I don't know. I'm not sure. You'd have to ask those who were directly involved in interrogation techniques whether they thought so or not.

"So, that's why that becomes a very difficult question whether it was or not, but it's a good question. Your question is a good one because those are the dilemmas we have. And, in some cases, as an officer, you have to

decide where you draw the line, and you have to decide where you decide it doesn't meet your moral and ethical values. Sometimes you have to be ahead of the institutions on this. That's a tough call, but it's happened before and it'll happen again."

Obama's Asia Pivot

The other leading feature of the conference was the effort to sell to anyone who would listen, the value of land forces in the Pacific. The basic argument is that you can't control land with only naval and air forces, as valuable as those forces may be. You need the credible threat of being able to occupy the land at issue, if you really want to control the land and the people and resources on it.

This argument was presented by Col. Bob Simpson, the leader of the Army 2020 initiative, during a seminar presentation on Oct. 23. Land power is about controlling the land, he said, but this can be very complex and problematic. Controlling the adversary is a human challenge. While the Navy operates in the sea domain, and the Air Force operates in the air domain, the Army operates in the human domain. And that's what this is all about. If you want to influence decision-making, you have to be able to put soldiers on the ground or you won't be a credible deterrent. Land power is about controlling people and resources.

So, on this basis, the Army is globalizing itself. With the Army completely out of Iraq and drawing down in Afghanistan, most Army forces will soon be back at their stateside posts. Army forces are in the process of being regionally aligned, that is, every combatant command will soon have Army forces committed to its part of the world, even if, for the most part, they will remain at stateside bases. An Army brigade, for example, will be aligned with U.S. Africa Command, beginning early next year, and small contingents from that brigade will deploy to various places in Africa to conduct training missions and exercises with the host nations where they deploy.

The biggest such alignment will occur in the Pacific, however, and an entire panel on Oct. 23, was devoted to this shift, led by Lt. Gen. Francis Wiercinski, commander of U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC). USARPAC includes 70,000 soldiers, at Joint Base Lewis McChord in Washington State, Alaska, Hawaii, Japan, and South



White House/Pete Souza

President Obama's first foreign trip following his reelection, is to Asia, to consolidate the "ring around China." He is shown here in Rangoon, Myanmar, greeting opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, Nov. 19, 2012.

Korea. Until recently, USARPAC was a force provider for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the demand on it for manpower for those wars was such that it couldn't meet the needs of the commander of U.S. Pacific Command, but that's all changing now.

One of the major changes that has already occurred is with the 8th Army in South Korea. The 8th Army used to be a four-star command, with service component responsibilities, as well as the theater responsibility for the Korean peninsula. However, the service component responsibilities have now been transferred to USARPAC, allowing the 8th Army to focus on being an operational headquarters, at the three-star level.

Big changes are also in store for I Corps at Lewis-McChord. I Corps will be an operational-level headquarters, and is building up for joint task force certification, so that if the U.S. Pacific Command requires it, I Corps will be able to function as a joint task force headquarters (meaning it will also be able to control naval and air forces, as well as forces from allied countries).

The panel included two State Department officials: James Moriarity, a retired ambassador, with extensive experience in the region; and Thomas Kelly, the current Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Asia. They were on the panel to emphasize the overall government approach, and even the overall society approach, to U.S.

engagement in the region. Both downplayed the possibility of conflict with China. “Conflict is avoidable,” Moriarity declared. The economies of the U.S. and Asia are increasingly intertwined. The U.S. and China have no interest in conflict. There are 160,000 Chinese students in the U.S. They will play an important role when they return to China.

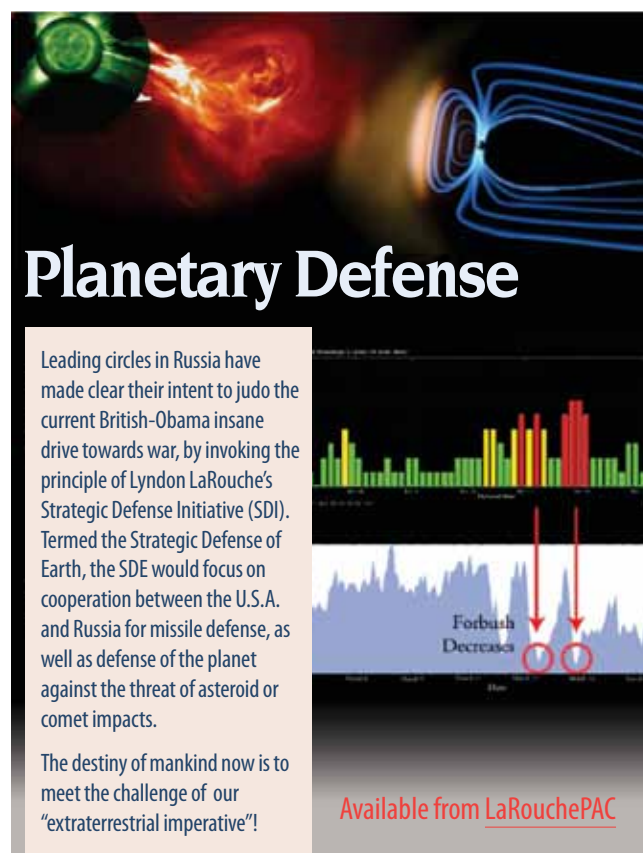
Kelly added that the U.S. is seeking a comprehensive, positive relationship with China. Furthermore, countries in the region don’t need to choose between the U.S. and China. That would be a dangerous and false choice, he said. The presence of these viewpoints on the panel seemed to reflect the warnings of General Dempsey, who has often cited the “Thucydides Trap,” a reference to the Athenian fear of a rising Sparta ensured that war between the two powers were inevitable. “I think that one of my jobs as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and as an advisor to our senior leaders, is to help avoid a Thucydides Trap,” Dempsey said in Washington on May. 1. “We don’t want the fear of an emerging China to make war inevitable. So, we’re going to avoid a Thucydides trap.”

The panel also included Australia’s defense attaché in Washington, Brig. Gen. Barry McManus. His presence demonstrated how closely Australia is intertwined with Obama’s Asia pivot, and its provocation of China. McManus gave the official Australian view of the world, which is probably very much a mirror image of the U.S. view, except that the Asia Pacific region is our region, he said. Australia has always been engaged in our region. Australia has a small military, because it has a small population, but it is very busy in the South Pacific. It is or has engaged in operations in East Timor, Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands, but it’s also globally engaged, having contributed forces to Iraq and Afghanistan.

McManus’s presence, however, was not the only indication of how integrated Australia is becoming with U.S. strategy. In November, USARPAC will welcome Australian Maj. Gen. Rick Burr as its deputy commander for operations. Burr’s main task, according to the *Sydney Morning Herald* Sept. 1, will apparently be to help the U.S. engage with countries in Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific. This is a great opportunity for us, McManus said. But *Herald* Asia-Pacific editor Hamish McDonald is not so sure. He noted, in that Sept. 1 report, that Burr’s appointment, while announced with great fanfare in the U.S., was kept quiet in Australia. “Why the coyness in Canberra?” McDonald asked.

“If it’s not just bureaucratic lag, it could be awareness of the political sensitivities of Australia’s enthusiastic embrace of the U.S. ‘pivot’ or ‘rebalancing’ into Asia, which is getting much closer than most of us are aware.”

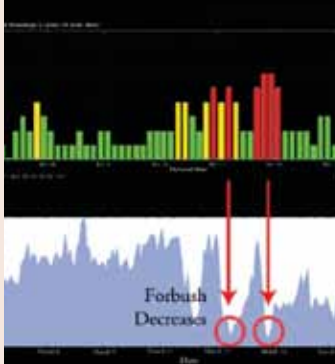
The Army and its partners would do well to recall the warnings of Gen. Douglas MacArthur to the newly elected President John F. Kennedy in 1961, with regard to strategic policy towards Asia. Kennedy met with MacArthur twice that year, first in April 1961, in the general’s residence at the Waldorf Astoria in New York, and the second time for a private lunch in the White House. Robert F. Kennedy, the President’s brother, would recall, in an April 30, 1964 interview, that “everybody, including General MacArthur, felt that land conflict between our troops, white troops and Asian, would only lead to, end in disaster.” Kennedy was sufficiently impressed by MacArthur’s advice, such that he determined that he would not fall into the trap of a land war in Asia. The U.S. military establishment, today, is equally determined to avoid a war in Asia, but with President Obama and Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta pursuing a “ring around China” policy, will the military be able to avoid that trap?



Planetary Defense

Leading circles in Russia have made clear their intent to judo the current British-Obama insane drive towards war, by invoking the principle of Lyndon LaRouche's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Termed the Strategic Defense of Earth, the SDE would focus on cooperation between the U.S.A. and Russia for missile defense, as well as defense of the planet against the threat of asteroid or comet impacts.

The destiny of mankind now is to meet the challenge of our "extraterrestrial imperative"!



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