

Rumsfeld & Co. Force Behind-the-Scenes Revolt

by Edward Spannaus

“Rumsfeld conducting war on Army,” read a headline in the May 7 *Baltimore Sun*. In fact, Donald Rumsfeld’s denigration of the Army and its infantry forces has been a hallmark of his entire reign as Defense Secretary, with Rumsfeld and his top deputies, such as Paul Wolfowitz and Steven Cambone, clashing repeatedly with top Army leaders over the past two years. This has now, according to knowledgeable sources, given rise to a full-scale, behind-the-scenes revolt against Rumsfeld, and in opposition to his attempts to wreck the traditionalist military and officer corps.

The latest affront was the disclosure that Rumsfeld had not only fired Secretary of the Army Thomas White—a former Army General—but had sent his deputy Paul Wolfowitz to White’s office a few days after this, to order unceremoniously that White clear out by May 9. “The Army is in a state of belligerence over this latest insult,” an Army official told the *Washington Times*. “The issue now is, when does this attack on the Army stop? When does President Bush put a stop to this?” the official asked. “We Republicans did not come into this building to experience a Stalin [purge].”

Syndicated columnist Robert Novak (who has frequently served as a voice for institutional opposition to the neo-conservative takeover of Bush Administration policy), recently wrote that Rumsfeld is now in a position to put his handpicked people in the three top Army positions. “Rumsfeld is forcing a thinner Army, and he does not want a service Secretary allied with ‘dinosaur’ generals backing their heavy forces with plenty of armor and artillery,” Novak said. The dumping of White, the pending replacement of Chief of Staff Eric Shinseki, and the announced retirement of Vice Chief of Staff John Keane, “clears the board for Rumsfeld to pick generals who will not oppose reducing Army strength by the equivalent of two divisions.”

A ‘Transformational’ Army Secretary

A high-level former military source told EIRNS that what Rumsfeld wants to do is to eliminate all heavy divisions, leaving only light, mobile divisions to serve as an imperial rapid deployment force. The same source said that Keane had let it be known within the Pentagon that he is stepping aside, because he does not wish to serve under Rumsfeld.

And, in what is taken as yet another slap at the Army,

Rumsfeld has reportedly chosen the current Air Force Secretary, James Roche, to replace White as Army Secretary. The appointment is regarded as unusual in several respects, including that Roche has no Army experience, but was a career Navy officer. Roche is closely associated with the anti-Army “transformation” group centered around Andrew Marshall—who has been a principal architect of the utopian “Revolution in Military Affairs” (RMA) for 30 years. Roche was Marshall’s chief military assistant from 1975-1979, and then worked with Wolfowitz in the State Department policy-planning office in the early 1980s. Roche has remained close friends over the years with both Andy Marshall and Wolfowitz.

Prior to the invasion of Iraq, there were indications that Rumsfeld might have been on his way out. Senior Republicans in the Senate were reported to be furious at Rumsfeld’s arrogance and his failure to keep them informed about the Administration’s Iraq war plans.

Then, a week into the Iraq invasion, retired and active uniformed military officers began talking to the news media about Rumsfeld’s personal interference in the military’s war planning, which had left U.S. troops dangerously exposed, with long, vulnerable supply lines. The highest-ranking active-duty officer to speak out was the V Corps Commander in Iraq, Gen. William Wallace, who made the now-famous comment: “The enemy we’re fighting is a bit different than the one we had war-gamed against.”

At a Pentagon press briefing on April 1, Rumsfeld and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Richard Myers were asked about these criticisms; Myers jumped in, very agitated, and said that these “bogus” and “false” criticisms were causing “harm to our troops who are out there fighting very hard, very courageously.”

But, nevertheless, on March 7, General Wallace reiterated his criticisms. “I make no apologies for those comments,” Wallace said. “The enemy that we fought in al-Samawa, the enemy that we fought in An Najaf, the enemy that we fought in Al Hillah and in Karbala, the enemy that we fought to some extent in An Nasiriyah when the 5th Corps first seized Tallil Air Base and the first intact bridge over the Euphrates River, was much more aggressive than what we expected him to be, or at least, what I expected him to be. He was willing to attack out of those towns toward our formations, when my expectation was that they would be defending those towns and not be as aggressive.”

Various media reports had interpreted Myers’ April 1 denunciations as a “shot across the bow,” on Rumsfeld’s behalf, directed at officers who were voicing their criticisms. It was also reported that colleagues of General Wallace wondered out loud if Wallace’s head was on the chopping block.

It was. On May 6, Rumsfeld dumped Wallace, replacing him as the head of the V Corps in what the Pentagon took pains to describe as a “normal rotation.”