

## Clinton directive reins in 'aggressive multilateralism'

by Edward Spannaus

After over a year of debate on "multilateralism" and the proper role of the United States in United Nations "peacekeeping" operations, the Clinton administration has issued new guidelines limiting the role of U.S. troops in U.N. operations. Presidential Decision Directive 25, issued on May 5, states U.S. opposition to the creation of a U.N. standing army, or the earmarking of U.S. military units for U.N. service, and puts strict conditions on the placing of U.S. troops under U.N. command.

PDD-25 also appropriately gives the Pentagon a larger policy voice vis-à-vis the State Department regarding U.S. participation in peacekeeping operations, and stresses the importance of bringing "a clear military perspective" to bear on such operations.

The long-awaited promulgation of PDD-25 comes after an extended and often confused policy debate over U.S. strategic policy and over the relationship of U.S. policy and military operations to the United Nations.

During the 1992 campaign, candidate Bill Clinton called for the creation of a new international army, standing by ready to intervene anywhere and everywhere to prevent aggression, combat terrorism, or deliver humanitarian relief—the euphemisms under which the U.N. "new world order" rides roughshod over the sovereignty of nation-states.

In late May 1993, Peter Tarnoff, the Undersecretary of State for Policy Affairs, gave a controversial background briefing on the theme of "multilateralism," calling for a reduced U.S. role in the world, together with "genuine power-sharing and responsibility-sharing." But many viewed Tarnoff's briefing as an after-the-fact rationalization for the administration's retreat regarding Bosnia, which President Clinton had been forced into the previous week under pressure from Britain and France.

In August, the debate erupted anew. On Aug. 18, the

*New York Times* quoted Clinton administration officials saying that a new presidential decision directive, PDD-13, permitting regular assignment of U.S. troops to U.N. command, had been drafted "and is expected to be signed by President Clinton next month." That same day, a State Department spokesman confirmed that a fundamental policy review was under way, but said that "substantial questions" remained to be addressed before changing the traditional policy of having only U.S. commanders for U.S. troops. (PDD-13 was reportedly drafted by Morton Halperin, whose nomination for a high Pentagon post was sensibly later withdrawn by the Clinton administration.)

The idea of putting U.S. troops under U.N. command met with an immediate barrage of criticism. Sen. Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyo.) denounced the plan as a "nutty idea," and said, "I can't imagine the Congress going along with it." Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.) termed it a "dangerous precedent." Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) said, "I'm surprised all this has occurred without much discussion with the Congress." Lugar also pointed out that integrated commands have not necessarily worked very well in the past, and pointed to the example of Somalia. Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.) characterized the plan as "more than dubious."

It was widely reported at that time that the PDD-13 draft also contained a section on the former Soviet Union which discussed the possibility of the United States becoming involved in "mediation" of conflicts and peacekeeping operations in the former Soviet republics. This was combined with mootings of a tilt away from a Russia-centered policy, and toward greater support for the claims of the former Soviet republics and the regions against Moscow. These leaks, whether true or not, did provoke a barrage of attacks on the idea from Russia as well as within the United States. These reactions quickly led the administration to deny any intention

of trying to act as a mediator between Russia and the other former Soviet republics, or of having U.S. troops be part of peacekeeping operations in the former Soviet Union.

### What PDD-25 says

The unclassified summary of PDD-25 issued on May 5 reflects a sharp turn away from the reliance on the U.N. which characterized earlier proposals. This undoubtedly comes as a consequence of the failures of U.N. operations, notably in Bosnia, but also the loss of U.S. lives in Somalia and in Iraq, where U.S. military forces were deployed under multilateral command. The repeated subversion of U.S. and NATO policies in Bosnia, by the U.N. and in combination with British military commanders, has contributed greatly to a healthy disgust toward the U.N. in the United States.

"It is not U.S. policy to seek to expand either the number of U.N. peace operations or U.S. involvement in such operations," declares the summary of PDD-25 issued by the administration on May 5. "Instead, this policy . . . aims to ensure that our use of peacekeeping is selective and more effective." National Security Adviser Anthony Lake, who earlier had described the administration policy as "aggressive multilateralism," described the new policy directive as an effort to reform and limit U.S. involvement in such U.N. operations. U.N. Ambassador Madeleine Albright, appearing before Congress on the same day, said that the new directive is "not designed to expand U.N. peacekeeping but to fix it, to make multilateral peace operations more selective and more effective." And in welcome contrast to candidate Clinton's 1992 campaign speeches, his administration now declares: "The U.S. does not support a standing U.N. army, nor will we earmark specific U.S. military units for participation in U.N. operations."

The tone of the directive was most striking on the issue of whether U.S. troops would be placed under U.N. command. The administration's written summary emphasized in boldface type that "the President will never relinquish command of U.S. forces." However, it then continued, "as commander-in-chief, the President has the authority to place U.S. forces under the operational control of a foreign commander when doing so serves American security interests, just as American leaders have done numerous times since the Revolutionary War, including in Operation Desert Storm."

The directive defines "command" as "the authority to issue orders covering *every aspect* of military operations and administration" (emphasis in original). It continues: "The sole source of legitimacy for U.S. commanders originates from the U.S. Constitution, federal law, and the Uniform Code of Military Justice, and flows from the President to the lowest U.S. commander in the field. The chain of command from the President to the lowest U.S. commander in the field remains inviolate."

The directive goes on to explain the notion of "operational control": "It is sometimes prudent or advantageous (for reasons such as maximizing military effectiveness and ensur-

ing unity of command) to place U.S. forces under the operational control of a foreign commander to achieve specified military objectives."

Within the "subset" of operational command, PDD-25 emphasizes that "a foreign U.N. commander *cannot*: change the mission or deploy U.S. forces outside the area of responsibility agreed to by the President, separate units, divide their supplies, administer discipline, promote anyone, or change their internal organization." Even under these conditions, PDD-25 declares, "the fundamental elements of U.S. command still apply." U.S. commanders will maintain the ability to report to their own superior officers, as well as to the U.N. commander. Orders which are illegal, or which violate the mandate of the mission, are to be referred to higher U.S. authorities, if the matter cannot be resolved with the U.N. commander.

### Pentagon role

The new directive assigns a more significant role to the Defense Department than was suggested in earlier discussions, undoubtedly in response to Pentagon concerns. Under what is called "shared responsibility" within the U.S. government, PDD-25 assigns to the Department of Defense "lead management and funding responsibility for those U.N. operations that involve U.S. combat units and those that are likely to involve combat, whether or not U.S. troops are involved."

The State Department, it says, "will retain lead management and funding responsibility for traditional peacekeeping operations that do not involve U.S. combat units." If this appears to contradict elements of the previous paragraph, it is probably a reflection of the fierce debates that went on regarding the new doctrine.

The document says that the assignment of lead responsibilities to the Defense Department "will ensure that military expertise is brought to bear on those operations that have a significant military component." Later, it comments that it is no longer sufficient to view such operations "solely through a political prism," and that "a clear military perspective must be brought to bear." All well and good, but there is a price tag attached. Note that the Pentagon obtains management and *funding* responsibilities for U.N. combat-related operations. Thus, a big chunk of U.S. obligations to the U.N. for peacekeeping operations—already in arrears—will come out of the strained Pentagon budget.

Meanwhile, all caution was being thrown to the winds by those in Congress and elsewhere who are putting pressure on the administration for a U.S. military intervention in Haiti. Most of the proponents of this genocidal intervention are pressuring for U.S. troops to be involved in an invasion sponsored either by the Organization of American States and/or the United Nations.

If the President gives in to this pressure and authorizes U.S. military involvement, the United States will find itself stuck in a new multilateral quagmire, from which all the fine-tuned policy directives in the world cannot extricate it.