

# Bush Military Policy Review Is in Chaos

by Jeffrey Steinberg

On May 17, 2001, the *New York Times* published a front-page story, revealing key elements of a classified Defense Department strategic review, ordered by Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, shortly after his confirmation. The review, directed by Andrew Marshall, the head of the Pentagon's Office of Net Assessments, a controversial in-house think-tank within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, purports that a future war with China is virtually inevitable, and that, due to a proliferation of ballistic missiles and terrorist access to weapons of mass destruction, U.S. forces and personnel will be denied forward-basing in the Asia-Pacific region, necessitating a total overhaul of military doctrine and force structure.

What was unusual about the *New York Times* story, was not the fact that the paper had published classified Pentagon material. What was unprecedented, was the fact that a senior military officer, Adm. Dennis Blair, the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Command (CINC-PAC), chose to give the *Times* an interview, in which he freely discussed his strong disagreements with the classified document. As subsequent events would confirm, Admiral Blair's attack against the Marshall study had at least the tacit support of the majority of members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The incident underscored a level of infighting and dissent inside the U.S. military toward the Bush Administration, which has subsequently begun having even more dramatic manifestations. The net result is that a far-reaching policy fight has erupted, which assures that there will be no "quick-fix" overhaul of the U.S. military. It demonstrates, once again, that the Bush Administration is a "gang that can't think straight," and that in just four months in office, it has provoked a firestorm of opposition, among America's allies abroad, and among policymaking centers at home.

Allied resentment and opposition to Bush was evident at the May 28-29 NATO foreign ministers summit in Budapest, Hungary, where the allies rejected the idea that they face serious threats of missile attack, and showed near-zero support for the Bush National Missile Defense (NMD) plan.

In the U.S. Congress, the already complex prospect of a major "rethink" of America's military requirements in the post-Cold War world has now been further compounded by the defection of Sen. Jim Jeffords (I-Vt.) from the GOP, giving the Democratic Party a narrow Senate majority, and the chairmanships of all the committees, including the Armed

Services and Appropriations committees, where the battle over military doctrine and budgeting will play out.

One immediate consequence of the Democratic ascent is that President Bush's promise to move ahead, unilaterally, on deploying a robust NMD system that would abrogate the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, is dead in the water. Unless the Bush Administration can win support from Russia and from America's NATO allies for NMD, meaning a cooperative reworking of the 1972 ABM Treaty, the Senate will block its deployment.

This point was driven home at a recent conference on the future of NATO at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C., where Russian arms control expert Sergei Rogov, head of the U.S.A.-Canada Institute, warned that if the Bush Administration goes ahead with a unilateral missile defense deployment, it will drive the world deeper into the Cold War hole of mutually assured destruction.

## Blair Speaks Out

In his *New York Times* interview, Admiral Blair took strong exception to two of the underlying premises of the Marshall report: the inevitability of war with China and the future inability of the U.S. military to maintain a secure forward-based presence in the Asia-Pacific theater.

On the latter point, Blair bluntly told the *Times*'s Michael Gordon, "I think we have the tools to keep both air and naval power anywhere we want to in the theater and can for quite some time. If you want to look at serious forces designed to keep the U.S. out of part of the world, look at what the Russians did in the '70s—dozens of submarines, hundreds of long-range bombers, dozens of satellites, lots of practice. That was a serious system which we were going to have a hard time fighting our way through. Nobody in Asia is even close to that."

Admiral Blair was equally critical of Marshall's call for a retreat from U.S. presence in the Pacific. For starters, Blair told the *Times* that the political outcome in China is not determined, and the assumption of a U.S.-China confrontation is premature. On the military front, he countered Marshall: "The Chinese," Blair said, "do not have an over-the-horizon target system that is capable of hitting U.S. forces and there are many, many countermeasures to all of the aspects of that kind of system which are available. I think that using this projection of what the Chinese are now doing as a rationale for the U.S. having to flow back out of Asia is just wrong. I think the forces we have can operate there."

## Hand Grenade Over the Pentagon Wall

Days after Admiral Blair delivered his public denunciation of the Marshall defense review, Secretary Rumsfeld held the first of several meetings at the Pentagon "tank" (the secured conference room) with the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the CINCs. According to several accounts, the



*Why is Donald Rumsfeld, veteran cabinet secretary and senior Washington insider, one of the Bush Administration “grown-ups,” now in so much trouble with his defense policy review and national missile defense plans?*

discussion was heated, with many of the four-stars voicing disagreements with Marshall’s evaluations and recommendations, which they had just received in draft form.

At the regular Pentagon briefing on May 29, Adm. Craig Quigley practically admitted that the Secretary had used the Marshall studies to provoke a serious policy debate among the uniformed military leadership, Congress, and the Administration’s national security team, and that the Marshall recommendations would probably never see the light of day. “I think Andy Marshall’s work has served its purpose,” Quigley explained, “in the sense of stimulating the Secretary’s thought and getting reaction from service chief and unified commanders; inputs, resulting in many, many rewrites of the original drafts. And the whole purpose was to stimulate discussion and try to ascertain where should America’s military be headed for the 21st Century.” Quigley added that the Marshall reports would likely not be made available, and that the debate would feed into the Quadrennial Defense Review, due to be completed in September, and is not likely to have any impact on Defense Department spending until the FY 2003 budget, which will be first released at the beginning of 2002.

In short, don’t expect any significant changes, certainly no “revolution in military affairs,” until well into the Bush Administration, if ever.

### **Money Talks . . .**

Further adding to the tug-of-war climate over the future of America’s military doctrine, was the announcement on May 31 that the Pentagon’s supplemental budget for FY 2001

will be a paltry \$5.6 billion. Most of that money will go to salaries and health benefits for GIs, additional flying time for pilots, and \$750 million to cover added costs of gasoline and electricity, due to energy deregulation. Not a penny in the supplemental funding is earmarked for ballistic missile defense.

As one defense correspondent observed, if the money trail is a reasonable measure of defense policy, the Bush Administration is carrying forward the Clinton Administration’s plans with very little exception.

As *EIR* reported in February, President Bush’s yahoo constituents’ clamoring for a tax cut has been one powerful factor arguing against the Administration’s ability or willingness to deliver on Bush’s campaign trail promises that he would rescue the military from the Clinton-era cutbacks. As Secretary Rumsfeld was departing for the annual Wehrkunde meeting in Munich in February, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer had announced that, to make the tax cuts fly, the President would enact a two-year freeze on defense spending. The Joint Chiefs hit the roof, lobbied Rumsfeld to get them a budget boost, and the “compromise” struck between the Pentagon and the Oval Office was that a “defense review” would be conducted, to set guidelines for a spending boost.

That review has now degenerated into a protracted fight between “utopian” fantasists like Marshall, and an encrusted military brass and defense industry stuck in the Cold War. And it is becoming increasingly clear that the fight is over money that the Bush Administration, under its current policy trajectory, won’t be able to deliver.