

However much Cheney benefitted from his Halliburton relationship, the company truly made out like bandits. According to data compiled by the Center for Public Integrity, a public interest research organization in Washington, between November 2001, when the United States launched the invasion of Afghanistan, and June 2004, Halliburton raked in \$11.4 billion in Bush-Cheney Administration contracts. Nearly two years later, those figures have certainly moved

toward \$15 billion in taxpayers' money. The next largest contractor, Parsons Corp., which has a long history of overseas U.S. government heavy construction projects, received under \$5.3 billion during 2001-04.

Halliburton has truly evolved into a "New East India Company" under Cheney and Rumsfeld. Halliburton personnel have been on the ground in every combat zone of the post-Cold War period, from Mogadishu in Somalia, to the Balkans,

Hitler's SS: Private Army Of the Third Reich

The blackshirted SS (Defense Detachment) of Heinrich Himmler, which fulfilled certain "defense" and intelligence/security functions in and for Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party, numbered only around 10,000 members until 1932, the year before Hitler's installation as Chancellor. Their numbers paled in comparison to the 3 million brownshirted members of Ernst Röhm's SA (Stormtroops), the Nazi street thugs who had already intimidated, brutalized, hospitalized, or murdered so many Germans who opposed the Nazis. Yet, Hitler chose the core cadre of the SS to murder hundreds of his presumed opponents inside and outside the SA—including the Chancellor who preceded him, Gen. Kurt von Schleicher—on June 30, 1934, the "Night of the Long Knives."

Hitler's distrust of the Wehrmacht (Armed Forces), prompted him to replace the members of the Army who had traditionally stood guard at the Chancellor's office, with his personal SS bodyguard (Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler), soon after he took office on Jan. 30, 1933. On Nov. 9, 1933, he had all the members of that bodyguard swear an oath of personal loyalty to him, while maintaining no formal relationship to either the Nazi Party (which by that time was the only legal party in Germany), or the State. On July 26, 1934, in appreciation of its murderous work on the night of June 30, Hitler elevated the SS to the status of a fully independent organization within the Party.

All this time, the SS was privately funded by a club known as the "Friends of the Reichsführer-SS" (the Reichsführer-SS was Heinrich Himmler), which included many prominent industrialists and bankers. The "Friends" were an offshoot of the Planning Committee for Economic Problems, which had been formed by Wilhelm Keppler, Hitler's economic advisor, in Summer 1932. That committee included Hjalmar Schacht, the president of the Reichsbank and chief agent of the Anglo-American financial establishment that supported Hitler; Albert Vögler, chairman of the United Steelworks; and Kurt von

Schröder, the Cologne banker who hosted the meeting in January 1933 that catapulted Hitler to power. The "Friends" contributed over 1 million marks annually to the SS; Himmler, in gratitude, bestowed the status of "honorary SS Commander" on 15 of its 32 members.

Himmler aggressively recruited "sponsorships" of SS members from the aristocracy and upper middle class, bestowing "honorary membership" upon those who responded. In 1932, there were 13,217 honorary members who had contributed 17,000 marks. By 1934, there were 342,492 "honorary members" contributing 581,000 marks.

It was Hitler's SS bodyguard that led the Wehrmacht's March 1936 occupation of the neutral Rhineland, in violation of the Versailles Treaty. Flexing his new-found political muscle after the seizure of the Rhineland, Hitler decreed that the SS Verfügungstruppen (the future 700,000-man Waffen SS), which had spearheaded the Rhineland action, and the Totenkopfverbände (the Death's-Head regiments which policed the concentration camps), were to be treated as "organizations in the service of the State," and placed on the police budget of the Ministry of the Interior. And thus, the SS had achieved Halliburton status.

The "special work" that the SS was called upon to do, necessitated a special legal status, according to Paul Scharfe, the head of the SS Legal Service: "This special position of course means that the SS man must be dealt with in a special way." Scharfe concluded that no state court, nor even a Nazi Party court, had the right to judge an SS man; this was to be the sole privilege and responsibility of SS judges and superior officers!

The conflict between the German Army High Command and the SS increased dramatically. In 1938, Generaloberst von Fritsch, the head of the Army, wrote that the SS "develops itself totally apart, and, it appears to me, in deliberate opposition to the Army. All units report unanimously that the relationship of the SS Verfügungstruppen to the Army is very cool, if not hostile." By February 1938, the collusion of Himmler, Hermann Göring, and Hitler against Fritsch, on a fabricated morals scandal, forced the general to resign. Hitler then reorganized the High Command, and assumed personal, dictatorial control.

—Steve Douglas