

National News

Army Recruitment, Black Enlistments Drop

African-Americans are no longer so enthusiastic as they once were about joining the Army, according to the Army newspaper *Stars and Stripes* on March 4. A major reason why Army recruiting has fallen 27% below quotas is that black enlistments have dropped precipitously, by 41%, over the last few years. In 2000, some 23.5% of all enlistees were black. That percentage has fallen to 13.9% for the first four months of Fiscal 2005.

Maj. Gen. Michael D. Rochelle, the commander of the Army Recruiting Command, did not attribute the drop to any single factor, but said the war in Iraq and the views of parents, teachers, coaches, clergy and other “influences” are major factors. Officer recruitment is being hit, too, with black enrollment in the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program down by 36% since 2001.

For Rep. Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.), there’s no surprise at all in the Army’s statistics. “I have not found a black person in support of this war in my district. The fact that every member of the Congressional Black Caucus emotionally, politically, and vigorously opposes this war is an indication of what black folks think throughout this country,” he said.

U.S. To Set Up Nine Bases in Afghanistan

The United States is in the process of setting up nine military bases throughout Afghanistan, Indian intelligence sources told *EIR*. There will be one each in Helmand, Nimrouz, and Herat (all close to the Iranian borders in the south and southwest); one each in Mazar-e-Sharif and Balkh (in the north, near the Tajik and Uzbek borders); and two each in the Jalalabad/Khost area and Paktika (in the east, close to the Pakistan border).

The decision was made during the last

visit of U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to Afghanistan. The Pentagon has reportedly come to the conclusion that its ally, Afghan President Hamid Karzai, has gotten weaker, and could be overthrown by the Taliban in combination with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar in seven to eight months, if the United States does not succeed in bringing up an Afghan army of significant size during that timeframe.

Democratic Think-Tank Debates Nuclear Power

The Center for American Progress, the Democratic think-tank headed by former U.S. President Bill Clinton’s long-time friend and last White House chief of staff, John Podesta, hosted a debate on March 3 on the future role of nuclear power in the world.

The significance of this event was more in its occurrence, suggesting a readiness by some leading Democrats to shift past policies and consider the nuclear power option, than in the presentations made. Podesta brought together three speakers from across the nuclear spectrum: Dr. Burton Richter, nuclear proponent, past director of the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, and recipient of the Nobel Prize for physics; Dr. John Deutch of MIT, veteran of a top position at the Department of Energy (from where he killed the fusion program), and long-time advisor to Presidents on nuclear energy matters; and Dr. Thomas Cochran from the environmentalist Natural Resources Defense Council, a nuclear naysayer and member of numerous DOE and nuclear weapons advisory committees.

The speeches were severely constrained by adherence to the accepted axioms regarding nuclear non-proliferation and global warming, but several questions from the audience broke through to more fundamental considerations.

21st Century Science & Technology magazine editor Laurence Hecht got in the first question, postulating the necessity for nuclear power to overcome the misery of life in the Third World, and calling on the Democratic Party to carry out its role in defending the General Welfare by fighting for nuclear

power. The question provoked the visible discomfort of the NRDC’s Cochran, but was taken seriously by the chair.

An audience member brought up the unmentioned nuclear power source—fusion energy—and asked the panel for their thoughts on its feasibility. Nuclear opponent Cochran was emphatic that it wouldn’t happen in his lifetime, and therefore should not be funded. *21st Century* reporter Christine Craig chastised him for his pessimism, assuring him that humanity would last beyond his lifetime, and that such technologies for the next century should be developed, along with the cadre of scientists and technologists necessary for their implementation. The anti-nukes in the audience seemed to recognize that this was not the place for hysterics, and tended to silence or softball opposition.

All the speakers and about half the audience received the Spring 2001 *21st Century*, with “LaRouche’s 25-year Solution to the Energy Crisis” on the cover, and/or the latest *EIR*.

GAO Sees Threat Of ‘Agroterrorism’

Imported food may be vulnerable to “agroterrorism,” says a report from the U.S. General Accounting Office issued on March 8. The document shows how the number of inspections of imported food has been reduced since the Department of Homeland Security took over in 2003 from the Department of Agriculture. In 2002, the Department of Agriculture conducted 40.9 million inspections of imported foods; in 2003, 37.5 million inspections were done, though imports of foods increased.

This drop in the level of inspections prompted experts to underline the relative ease with which highly contagious diseases can be introduced into livestock and crops.

The GAO report also found that the Agriculture Department does not use rapid detection equipment to test animals at the site of disease outbreak. The USDA stores vaccine for foot-and-mouth disease, but the vaccine cannot be deployed within 24 hours of an outbreak, since it is not stored in ready-to-use condition.