

Pentagon/Justice Take Police State Moves, as LaRouche Warned

by Edward Spannaus and Michele Steinberg

Attorney General John Ashcroft's suspension of the constitutional rights of an American citizen, in the "radioactive dirty bomb" case, is the latest step-wise escalation in the assault on civil rights and liberties which began in earnest immediately after Sept. 11.

On June 10, exactly as Democratic Party Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche had warned in May, the Pentagon did "cross the Rubicon"—or at least the Potomac—to hold a press conference with Justice Department officials, where they announced the arrest and transfer to a military prison of José Padilla, an American citizen. This unprecedented and legally dubious action occurred only weeks after LaRouche's *EIR* article of May 24, 2002, entitled, "The Northern Command: Crossing The Rubicon."

LaRouche said: "The proposal for the probably unlawful, U.S. Army Northern Command ('USNORTHCOM'), when taken in its current strategic-policy setting, is clearly a proposal to 'cross the Rubicon,' a preparation to create a Caesarian military dictatorship over both the North American continent and the Caribbean. . . . In today's world, it is a preparation for the Pentagon to cross the Potomac one morning, to place the U.S. Attorney-General and his minions in power, reducing the President himself to a ceremonial, or even lesser figure in the configuration."

The night before the June 10 press conference, Ashcroft's Justice Department got President George W. Bush to sign an order classifying Padilla as an "enemy combatant," be-

cause of his alleged ties to al-Qaeda. This then allowed the former member of a Latino street gang, to be transferred to a military brig where he may *never* be tried, from Justice Department custody. One of the main reasons that Padilla was transferred, was that there is no evidence to prove the charges against him. A high-level intelligence source in Washington told *EIR* that, while the U.S. government had "intelligence" about Padilla, they had no real evidence.

But as alarming as the legal maneuverings are, equally dangerous, and indefensible, were the actions by Ashcroft and his war-mongering allies, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and FBI Director Robert Mueller, resorting to a Nazi Party-style "Big Lie" tactic. To cause maximum panic, the announcement about the military transfer of Padilla, was made *in Moscow* by Ashcroft, mouthing off that the arrest of this "top" al-Qaeda terrorist justified U.S. concerns about the "axis of evil," state-sponsored terrorism, and the threat from weapons of mass destruction. Ashcroft announced that Padilla had entered the United States to carry out an al-Qaeda plan to set off a "radioactive bomb" in Washington. But just hours after Ashcroft's "Big Lie" announcement, the officials themselves had to backtrack on this outrageous propaganda.

Not only was it later stated by Wolfowitz and FBI officials that there was "no actual plot" to which the U.S. government can tie Padilla; it was further admitted that he is not a "top" figure in al-Qaeda, or any other known terrorist

group. In fact, intelligence analysts admitted that al-Qaeda leaders would not make a recent American convert to Islam, such as Padilla, anything more than a courier or low-level operative.

Ripping Up the Constitution

The Justice Department's actions in the case of Padilla, who reportedly goes by the name Abdullah al-Muhajir after converting to Islam in the United States around 1993, goes well beyond what was contemplated in the President's Oct. 13 Military Order establishing military tribunals to try terrorist suspects captured in Afghanistan.

The Military Order explicitly excluded United States citizens, and also provided a procedure for trials and access to a lawyer. Padilla's case stands in contrast to that of John Walker Lindh, the so-called "American Taliban," who had been captured in Afghanistan, as part of the military forces of Taliban and/or al-Qaeda. Lindh is standing trial under Department of Justice charges in a Federal criminal court in Alexandria, Virginia.

Padilla's sudden transfer was apparently triggered by a scheduled court hearing at which the Justice Department would have been compelled to state whether or not it was bringing criminal charges against him. Since, by all accounts, the government has virtually no evidence against Padilla—or at least, no evidence that it is willing and able to use in Federal court—the Justice Department went to President Bush on the evening of June 9, and got him to sign an order declaring Padilla an "enemy combatant" who was to be transferred to military custody.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has made it clear that the government has no interest whatsoever in putting Padilla on trial—in front of a military commission or any place else—but that it simply wants to detain him, incommunicado, and interrogate him.

This has been done already with non-citizens since Sept. 11—hundreds of men captured in Afghanistan, many of whom are not Taliban or al-Qaeda fighters, are being held in military custody at Guantanamo; and a Syrian citizen, who is a former cab driver in Boston, was held incommunicado for eight months in New York, before being brought before a Federal magistrate. But what makes the Padilla case so extraordinary, is that the Justice Department, with the stroke of the President's pen, has now suspended all constitutional rights of an American citizen.

But the actions by Ashcroft, Wolfowitz, and company are so egregious that the action against Padilla may backfire. On June 12, the *New York Times*, in its lead editorial, accused Ashcroft of "suspending the U.S. Constitution." The *Times* noted that the U.S. government seems to have no interest in giving Padilla a trial, but it seems only interested in detaining and interrogating him.

"So far," says the *Times*, "the government has produced

no evidence that a dirty-bomb plot existed, or of Mr. Muhajir's role in one. We do, however, have President Bush's assurance . . . that 'This guy Padilla is a bad guy.'

"The government's position is unacceptable," says the *Times*, since the government says it can revoke constitutional rights by labelling someone an "enemy combatant." Further, it shows that "the government is prepared to strip away the rights of American citizens as readily as those of foreigners."

"The real problem with the government's approach has been evident since Sept. 11: The Bush Administration has too little faith in the criminal justice system," the editorial concludes. "The government must be vigilant about fighting terrorism, but this war can be waged without suspending the Constitution."

Police State's Global Agenda

Similar concerns have appeared in leading international publications. On June 11, the London *Independent* carried an article entitled "British Security Sources Raise Doubts Over U.S. Claims About 'Dirty Bomber.'" The *Independent* says that British and European security officials are "highly skeptical of American claims" that Padilla "was preparing to unleash a radioactive attack. . . . No evidence has been produced to show that he had access to the radioactive material needed to build the bomb, or indeed, that he had even worked out a time or place to launch the attack."

The Israel newspaper *Ha'aretz* said that "in the month since his arrest, the FBI has had difficulty grounding in evidence the charges that Padilla belongs to a hostile organization, to the extent that it needed to use the trick of moving him to a military tribunal 'as an enemy combatant.' Not even spies condemned to death, like Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, were given such treatment."

As LaRouche explained in "Crossing the Rubicon," measures toward a police state in the United States are not ends in themselves, but part of the nightmare policy option of turning the United States from a republic into a fascist empire of the Roman Empire model.

The fact that Paul Wolfowitz appeared as the spokesman for the Defense Department at the joint press conference with the Justice Department, instead of someone from the DOD General Counsel's office, or the military's judicial branch, that of the Judge Advocate General, is a sign of that concern. The prominence of Wolfowitz signals that the U.S. utopians behind the Northern Command and the police-state measures exposed by LaRouche, wanted to try to use the phony "dirty bomb" case around Padilla, as an excuse to extend the war on terrorism to Iraq, Iran, and other countries.

Wolfowitz is the utopian maniac who has repeatedly penned scenarios and war plans—since 1991—for the assassination of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and full-scale war against Iraq. Like his decades-long associate, Richard Perle, now head of the Defense Policy Board, Wolfowitz

believes that the United States should wage war unilaterally against any country that right-wing neo-conservatives, and Israeli Likudnik fascists put on their “enemies list.”

Perle also believes that a second major terrorist assault inside the United States—such as a “suitcase nuke” dirty bomb—is a necessary step to give his faction of “perpetual war” advocates, the leverage to overcome internal Bush Administration reluctance to Wolfowitz’s and Perle’s mad policy. This is to abandon the “coalition” for a war against terrorism, and to launch full-scale unilateral military operations against Islam in a global “Clash of Civilizations.”

Ashcroft Reprimanded

Wolfowitz’s agenda is well known, and opposed worldwide, largely because of the international influence and activities of Lyndon LaRouche, whose 2004 Presidential campaign issued a groundbreaking Special Report in February, entitled *Zbigniew Brzezinski and September 11th*. In that report, LaRouche demolished the “Big Lie,” that is at the heart of current global destabilizations, and U.S. police-state dangers. This is the assertion, for which evidence is never publicly produced, that Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda carried out the Sept. 11 irregular warfare attacks. LaRouche exposed the fact that the Sept. 11 tragedy was an “inside job” designed to trigger a Clash of Civilizations war.

Numerous reports have confirmed that Attorney General Ashcroft was reprimanded by the White House for his grandstanding on the Padilla case. It is reported that, after the decision was made to transfer Padilla to military custody, it was to be announced by two deputies—Deputy Defense Secretary Wolfowitz, and Deputy Attorney General Larry Thompson—at the June 10 press conference. But instead, Ashcroft, who was in Moscow, jumped in front of the cameras with a highly exaggerated and inflammatory account of the Padilla case, declaring that “we have disrupted an unfolding terrorist plot to attack the United States by exploding a radioactive ‘dirty bomb,’ ” which, Ashcroft went on to say, “can cause mass death and injury.”

As a result of the anger in the White House over Ashcroft’s conduct—which also triggered an 80-point drop in the stock market—Wolfowitz went on television the next morning with a much softer description of the plot, saying, “I don’t think that was actually a plot beyond some fairly loose talk and his coming in here obviously to plan further deeds.” Wolfowitz added that “it’s not as though this was a plan that was on the verge of being executed.”

Nonetheless, despite admitting that the entire Padilla plot was just “loose talk,” Wolfowitz arrogantly defended the classification of any American judged to be a threat to the war on terrorism as an “enemy combatant,” whose constitutional rights can be denied. The case has been made that Ashcroft, Wolfowitz, and the gang behind the police-state plans should be ousted, as a vital move in defense of the U.S. Constitution.