

Andrew Marshall: Key Architect of Utopian Military Policy

by Carl Osgood

In early 2001, newly confirmed Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld selected Andrew Marshall, the director of the Pentagon's Office of Net Assessment (ONA), to conduct a review of military strategy and force structure. The review was to lay the foundation for the transformation of the military that then-candidate George Bush had promoted in a speech—said to have been written by protégés of Marshall—at the Citadel in September 1999. Little known outside military and strategic policy circles, Marshall is described as both “legendary” and controversial inside those circles for his unconventional views on everything from nuclear strategy to the organization of military forces. For example, the Center for Security Policy, a neo-conservative think-tank close to the chicken-hawk war-mongers in the Pentagon, praises Marshall as the right man for the job. “Andy Marshall has spawned not only creative ideas,” the center wrote in a February 2001 statement, but “he has been a mentor to a generation of first-rate strategic thinkers and sponsored some of the best security policy research at the nation’s academic institutions.” On the other side, journalist Jason Vest, writing in the *American Prospect*, quoted veteran CIA analyst Mel Goodman that “putting Andy Marshall in charge of this [strategic review] is a ploy to make sure national missile defense gets funded.”

While Marshall’s review remains classified, it can safely be assumed that it has had a great deal to do with the military strategy elucidated in the September 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review, and in Rumsfeld’s drive for military transformation. In his Citadel speech, Bush, defining what transformation would mean in his administration, told the cadets that “our forces must be more agile, lethal, readily deployable and require a minimum of logistical support. We must be able to project our power over long distances.” He said that while equipment currently in service should be improved as needed, “The real goal is to move beyond marginal improvements to replace existing programs with new technologies and strategies. To use this window of opportunity to skip a generation of technology.” Bush’s speech was reportedly written by Richard Armitage, now Deputy Secretary of State, and John Hillen, who formerly worked for Marshall in the ONA.

Military transformation started out as something called “the revolution in military affairs,” a notion that was put forward after the 1991 Gulf War against Iraq. The revolution in military affairs posits that information technology and preci-



Pentagon
“transformation”
guru Andrew
Marshall.

sion-guided weapons will change the nature of warfare in the 21st Century. It emphasizes the importance of communications and sensors, and the use of computers to rapidly integrate sensor data. Marshall’s interest in the revolution in military affairs was piqued, in the early 1980s, when he became aware that Soviet writers, and especially Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, were looking into the military implications of advances in computer, communications, and sensor technologies, in conjunction with better warheads that would permit fire from a distance. The key to this revolution was the ability to “get inside an opponents’ decision cycle,” as it was described to *EIR* by one ONA military official.

Marshall’s influence is felt throughout the military and industry—despite the fact that only 15 people work in his office, and its budget for Fiscal 2003 is \$9.9 million. “Mr. Marshall has tremendous networks in academia, the Defense Department, and other parts of the government,” one ONA official told *EIR*. Because people he has trained over the past 30 years are seeded throughout the military, academia, think-tanks, and industry, Marshall has been able to steer military strategic policy to a great extent. Some of his protégés include Secretary of the Air Force James Roche; Gen. Lance Lord, commander of Air Force Space Command; and Andrew Krepinevich, the executive director of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. Krepinevich, who does studies under contract to Marshall’s office, is known in Washington as a key lobbyist for military transformation. Marshall is also said to be close to Rumsfeld from the mid-1970s, during Rumsfeld’s first stint as Secretary of Defense. Marshall provided testimony to Rumsfeld’s 1999-2000 Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States, and reportedly played a large role in convincing the commission that a real threat is imminent.

‘Envirusing’ the Military

In the early 1990s, however, Marshall had a problem. Virtually nobody in the military services was doing anything

with these ideas. So, using a process described to *EIR* as “envirusing,” Marshall’s office set about organizing a series of war games with the services. The notion of “envirusing” was literally that the ideas would spread like a virus, through the environment created by the war games. The services would provide participants and Marshall’s office would provide scenarios of possible future wars, along with a variety of potential future technologies. In effect, Marshall’s office told the services, “These are the capabilities you might have, someday in the future. What can you do with them?” and that’s how the war games were organized.

According to the ONA military official, these games gave participants the freedom to think. Because the scenarios were set in an indefinite future, nobody worried about the conclusions negatively affecting their careers. As a result, participants would go back to their parent organizations and talk and write about the war games. Marshall’s office sees last year’s Millennium Challenge 2002 military transformation experiment as “a very large manifestation of envirusing.” The process “injected into the collective bloodstream of the late 1990s,” the ideas that Marshall was promoting, according to the ONA military official. The organizations that were created as a result of that process, such as U.S. Joint Forces Command, which ran the Millennium Challenge exercise, are now “up and running by themselves,” he said.

China as the Next Strategic Threat

Marshall’s professional career began at the California-based RAND Corp. in 1949, where, along with people such as Herman Kahn, Albert Wohlstetter, and Fred Iklé, he spent much of his time “thinking about the unthinkable,” that is, nuclear war. At RAND, Marshall’s areas of research included nuclear war scenarios, strategic warning, Monte Carlo simulation methods, analysis of Soviet military programs, application of organizational behavior theory to military analysis, and the development of strategic planning concepts, including strategy for long-term U.S.-Soviet political-military competition. Marshall’s predecessor as director of strategic studies at RAND was James Schlesinger, who, as Secretary of Defense, brought Marshall into the Pentagon in 1973.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, Marshall turned his attention to China, commissioning translations of many Chinese military writings, in much the same way he had approached the Soviet Union. One result of the focus on China was a study called “Asia 2025,” which came out in early 2000. According to a *Washington Post* article at the time, the report postulated that China will be a future threat to the United States whether it is strong or weak. “A stable and powerful China will be constantly challenging the status quo in East Asia,” the report said. “An unstable and relatively weak China could be dangerous because its leaders might try to bolster their power with foreign military adventurism.”

This rejection of the Clinton Administration’s policy of engagement with China caused some consternation in Asia. Then-Secretary of Defense William Cohen, during a Septem-

ber 2000 visit to Bangkok, Thailand, downplayed the significance of Marshall’s report, saying that what Marshall did was examine “a number of potential options which might evolve in the next 20 years.”

Nonetheless, according to the *Washington Post*’s account, Marshall’s report claimed that because of the ready availability of highly accurate cruise missile and ballistic missile systems by 2025, “states in the region may have powerful methods of . . . influencing the behavior of their neighbors that do not involve the threat or use of major forces for invasion, conquest, or occupation of territory. Instead, force will be used and objectives will be obtained increasingly through strategies that seek to coerce, intimidate, or deny access.” The report concluded, “An Asia it dominates but does not conquer or occupy is China’s goal.” This assessment is explained in Marshall’s office as little more than a consideration of the military problems that are presented by the geography of the Pacific region, given the rising dominance of Asia. A senior civilian assistant to Marshall explained that the military problems presented by the long over-water distances of the Pacific are very different from what had been the traditional focus on the Central European front. For example, “What does that mean for the capabilities that you need to have?” he asked.

Not everyone saw the Asia 2025 report in that light, however. Srdja Trifkovic of the Rockford Institute wrote that it sought “justification for an ever growing military machine, supplied by an ever growing military-industrial complex.” Other threats faced by the United States, Trifkovic said, demand smaller U.S. forces capable of deploying rapidly anywhere in the world. “But the China threat, a nuclear power with over a billion people, is satisfyingly Soviet-shaped and justifies a very different type of military build-up.” Trifkovic quoted Asia expert Chalmers Johnson, who wrote in the *American Prospect* in January 1997, that “Americans still remain confused by the shift in the nature of power from military strength to economic and industrial strength. They tolerate and even applaud bloated, irrational defense budgets while doing nothing to rebuild and defend the industrial foundations of national security.” Trifkovic called the Asia 2025 report “living proof of Johnson’s lament.”

The matter identified by Johnson is at the heart of the issue. For Marshall and his disciples, the industrial age is over. Instead, the United States must prepare itself for—as Adm. Arthur Cebrowski, Rumsfeld’s transformation czar, has put it—“warfare for the information age.” “The changes in information technology of the past decade,” said Marshall’s military assistant, “can’t help but have the same effect in the military as it does in society.” It’s possible they see the war on Iraq as a paradigm for this shift. “The lessons that come out of that may offer important clues as to what warfare may look like in 20 years,” added Marshall’s military assistant. However, how can the Information Age paradigm, which has proven itself incapable of physically supporting a population, be any more of a success in the military realm?