

Military Spokesmen Taking the Lead Against Bush's Iraq War Fiasco

by William Jones

When President Bush on Dec. 7 gave the second of four scheduled speeches on the Administration's Iraq policy prior to the Dec. 15 elections in Iraq, touting "success" before a rather somber crowd at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), and focussing on this occasion on the economic reconstruction efforts, he was immediately met by a barrage of responses from leading Democrats, including that *bête noire* of the White House, Pennsylvania Rep. John Murtha, exposing the fallacy of Bush's claims. The counterposition reflects the truth of what Murtha said in response to questions later: There are only two positions on Iraq, the President's and his.

The relentless attacks by Murtha, a highly decorated Marine with 37 years of military service, who, in a dramatic move last month, had called for a redeployment of U.S. troops to points outside of Iraq within the next 6-12 months, has opened the floodgates to opponents in the Congress, which had hitherto been extremely cautious in their criticism of the war. As a Congressman who has always shown himself a defender of the needs of the U.S. military, Murtha's attacks have teeth.

Not only does Murtha's war record far outshine that of any of the neo-con warhawks in the Administration—most of whom, like that master of mendacity and subterfuge, Vice President Dick Cheney, had taken deferments to military service—but Murtha's critique reflects much of the pent-up anger in the uniformed military over the botched Iraq policy. Murtha himself indicated that this was the case in his Dec. 7 press conference. "I'm basing this on information I have from the military, based on information of the people I talk to, not only the hospitals I visit, but the generals I talk to, the retired generals I talk to. And they're as frustrated as I am about what's going on."

Both Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld have gone out "on the hustings," together with the President, in order to try to rally support for their failed policy. While these highly choreographed speeches before select military audiences usually elicit the appropriate "whoas" and "hoorahs" of troops who have been hyped up by their commanders, Bush's attempt to elicit similar positive response from a hastily gathered CFR crowd on Dec. 7 fell flat, with his lines about finishing the fight receiving only faint applause.

Commenting on Bush's speech on Dec. 7, Murtha rejected the President's claims of progress in the reconstruction effort.

"I can only measure progress by what I see and the things that I can actually measure, not by what they say are brigades and so forth and so on." Murtha said. "Now, water production: We put \$2.1 billion into water production. They're short of water all over the country. And they have only spent \$581 million."

Presenting a chart with electricity demand and the amount of electricity actually generated, he showed how the post-invasion electricity generation only sporadically reached the line of pre-war electricity generation, much less reaching the level of actual demand. "Now, there's one other area where I measure progress, and that's incidents," Murtha said. "Incidents have increased fivefold in the period of time that—well, a year ago. A year ago there were five times less than today."

LaRouche Doctrine Revisited

While Murtha has been attacked by Cheney and the Administration for his policy, he remains firm in his position and on the offensive, and insists that public opinion is swinging his way. While he acknowledges receiving some calls that attacked him, and being called a few names by his opponents, the great majority of people have supported him. To those who object that a U.S. withdrawal will lead to civil war, Murtha insists that we are already in a civil war in Iraq, and, by remaining there, U.S. troops have become the target. "The Iraqis don't want us there," Murtha said. "Eighty percent want us out of there, and 45% say it's okay to attack Americans. And the whole periphery say there's more chance of democracy if we get out of there. So the sooner we get out, in my estimation, the better off we'd be."

When *EIR* asked Murtha if he would be in favor of bringing the other regional powers, including Syria and Iran, into a security agreement which would help create stability in Iraq, Murtha replied: "Well, I think we have to do it. I think once we pull out, we'll be able to talk to them. I think until we pull out, we won't be able to, because of our credibility."

Another major critic of the Cheney Iraq policy has been former National Security Agency Director Lt. Gen. (Ret.) William Odom. Also reflecting views widely held by many in the U.S. military and intelligence community, Odom does not mince his words, provocatively entitling one of his articles, "What's Wrong With Cutting and Running?" Like

Murtha, Odom envisions a withdrawal of U.S. troops as the necessary prerequisite for creating the basis for charting a diplomatic solution. “U.S. withdrawal from Iraq is the precondition to winning the support of our allies and a few others for a joint approach to the region,” Odom wrote, in an article on the NiemanWatchdog website. “Until that has been completed, they will not join such a coalition.”

When *EIR* broached the question of bringing together the regional powers, including Syria and Iran in a security arrangement, as outlined by Lyndon LaRouche in his “Southwest Asia: the LaRouche Doctrine” paper, widely circulated in Washington in April 2004 (*EIR*, April 30, 2004), Odom expressed agreement. “Establishing relations with Iran is one of the most important things we could do,” he said.

In an interview with John McLaughlin on Nov. 27, Odom had also reflected such a concept: “I believe that stabilizing the region from the Eastern Mediterranean to Afghanistan is very much an American interest, one we share with all our allies as well as with several other countries, especially China, Russia, and India.”

Similar thoughts had also been expressed by Republican Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.), a Vietnam veteran long a critic of the Iraq debacle, in a speech made to the CFR on Nov. 15, in which he proposed convening a ministerial-level regional security conference on Iraq, which would include the regional powers Turkey, Jordan, Iran, Syria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. “Creating a formalized regional mechanism is vital for security in the Middle East,” Hagel told the CFR. “Although a regional mechanism does not assure Iraq’s success, the active involvement of the countries in the region allows a more promising future of stability for Iraq and lessens the chances for civil war and sectarian violence.”

Marching to a Different Drummer

The growing unwillingness by the U.S. military to be used as the “enforcers” of a policy that has gone totally awry was also evidenced somewhat more directly in a public tiff at a press conference on Nov. 29 between Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and Gen. Peter Pace, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. When asked about what U.S. soldiers must do when they see evidence of torture going on, Pace replied, “It is absolutely the responsibility of every U.S. service member, if they see inhumane treatment being conducted, to intervene, to stop it.” Rumsfeld then tried to correct the general, saying, “I don’t think you mean they have an obligation to physically stop it, it’s to report it.” But Pace held his ground: “If they are physically present when inhumane treatment is taking place, they have an obligation to try and stop it.”

Rumsfeld was so peeved by Pace’s response, that he brought up the issue again on Dec. 5 in a speech to students at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), “And so reporting something that looks amiss is good,” Rumsfeld told the SAIS audience. “Orally trying to stop something that looks amiss, to me, sounds very reason-



www.house.gov/murtha

Rep. John Murtha (left) rejected Administration claims about reconstruction in Iraq: “I can only measure progress by what I see and the things I can actually measure. . . .”

able. And then the next question is: What level of force should they use to try to stop it, if they see it happening in a country where they don’t know the laws, they don’t know the culture, and it could vary depending on whether it was being performed—the abusive act or the seemingly inhumane act or possibly illegal act, whether it’s being performed by an official of that government, a policeman or a soldier, or just by someone else?”

The Secretary’s “concerns” undoubtedly reflect the immoral and illegal Cheney-Rumsfeld policy on torture, which were most clearly manifested in Dick Cheney’s attempt to exempt the CIA from the blanket restrictions on torture mandated by the legislation being introduced by Senator John McCain. But the dichotomy between the civilian leadership of the Cheney-Rumsfeld cabal and the U.S. military, who have had to fight a war and conduct an occupation under very aversive conditions with insufficient equipment, insufficient personnel, and lack of strategic vision, has become more and more of an open fissure.

Another indication of the growing outrage in the population to the Cheney-Rumsfeld policy, is the formation of a new organization, Families of the Fallen for Change, which is demanding a change in policy. The new organization already comprises several hundred relatives of fallen soldiers in the few weeks it has existed.

But the necessity for policy changes lies not with the U.S. military, nor with the relatives of fallen soldiers, but with Congress, and particularly with the U.S. Senate. Only they can put a stop to the insanity perpetrated on the land by these ghouls around puppet-master Dick Cheney. If more of them would show the grit of that seasoned Pennsylvania ex-Marine on Capitol Hill, the quicker this costly fiasco would be terminated.