

RUMSFELD RECONSIDERED: AN IDEOLOGUE IN MODERATE'S CLOTHING

As the Senate Armed Services Committee begins hearings on the nomination of Donald Rumsfeld for Secretary of Defense, new information has emerged which casts doubt on his image as a solid, non-ideological manager who can bring the Pentagon into the 21st century.

When it comes to vital national security issues like missile defense and nuclear arms control, Donald Rumsfeld's track record and political ties show that he's an ideologue in moderate's clothing. In particular, his longstanding ties with right-wing think tanks, like Frank Gaffney's Center for Security Policy, raise serious questions about whether he has the temperament or the objectivity to be entrusted with the authority to decide whether this nation embarks upon an ambitious, provocative, and costly National Missile Defense (NMD) program. Rumsfeld is every bit as ideological on the missile defense issue as Bush's Attorney General nominee, John Ashcroft, is on the abortion issue.

TIES THAT BIND: RUMSFELD'S CONNECTIONS WITH RIGHT-WING THINK TANKS

The most troubling aspect of Rumsfeld's background lies in his close connections with the Center for Security Policy (CSP), a small, extremely effective missile defense advocacy organization founded by former Reagan Pentagon official Frank Gaffney. Going back to at least 1996, Rumsfeld has routinely been singled out as a "trusted advisor and faithful supporter" in CSP's annual reports. Rumsfeld has also been a regular donor to the Center. Last but not least, in 1998, Rumsfeld received the Center for Security Policy's "Keeper of the Flame" award at its annual fundraising dinner, in honor of his role in chairing the Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States.

Rumsfeld has also served on the board of Empower America, a conservative lobbying group that has vigorously attacked members of the Senate who express doubts about the wisdom of rushing ahead with the deployment of a missile defense system.

Rumsfeld was already a card-carrying member of the missile defense lobby before he chaired the Congressionally mandated commission on the Third World missile threat that was used to jump start the NMD program at a point when it had reached a dead end in the Republican-led Congress. While claiming to do a careful assessment of the evidence on the potential for other nations to develop missile capabilities that can reach the United States, it is clear that Rumsfeld and his conservative cohorts decided to use the commission as an opportunity to press the case for missile defense.

THE COMPANY HE KEEPS: WHY RUMSFELD'S CONSERVATIVE LINKS MATTER

It would be one thing if Donald Rumsfeld had affiliations with non-partisan think tanks which were objectively assessing the national security threats to the United States in the light of changing circumstances. But the Center for Security Policy is an ideologically driven advocacy organization disguised as a think tank. Ever since CSP Director

Frank Gaffney convinced Newt Gingrich and Dick Armye to make National Missile Defense a plank in their 1994 political credo, the "Contract With America," his organization has served as the *de facto* nerve center of the missile defense lobby. CSP's board is a virtual executive committee of the missile defense lobby, with representatives of right-wing foundations such as Heritage, Empower America, and High Frontier; weapons contractors like Lockheed Martin; Star Wars "true believers" on Capitol Hill such as Sen. Jon Kyl (R-AZ), and Rep. Curt Weldon (R-PA); and Reagan era Star Warriors like weapons scientist Edward Teller and former Reagan science advisor George Keyworth. CSP Board member Jon Kyl led the charge in the defeat of the Comprehensive Test Ban in the U.S. Senate, while Curt Weldon sponsored the amendment that created the Rumsfeld Commission to "assess" the ballistic missile defense threat to the United States.

Funders for Gaffney's Center in recent years have included right-wing philanthropists like Richard Mellon Scaife and the Coors family, self-interested weapons contractors like Lockheed Martin, Boeing, and TRW, and supportive individuals like Donald Rumsfeld, Elliott Abrams, and Howard Phillips.

Absent from CSP's members are moderate Republicans like Brent Scowcroft and Colin Powell; nor are there any middle-of-the-road Democrats.

Stripped of their pseudo-objective rhetoric, the views routinely expressed by CSP are quite extreme, including opposition to virtually every arms control agreement of the past two decades, from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty to the recent international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines. CSP Director Frank Gaffney has already rushed into print urging Donald Rumsfeld to begin deployment of a sea-based missile defense system within the next six months, despite the fact that the interceptor missile for such a system has not even been designed yet, much less tested.

Gaffney also rushed to criticize Secretary of State nominee Colin Powell's quite reasonable suggestion that the new Defense Secretary will need to "make an assessment" of the technological capabilities available to the United States before moving to deploy an NMD system.

In public statements on the missile defense issue, Rumsfeld has echoed the absurd argument crafted by CSP and its inner circle that because the ABM Treaty was signed with the Soviet Union, not Russia, it is no longer valid. This dangerous view flies in the face of standard

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international legal understandings of the obligations inherited by Russia as the successor state to the former Soviet Union, but Gaffney and his conservative cohorts continue to put forward this argument at every available opportunity.

CSP and Empower America are not above twisting the truth when it serves their purposes. In a 1998 radio ad targeting Nevada's Democratic Senator Harry Reid, Empower America suggested that he was unwilling to protect Nevada's families from the threat of ballistic missiles by a rogue state or terrorist group simply because he would not support the Republican version of National Missile Defense that was being championed by Sen. Thad Cochran of Mississippi. Although Rumsfeld was on Empower America's board

at the time, he did not speak out against this unfair and misleading piece of propaganda, which, among other factual mis-statements, gave the impression that there are terrorist organizations out there with access to ballistic missiles—a claim that no credible analyst has made.

Similarly, during the run-up to the year 2000 elections, CSP director Frank Gaffney chaired the Coalition to Protect Americans Now, which ran ads and put up a web site purporting to demonstrate the threat posed to each American neighborhood by ballistic missiles. The web site encourages visitors to punch in their zip code to see which foreign missiles are poised to attack them; but when one does so, many of the systems referenced, such as medium-range Iranian missiles, are not capable of coming within thousands of miles of U.S. soil. It is a classic bait-and-switch exercise, where the seeming specificity of the information offered ("punch in your zip code for a customized threat assessment") is backed up with shoddy and misleading information.

Given Donald Rumsfeld's close ties to organizations with a documented history of bending the truth to promote missile defenses, is he capable of making an objective assessment of NMD as Secretary of Defense? Will he distance himself from the extreme views of his conservative cronies and take a fresh look at the problem, or will he move full speed ahead without heeding problems of cost, technology, and diplomacy? That's the \$100 billion question, and American taxpayers are the ones who will pay the price if the U.S. Senate picks the wrong answer.

THE RUMSFELD COMMISSION REVISITED: POLITICIZING THE INTELLIGENCE PROCESS

As President-select George W. Bush noted at the press conference announcing his nomination to run the Pentagon, Rumsfeld's claim to expertise in missile defense matters is closely tied to his chairmanship of the Rumsfeld commission. But stripped down to its essentials, Rumsfeld's commission was an exercise in politicizing intelligence to promote predetermined beliefs, not an objective assessment of the realities facing the United States. Much like the conservative "Team B" report which was established at the request of the conservative Committee on the Present Danger to second guess the CIA's estimates of Soviet military spending in the 1970s, the Rumsfeld Commission—which was the brain child of CSP Board member Rep. Curt Weldon with the enthusiastic support of then-House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who appointed Rumsfeld to chair the panel—basically massaged existing U.S. intelligence data to come up with new con-

clusions that fit the political needs of its creators for a quasi-official endorsement of their exaggerated views of the missile threat to the United States. Rumsfeld's commission uncovered no new data. It merely applied an extreme worst case scenario to existing data, by suggesting that if nations like North Korea received substantial help—up to and including the possibility of a transfer of a complete ballistic missile from a nation like China—they would get a long-range ballistic missile capability more rapidly than if they did not receive such assistance.

As former House Armed Services Committee analyst Joseph Cirincione of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has pointed out, all the Rumsfeld Commission really did was change the standards by which the U.S. intelligence community measures the ballistic missile threat to the United States by substituting "possibility" for "probability," and ignoring economic and political factors that would deter a country from pursuing a "possible" capability. Given that North Korea has agreed to a moratorium on new missile tests, has begun a rapprochement with South Korea, and has expressed a willingness to cap its nuclear and ballistic missile programs (exports and production) as part of a framework agreement with the United States, Rumsfeld's alarmist position of two years ago seems to be quite wide of the mark. In fact, Cirincione argues, the United States is under considerably less threat of attack by ballistic missiles now than it was a decade ago.

And as U.S. intelligence analyst Robert Walpole has pointed out in testimony to Congress, a ballistic missile is the least likely way a foreign nation would choose to deliver a weapon of mass destruction to U.S. territory, because ballistic missiles have a "return address" which would allow swift and devastating retaliation on the part of the United States.

The Rumsfeld Commission report is, at its core, a landmark in political spin control, not a landmark in objective analysis of the threats facing our nation. Just as we learned after the fall of the Soviet Union that our estimates of Moscow's military capabilities had been greatly exaggerated, we will soon learn that the Rumsfeld Commission has hyped the threat posed to our country by ballistic missiles.

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