

## ***Pump Up the Pentagon, Hawks Tell Bush***

By Jim Lobe

While public opinion polls show that most of the U.S. public is concerned about the economy, hawks in the Bush administration see another problem as more urgent: the Pentagon is poor. Last week a group of influential right-wing figures close to Pentagon chief Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney complained that the current military budget of almost \$400 billion—already greater than the world's 15 next-biggest military establishments combined—is not enough to sustain U.S. strategy abroad.

In a letter to the president released on the eve of his State of the Union Address, the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), whose alumni include both Rumsfeld and Cheney, as well as most of their top aides, called for increasing the defense budget by as much as \$100 billion next year.

“Today's military is simply too small for the missions it must perform,” said the letter whose signatories included mainly key neoconservatives, former Reagan administration officials, and a number of individuals close to big defense manufacturers like Lockheed Martin. “By every measure, current defense spending is inadequate for a military with global responsibilities.”

The letter, which also suggested that Washington should prepare for confrontations with North Korea, Iran, and China, was published Monday in the *Weekly Standard*, the Rupert Murdoch-financed neoconservative journal edited by William Kristol, PNAC's cofounder and chairman.

Publication of the letter comes as public confidence in Bush's leadership, and particularly his apparent eagerness to invade Iraq, has slipped substantially, according to recent polls. The same surveys show increasing concern as well about his management of the economy, including the return of \$300 billion budget deficits

fueled mostly by military and security-related spending and tax cuts.

It also comes as veteran foreign policy analysts here and abroad are warning that anti-American sentiment is rising sharply in both the Islamic world and among U.S. allies in both Europe and Northeast Asia due to the perception that the Bush administration is insensitive to their views and seeks permanent military domination of Eurasia.

In his State of the Union Address Bush will lay out his budget and other priorities for the coming year. In the following days, the administration will make specific budget requests. If the administration asks for the increases urged by PNAC, public concerns about Bush's intentions both here and abroad are likely to rise steeply.

On the other hand, PNAC's past letters, particularly its recommendations on its anti-terrorist campaign and policy in the Middle East, have anticipated to a remarkable degree the administration's policy evolution. Just nine days after the September 11, 2001 attacks, for example, PNAC issued an open letter that called on Bush to take his anti-terrorist war beyond Afghanistan by ousting Saddam Hussein in Iraq, severing ties with the Palestinian Authority, and preparing for action against Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

### **PNAC's Origins**

PNAC in many ways is the latest incarnation of a series of hawkish groups dominated by Jewish neoconservatives dating back to the 1970s when they fought the antiwar wing of the Democratic Party and then combined with key Republicans like Rumsfeld to oppose détente with Moscow. Midge Decter and her husband, Norman Podhoretz, for example, helped found the Committee on the Present Danger in the

late 1970s and the Committee for the Free World in the early 1980s, which Decter co-chaired with Rumsfeld. Both signed the new letter.

Founded formally in 1997, PNAC works mainly as a front group for the coalition of neoconservatives, hard-right Republicans, and Christian Right activists that is behind what has come to be called Bush's "neo-imperialist" policies. Among its charter members were Rumsfeld, Cheney, and their chief deputies, Paul Wolfowitz and I. Lewis Libby, respectively, as well as a dozen other top administration policymakers today.

During the 2000 presidential campaign, PNAC produced a book-length blueprint for the incoming administration called *Present Dangers* edited by Kristol and Robert Kagan, another signer and prominent neocon, and featuring chapters by several prominent strategists either in or closely tied to the administration, notably Wolfowitz; Assistant Defense Secretary for International Security Affairs Peter Rodman; National Security Council Mideast director, Elliott Abrams; and Defense Policy Board chairman, Richard Perle.

PNAC is closely tied to the neoconservative American Enterprise Institute (AEI) from which it rents office space, and whose leading lights include Perle, former UN Ambassador Jeanne Kirkpatrick, and Lynne Cheney, the vice president's spouse.

The administration, which already won an \$80 billion increase in the defense budget for fiscal 2003, has called for further increases up to \$442 billion by 2007. But hawks have warned that this will not match what is needed if Bush's global ambitions are to be realized.

"A year into this activist foreign policy," wrote Frederick Kagan, a military historian and Robert Kagan's brother, late last year, "the defense agencies that will prosecute the war on terrorism remained starved of resources. Increases of some 100 billion dollars annually or more—over and above the increases already called for—will be necessary to provide for a defense establishment able to fulfill the president's national security strategy."

### A Nickel on the Dollar

The hawks insist this is realistic, because an increase of 100 billion dollars will bring the defense budget's percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) to only four percent, still lower in percentage terms than what the Pentagon received in the mid-1980s. "Less than a nickel on the dollar for American security in the 21st century is cheap at the price," according to the letter.

The letter enumerates the challenges that U.S. power must address, noting that the ouster of the Taliban in Afghanistan was "an essential first step" and that "an overwhelming military coalition (is) now ready to end the threat of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq."

"Removing Saddam is but the first step toward reconstructing a decent government in Iraq and carrying out your strategic vision for the Middle East. Other rogue states remain a major problem. Indeed we now confront the two-war scenario: Even as we deploy forces for war against Iraq, North Korea has abrogated its agreement to terminate its nuclear weapons development and threatens war if it is not appeased. The third member of the 'axis of evil,' Iran, has likewise stepped up its nuclear efforts."

It notes that the stabilization of Afghanistan remains to be secured, while "the war is also carrying U.S. troops across the border into Pakistan." In addition, Washington has committed itself "to a long-term military presence in Central Asia," while attacks in Bali and in the Philippines "show how this war has spread to Southeast Asia."

The letter to President Bush goes on to note that "In East Asia, China, as your own administration says, is 'pursuing advanced military capabilities that can threaten its neighbors'—our democratic allies—and derail its own internal political and economic modernization. With U.S. troops stretched as they are, it is a serious question of whether we could respond adequately to a Korean crisis or a sudden confrontation in the Taiwan Strait."

"In sum, there is an increasingly dangerous gap between our strategic ends and our military means, and the Bush Doctrine cannot be carried out effectively without a larger military force," it asserts.

In addition to Kristol, Decter, Podhoretz, and Kagan, other signers included several neoconservative academics, including Kagan's father, Donald, and Eliot Cohen, whose most recent book, *Supreme Command*, was reportedly at the top of Bush's reading list this summer; former senior Lockheed executives Thomas Donnelly and Bruce Jackson; former CIA director R. James Woolsey; a number of AEI associates; the head of the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq, Randy Scheunemann; former Defense Secretary and Carlyle Group director, Frank Carlucci; Christian Right activist Gary Bauer; Center for Security Policy chief Frank Gaffney; and Chris Williams, described by the

*Weekly Standard* as Rumsfeld's "right-hand man" during his first year at the Pentagon.

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## For Background and other analysis see:

PNAC's Open Letter to the President about the defense budget.  
<http://www.newamericancentury.org/Bushletter-012303.htm>

PNAC'S Present Dangers As Blueprint for Bush Doctrine  
By Tom Barry  
<http://www.presentdanger.org/frontier/2002/1031neocon.html>

A Strategy Foretold  
By Tom Barry  
<http://www.presentdanger.org/papers/foretold.html>

U.S. Foreign Policy—Attention, Right Face, Forward March  
By Tom Barry and Jim Lobe  
<http://www.fpif.org/papers/02right/index.html>