

DISCUSSION MEMORANDUM

Rebuild U.S. Military Around A Corps of Engineers Function

by Jeffrey Steinberg

In recent conversations with Lyndon LaRouche, the following set of basic observations and proposals emerged.

1. During his 1989-1993 tenure as Secretary of Defense in the George H.W. Bush Administration, Dick Cheney presided over a radical transformation of the U.S. military, which has now reached a crisis point, where many flag officers, active-duty and retired, have warned that the entire military structure has been hollowed out, nearly to a point of total destruction. The extension of the Iraq mission, and the looming prospect of a broader Persian Gulf military engagement targeting Iran, would be the proverbial “straw that broke the camel’s back” of the U.S. military altogether.

As Secretary of Defense, Cheney first cut the size of the U.S. Army by one-third. During his tenure, the U.S. Army went from 18 divisions down to 12 divisions. Once the military had been severely downsized, under the ostensible “peace dividend,” brought about with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States shipped 500,000 troops to the Persian Gulf for Operation Desert Storm. Then Cheney turned around and hired Halliburton to conduct a \$10 million study into how to “outsource” and “privatize” key military support functions. Having created a gaping hole in the military’s readiness, Cheney shoved privatization and outsourcing down the throats of the uniformed military. It was a carefully orchestrated seduction, one in which Cheney played an important, albeit bit part. Others with greater intellectual capacity, like George Shultz and Felix Rohatyn, did the planning. Cheney was the compliant thug who did the implementation. And, of course, when the Clinton Administration came into office, Cheney stepped in as president and CEO of Halliburton, and transformed the petroleum-infrastructure com-

pany into the *primo* Pentagon contractor, once he became Vice President in 2001.

2. In reviewing this rough chronology, in light of *Executive Intelligence Review*’s recent in-depth and highly critical study of the outsourcing of national security, Lyndon LaRouche proposed a simple solution to the dilemma of the military’s increasing dependence on Private Military Corporations (PMCs): Reverse direction altogether, and build back up to an 18-division Army once again. But the focus should be on a real expansion of those capabilities—active and active reserve—that are today vitally needed.

3. First and foremost, LaRouche emphasized the need to revitalize and vastly expand the Army Corps of Engineers, and similar engineering components of the other services, active duty, Reserve, and National Guard. Taken in the context of LaRouche’s May 2 legislative proposal for emergency action to create a Federal bankruptcy administration to revive the dormant production capacity of the automobile-manufacturing sector, with its vital machine-tool capacity, the build-up of the military engineering capacity serves a number of vital requirements. First, the Corps of Engineers plays a critical role in any major expansion of U.S. infrastructure, from water management and high-speed rail, to a vast expansion of America’s power grid, to rebuilding urban centers with new hospitals, schools, etc. There is virtually no ceiling on the amount of vital work that the Army Corps of Engineers can achieve, provided there is a vast Federal government emission of low-interest, long-term credit for these vital infrastructure projects. Even in its present vastly reduced capacity, LaRouche believes that the Army Corps of Engineers still has blueprints for many of the key infrastructure programs that are

vitality needed for our nation's future well-being, and which would provide employment for the soon-to-be-extinct American skilled auto worker. Second, the Corps of Engineers also has a vital overseas mission, training engineering corps from friendly nations, playing a leading role in the launching of vitally needed, large infrastructure projects in Africa, Southeast Asia, South and Central America, etc.

4. The Corps of Engineers, along with the Veterans Administration, and the Public Health Service, represent a critical component of our national disaster response capacity. The Department of Homeland Security has already shown itself to be a bureaucratic nightmare. DHS could be eliminated or significantly downgraded. A study of the Clinton Administration will show that when FEMA was upgraded to full Cabinet status, and placed under the command of a competent specialist, it was able to perform at a very high level. A revived FEMA, working in conjunction with a revived Army Corps of Engineers, Veterans Administration, and Public Health Service, could play a central role in kick-starting an American economic revival, reversing the past 40 years' trend to deindustrialization, outsourcing, and post-industrial service and entertainment ("Bread and Circus") insanity.

5. LaRouche also emphasized two important psychological benefits from such an expansion of the military, with this reorientation back to the traditional notion of military engineering. There are two segments of the American population that are in big trouble, as the result of collapse of the U.S. physical economy and the disastrous U.S. occupation of Iraq. In every American city, there are a majority of young people who are truly facing a "no future" world. In the poorest areas, there are young people already caught in a life of drugs, crime, hopeless poverty, lack of basic education, and no job opportunities. Many are already second-generation victims of this deep lumpenization and culture of despair and brutality. These young people represent a critical part of the future of our country, and they must be rescued from this disaster. They represent a critical resource for this expanded military-engineering capability. In the 1930s, under the New Deal, it was the Army Corps of Engineers that ran the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Then, as now, there were young men and women, caught in the grip of poverty and hopelessness. They were given job skills. Furthermore, they were taken out of their environment and given a chance, and thrown together with people from other parts of the country with



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers/Bob Heims

The Army Corps of Engineers will have to play a vital role in expanding American infrastructure and upgrading the skills of the workforce. Here: Construction by the Army Corps at the Dalles Dam in Oregon.

similar experiences and feelings of helplessness. Given a mission, a job, and a sense that the nation could be turned around, they responded. They later became the soldiers who defeated Fascism in World War II. Along with the urban and rural poor youth, there is another element of the "forgotten America" that must be given a real sense of mission and opportunity. These are the returning Iraqi war wounded, many in their early 20s. Many have suffered life-altering injuries, amputations, etc., and are now suffering from the shock of having their futures taken away. These people could be vital to a revived Corps of Engineers and similar military expansion. They may no longer be able to play a role in a combat unit, but their experience, their valor, their leadership skills, can be put to use, in various training and other capacities. Give them a sense of meaning again in their lives. They more than deserve it for what they have sacrificed for their country.

6. Such a revival of the American System tradition of military engineering, through an expansion of the U.S. military, would more than pay for itself. Right now, our national economy is on the verge of total destruction. As LaRouche has emphasized, if we allow the automobile-manufacturing sector to be wrecked, the United States will become a junk nation. Launch a major infrastructure revival, using the idle capacity of the automobile-manufacturing sector, with its strong machine-tool component, to rebuild our nation's infrastructure; expand the Corps of Engineering function to play a pivotal role in that effort, as the Corps was pivotal to the New Deal job-creation and infrastructure expansion; and the net increase in real wealth of the United States will sustain the effort—and then some.