

Rumsfeld, General Abizaid Admit: We Face 'Asymmetric and Irregular Warfare'

by William F. Wertz, Jr.

As the result of forceful questioning by both Republican and Democratic Senators, during a hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee on Aug. 3, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Gen. John Abizaid, head of the U.S. Central Command, were forced to admit the reality of what Lyndon LaRouche has described as “the onrushing threat of a modern nightmare of asymmetric World War III.” This crucial aspect of the hearing has been blacked out by the press.

In his opening statement Rumsfeld was the first to characterize the present warfare as “asymmetric warfare, irregular warfare,” stating that, “The wars we’re engaged in . . . are being fought with asymmetric and irregular warfare, which is very much to the advantage of the attackers.”

General Abizaid added the following comment:

“I think it’s very clear to us that if you look at the recent experience that the Israelis are having as they operate in Lebanon and you look at how other armed forces—say Pakistani armed forces—operate in their northern territories, that asymmetric warfare is here and with us.

“And it’s the warfare of the 21st Century, where the enemy seeks to attack the weaknesses of their opponent, and where they will attempt to win media victories as opposed to military victories.

“It should go without saying that, in five years of war, we have never lost a major engagement to the enemy anywhere in the region, yet there is considerable loss of confidence because the enemy is so agile and capable in purveying the notion that the situation is not winnable.”

It was in this context that both General Abizaid and Gen. Peter Pace, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, echoed comments made by Gen. Peter Chiarelli, the commanding general of Multinational Corps Iraq, the previous week about the devolution of Iraq into civil war and sectarian violence for which the military is not trained. General Chiarelli’s comment was as follows: “Quite frankly, in 33 years in the United States Army, I’ve never trained to stop a sectarian fight. This is something new.”

Asked if he agreed with this statement, General Abizaid testified: “I believe that the sectarian violence is probably as bad as I’ve seen it in Baghdad in particular, and that if not stopped, it is possible that Iraq could move toward civil war.”

General Pace also reluctantly admitted: “I believe that we do have the possibility of that devolving to a civil war, but that does not have to be a fact.”

After this testimony, Sen. John Warner (R-Va.), chairman of the committee, who expressed concern that the events in Lebanon and Israel “could spark a wider war,” went so far as to argue that the Senate may have to reconsider the resolution authorizing the President to use force in Iraq. “I think we have to examine very carefully what Congress authorized the President to do in the context of a situation if we’re faced with an all-out civil war, and whether we have to come back to the Congress to get further indication of support.”

Bipartisan Assault on Rumsfeld

Sen. Carl Levin (Mich.), the ranking Democrat on the committee, expressed the policy recently adopted by the leadership of the Democratic Party: “We need to clearly tell the Iraqi political leaders that our commitment to Iraq is not open-ended, and we will begin the phased redeployment of our troops by the end of the year.”

Noting the U.S. inability to effectively combat the insurgency in Iraq, Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) questioned the proposal for an international force to be sent to Southern Lebanon: “Let me ask you, General Abizaid, if we have difficulty with 130,000 troops in Iraq trying to disarm the insurgency, how in the world do we think we’re going to be able to get an international force that’s going to disarm Hezbollah?”

Sen. Jack Reed (D-R.I.) attacked Rumsfeld for the fact that the U.S. has no ready strategic reserve: “Mr. Secretary, it’s very clear that two-thirds of the Army operating force, active and reserve, is now reporting as unready. There’s not a single nondeployed Army brigade combat team in the United States that is ready to deploy. The bottom line is that we have no ready strategic reserve. and this is a stunning indictment of your leadership.”

At the end of the hearing, General Pace was finally forced to admit that Reed was right: “About two thirds of the brigades, as you have pointed out, would report C-3 or C-4.” Reed clarified: “Not ready for duty.”

Finally, Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) issued a point-by-point stinging indictment of Rumsfeld: “Under your leadership . . . we have a full-fledged insurgency and a full-blown sectarian conflict in Iraq. . . . You did not go into Iraq with enough troops to establish law and order. You disbanded the entire Iraqi army. . . . Now, we’re trying to recreate it. . . . Given your track record, why should we believe your assurances now?” Rumsfeld could only mutter: “My goodness.”

Hagel: We Need a Regional Security Conference

Speaking with anchor Bob Schieffer on CBS's "Face the Nation" on Aug. 6, Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-Ne.) put forward a rational perspective on the conflict in Southwest Asia:

This is a regional issue. It is evolving into a global issue. We have got to keep working it. And until we have that cease-fire that stops all of this, we can't move toward moving to a high ground here of moving a process to get us to a resolution, which we all support and we all know what it is, a two-state resolution. . . .

So you cannot separate what's going on in Lebanon and Israel, from Iraq or anywhere else. This is going to have to include Iran, Syria. That means engagement. That means direct talks, and put all of it on the table. But we have to stop the slaughter. That's the first thing we have to do. . . .

We can find a way out of this. But it's going to take a lot different approach than what we have seen. Last point I'd make: Diplomacy and engagement and talking to adversaries is not and cannot be seen as a reward. It's part of the diplomatic process. . . .

And I think where we go from here, with all the prob-

lems and inconsistencies, is a cold, hard assessment that Iraq is not going to turn out the way that we were promised it was. And that's a fact, not because I say it. That's where it's going, just as the general said it very honestly, I think, this week, before the Congress.

What you do, I think—because we don't have many options. There are no good options here, no good options. I would move toward a higher ground, toward right back to what you talked about, Bob, the regionalization.

I would get the first President Bush, President Clinton, involved and try to impanel a regional security conference, a regional diplomatic conference. The UN can be part of that.

Unless you come at it that way, we're going to be leaving Iraq. And it's not going to be the way we intended to leave Iraq, because that is the direction this is going.

It is very wrong, Bob, to put American troops in a hopeless, winless situation, just keep feeding them in to what's going on. That's irresponsible and that is wrong. . . .

We are decimating our army. We can't continue with the tempo and the commitment that we are on right now. You go talk to any sergeant major, sergeant first class that's been around a little bit, or any general quietly, and they'll tell you.

I get the calls. Chris [Sen. Chris Dodd (D-Conn.), also on the show—ed.] gets the calls. So let's not pretend that things are a certain way. They are where they are. We have got to understand that, and deal with the facts as they are.

After the committee hearing Senator Clinton called upon Rumsfeld to resign: "I just don't understand why we can't get new leadership that would give us a fighting chance to turn the situation around before it's too late. I think the President should choose to accept Secretary Rumsfeld's resignation. The secretary has lost credibility with the Congress and with the people. It's time for him to step down and be replaced by someone who can develop an effective strategy and communicate it effectively to the American people and to the world. I am frankly tired of hearing the same stories from the Administration's national security team. The President changed his economic team, he changed his White House team, I think it's time for him to change his security and defense team."

On the Republican side, both Senators John McCain (Ariz.) and Susan Collins (Me.) joined Warner in making clear their lack of confidence in the strategy and tactics being employed by the Bush Administration, and also their concern about the cost of the war. Senator McCain, who is opposed to a withdrawal of troops, expressed concern about the redeployment of troops from Ramadi/Fallujah to Baghdad, saying: "What I worry about is, we're playing a game of whack-a-mole here. It flares up. We move troops there."

McCain also told Rumsfeld in no uncertain terms that the

Senate was now going to exercise oversight over the management of funds: "Secretary Rumsfeld, we passed an amendment on the armed services authorization bill, which I am confident will be accepted in conference. And that requires that operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, funding for it, be included in the regular budgetary process. . . . I hope you are making plans to include the expenses involved in operations in Iraq and Afghanistan in the normal budgetary process and not as a, quote, 'emergency supplemental.'"

Senator Collins challenged the entire strategy of the Bush Administration: "If the upswing in violence has occurred despite the presence of the best troops in the world, it doesn't give me a lot of confidence in our underlying strategy." She then concluded: "I'm just trying to get a sense, Mr. Chairman, of whether we can expect indefinitely approximately \$2 billion a week from our budget to be spent on this war."

But now that the reality of what LaRouche has warned is the threat of generalized asymmetric warfare has been admitted, the question is whether the Congress will continue to stand impotently by, or take the necessary action. This is a war which is unwinnable militarily. Only *political* solutions which provide answers to the causes which underlie the asymmetric warfare are capable of preventing World War III.