

Bush to Aspen confab: Third World the enemy

by Kathleen Klenetsky

The U.S. military is being rapidly transformed into a British-style strike force, whose sole purpose is to implement neo-colonial looting policies against Third World nations—with the current American military move into the Mideast being a prime example of this new strategy. President Bush made this shift official in a speech to the 40th anniversary conference of the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies Aug. 2, in which he unveiled a plan for radically restructuring the U.S. military.

Drawn up by Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney and his Undersecretary for Policy, Paul Wolfowitz, the proposal will cut 25% in Armed Forces personnel over the next five years. Of greater significance is the proposal's redefinition of America's military mission. The major threat to U.S. national interests in the so-called post-Cold War era, it maintains, now comes not from the traditional East-West matrix, but from those developing-sector countries possessing raw materials which the U.S.'s collapsing economy dictates must be obtained at bargain-basement prices.

This was the basic message of Bush's address to the Aspen Institute. In that context, it was hardly happenstance that the conference's guest of honor was British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who epitomizes the savage neo-colonial looting policies that motivate the administration's new military policy.

Bush told his audience that the potential threat from the Soviet Union has been so reduced over the past year, that it is now permissible to contemplate a massive reduction in American forces deployed in Europe. By the mid-1990s, he claimed, it will take the Soviets so long to "return to the levels of confrontation that marked the depths of the Cold War," that a strong U.S. military presence in Europe will no longer be needed. Instead, the U.S. will rely more heavily on reserve units and "the concept of reconstitution of forces."

The "new era" the world is entering into will enable the U.S. to cut 500,000 active duty personnel out of the current 2.1 million-man force. At that point, he said, "America's Armed Forces will be at their lowest level since the year 1950"—when the Korean War was triggered.

According to published reports, the Cheney-Wolfowitz proposal calls for streamlining the U.S. military into an Atlantic Force, a Pacific Force, and a Contingency Force, the last geared toward rapid interventions into Third World areas. This was clearly reflected in Bush's speech.

"Notwithstanding the alteration in the Soviet threat, the world remains a dangerous place with serious threats to important U.S. interests wholly unrelated to the earlier patterns of the U.S.-Soviet relationship," he said. "Outside of Europe, America must possess forces able to respond to threats in whatever corner of the globe they may occur. Even in a world where democracy and freedom have made great gains, threats remain. Terrorism. Hostage taking. Renegade regimes and unpredictable rulers. In an era when threats may emerge with little or no warning, our ability to defend our interests will depend on our speed and agility."

Bush motivated his proposal by pointing to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which had started just hours before the President spoke. "The brutal aggression launched last night against Kuwait illustrates my central thesis," he said. It proves that threats "can arise suddenly, unpredictably, and from unexpected quarters. U.S. interests can be protected only with a capability which is in existence, and which is ready to act without delay."

In truth, Bush's military restructuring has virtually nothing to do with deterring aggression. Its real purpose is to create a military force to loot Third World countries of raw materials, force them to pay their debts (which economic conditions have now made unpayable), and to threaten or take over countries which resist U.S. colonial policy—such as Panama under General Noriega.

Bush could not have hoped for a more receptive forum. Other speakers at the Aspen conference included Robert McNamara, the former defense secretary and World Bank head who has repeatedly claimed that human population growth is a more dangerous threat than nuclear war, and that the population in the Third World must be sharply decreased; Barber Conable, a close Bush crony and current World Bank president, whose views are akin to McNamara's; and Richard Lamm, the former Colorado governor who thinks that the elderly have a duty to "die and get out of the way."

Maggie holds Bush's hand

The real hallmark of the conference was Thatcher's presence. She was there to receive the institute's "Statesman Award," making her only the third person to receive that honor in four decades. But her trip to the U.S. just happened to coincide with the explosion in the Mideast, and she prolonged her stay for several days to ensure that the U.S. would make some lunatic military response to the situation, which it did.

In his Aspen speech, Bush hinted at how much he was relying on Thatcher's input on the Iraq-Kuwait crisis. "It was very, very comforting to me today when I went out . . . expressing our views on the . . . naked aggression by the state of Iraq. I felt very comforted by the fact that as I spoke, Prime Minister Thatcher was there with me answering the tougher questions and standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the United States."