

National News

White Directs Army To Privatize 200,000 Jobs

Secretary of the Army Thomas White has directed the Army to increase the percentage of work it farms out to the private sector, in order to “free up resources” for the war on terrorism. White’s initiative was presented at an Oct. 31 press conference; it flows from President Bush’s Management Agenda, and is targeting 155,000 civilian jobs and 59,000 military jobs for eventual contracting out or elimination—jobs that are defined as “non-core competencies.”

The initiative includes expanding the privatization of Army housing and utilities on Army bases, as well as looking at the privatization of Army arsenals, which supply a large portion of the Army’s ammunition needs.

White’s former employer, the now-bankrupt Enron Corp., was awarded military utilities privatization contracts in the 1990s.

War College Professor Promotes New Silk Road

Stephen Blank, a professor at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, penned an article for the *Asia Times* of Oct. 18, which identified the buildup of the New Silk Road, linking Russia to Central Asia, North Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, and Iran, as the cornerstone of a new development perspective that can bring peace and stability to all of Asia. “We have long known,” Blank began, “that the development of long-range transportation projects, including energy pipelines, brings together markets and peoples and provides a major impetus to long-term economic growth. Similarly, we have also long known that a fundamental cause of Central Asia’s backwardness was its remoteness from major shipping and transportation lanes.”

“Therefore,” Blank wrote, “a basic precondition of Central Asia’s economic growth is its linkage to such lanes and the completion of major infrastructural projects

in energy, rail, air, sea and land transport that connect it to foreign markets.”

Blank cited Moscow’s recent promotion of three rail projects to buttress trade and economic links to Central Asia, North Asia (the Korean peninsula and Japan), and India-Iran. Borrowing concepts from Lyndon LaRouche’s writings on the Eurasian Land-Bridge and the special role of Russia as a Eurasian link, Blank wrote, “Russia’s geographic position enables its policymakers and planners to think of it as a hub, if not the hub of a revived Asiatic transportation network that links together all the different parts of Asia through Russia and connects Europe to Asia as well. Ultimately, all these projected lines, if they materialize, could form part of a giant network of transportation lines linking together all of Asia and Russia.”

While Blank at points reflects typical geopolitical thinking—e.g., that the Russian plans trump European Union “Silk Road” initiatives that bypass Russia, and also outflank the U.S.-backed Baku-Ceyhan pipeline—the fact that such discussion about Eurasian Land-Bridge prospects is being debated at the leading U.S. Army think-tank is noteworthy, as an indication of the growing power of LaRouche’s ideas.

D.C. Hospital Raiders Lose Credit Rating

National Century Financial Enterprises (the financial partners of Doctors Community Healthcare Corp.—DCHC) had its credit rating withdrawn entirely by Fitch on Oct. 31, and Moody’s also lowered its ratings, saying that NCFE improperly used its cash reserves to finance new deals. Moody’s warned of “a higher likelihood of default of NCFE” and the corresponding effect this would have on the healthcare providers to which it lends.

A *Washington Post* Oct. 30 article reported that in September, Florida governor Jeb Bush used a NCFE corporate jet for an in-state trip. But it did not mention NCFE’s connections to DCHC, which was given the privatization contract for the capital District’s health care system in a 2001 deal

backed by the *Post* itself, and involving the shutdown of D.C. General Hospital, the capital’s only public hospital.

The *Post* said that NCFE “provides cash flow for struggling hospitals around the nation by lending them money immediately in exchange for relatively high interest rates and control of the institutions’ receivables”—money due to the hospitals from HMOPs, insurers, the government, and others.

EIR reported last year that NCFE was amassing a fortune stolen from health-care institutions through gangster methods of fraud and embezzlement under the cover of money-lending, and described various lawsuits charging NCFE and DCHC with racketeering and fraud.

Huge Promotion of Ultra-Violent Video

Amidst huge media promotion including ABC-TV’s “Good Morning America” on Oct. 31, SONY is preparing release of an ultra-violent video game which already has pre-sales of 4 million copies, and is expected to grow \$400 million. ABC’s “Good Morning America” “news” program featured the game called “Grand Theft Auto: Vice City” which was created by two British men experienced in criminality. The game’s theme is to “find the people who stole your cocaine and kill them;” for example, “you can pick up a prostitute, pay her for (off-screen) services, then kill her and get your money back.”

A spokesman for the bank UBS-Warburg, Michael Wallace, said “Violence gets you headlines . . . and violence doesn’t hurt.” The maker of the video for SONY, Rockstar Games, defended the violence, saying they had submitted the game to the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB). This board was created by legislation sponsored by Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.). The case of the new video makes it clear that the rating board does not keep the most violent videos from reaching children and youth. Lieberman, Hollywood’s favorite Senator, has however denounced the game for “rewarding . . . anti-social behavior.”