

National News

Retired Flag Officers To Oppose Gonzales

A group of retired generals and admirals who were top military legal officers and who are opposed to the nomination of Alberto Gonzales to be U.S. Attorney General, are discussing how to most effectively oppose his confirmation by the Senate, according to the *New York Times* on Dec. 16, and confirmed by a legal source contacted by *EIR*.

The retired officers are focussed on the legal memoranda written and commissioned by Gonzales, as White House counsel, which sanctioned harsh treatment, including torture, of prisoners captured in the war on terrorism. Adm. John Hutson (ret.), who was the Judge Advocate General for the U.S. Navy, said that when Gonzales wrote these memos, he "was not thinking about the impact of his behavior on U.S. troops in this war and others to come. He was not thinking about the United States' history in abiding by international law, especially in the wartime context. For that reason, some of us think he is a poor choice to be Attorney General."

Brig. Gen. James Cullen (ret.) said that Gonzales had ignored the advice of military lawyers who were adamantly opposed to the Administration's legal strategies. "When you create these kinds of policy that can eventually be used against your own soldiers, when we say 'only follow the Geneva Conventions as much as it suits us,' when we take steps that the common man would understand is torture, this undermines who we are supposed to be, and many of us find it appalling."

Schwarzenegger on New Austerity Offensive

The would-be Führer of the United States, current California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, is renewing his drive for draconian austerity, taking on nurses in the

state, Democratic legislators, and long-established lunch rules for workers.

- The "Governator" backed off his agreement with nursing associations to reduce the work load to five patients per nurse, so it remains at six. Nurses charge that this is a betrayal of his promise to them.

- To defeat opposition from Democratic legislators to his plan for "restructuring" state government by shutting down state agencies and reducing manpower, Schwarzenegger has proposed that a vote by two thirds of the legislators be required to oppose the "reform." This would allow him to impose his fascist restructuring with votes of one third of legislators—which corresponds to the number of Republican legislators in the State Assembly and Senate.

- He attacked a state law which requires a lunch break for workers within five hours of reporting for work. Six hours ought to be allowable, he said.

As to his past failures, the Workmen's Compensation reform he rammed through, which was to reduce costs to small businesses, has proven to be a fraud. Small businessmen who supported Schwarzenegger are getting their new bills, and their premiums are higher than before, the *Los Angeles Times* reported.

'Faith-Based' ABM System Fails Again

Another test of the U.S. anti-missile missile system failed on Dec. 15, when the interceptor missile never left its launch pad in the Marshall Islands, after a target missile had been sent up from Alaska. Press reports described this as "the first test in two years," which is true enough, but few mentioned that that test two years ago failed also, and that five out of six tests of this antiballistic-missile system have been unsuccessful. This system, for which the Bush Administration solemnly exited the 1972 ABM Treaty, is so ineffective that it bothers no one—the Russian government, for example, looks on it quite calmly. But despite all the test failures, it is being deployed.

The system might thus be considered a

"confidence-building measure," being so inoffensive a defense. Or, perhaps, it has within it the overlooked qualities of a "faith-based" ABM system, in which the miracle of destruction of nuclear-tipped missiles without intercepting them, is accomplished. It does have the virtue of demonstrating Lyndon LaRouche's often-repeated judgment that an ABM system not based on "new physical principles" will never be an effective defense against nuclear attack.

Senate Democrats Seek To Stop Medicaid Cuts

Sen. Jeff Bingaman (N.M.) and 47 members of the Senate Democratic Caucus have signed a letter to the President, expressing their opposition to any proposal that would cut Medicaid, on the grounds that it would ultimately mean low-income families and persons with disabilities would be dropped from the program. The only Senate Democrat who did not sign was outgoing Sen. Zell Miller. According to a press release from Senator Bingaman's office on Dec. 15, the letter said:

"We are writing to express our opposition to any Medicaid reform proposal that seeks to impose a cap on federal Medicaid spending in any form or eliminates the fundamental guarantee to Medicaid coverage for our nation's most vulnerable citizens, including low-income children, parents, pregnant women, people with disabilities, and senior citizens. . . .

"Arbitrary limits on federal Medicaid spending fail to automatically adjust for economic recessions, demographic changes, health care inflation, or disasters, including terrorism. . . . We stand ready to work with you on policies impacting the health and well-being of [eligible recipients], and identifying those structural changes that enhance state flexibility without compromising the health and well-being of beneficiaries.

"With the number of uninsured growing in the nation and an aging population, we should take steps to stabilize and improve health coverage rather than undermine it. . . ."