

National News

Reality Sends Rumsfeld Even More Ballistic

The suggestion that the U.S. Army is in bad need of repair caused Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to launch another ballistic rant, upon being confronted with that reality.

In late January, AP broke a story of a new report, written under contract to the Pentagon, by Andrew Krepinevich, a retired army officer and director of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. In that report, Krepinevich concluded that the Army cannot sustain the pace of troop deployments in Iraq long enough to break the back of the insurgency. He suggested that the Pentagon's decision to begin reducing troop levels in Iraq to 100,000, this year, is in response to the realization that the Army is overextended.

In the report, he warned that the Army is "in a race against time" to adjust to the demands of war "or risk 'breaking' the force through a catastrophic decline" in recruitment and re-enlistment.

Not surprisingly, Rumsfeld went ballistic when asked about the report at a Pentagon briefing. "Unless people are telling me something other than the facts, that's just false. . . . I just can't imagine someone looking at the United States armed forces today and suggesting that they're close to breaking," Rumsfeld said. "That's just not the case."

Arnie, Bush Kill Funds For High-Speed Rail

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and the Bush Administration moved in lockstep recently to stop high-speed rail even before it starts.

After ten years, the California High Speed Rail Authority is nearly ready to start construction on a 700-mile-long system, which would whiz electric-powered bullet trains between San Francisco and Los Angeles (and other destinations) at speeds of up to 220 miles an hour.

But the Terminator has said that he plans

to remove the project's \$9.95 billion bond issue from the 2006 ballot. In an effort to salvage the system, Democratic State Sen. Don Perata has proposed a \$1 billion California bond package bill.

On Feb. 1, at the behest of the Bush Administration, House Ways and Means Committee chair Bill Thomas of California deleted a tax-bonding provision for high-speed rail in H.R. 1631. He justified getting rid of the provision by saying that "not every region of the country would benefit by the development of high-speed passenger rail service," according to the Congressional Quarterly.

But the fight for rail development doesn't break solely on party lines. Republican Sen. Trent Lott (Miss.) continues to press for the passage of the Lott-Lautenberg bill, S. 1516. Announcing his bid for reelection Jan. 17, Lott said, "Part of my goal is to put a little pressure on the Administration, because I don't think their [passenger rail] proposals have any credibility at all, and on the House to go ahead to address this issue."

Mrs. King 'Stood Firm, Comforting Others'

Amelia Boynton Robinson, the civil rights heroine and vice chairman of the Schiller Institute, made public note of the death of her longtime friend and colleague, Corretta Scott King, in a statement in which she said that Mrs. King had "quietly laid the draperies of her beautiful past behind her," when she died Jan. 31.

Mrs. Robinson was among the first to be asked to become a board member of the King Center, which Mrs. King founded in Atlanta, following the assassination of her husband, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"I gleaned from Coretta King, more patience, determination and courage in fighting discrimination among the white citizens, and deep-seated fear among people of my race," wrote Mrs. Robinson. "Coretta was a very strong woman, having to raise four children, while she loaned her husband to the world, withstanding non-believers who hated the troubling of the political racial waters. She stood firm, comforting others."

"There were many dark days that brought pains, and nights when she could not sleep, but through it all she never became discouraged, or gave up hope, as she took the bitters with the sweets: The victory of winning the right for the citizens of the United States of America to vote and the Civil Rights Act were sweet rewards."

And Where Were You, Justice Antonin Scalia?

The *New York Times* and ABC's "Nightline" report that Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonin Scalia had more pressing matters than to attend the swearing-in of new Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts.

The Ritz Carlton Hotel in the mountains near Vail, Colo. beckoned. What was there? The Schmittlerian Federalist Society's September three-day bash. Between tennis, fishing, and cocktail sessions, Scalia weighed in with a ten-hour course for attending lawyers, many of whom appear before the Supreme Court.

One of the elbow-bending sessions was sponsored by the lobbying and law firm where Jack Abramoff used to have an office.

Scalia was the only Supreme Court associate justice to miss Roberts's swearing-in ceremony.

Rebuild U.S.A., Says Bipartisan Majority

The office of GOP Sen. Pete Domenici (N.M.) reports that 60 Senators have now signed on as co-sponsors of the three bills, jointly called the Protecting America's Competitiveness Edge Act (PACE). The co-sponsors are 30 Democrats and 30 Republicans. The bills provide tax incentives for R&D, innovation, and continuing education; support for graduate and undergraduate students in science and math, and fellowships for teachers; and to strengthen basic research programs at the Energy Department, and science and math education, using the national labs.