

## ATTACK ON THE U.S. ARMY

It seems the United States Army will be reverting to the condition it is usually in when a Democrat is President and Commander-in-Chief. I remember those days well. Back then the Army didn't have enough repair parts to keep its motor vehicles running and its helicopters flying so combat units were instructed to selectively cannibalize non-running vehicles and helicopters to keep as much of the fleet operational as possible.

Then the budget couldn't sustain the military force at its authorized strength levels so there was a chronic shortage of experienced leadership at the middle and lower unit levels. Captains were doing the jobs that majors and lieutenant colonels were supposed to do. Sergeants were filling in for lieutenants. Lieutenants were filling in for captains and majors. The soldiers used to say that if the available manpower pool was rotated fast enough, it would give the appearance that there were sufficient people assigned to the units to make them look combat ready.

At the top of the command pole only flexible, amenable flag officers got the top jobs. I recall one four star who was called to the White House for interrogation -- examination is probably a better word -- by the Commander-in-Chief before being offered a top job. When later asked how the interview went, he said that he had stuck by his principles but in so doing had failed his "Orals" and would not be getting the job. In those days he and his fellow flag officers believed that being faithful to principles always came first. Hopefully, today's top military leaders share similar convictions.

It is criminal! Let me say that again, it is criminal to send our young men and women back for their third, fourth, fifth, sixth or seventh tour of duty in Afghanistan and Iraq -- even if they volunteer to go back for another combat tour. It is the same as signing their death certificates. Somewhere between the third and seventh tour the odds are that for many their luck will run out and they will return in a body bag.

Why does the Commander-in-Chief send the flower of American youth back for so many dangerously repetitive combat tours? Because there aren't enough soldiers on active duty. Why? Because the current Army budget is too small and won't sustain maintaining an adequate combat force so that units can be rotated on a reasonable, lifesaving basis. Still Congress and the White House want to reduce the military budget even further. And yes, there is waste in the military budget that needs to be eliminated.

The military represents about a fifth of the national budget. The deficit reduction deal which the White house, the Democrats and Republicans in Congress have agreed to is basically one that supposedly seeks a long term solution to the nation's fiscal problems by restructuring the military services and redefining their missions.

Supposedly Congress will put the federal budget on the table and take an ax to it. If the Democrats and Republicans can't come into agreement on what and how much to cut, the Department of Defense will be forced to swallow one half of the reductions. This isn't fair and it will gut our armed forces. From the beginning of the budget negotiations, the White House and the Democrats had no intention of coming

into agreement with the Republicans. All along they intended to make draconian reductions in the nation's military forces; they just needed the Republican's help or inattention.

It would be easy to lay this mindless idiocy entirely at the feet of the Democrats, since it is their ideas fueling the runaway Pentagon train. But the truth is the Democrats in Congress are only observers of this rape. Yes, they run the White House and the Senate, but the nation's purse strings are loosed and gathered together by the Republican run House. It's time the Republicans of today manned up, took charge and started acting like President Lincoln's Republicans, instead of selling their souls to the Democrats for a cold bowl of bipartisanship.

In this supposed search for the finding of a solution to the nation's budget and fiscal problems, everything is supposed to be on the table, including the military budget. Well, everything should not be on the table, especially the military budget. National Defense and Security should not be lumped and dumped together with programs like welfare and health care.

As usual, the Democrats have out maneuvered the Republicans. They have told them fairy tales, made all sorts of promises they have no intention of keeping, hummed them to sleep and while they were sleeping kicked the Republican can, with our soldiers in Afghanistan stuffed into it, far down the road. But I suspect that this inattention to the needs of the members of our armed forces in Afghanistan is only the beginning of the military's troubles. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta has already announced that he is working on a way to cheat our soldiers out of future pay raises and retirement benefits, and our flag officers remain mute.

Essentially Panetta is being told by the White House to come up with a plan that embraces technology and de-emphasizes active-duty "boots on the ground." President Carter once took us down that same road. He declared that in the future, intelligence and spying would be done through technological means such as satellites, not people on the ground. He then went about systematically destroying the nations' human intelligence and spying resources and capabilities. After all these years, we have yet to fully recover from his stupidity.

The Administration is guessing that our strategic interests are shifting away from Europe and NATO and moving more toward the western Pacific, East Asia and China. But who can say with certainty that our next military crisis or challenge will be in the Asia-Pacific area rather than in the Strait of Hormuz, the Middle East, Africa or South America? If not done carefully and properly, reorientation could prove to be quite risky.

Over the centuries our strategic interests have coincided more with Europe than with Asia because our history, religion, principles and beliefs have evolved from Europe. No matter in which direction we reorient foreign policy, our history will not change. The Vatican, seat of our Catholicism, will not suddenly relocate to Asia. Shakespeare will still be taught in literature classes. La Scala will still be the foremost opera house in Europe. True, our strategic involvement with China and Asia will increase, but we will still be Americans and our heritage and history will still have a European flavor.

The Army Chief of Staff, General Odierno, said recently that because the Army's budget is being cut drastically, the reserve forces will have to be enlarged and kept at a much higher level of readiness than they historically have been. This is nonsense! Over and over history has recorded the sad results of adopting such a policy. It's time we learned our lesson -- when the budget goes down, readiness goes down! There are no exceptions.

History tells us that when available funds dry up and bases are closed overseas and troops are returned back to the United States, they are not reassigned to U.S. military bases. They are discharged from the Army and other branches of the armed forces and their units disbanded, which further reduces the military's size and power, which seems to have been the purpose of this Administration from the beginning.

Our soldiers deserve better. They deserve to serve in well trained units that are up to full strength. Their equipment should technologically be the latest and be supported by an abundance of repair parts and maintenance personnel. And they deserve to have their lives treasured and protected, and to have the full financial support of the Congress and the White House.