

„Donald Rumsfeld and the War in Space“



Speech by Regina Hagen
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Who is Mr. Rumsfeld and what does he have to do with the newly revived missile defense and “Star Wars” plans? Allow me to offer you a brief answer to this question.

Donald H. Rumsfeld, born in 1932, is the new U.S. Secretary of Defense, member of the two week old team established by President Bush and Vice President Cheney. The job, however, is not new to him: he already held it under President Ford.

Rumsfeld reported back from retirement and hobby farming in 1998 when he was appointed chairman of the Committee for National Security. This first Rumsfeld Commission concluded that within five years the U.S. would be threatened by “rogue states”, i.e. by countries like North Korea, Libya and Iraq. The committee recommended that development and deployment of a missile defense system should be vigorously pursued. This system is often called NMD, National Missile Defense.

As a result of this report, the U.S. Congress passed a law binding the U.S. president to deploy an NMD system “as soon as technically feasible”. Former President Clinton was not particularly enthusiastic about the project but he did comply with the demands of the Republican Congress. Since then, development and testing of missile defense has been moving forward, though not very successfully.

A few days before President Bush took office, on 11 January 2001, the report of the second Rumsfeld Commission, the so-called “Space Commission”, was made public (Rumsfeld resigned as chairman when he accepted the nomination to Secretary of Defense). In this report the threat potential is considerably expanded. Now, a massive and immediate threat to the U.S. from space is defined.

Using the picture of a “Space Pearl Harbor”, Rumsfeld and his colleagues skillfully instrumentalize a trauma which dramatically recalls the dangers of lack of preparation... a trauma which has made invulnerability the guiding principle of U.S. defense policy.

The recommendation of the second Rumsfeld Commission is clear and unmistakable: weapons in space are the answer to the supposed threat.

This idea is not surprising since General Howell Estes III was one member of the advisory group - and he is the former Commander in Chief of the U.S. Air Force which hosts a less well-known unit of the U.S. military, the U.S. Space Command, with headquarters at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado.

As Commander in Chief of the U.S. Air Force, General Estes III wrote the foreword to an extremely interesting 150 page document, the “Long Range Plan”, the plans of the U.S. Space Command up to the year 2020. Included in this plan are all the components which the new Secretary of Defense and the Bush team are now planning to use to protect the homeland:

- Missile defense, which in the Long Range Plans is not at all limited to protecting national territory as it also includes troops stationed overseas as well as “friends and allies”. This would include land-based laser systems.
- Airborne laser, ABL, in a Boeing airplane for defense against short and mid-range missiles, but capable of being used in air defense and destruction of earth targets as well. Development of this weapons has been expedited. The first prototype should be ready for testing in 2003.
- Space-based laser, SBL, a favorite of President Bush, who mentioned it often during the election campaign. This space-based laser battle platform could be used in long-range missile defense as well as to destroy satellites and other space components. The SBL is also already in the development phase. First tests are scheduled for 2010.
- Microwave weapons are also planned to provide powerful and fast reactions. The “Long Range Plan” states a lethal rate of 30% for this weapon type.

To support these battle and defense systems, additional numerous ground- and space-based systems will be necessary: radar stations, infrared satellites, battle centers, communication satellites, etc.

What for? All this to protect against a threat from terrorists like Osmar Bin Laden (according to the Rumsfeld Report one of the likely scenarios)?

That’s how it is being packaged, but when one looks closer it appears different. The official documents of the U.S. Space Command speak of ‘*dominance*’ and ‘*control*’ of space. In their “Long Range Plan”, the space warriors regret that they have yet to get the necessary political support. The situation has now changed drastically.

And even the Clinton government supported some of these martial space plans. On 9 July 1999, the then-Secretary of Defense released a new DoD directive on “Space Policy” which says: “Space is a medium like the land, sea, and air within which military activities shall be conducted to achieve U.S. national security objectives.” The directive, however, limits itself to actions related to “self-defense” including “the use of force”.

The forethinkers in the U.S. Space Command must be patting each others’ backs, given the new Rumsfeld Commission report and with Rumsfeld as new Secretary of Defense: now their own plans are in demand. The second Rumsfeld report names the goals of space weaponization: “deter and defend against evolving threats directed at the U.S. homeland, its forward deployed forces,” (here they mean U.S. troops in South Korea or in Germany) “allies and interests abroad and in space” and “maintain and ensure continuing superiority”.

The report states also: “In the coming period, the U.S. will conduct operations to, from, in and through space in support of its national interests both on the earth and in space.”

This leaves few questions open – one certainly is: what can we do to stop it?

The “Long Range Plan” of the U.S. Space Command can be looked at in the Internet under <http://www.spacecom.af.mil/usspace/LRP/cover.htm>. The new Rumsfeld report is at <http://www.space.gov/commission/report.htm>. You can find numerous links to original documents of the U.S. military at the Global Network homepage under <http://www.space4peace>.

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