

US general issues warning: politics must not interfere with 100-year “war on terror”

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19 December 2006

One of the Pentagon’s senior uniformed strategists warned last week that the “global war on terror” will go on for another 50 to 100 years and voiced concern that “politics” not be allowed to interfere with the protracted struggle.

The remarks were made by Brig. Gen. Mark O. Schissler, an Air Force commander and the Defense Department’s deputy director for the “war on terrorism.” He made them in an exclusive interview with the *Washington Times*, the right-wing daily owned by the Unification Church of Rev. Sun Myung Moon.

“We’re in a generational war,” he told the paper. “You can try and fight the enemy where they are and where they’re attacking you, or prevent them and defend your own homeland,” he said. “But that’s not enough to stop it.”

The *Washington Times* went on to report, “Gen. Schissler said he is concerned that Washington politics is weakening the will of the nation.”

“I don’t care about the politics,” he told the newspaper. “I care about people understanding the facts of what our enemy is thinking about, what’s our strategy to defeat them, and for [Americans] to understand that it will take a long fight, mostly because our enemy is committed to the long fight.” He added, “They’re absolutely committed to the 50-, 100-year plan.”

“One of my concerns is how to maintain the American will, the public will over that duration,” the general said. He described this task as “very difficult.”

Difficult indeed. How is the “public will” to wage global warfare for the next century to be maintained, particularly when “politics” gets in the way?

Given the political context of Schissler remarks, his warnings have unmistakable and chilling implications.

Barely six weeks ago, the Bush administration, which initiated the “war on terror” and proclaimed Iraq to be its most important front, suffered a stunning defeat at the polls. The Republican Party’s loss of both houses of the US Congress was the result of mass popular opposition to the Iraq war.

This opposition has only deepened in the intervening

weeks, as a series of opinion polls have demonstrated. A CBS News poll, for example, found that just 4 percent of Americans believe that terrorism is the most important problem confronting the country. The same poll found that a record 35 percent believe that the war in Iraq is the principal problem, with 71 percent saying the war is going badly and only 9 percent believing that the US is very likely to succeed in Iraq.

A *USA Today* poll found that two-thirds believe that the costs of the US succeeding in Iraq outweigh the benefits. A clear majority wants all US troops withdrawn from the country within the next year, while 74 percent say all combat troops should be withdrawn by March 2008.

Not only is the American public unwilling to support a century of wars of aggression, it has reached the conclusion that the three-and-a-half-year-old war in Iraq should never have been launched and should be brought to a speedy end. This is the threat to the “American will” about which Gen. Schissler is so concerned.

This supposed “will” to wage war—what could better be described as a temporary and forced acquiescence—was achieved through political deception and intimidation, by terrorizing the population with the supposed threat of attack in the wake of the September 11, 2001 tragedy.

As all of the pretexts used to promote the war—weapons of mass destruction, Baghdad-Al Qaeda ties, etc.—were exposed as lies, and as the war itself turned into an ever-more bloody debacle, claiming the lives of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and either killing or wounding 25,000 US troops, the demand for withdrawal of US forces from Iraq was embraced by millions of Americans, including many in uniform.

The issue posed is not really sustaining the “will” to wage a 100-year war, but suppressing the mass opposition to war that has already found powerful political expression.

Among masses of American working people, there never was a will to wage wars of aggression. That outlook reflected the aims and schemes developed within the corporate and financial elite that rules America. This ruling

layer has utilized the “global war on terror,” in which Gen. Schissler is a senior strategist, as the pretext for carrying out a military campaign aimed at imposing US domination over the oil-rich regions of the Persian Gulf and Central Asia as part of American capitalism’s pursuit of global hegemony.

In the aftermath of the 2006 midterm elections, it has become increasingly apparent that this ruling elite has no intention of bowing to the actual will of the people, as reflected at the polls, by bringing an end to the war and withdrawing US troops from Iraq. It is driven by its own economic necessity to offset a declining position on the world market by means of military force. And it fears that a withdrawal from Iraq will expose the underlying weakness of American imperialism, raising the danger of revolutionary crises both at home and abroad.

In his interview with the *Washington Times*, Schissler said that the century-long struggle he foresees will be waged against extremists determined to establish a global “caliphate” stretching from Spain to Indonesia. While there are, no doubt, a small number of radical Islamists who believe in such a crackpot scheme, this supposed threat has nothing to do with the military interventions now being carried out by Washington in the regions possessing the largest reserves of petroleum in the world.

The attempt to cast the wars being waged in Afghanistan and Iraq in religious terms has become an increasingly common refrain within the most right-wing sections of the political establishment in Washington, as well as within the military command. There is no doubt that this depiction of events is aimed at solidifying a base of support for war among a layer of Christian fundamentalists.

The most notorious example of this attempt to drum up a religious-based “will” to wage war came to light in 2003 with press reports of speeches delivered by Lt. Gen. William “Jerry” Boykin, the deputy undersecretary of defense for intelligence, to audiences assembled by the Christian right.

Boykin repeatedly told audiences that the war was being waged by a “Christian army” and a “Christian nation” against Islamic forces aligned with Satan. He proclaimed that his own confidence in victory over a Muslim foe was based on the knowledge that “my God was bigger than his . . . my God was a real god and his was an idol.” He likewise declared that George W. Bush was “appointed by God,” despite having failed to win the majority of the votes in 2000, and indicated that he saw himself as answerable only to God’s commands.

While the general’s anti-Islamic bigotry and profoundly anti-democratic remarks provoked outrage, the Republican right and the Bush administration leapt to his defense. The general himself asked that a Pentagon inspector general investigate the controversy. The result was a report that

avoided the content of Boykin’s remarks, delivering only the mildest rebuke for his failure to assert that they were his personal opinion and to clear them first with superiors.

General Boykin remains to this day the senior uniformed officer in military intelligence and a top policy-maker in the “war on terror,” overseeing assassination squads, illegal abductions and torture.

Schissler is not known to have delivered any similar religious-political diatribes. His service record posted on the Defense Department’s web site does, however, include the notation that in 1998, while climbing the promotional ladder to the Pentagon’s inner circle, the Air Force officer found time to complete a master’s degree in “pastoral studies.”

The politically protected ravings of Boykin as well as the expressions of concern by Schissler that “politics”—that is, the real will of the people—not be allowed to interfere with the official will to wage war are indicative of the right-wing and authoritarian tendencies that are being nurtured by American militarism and colonial-style occupation.

In the end, imposing upon the American people the “will” to sustain a 100-year war could be achieved only by dictatorial means similar to those utilized by the Nazis in their attempt to generate the “will” of the German people to sustain a 1,000-year Reich.

The danger posed by such right-wing tendencies is not that they have any substantial base of popular support, but that they emerge under conditions of deepening social and political polarization in which the opposition of American working people to war and repression can find no genuine expression within the political establishment and its two-party system.



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