Obama names advocate of cyber-warfare to head NSA

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President Barack Obama nominated the next director of the National Security Agency on Thursday, announcing that Navy Vice Admiral Michael Rodgers will take over in March for outgoing director, General Keith Alexander.

The promotion of a high-ranking member of the military apparatus to lead the NSA is part of the ongoing effort by the Obama administration to entrench and expand the NSA and prevent popular opposition to the programs from limiting the agency's spying capacities.

Rogers has earned his stripes as a builder of the police state apparatus. A self-described "cyber warrior," he has served in the Navy for 33 years and currently serves as the head of the Navy's spying operations as commander of the US Fleet Cyber Command and the US 10th Fleet. Previously, Rogers has served as director for intelligence for the Joint Chiefs of Staff and US Pacific Command.

It is significant that the Obama administration has selected a naval figure with experience in the Pacific Command. The appointment thus serves the Obama administration's "pivot to Asia" and its efforts to encircle China by asserting its Naval dominance in the South China Sea.

There has hardly been a US military intervention of the past three decades in which Rogers did not participate. He was involved in the recent intervention in Haiti, the 1983 invasion of Grenada, attacks on Panama, El Salvador, Serbia, and Lebanon, and the war in Afghanistan.

As a member of the military's Joint Staff during 2003, Rogers helped plan and lead the illegal war against Iraq, during which hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis were killed while the entire country was laid waste.

Though no official investigation has been undertaken, Rogers may be guilty under international law of crimes against the peace for his role in planning and waging the war in Iraq. The Nuremberg Principles and the United Nations Charter make illegal the "planning, preparation, initiation, or waging of wars of aggression, or a war in violation of international treaties, agreements or assurances, or participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of any of the foregoing."

But rather than face trial for such crimes, Rogers has been rewarded for his service to American imperialism: he is heavily decorated with a variety of medals, ribbons, badges, and awards.

Those close to Rogers in the military have no doubt that he will represent the interests of the military-intelligence apparatus in his service at the NSA. He comes with the stamp of approval of those currently directing the government's intelligence and military apparatus.

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said in a statement Thursday that he had recommended Rogers to President Obama. Hagel commended Rogers for his "extraordinary and unique qualifications" and noted that Rogers was prepared to maintain the appropriate "balance" between liberty and national security. Such statements about "balancing" the democratic rights of the population against the needs of the police state apparatus are code words for riding roughshod over the Bill of Rights, which includes no provision allowing for the abrogation of rights when the government claims "national security" is at risk.

An anonymous "senior military official" told the *New York Times*, "I know of no other naval officer as deft as he in synthesizing seemingly disparate bits of information into a cohesive whole. He connects dots.

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Some people see the details and can describe them for you. Rogers sees the details and can tell you a story."

Rogers, who also has the support of General Alexander, told the *Washington Post* in a 2012 interview that "we need to make sure that commanders understand cyber is a core facet of operations and warfare of the 21st century." He noted that it should not replace, but should support, more traditional means of war like mass bombing, and invasion.

"[Cyber warfare] is not a silver bullet. It is not going to replace other capabilities," he said.

A report issued under Rogers' direction, titled "Navy Strategy for Achieving Information Dominance," gives an indication of his dedication to expanding the police state apparatus. "Joining surface, subsurface, air and special warfare, information dominance is our newest warfighting pillar," the report reads, adding that "the Information Dominance pillar can be our most powerful asset."

The language employed in the report—which bears Rogers' signature—indicates that Rogers and company have already prepared advanced strategies in case of full-scale war.

"Warfare has historically been fought in the physical domains involving the land, sea, air, and space. With the advent of advanced radio, computer and network technology, what has changed is the growing importance of the electromagnetic spectrum and cyberspace as not only enablers of the physical domains, but as a warfighting domain in its own right. The cyberspace domain is likely to figure largely in future conflicts and crisis. The military force that dominates this domain and effectively 'fights' on this network and in the EM [electromagnetic] spectrum—just as it 'fights' on ships and aircraft—will also develop and maintain an advantage over its adversaries."

Another section of the report reads: "To deliver comprehensive fires, the Navy must strengthen and synthesize cyberspace operations with kinetic fleet operations. Blending these operational arts will yield an enhanced combat system that can exploit, influence, deny, degrade, disrupt, and—if need be—physically destroy an adversary's power."

Under the headline "The Way Ahead," the report concludes that in order to "fully enable the Navy's primary tenet of Warfighting First," the Navy will have to entrench and expand its spying capabilities. "The Navy's success in future crises and conflicts depends increasingly on the speed, security, and adaptability of our C2 [command and control], the depth and breadth of our battlespace awareness, and the effectiveness of our integrated fires. In implementing this strategy's goals and objectives, the IDC [Information Dominance Challenge] will remain ready to fight and win within the cyberspace domain. We will not only set our sights on maintaining decision superiority for our forward-deployed Navy-Marine Corps Team, and Joint and coalition commanders, we will lay the practical foundations for mastering information throughout cyberspace."

Because of the anti-democratic and secretive nature of the NSA, which legally is a subordinate agency of the Department of Defense, Rogers will not have to face Senate confirmation before he takes the directorate. But because he is simultaneously being appointed head of US Cyber Command—a position also held by General Alexander—he will have to face Senate scrutiny and confirmation. He will appear before the Senate Armed Services Committee in the coming weeks.

Throughout his career in the Navy, Admiral Rogers has proven himself to be not merely a loyal defender but a leading advocate of the expansion of the military's spying capacities. The decision by the Obama administration to appoint an individual with such credentials speaks to the true character of the "reforms" being proposed by the administration. The White House is merely trying to perform damage control and limit popular opposition to the unconstitutional programs. But by appointing Rogers as the next director of the NSA, President Obama is sending a clear message to the military-intelligence apparatus: "Full steam ahead!"

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