



THE CIA “WEHRMACHT”

Posted on Wednesday, April 19, 2006. By [Ken Silverstein](#).

With the war in Iraq an utter debacle and public opinion turned against the White House, anger within the armed forces towards Secretary of [Defense Donald Rumsfeld](#) and the [Administration](#) is growing, and the Pentagon is fighting back (see “[Pentagon Memo Aims to Counter Rumsfeld Critics](#)” in the April 16 *New York Times*). But what's been little noted thus far is what looks to be a similar revolt brewing at the CIA. An ex-senior agency officer who keeps in contact with his former peers told me that there is a “a big swing” in anti-Bush sentiment at Langley. “I've been stunned by what I'm hearing,” he said. “There are people who fear that indictments and subpoenas could be coming down, and they don't want to get caught up in it.”

This former senior officer said there “seems to be a quiet conspiracy by rational people” at the agency to avoid involvement in some of the particularly nasty tactics being employed by the administration, especially “renditions”—the practice whereby the CIA sends terrorist suspects abroad to be questioned in Egypt, Syria, Uzbekistan, and other nations where the regimes are not squeamish about torturing detainees. My source, hardly a softie on the topic of terrorism, said of the split at the CIA: “There's an SS group within the agency that's willing to do anything and there's a Wehrmacht group that is saying, 'I'm not gonna touch this stuff.'”

[Scott Horton](#), a human rights activist who has become a principal spokesman for the [New York City Bar Association](#) in evaluating the Bush Administration's tactics, said that he's also hearing stories of growing dissent at the [CIA](#). “When the shit hits the fan,” he explained, “the administration scapegoats lower-level people. It doesn't do a lot in terms of inspiring confidence.”

The expanding revolt against Rumsfeld is nothing new. I received a note way back on June 22, 2004 from a source at the Naval War College that put the situation in sharp perspective:

From my vantage point...cracks definitely have developed in the Administration's relationship with the Armed Forces. Most recently, several active duty senior commanders who spoke on the record at the “Current Strategy Forum” that ended here last week were critical to a point that walked a fine constitutional line of disloyalty to the political leadership. It was clear that many of the officers in the audience agreed with them and admired them for telling it like it is...[W]hat I think is going on here is serious concern among officers to protect the integrity of the institution. After unquestionably following policy, as we would expect, the increasing strains on the military plus the devolution in Iraq seem to have retrieved a collective wisdom from the shadow of Vietnam.

Other signs of serious military anger toward the administration were apparent by the spring of 2004 when a group of very senior officers from the Judge Advocate General's Corps, the legal arm of the U.S. armed forces, were so upset about the administration's loosening of rules against [torture](#) that they complained in private to Horton, who was then a committee chair at the New York City Bar Association. Horton and the Bar subsequently prepared a groundbreaking report on U.S. interrogation tactics, “[Human Rights Standards Applicable to the United States' Interrogation of Detainees](#),” which challenged the Pentagon's actions. Horton and the Bar also were involved in publishing the “torture memoranda” and used them to disprove Rumsfeld's claims that the abuses at Abu Ghraib resulted from a few low-ranking “bad apples” (to use the administration's phrase).

Today's “Wehrmacht” officers at the CIA are right to be worried about subpoenas: a legal analysis prepared by a senior FBI attorney in 2002 deemed that renditions to countries that torture detainees were illegal. The attorney concluded that such actions were designed to circumvent American laws against torture and that anyone even discussing such a plan could be found criminally liable. If the political winds shift, some “bad apples” in the CIA could find themselves indicted for torture.

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