

# D E F E N S E

## A new, improved world order

*In the wake of  
the Cold War,  
we have an  
opportunity  
to reorder  
our national  
priorities,  
convert our  
economy and  
restructure  
our armed  
forces.*

By Rep. Ronald V.  
Dellums

*Since his election to Congress in 1970, Rep. Ronald V. Dellums has consistently questioned the role of the U.S. military both at home and abroad. In January, Dellums, a self-described pacifist, assumed the chairmanship of the House Armed Services Committee. In These Times asked him to outline his vision of a responsible military policy. Following is Dellums' first major statement on the subject.*

Since the end of World War II, the United States has based its foreign and military policy on the theory that an international communist movement, dedicated to the destruction and domination of the United States and its allies, presented a relentless, expanding and implacable foe.

In pursuit of various strategies, military budgets were enacted that sought a

continuing advance in the capacity of the nuclear and thermonuclear devices that have characterized the atomic age. Our nation sought conventional and covert forces sufficient to challenge the perceived enemy in Europe and throughout the Third World—in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. But now, with the disbanding of the Warsaw Pact, the dismemberment of the former Soviet Union, a continuing détente with Russia and other elements of that former union, and an overwhelming battlefield victory in Operation Desert Storm, much of the intellectual and evidentiary basis that had been offered to support the Cold War strategy has melted away.

Many of us long argued, of course, that the threat during that period was overstated, that the strategy we pursued was poorly conceived or wrong, and that the scale of our military investment and our proclivity to use military force was inconsistent with our long-term diplomatic, economic and national interests. Whatever may or may not have

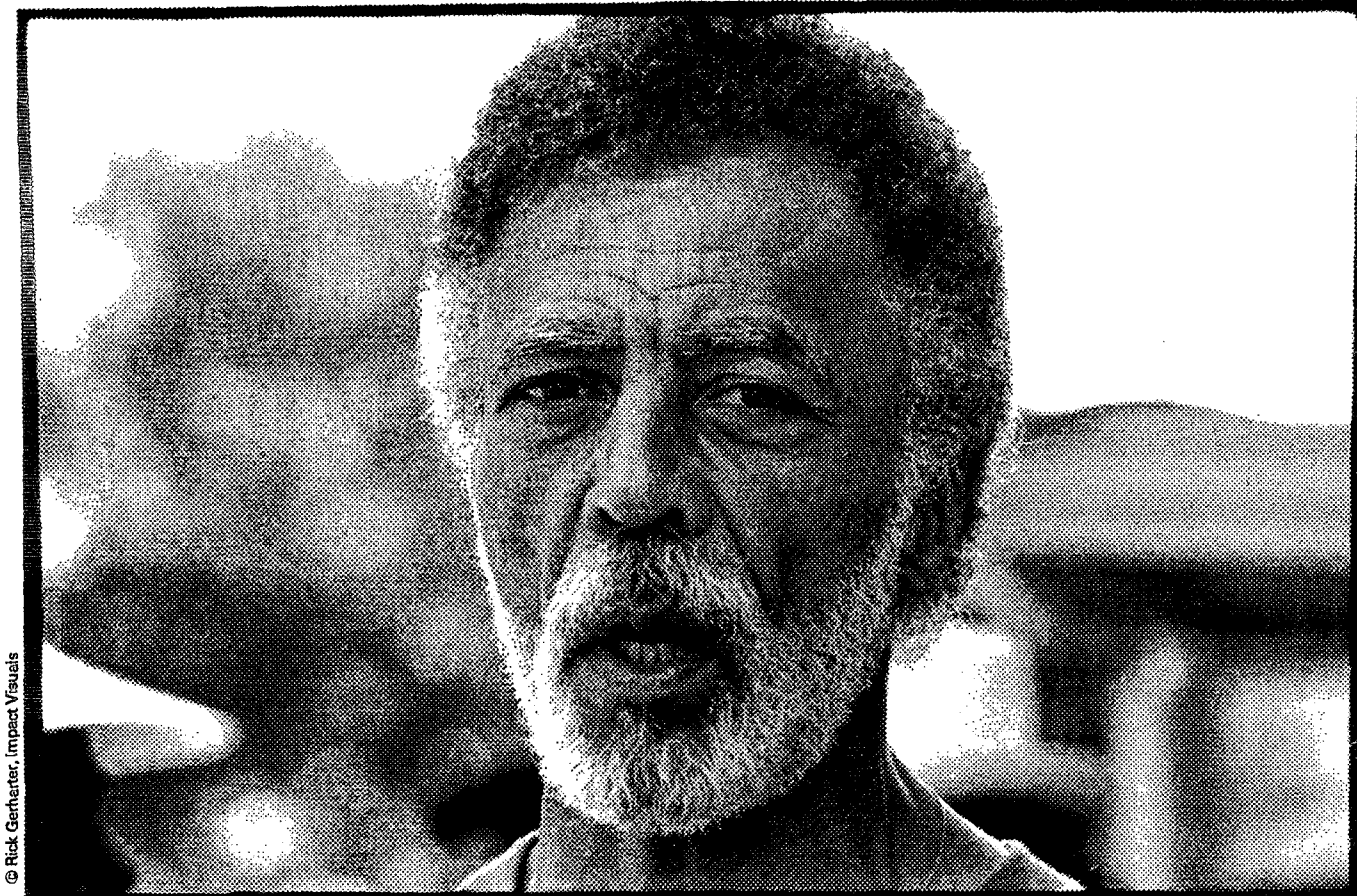
been true about Soviet intentions and the propriety of our military response, it must be conceded by everyone that those days have passed.

Hopefully, too, we are past the time when an uncritical anti-communism was expected of all, and that those such as myself who challenged the prevailing orthodoxy were dismissed as irrelevant or, worse yet, as menaces to the national well-being.

Many analysts now busily work to develop new menaces, new devils for a theology that would have us continue to squander our national treasure on useless military hardware and excess military personnel. Some cry out that our economy cannot afford to scale back military spending in this time of economic slowdown. Some insist that we must spend dramatically to meet any as yet unimagined threat that might loom at a later date to challenge U.S. vital interests.

For 20 years I have sat in the chambers of the House Armed Services Committee, challenging my congressional colleagues, a succession of presidents and the U.S. citizenry to view the world differently than through the





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**Rep. Ronald V. Dellums** prism of bipolar, global confrontation. I have wept with frustration as we have launched military campaigns at times when diplomacy and negotiation seemed to promise a fruitful achievement of legitimate goals. I have been angered at our use of force in situations clearly unjustified then or in the light of history. I have been frustrated by the expenditure of tens of billions of dollars on weapons that were clearly destabilizing, redundant or unnecessary for any justifiable strategic mission.

In January, I was elected by my colleagues in the House Democratic Caucus to chair the Armed Services Committee—the very same committee whose former chairman fought to deny me a seat 20 years ago because he perceived me as a national security threat. I joined the committee in 1973 in order to become an expert in military strategy and the threat that we faced—not because I was intrinsically interested in the topic (in fact, I had come to Congress with the hope that my skills as a psychiatric social worker and as an expert in job training and development could have a dramatic impact on the domestic debate). But I grew tired of having colleagues dismiss my arguments to redirect our national resources to domestic priorities because I “naively failed to comprehend the nature of the Soviet threat.”

Twenty years of service on the committee, most recently as chair of the vital Research & Development Subcommittee, two years on the Intelligence Committee, membership in

the North Atlantic Assembly and its military committee have all brought me to this historic moment prepared to enter the debate at a new level, with new responsibilities.

What is that moment? The Cold War is over. Everybody agrees that military spending must be reduced, leaving only the questions: how much and at what pace? The new administration states its commitment to a more sensible military budget and recognizes the drain that military spending has placed on our economy. The much ballyhooed new world order trumpeted by former President Bush is a concept that is now up for grabs. Opportunities abound for a change in U.S. priorities and policy. I appreciate the chance to have a more significant impact on the current debate. And I am privileged to carry the vision of my community, and of progressives throughout our nation, into the contest to determine U.S. national security policy. In reshaping that policy, it is important that we understand what happened during the Cold War to know how we can change U.S. policy in its wake.

The Cold War involved a massive confrontation between the United States and its alliance structure, on the one hand, and the Soviet Union and its allies, on the other. Depending on whose estimates one believes, upward of 70 percent of our national defense resources were dedicated to meeting the perceived threats posed by the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union. I believe that when most people discuss the post-Cold War era they refer to the lessening of that tension.



They appropriately argue that this new state of affairs provides the opportunity to reduce the degree of commitment that was dedicated to meeting those threats.

Much less discussed, however, is the confrontation that played itself out in various military conflicts throughout the so-called Third World. Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, Angola, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Indonesia, the Philippines, Cuba and many other locales provided the literal battleground, often characterized as the surrogate wars, of this larger confrontation.

However, we must ask ourselves this compelling question: were these simply surrogate battles? Would they have occurred even without the construct of the Cold War as an ideological imperative? Or are they a manifestation of an over-reliance on military force as a solution to a variety of international issues? I arrived in Congress as a leader in the effort to end the Indochina War. I have remained steadfast during these two-plus decades in my vision that diplomacy should be preferred to war, that mutual respect among nations should be preferred to military intimidation, and that our military budget was bankrupting, has bankrupted and continues to bankrupt our economy.

I fear that a failure to confront our propensity to use military force will lead to a new world order that relies inappropriately on the use of U.S. military might to react to the world's many conflicts. We must develop instead a new world order in which the United Nations, regional organizations, constructive diplomacy and equitable development policies lead to a reduction of the economic, social, cultural and political tensions that foster these spasms of violence and human rights abuse.

The first question we must ask ourselves as a nation, and as a member of the community of nations, is: when is the use of force justified? The Armed Services Committee is just beginning that conversation. We will attempt to use our hearings to change the paradigm that suggests that the use of force or intervention should be a readily available and frequently invoked solution to multifaceted international developments.

We need to have the courage to achieve a world in which the use of military violence, covert or overt, is avoided at all costs. So long as any other options exist to resolve the crises at hand—whether it be the protection of internationally recognized human rights, the cessation of civil and cross-border wars or the restoration of civil authority to prevent massive loss of life—we should resist the urge to broaden the violence.

Both on a domestic and an international basis, we must insist upon adherence to required procedures to launch military operations, no matter how justified the military intervention may appear to its proponents.

In the international arena, the U.S. must resist its "isolationist" tendency. I do not mean this term in its usual sense, because, despite our international engagement, I believe we have been isolationist. We must recognize that the U.S. has often acted in isolation from the world community in the

use of force rather than in conformance with international consensus. Most recently, we saw examples of this in our refusal to place our troops under U.N. command in Somalia and our insistence on enforcing "no-fly zones" in Iraq that have not been established by the United Nations. If the new world order is to move us past nationalism, then even the proprietor of the world's most powerful military force must be prepared to conform to a perhaps laboriously created international consensus.

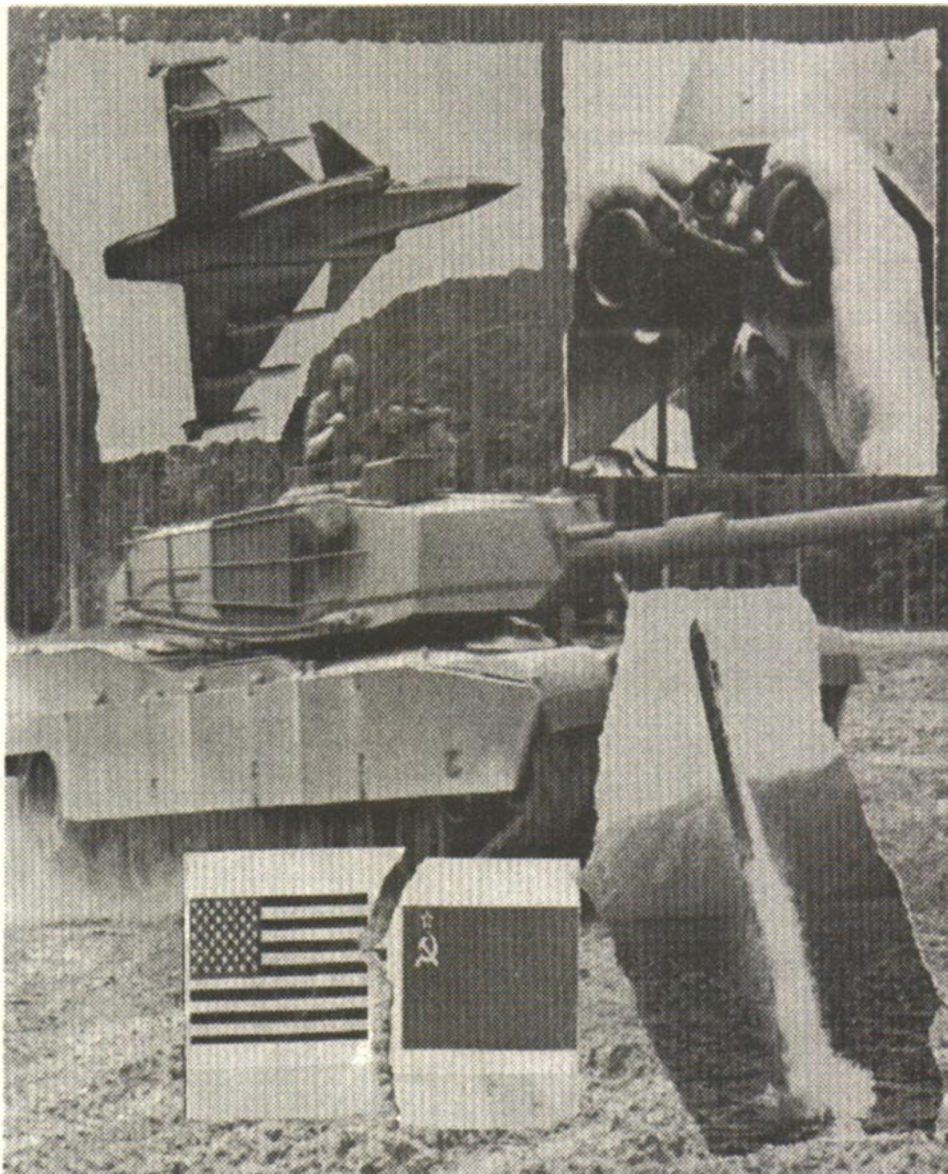
On the domestic front, we must insist that the Cold War pattern of presidents committing U.S. troops to military action without express and prior congressional approval must be stopped. Whatever justification *might* have existed under the claimed exigencies of the Cold War—i.e., that we were in a constant state of "war," which arguably required a president to respond immediately to any emergent threat—now no longer applies, if it ever did. President Bush's early insistence that he could undertake such combat in the Persian Gulf without congressional authorization was only the latest and most dramatic invocation of that claim.

Despite the recently held position of various presidents, the framers of our Constitution clearly intended that Congress determine when, where and in response to what provocations and threats our nation would resort to force, even short of full-scale war. Their rationale was clear and precise: the Congress will usually be less willing than the president to risk the lives of our citizens and the treasure of our nation in armed conflict. It is insufficient for a president to seek legislative approval after troops have been deployed or a covert action undertaken. Operation Desert Storm provides a stark example of the dramatic change of opinion that occurs once fighting begins.

Prior to the war, only 50 percent of Americans believed we should undertake immediate military action. In the actual vote in Congress (a vote sought, I believe, in no small part because of our success in defending the congressional war power in the case *Dellums vs. Bush*), the president could muster only 53 votes in the Senate; in the House, 180 members voted against the war resolution.

Within the first days of combat, however, polls showed Americans supported the action in overwhelming numbers and the House and Senate passed nearly unanimous resolutions approving the president's actions. Clearly, the opportunity for serious debate would have

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would place us squarely on the path to a reasonable level of military spending without unduly disrupting our economy and the lives of the men and women currently in uniform or employed in defense-related industries. The budget the CBC submitted last year would have resulted in military savings of \$1 trillion from 1993 to 2000.

During the '70s and '80s, many progressives promoted economic conversion planning as essential in breaking the grip of the "iron triangle"—the Congress, the Pentagon and defense industry planning process—that prevented any effort at sustained military spending cuts. We must understand that this idea is now even more important for stabilizing today's economy. One need only look at the devastation in California, where more than 800,000 industrial workers have been laid off in the past several years, to understand the scale of what even a modest downsizing of the military will bring if not accompanied by vigorous economic conversion efforts.

In last year's CBC budget, we allocated approximately \$7.5 billion for what I characterize as structural economic conversion planning—the extended unemployment benefits, GI bill, community impact aid and worker training

passed had the troops gone into combat first.

If we reject military intervention as an instrument of foreign policy; if we believe that international organizations should assume the leading role in peacekeeping, human rights protection and the restoration of civil order; if we reject placing a plethora of truly civilian responsibilities in the hands of our military simply to maintain a near-current scale of military spending; and if, as former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara suggested recently in the *New York Times*, we pursue arms reduction programs that cut nuclear forces to levels that stave off the threat of nuclear blackmail, then we should be able to achieve the type of dramatic reductions that were proposed in last year's Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and House Progressive Caucus budget.

That plan envisioned reducing military spending by 50 percent from Cold War levels within four years, and maintaining that level of reduced spending for an additional four years. As the principal author of that plan, I believe that it

necessary to ameliorate the pain and dislocation of plant and base closures. In addition, we argued that the federal government had to take most, if not all, of the defense savings in the first four to five years and reinvest them in communities affected by military spending reductions. This is essential to pull the economy through the conversion process, to provide jobs for retrained workers and to provide economic activity that companies can compete for in order to retool for the next century.

Our military budget can be reduced substantially and permanently. My conversations with defense analysts within and outside the military establishment lead me to conclude that the United States does not now face a strategic threat that in any way approximates that of the Cold War era, and will not face any such significant threat within the next decade.

Our military budget must start from the point of view that it addresses real, defined, ascertainable and not hypothetical threats. It must be based on a proper assessment of



the strategy that will be employed to face those legitimate threats. It must be of a scale sufficient, and no more so, to deploy forces and procure matériel to implement that strategy.

I believe that tepid cuts in military spending will produce the worst of all economic worlds—reduced job opportunities in the current economy and no drive to pull the economy through to the other end. We must plan a bold change, as dramatic as the changed world circumstances that now provide us with this clear-cut opportunity.

We have an opportunity that we have not had since the end of World War II to reorder completely our national priorities, redefine our foreign policy paradigm, convert our economy and restructure our armed forces. Progressives have an opportunity to enter this debate and to convince our families, colleagues and neighbors that we need not fear and have much to gain by taking such a course.

This change will not come easily, but the opportunity will never be as great as it is today.

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The staff of *In These Times* has recently had some fun and reached thousands of potential readers by handing out sample copies of our newsmagazine to Chicago viewers of *Manufacturing Consent*, a documentary film on Noam Chomsky and the media.

In fact, *In These Times'* reception was so enthusiastic, we decided to continue handing out sample copies at playdates across the country.

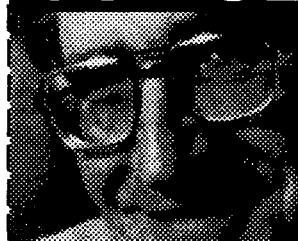
But, to effectively do so, we need many helping hands.

We're seeking volunteers in the cities scheduled (see ad on right) to accept delivery of bundles of *In These Times*, and then hand them out to viewers at the conclusion of the film. It won't take long — about 15 minutes. And believe me, people will be happy to receive them.

There will hopefully be a number of volunteers — especially for larger cities with multiple showings — so if you'd be willing to also coordinate volunteers in your area, that would be especially appreciated.

If you can help us out, bless you! Call 312/772-0100 and ask for Rob.

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CLIP AND SAVE

## THE PENTAGON

# The military humanitarian complex?

G

en. Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, wants to retool the Atlantic Command to create a permanent role in humanitarian relief and disaster assistance. But his proposal is sparking controversy not just at the Pentagon but among relief workers as well.

*Should humanitarian interventions be added to the Pentagon's portfolio?*

By April Oliver  
WASHINGTON D.C.

In a recent report defining the Pentagon's "roles and missions" to the new secretary of defense, he calls for an additional mandate for the Atlantic Command to train forces for such operations. The Atlantic Command, based in Norfolk, Va., is a maritime command whose overriding responsibility in recent decades was to counter the Soviet threat.

Powell's report on roles and missions is a required exercise every three years, but this submission is gener-

ating inordinate turmoil in Washington, in part because it is the first report to address the realities of a post-Cold War world, and because the emphasis is on streamlining and eliminating redundancies. The reality of such cost-cutting is an all-out fight between services to preserve resources, jobs and—that precious commodity—turf.

But another reason for heartburn, especially at the Pentagon, is that this is the first time the report will be sent to Congress, where Rep. Ron Dellums (D-CA), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, and other congressional liberals are expected to push for more aggressive cost-cutting measures than Powell's report contains. (See story on page 14.) And while the new peacekeeping and disaster assistance role for the Atlantic Command is but a small clause in a massive document, some see it as an attempt to inflate the Pentagon budget, which now stands at \$280 billion. Says one critic, retired Adm. Eugene Carroll of the Center for Defense Information, "The military can't find an enemy to justify its arms, so it is finding friends to arm itself to help—at the point of a gun."

Some senior Pentagon officials are also unhappy with plans to create a new, clearly defined mission for peacekeeping, disaster assistance and humanitarian intervention. They worry that it distracts their soldiers from the military's first and overriding task—defending the country and its allies in the face of aggression. The relief community also is divided about a more permanent role for the military in the business of humanitarian assistance.

Is such a role for the military an appropriate one for American forces in the post-Cold War world? Somalia is a case study of how the military and relief agencies may fare in future joint missions.

In the days leading up to the invasion, the relief community in Somalia was deeply divided over whether military intervention would, in the long run, help or hinder their work. Concerns from field reps of many organizations ranged from the possible obstruction of a fragile political reconciliation process to the likelihood that relief workers on the ground would become prey in a hot war.

Nevertheless, many prominent relief agencies decided to act. Eleven agencies, through the auspices of an umbrella organization called InterAction, signed a letter calling for a stronger United Nations presence and mandate. Several of them—including Oxfam America, the International Rescue Committee and CARE—held a highly publicized press conference on November 24 in Washington to underscore the need for the international community to help protect their convoys. By so doing, they helped build public support for military intervention.