

Dark Days

"The situation is worse than in 1917 [year of the Bolshevik seizure of power during World War I]. ... The situation in Russia is catastrophic."

Alexander Lebed, ex-general and presidential aspirant, in a Sept. 2, 1998, Moscow press conference at a time of Russian economic collapse.

Even Darker Days

"Given the disastrous state of things in Russia, we'd be foolish not to worry [about security of Russian nuclear weapons]. They're sloppy, they're starving, they're stupid, they're mean, and they do maintenance with sledgehammers."

Ralph Peters, ex-US Army intelligence officer, quoted in the Aug. 28, 1998, Wall Street Journal.

Death Spiral

"I am increasingly concerned that our military has begun a downward spiral that, if left unchecked, will lead to a weakened military no longer able to underwrite our interests. This spiral results from fewer and fewer military people and less and less [military] equipment and supplies being called to do more and more around the world. This in turn causes more wear and tear on people and equipment, which results in fewer people and less equipment."

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.), in an August 1998 letter to Senate Republican defense leaders.

The Chiefs Speaketh ...

"The [Rumsfeld] Commission points out that, through unconventional, high-risk development programs and foreign assistance, rogue nations could acquire an ICBM capability in a short time and that the intelligence community may not detect it. We regard this as an unlikely development."

Gen. Henry H. Shelton, JCS Chairman, in an Aug. 24, 1998, letter to Sen. James M. Inhofe (R-Okla.), giv-

ing the JCS response to findings of a commission headed by former Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld.

... And Inhofe Respondeth

"I am not particularly reassured that the Joint Chiefs think the emergence of an unexpected long-range missile threat is 'unlikely.' The recent nuclear tests in India and Pakistan were also 'unlikely.' The recent bombings of our embassies in Africa were considered 'unlikely.' The survival of Saddam Hussein as a menace to world security once seemed 'unlikely.' That a threat is 'unlikely' is no longer, by itself, a good enough basis on which to formulate national security policy affecting the lives of millions of Americans."

Sen. James M. Inhofe, Senate Armed Services Committee, in an Aug. 26, 1998, reply to Shelton's letter.

Operation "Significant Disruption"

"With respect to the terrorist [training] camps in Afghanistan: ... [T]he camps which comprised the Khost complex [have] sustained moderate to severe damage. The attacks have significantly disrupted the capability to use these camps as terrorist training facilities."

Samuel Berger, White House national security advisor, in an Aug. 21, 1998, press briefing about US anti-terrorist attacks.

Ritter's Condemnation

"I fought in the [Gulf] war. Americans died in the war. I was told by my government in April 1991, in a UN Security Council resolution the United States sponsored, that Iraq was going to disarm. ... I've poured my heart and soul into disarming Iraq, and this means I was wasting my time. It means we lost the Gulf War. ... The whole world should be shamed by this."

Scott Ritter, ex-chief UN inspector tracking down Iraqi arms, in a Washington Post interview published Aug.

27, 1998—a day after he resigned to protest US efforts to interfere with planned inspections.

Biden's Wisdom ...

"[I]n terms of whether the secretary of state has no more to consider than you do as the arms inspector—you didn't get in, 'Didn't get my job done; get me in! ... Scott Ritter, I'm ready to go! That's not how it works. ... I respectfully suggest, Scott—Major—I respectfully suggest they have responsibilities slightly above your pay grade ... to decide whether to take the nation to war. That's a real tough decision. That's why they get paid the big bucks. That's why they get the limos and you don't. ... Their job is a hell of a lot more complicated than yours."

Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr. (D-Del.), in a Sept. 3, 1998, Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing, held to examine Ritter's charges about Administration duplicity.

... And McCain's Rejoinder

"Some of us who fought in another conflict wish that the Congress and the American people had listened to someone of your pay grade, ... and perhaps there wouldn't be quite so many names down on the [Vietnam Memorial] Wall."

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), a Vietnam veteran, addressing Ritter at the same Senate hearing.

More Like a Slippery Slope?

"The worst case is, we're on a kind of a slow slide here, and we can't go a whole lot farther before it will in fact begin to impact on our ability to close quickly on a two-Major-Theater-War scenario. It's not like a cliff we're going to drop off, but it's certainly not a situation where you simply sit idly by and say things are fine."

F. Whitten Peters, acting Air Force Secretary, quoted in an Aug. 13, 1998, Washington Post article about readiness. ■