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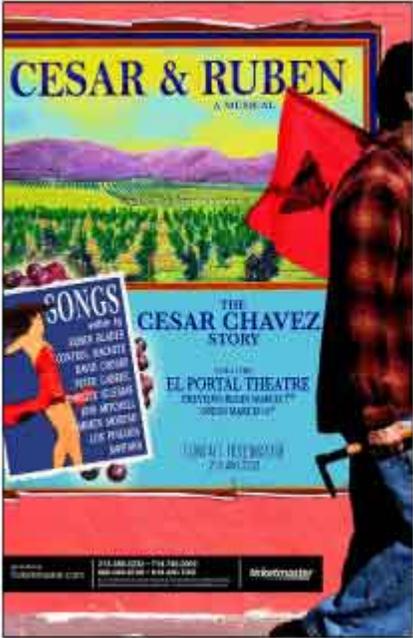
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Richard Perle Flies the Coop

The Enterprising Hawk

By JASON LEOPOLD

Richard Perle's resignation Thursday as chairman of the Defense Policy Board, a Pentagon advisory group, is long overdue. Perle quit the board because he was hired to help bankrupt telecommunications firm Global Crossing win approval from the Department of Defense to sell the company to a Hong Kong billionaire and lawmakers questioned whether Perle's dual roles was a conflict-of-interest.

Presumably, Global Crossing hired Perle, who served as assistant secretary of defense under former President Ronald Reagan, as a lobbyist because he wields an enormous amount of

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power around the Pentagon and would likely get the job done. Perle is a key adviser to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and a leading architect in the Bush administration's policies toward Iraq.

The Pentagon and the Federal Bureau of Investigation objected to Global Crossing's sale to Asian investors last year because the government uses Global Crossing's fiber optics networks and a sale would put the networks under control of the Chinese government. Global Crossing said it would pay Perle \$125,000 and an additional \$600,000 if the deal went through.

Perle denied Thursday that his unpaid advisory role on the policy board would have interfered with his lobbying on behalf of Global Crossing, which is mired in shareholder lawsuits as a result of its questionable accounting practices. But Perle has a long history of using his influential role as a government adviser to line his pockets.

"Richard Perle...has made a lucrative career out of some bald conflicts of interest," wrote Mark Crispin Miller, a New York University media professor, in the Free Press in 2000. "As an Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security under Ronald Reagan, he got in some slight trouble when he wrote a memorandum urging the department to consider buying equipment from a company that had paid him a \$50,000 consulting fee (as the the New York Times noted back in 1984). As chairman and CEO of Hollinger Digital (owned by media titan Conrad Black), Perle maintains his close connections with the military industries. For example, as a non-executive director of Morgan Crucible, PLC (UK), which has done business with the Pentagon..."

Moreover, Perle was also a director of Memorex Corp., a defense contractor, in the 1990s while he was advising then-Secretary of Defense Dick

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Cheney as a member of the Defense Policy Board Advisory Committee during the first Bush administration. At the same time, Perle also was a paid consultant to a Turkish-hired lobbying firm in Washington and has been both an adviser to FMC Corp. and a director of an FMC-Turkish joint venture building military equipment. It should be noted that during Perle's tenure in the Reagan administration he was a fierce proponent of aid to Turkey's military.

In 1987, the Pentagon's Office of General Counsel opened an inquiry into whether Perle's attempts to write a fictional novel based on classified intelligence information were a conflict-of-interest. At the time, Perle was offered a \$300,000 advance for the novel, titled "Memoranda."

The proposal for the novel described an inside look at the bureaucracy and promised a plot that seemed a thinly veiled account of Perle's long-running internecine struggle with former assistant secretary of state Richard R. Burt. It promised "an array of bureaucratic maneuvers recounted in the context of actual events altered only enough to make them publishable, to preserve the fiction in "Memoranda."

In April of 1987, Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), the former ranking Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, wrote an angry letter to Reagan suggesting that Perle's book "creates a climate encouraging disrespect for the protection of classified information" and might have "a chilling effect on the candor of {officials'} policy analysis and recommendations." Nunn also raised questions about the propriety of the sale of the book during Perle's tenure in office.

In response to the inquiries, Perle resigned his post as assistant secretary of defense in April 1987 to write the book. The title was later changed to "Hard Line."

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Jason Leopold is a regular contributor to CounterPunch. He broke one the Iraq war's biggest stories for us, the insidious role of the Project for a New American Century in relentless pushing for an invasion of Iraq. This story has now been picked up the LA Times, New York Times, Newsweek and Nightline--though you'll search in vain for any credit. He can be reached at: jasonleopold@hotmail.com

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