

The Hawks' Hawk

By Jim Lobe | January 11, 2007

In putting together his long-awaited new strategy on Iraq, President George W. Bush relied heavily on the counsel of J.D. Crouch II, perhaps the most hardline—and most obscure—of his hawkish advisers.

Over the past 15 years, the generally low-profile Crouch has taken a number of controversial positions, from advocating military action against Cuba and North Korea to blaming the 1999 Columbine High School student massacre in Colorado on “30 years of liberal social policy.”

As deputy national security adviser, Crouch, who has held three posts in the Bush administration, chaired the interagency group charged with mapping out Bush's new Iraq strategy. The main feature of the so-called surge strategy will add some 20,000 new U.S. troops to the 140,000 already there in hopes of stabilizing Baghdad and the rebellious Al Anbar province.

Crouch, whose substantive expertise is in arms control—or, more precisely, how the United States can evade or undermine international efforts to promote arms control—has long been a favorite of Vice President Dick Cheney, whose own national security adviser, neoconservative John Hannah, has reportedly played a key role in the deliberations over Iraq.

Crouch first worked under Cheney at the Pentagon during the administration of President George H.W. Bush when, as a deputy assistant secretary for international security, he contributed to the controversial 1992 draft Defense Planning Guidance (DPG) that, among other things, called on Washington to pursue unquestioned military dominance in and around Eurasia.

He returned to the Pentagon as assistant secretary for international security after the younger Bush took office as president in 2001. In that capacity, Crouch focused mostly on the administration's withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, plans to develop new kinds of nuclear weapons, and the

preparation of the 2002 National Security Strategy, which codified many of the ideas first proposed in the 1992 draft DPG.

He left the administration in late 2003 to return as a professor to Southwest Missouri State University (SMSU, now renamed Missouri State University), long a stronghold of missile defense, nuclear arms, and space weapons advocates, only to be appointed the following year as U.S. ambassador to Romania, a post he held for just eight months before being recalled to Washington in early 2005 as deputy national security adviser under Stephen Hadley.

His return was described by *Washington Post* columnist Jim Hoagland as evidence that Cheney was “charging ahead with undiminished influence and unshakable self-confidence.”

Now 48, Crouch first entered government after earning a doctorate in international relations at the University of Southern California in the mid-1980s. With the help of his longtime mentor and one of then-President Ronald Reagan's most hawkish advisers, William Van Cleave, Crouch was assigned to the State Department's Arms Control and Disarmament Agency before joining the staff of the far-right senator from Cheney's home state of Wyoming, Malcolm Wallop, in 1986.

In 1990 Crouch moved to the Pentagon, where he worked under then-Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Paul Wolfowitz. After the first Gulf War Crouch was part of a team that prepared the draft DPG, including Wolfowitz, I. Lewis Libby (Cheney's future vice presidential chief of staff until 2005), and Zalmay Khalilzad (Washington's current ambassador to Iraq). The draft DPG's leak to the *New York Times* sparked a

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major controversy that eventually prompted the George H.W. Bush administration to repudiate its more unilateralist proposals.

Crouch spent most of the 1990s teaching at SMSU, where the Department of Defense and Strategic Studies was headed by Van Cleave, and speaking out against what he and his associates charged was the “appeasement” policies of the Clinton administration.

He strongly denounced U.S.-North Korean negotiations in 1995, calling for Washington to send more U.S. troops and deploy tactical nuclear weapons to South Korea to carry out air strikes against nuclear targets in the North if Pyongyang refused to give up its nuclear program. The following year, he criticized President Bill Clinton for imposing travel restrictions and economic sanctions against Cuba after its air force shot down two civilian planes flown by anti-Castro activists from south Florida. “We ought to have considered military options,” Crouch said at the time. “As long as we allow a totalitarian Communist regime to exist 90 miles from our borders, we can expect these kinds of problems to recur.”

He also joined the Board of Advisers of the ultra-hawkish Center for Security Policy (CSP), a lobby group funded by defense contractors and far-right Zionists associated with Israel’s Likud Party and headed by hardline neoconservative Frank Gaffney.

Other members of that board have included senior members of the Bush administration, including Elliott Abrams, the senior Middle East director on the National Security Council; Richard Perle, the former Defense Policy Board chairman; Douglas Feith, the

former undersecretary of defense for policy; and a number of former and current SMSU faculty members, including Van Cleave, Charles Kupperman, Keith Payne, and Henry Cooper, the former head of Reagan’s Star Wars program.

From his perch at SMSU, meanwhile, Crouch also spoke out about and wrote on domestic issues, taking classically far-right positions against big government, progressive taxation, and gun control. In a letter published in the *Washington Times*, he blamed the 1999 Columbine shooting rampage on “30 years of liberal social policy that has put our children in day care, taken God out of the schools, taken Mom out of the house, and banished Dad as an authority figure from the family altogether.” Crouch has since then insisted that he does not oppose “women in the workplace.”

Although such positions generally do not reflect neo-conservative views, neoconservatives, including Perle and Gaffney, have, like Cheney, been among Crouch’s most enthusiastic boosters over the years.

“Knowing him as I do,” Gaffney—whose list of U.S. adversaries against which Washington should be much more confrontational runs from Iran to France—told the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* earlier this year, “I’m almost certain that he is exercising influence, and influence that is reinforcing the most robust policies and positions of this administration.”

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