

By Robert S. Dudley

Some Commander in Chief

“Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel on Wednesday released a sobering report on the deep funding problems looming at the Pentagon, which is on track to fall tens of billions short of what it needs to fulfill the strategic mission that President Obama has articulated for the national defense. The same day, Mr. Obama told congressional Democrats that the Pentagon should get no more attention than many other areas of the budget. ... That can't be the final answer from the Commander in Chief. ... Mr. Obama ultimately can't act as though the Defense Department's sequester cuts are equivalent in consequence to every other item in the budget. The country's defense is a core responsibility of the federal government, and its armed forces are critical to the nation's ability to exert leadership, maintain alliances, defend human rights and preserve the nation's safety.”—*House editorial in the Washington Post, Aug. 3.*

Raising the Bar

“Prior to 9/11, a soldier could lose his or her clearance over a minor infraction, and access to Special Compartmentalized Information was granted on a strict ‘need to know’ basis. To lose access today, you have to hand over 700,000 classified documents to WikiLeaks or give the Chinese and Russians the NSA's gravest secrets. Back when I served in Military Intelligence, [Pfc. Bradley] Manning never would've gotten a clearance in the first place—warning flags were everywhere. Same thing with [former National Security Agency contractor] Edward Snowden: He never should have gotten a clearance of any kind. But serious vetting ended with 9/11: Today, it's just a meat market.”—*Ret. Army Col. Ralph Peters, a former Army intelligence officer, op-ed in the New York Post, July 31.*

No Apologies

“I state without apology that we are a Pacific power. America is a Pacific resident power and we will remain so. The truth of the matter is our resident power status is the reason why this area of the world is able to grow and be stable. Our mere presence in the Pacific is in and of itself the basis upon which stability of the region is built.”—*Vice President Joseph Biden, remarks aboard USS Freedom in Singapore, Agence France-Presse dispatch, July 27.*

They're on the Run, Though

“The problem we face today is there are probably more al Qaeda cells and affiliates across the Arab world in 2013 than there have ever been before because of the chaos that's followed the Arab Spring.”—*Bruce O. Riedel, CIA veteran and now director of Brookings Institution Intelligence Project, Wall Street Journal, Aug. 5.*

Kerry's Keystone Komment ...

“The [Egyptian] military was asked to intervene by millions and millions of people, all of whom were afraid of a descent into chaos, into violence. And the military did not take over, to the best of our judgment so far. To run the country, there's a civilian government. In effect, they were restoring democracy.”—*Secretary of State John F. Kerry, on the Egyptian military's armed overthrow of President Muhammad Morsi, Aug. 1.*

... And a Good Question

“Does Secretary Kerry expect Defense Secretary Hagel to step in and remove [President] Obama if large protests take place in America?”—*Gehad El-Haddad, spokesman for Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, denouncing Kerry's remark about the Egyptian coup, AP dispatch, Aug. 2.*

A Light Finally Dawns

“What we're seeing is a Russian president who has increasingly committed to a foreign policy that is based largely on zero-sum calculations, ... which is the exact opposite of the US-Russian relationship in the decade after the Cold War. Win-win on the Russian side seems to be now an inoperative concept.”—*Former Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, a noted dove on Russia, commenting on Vladimir Putin's move to give asylum to NSA renegade Edward J. Snowden, Politico.com, Aug. 2.*

Shelton's Justified Rant

“I'm ... extremely tired of reading articles in various publications that there is no impact to sequestration. Let me assure you, there are plenty of impacts to sequestration. And those who are writing those articles, those who are saying that there is no impact, and the sky has not fallen, and so on and so forth, I would like for them to come live with me for a couple of days and try to

make ends meet on budgets. ... To the end of the fiscal year here, I know I'm probably about \$4 or \$5 million short, just getting to the end of the year. So how we're going to scrape up \$4 or \$5 million to make it to the end of the year, much less make it through another year of sequestration in '14—Yeah, no impact. No impact. Let me assure you, there is plenty of impact.”—*Gen. William L. Shelton, Air Force Space Command, remarks to a forum on Capitol Hill, July 16.*

Meet the New Boss ...

“In our region, a sore has been sitting on the body of the Islamic world for many years, in the shadow of the occupation of the holy land of Palestine and the dear Quds [i.e., Jerusalem]. This day is in fact a reminder of the fact that Muslim people will not forget their historic right and will continue to stand against aggression and tyranny.”—*Iranian President-elect Hassan Rouhani, remarks about Israel, Aug. 2.*

... Same as the Old Boss

“Rouhani's true face has been revealed earlier than expected. ... This is what the man thinks and this is the plan of the Iranian regime. These remarks by President Rouhani must rouse the world from the illusion that part of it has been caught up in since the Iranian elections. The President there has changed, but the goal of the regime has not: to achieve nuclear weapons in order to threaten Israel, the Middle East, and the peace and security of the entire world.”—*Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu, New York Times, Aug. 3.*

Invest for the Long Haul

“I think in a downturn like this, it's even more important to spend on R&D. We're in this game for the long haul. We need industry to be in it for the long haul with us. And when I was running an R&D program for industry, we understood that. We continued to make investments in the early '90s, despite the downturn in defense. Companies that want to be in this business for the long term, and want to provide us with the products that we need, need to be invested in R&D.”—*Frank Kendall, undersecretary of defense for acquisition, technology, and logistics, interview on “This Week in Defense News,” Aug. 5.*