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[发表] Nov. 22, 2006 -- The Pentagon's claim it has a "zero tolerance" policy for racist extremism in the military is astonishing, given that military officials have failed to discharge an airman who posted an Internet message calling for the deaths of Jews and non-whites, writes Southern Poverty Law Center president Richard Cohen in a letter (PDF) to a high-ranking military official.
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The Pentagon's claim it has a "zero tolerance" policy for racist extremism in the military is astonishing, given that military officials have failed to discharge an airman who posted an Internet message calling for the deaths of Jews and non-whites, writes Southern Poverty Law Center president Richard Cohen in a letter (PDF) to a high-ranking military official.

"The Pentagon is engaging in doubletalk when it claims it won't tolerate radical racists," Cohen said. "It's ludicrous to suggest there is zero tolerance when white supremacists can publicly display their vile propaganda with impunity."

The Center's Intelligence Project reported in July that growing numbers of neo-Nazi, skinheads and other radical extremists are serving in the U.S. armed forces -- a problem with which previous defense secretaries have grappled twice over the past two decades.

The report, which quoted a military investigator, blamed relaxed wartime recruiting standards and the ambiguity of regulations that are intended to weed out such extremists.

The Pentagon, however, denies it has a problem.

In a Sept. 28 letter (PDF), Under Secretary of Defense David S. C. Chu wrote that military regulations already prohibit "participation" in supremacist organizations.

"Despite your assertions to the contrary, we have not compromised our rigorous standards to meet recruiting goals," Chu wrote.

Chu also responded to the article's assertion that military police investigator Scott Barfield, who has since left the military, identified and submitted evidence on 320 extremists at Fort Lewis in Washington state. Chu wrote, by applying the military's definition of "participation" in a hate group, officials at Fort Lewis "could not liberally identify extremists."

Cohen said the military's interpretation of the Defense Department's existing policy misses a crucial point.

The regulations are ambiguous and inadequate, because they allow members of the armed forces who are "lone wolf" extremists to engage in unaffiliated activities such as posting neo-Nazi messages to public Internet sites and electronic message boards, Cohen wrote.

The failure of the current policy is best illustrated by the case of Robert Lee West, an active-duty airman stationed at Warner Robins Air Force Base in Georgia. West posted a photograph of himself holding a rifle and a shotgun in front of a Nazi banner. He also posted messages calling for the deaths of non-whites and Jews. The Air Force Office of Special Investigations failed to discharge West because officials determined the regulations apply only to those who are active members of hate groups. The Center's report also quoted Barfield as saying he had uncovered an online network of 57 self-identified neo-

Nazis at five U.S. military installations. Like West, the soldiers have not been disciplined or removed from the military because, as Chu wrote, "it does not appear that there is sufficient information to conclude that these Soldiers are participating in hate groups."

Cohen said that's not good enough. Extremists, many of whom advocate the violent overthrow of the U.S. government, are a threat not only to their fellow service members but to the public at large, because they are receiving combat and weapons training in the military.

"We think it makes perfect sense for the military to end this problem once and for all by issuing and enforcing regulations that make it clear that anyone who espouses extremist ideology or who publicly identifies himself as a neo-Nazi or white supremacist is not fit to serve in this nation's armed forces," Cohen wrote.

In contrast to its policies toward extremists, the military has expelled more than 11,000 homosexuals since instituting its "don't ask, don't tell" policy in 1993.

"The only conclusion we can draw is that the DOD considers homosexuals a greater threat than neo-Nazis," Cohen wrote.

