

victed felons jumped by 30 percent.

Once you get in, there's next to no chance of washing out. Whereas in 2005, the graduation rate in Army basic training was 82 percent, the following year it rose to 94 percent—a clear indication that training standards are eroding as the war drags on. Similarly, re-enlistment criteria are becoming more lax. The Pentagon proudly reports that each of the services continues to meet its re-up goals (helped, of course, by the offer of generous bonuses that are tax-free if the soldier re-enlists while overseas). By comparison, it does not broadcast the fact that the services meet those goals by permitting those with disciplinary infractions and mediocre records of performance to re-enlist.

Secretary Gates has announced plans to expand both the Army and the Marine Corps. That expansion will be modest—fewer than 100,000 overall—and it will occur over a five-year period, providing no meaningful relief to the troops currently headed back to the war zone for their second, third, and even fourth tours. Almost certainly, recruiting those additional troops will mean an even greater degradation of enlistment standards.

President Bush has nicked and dimed the nation's fighting forces to the verge of collapse. Even today he remains oblivious to the basic problem that his administration has confronted for the past four years—too much war and too few soldiers.

The president's attitude seems to be: sure, the military is overstretched, but let's see if we can stretch it just a little bit more. Perhaps he figures that when the rubber band breaks, dealing with the consequences will be someone else's problem. It's almost enough to make one nostalgic for Bill Clinton. ■

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Former Central Intelligence Agency Director George Tenet continues to come under fire for profiting directly from the Iraq War, about which he now claims to have had misgivings.

Tenet has reportedly received a \$4-million advance from HarperCollins for his book *At the Center of the Storm*, and he also commands a speaking fee of \$50,000 each time he addresses a corporate group. Tenet has a substantial government pension, and his salary from Georgetown University, where he has a three-year appointment as the Distinguished Professor in the Practice of Diplomacy in the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Diplomacy, is reported to be in the six figures. But Tenet's most significant income, an estimated \$2.3 million since 2004, derives from his participation on the boards of a number of corporations that are contractors for the intelligence and defense communities. Tenet has three key directorial positions—with L-1 Identity Solutions, which provides biometric identity software; Guidance Software, which specializes in forensics; and QuinetiQ, a British defense technology firm that was until recently owned by the Carlyle Group. Tenet has also been linked to Science Applications International Corp, a major defense and intelligence contractor. He wrote much of his book in a SAIC secure facility where he was able to work with classified documents (which raises the question of how a former CIA director continues to have access to secret material to enable him to write a for-profit book). The CIA workforce is now 60 percent contractors, nearly all of whom come from companies like those with which Tenet is associated. Contractors cost the taxpayer two to three times as much as a staff employee does, but they are frequently expensed off-line in the budget and can have their positions eliminated when their contracts expire, which is why federal government managers prefer to use them.



Col. Larry Wilkerson, former chief of staff to Colin Powell when he was secretary of state, told a May 7 gathering why Powell did not resign during President Bush's first term.

He feared that his departure would mean that the Pentagon would be completely unrestrained in its attempted reshaping of U.S. foreign policy. According to Wilkerson, the Pentagon began to interfere in the policy process very early in the Bush administration. He cited as one example the dispatch of senior Pentagon officials to Taiwan during 2001 to urge the Taiwanese leadership to declare the country independent of mainland China. Pentagon officials assured the Taiwanese that if they were to do so, the United States would adopt a "two China" policy, abandoning the current American recognition of the People's Republic as the sole legal government of China. Beijing would have reacted strongly and perhaps unpredictably to such a move. When Powell heard about the Pentagon initiative, he was livid and immediately sent senior State Department officers to Taiwan to inform them that a new China policy was not being contemplated and that Taiwan's declaring independence would not be supported by the United States.

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Mondoweiss, Chapter One

Blogging about Israel and Jewish identity raises *Observer* hackles.

By Philip Weiss

A YEAR AND A HALF AGO, I resolved to become a blogger. As a lifelong writer, I had produced journalism through a host of technologies, from carbon copies on manual typewriters to e-mail, and I didn't want the world to leave me behind. Besides, I was excited by the form. The writers were working without filters—editors—and as a result, the writing was more immediate, genuine, and personal. I wanted to try.

I also thought there might be money in it. I had covered an antiwar hearing in Congress for a glossy magazine, and the only other reporters were two or three bloggers. It seemed to me that something was wrong with the economy when one guy was making \$10,000 for an article and three guys were making nothing for providing a similar service. An efficient economy rewards people for their work; that money would have to be shared. But when I offered this analysis to Craig Newmark, the founder of craigslist.org, he shook his head. The three bloggers were all getting something out of it, he said. Maybe one guy expected to get money down the road, so it was an investment. Another was getting personal satisfaction and learning something. "Maybe the third guy is getting to express heretical views or fulfilling his idea of citizenship..."

My main outlet was *The New York Observer*, the weekly printed on orange paper, and I began bird-dogging the editor, who had long supported my work, to give me a blog on the *Observer* site and forget about print. Peter Kaplan

is old-school in more ways than one: our friendship goes back to our Harvard days in the '70s. He pointed out that readers still value what they can hold in their hands more than what they see on a screen. He was right, I said, but who could say when that paradigm was going to break?

After considerable back and forth with designers and web managers, I got my blog in March 2006. It was my editor's idea to call it Mondoweiss. Peter is charming, intuitive, and magisterial, a Flo Ziegfeld type. The way *The Observer* works is that editors knock softly on his closed door all afternoon, hoping for a minute in which he will deliver an inspirational note as he puffs on a metaphorical cigar. Peter gave me just a couple of notes as I began blogging. "You're a writer! Be a writer, write about what's on your mind!" and "Drive traffic!" He had often described his ideal of a writer to me: someone with complete confidence on the page, someone with his own special view of things and his own way of expressing it. Another time he told me to throw some pictures of my dogs on the blog. That's a blogging tradition, pet pictures.

It was understood that Peter couldn't pay me anything for the blog. *The Observer* lost money, and I figured I couldn't have my hand out when I didn't even know what I was doing.

Many of my early entries were indulgent or writerly. They had cute turns of phrase or long setups or personal anecdotes. Not for long. Blogging gave me a

clipped style. Short sentences, little imagery, simple words. Hard lessons for an old belletrist.

The pressure was awful. I felt oppressed by the need to say something interesting every day and ransacked my life for anything that might entertain readers. I related amusing stories like how I'd ruined a dinner party by getting into an argument and how my wife had later comforted me: "I'll tell you a secret, there are endless social groups. You can burn through one and still get invited to another." But really, what was so interesting about my life? Not much.

Borrowing time from remunerative activities, I wondered why I was doing it at all. Then I began to focus, writing about things I thought about naturally: the Iraq disaster and my Jewishness, and on from that to recent Jewish history, the Jewish arrival in the American establishment in my generation, Zionism, neoconservatism, Israel, Palestine. Later I noticed a commenter objecting that *The Observer* had "assigned me" to write about Jewish issues. It hadn't. I'd assigned myself.

My Jewishness has long intrigued me. I was raised in a very close-knit scientific family that had a sense of Jewish superiority. Being Jewish was the main thing I was *vis-à-vis* the world. All my friends were Jewish, and summers we went to a scientific community that was also very Jewish. Only in college did I start to break away from my background, even as I cast long looks back at the tribal.