

# Army study warned against Bush's insane Gulf war; authors silenced

by Leo F. Scanlon

*EIR* has learned that the authors of a U.S. Army study, which counseled against a foolish and dangerous confrontation in the Persian Gulf, have been forbidden to discuss their report and its recommendations. A spokesman for the U.S. Army War College said that the decision is in line with the Pentagon practice of not providing background discussions about policy issues while hostilities persist. The gag-order is not surprising, since the publicly available study, "Iraqi Power and U.S. Security in the Middle East," by Stephen C. Pelletiere, Douglas V. Johnson II, and Leif R. Rosenberger, published by the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, is a virtual point-by-point refutation of the propaganda themes used by George Bush to drag the nation into war.

The report was released last spring during the congressional debate over sanctions against Iraq, and recommended against an "unfortunate and unnecessary" confrontation with the Ba'ath regime. "The root of the problem appears to be Washington's inability to appreciate the intensity of Iraq's determination to overcome its present economic crisis," the authors say. They accurately predict the outcome of this miscalculation: "There is, we conclude, the possibility of a major military blowup, in which case the United States would almost certainly have to intervene."

The broader forces which threatened war in the region were analyzed independently by Lyndon LaRouche, who warned of an outbreak of war in the region beginning in June 1990, and presented his Oasis Plan for economic development of the region as the only basis for peace. LaRouche's thesis was ridiculed by intelligence community officials and journalists who rely on the "gossip" school of analysis. The Army study has not fared much better.

The study, while less comprehensive in its purview and recommendations than the proposals put forward by LaRouche, stands in contrast to the vast outpouring of propaganda which has inundated the airwaves, print media, and the Congress about Iraq since September 1988. The facts and analysis in the Army report are irrefutable, and for that reason we present lengthy excerpts. *EIR's* interpretative remarks do not necessarily reflect the thinking of the authors of the Army report.

## Disaster rooted in Iran-Contra scheme

Not since the time of Joseph Goebbels has a national news media addressed issues of war and peace in such a cartoonish, one-dimensional, and hate-filled manner as the U.S. media has in the case of Iraq. Since about Aug. 5, the charge has been led by Bush who, unable to grasp what shapes events in the region, has become "obsessed and possessed" by his personal demon Saddam Hussein. Tragically, Bush has entered a war against the national interests of the United States.

The Army report shows that the U.S. confrontation with Iraq has its roots in events which antedate the occupation of Kuwait—and is intertwined with the infamous "Iran-Contra" gambit in the great game played by imperial powers in the region. The underlying cause of conflict, as this report shows, is the economic warfare conducted by the developed countries against the underdeveloped countries in the region—and the U.S. has entered that war on the wrong side. George Bush's "New World Order" is simply the old imperialism.

The authors explain that their investigations began in response to the inadequacy of existing explanations for the stunning turnaround in Iraqi military fortunes during the eight-year war against Iran. The popular but facile hypotheses explained the events either as a result of foreign intervention on behalf of Iraq, or relied on the unproven assertions that chemical weapons were widely used. The authors rejected these explanations, examined the documentable social and political changes which occurred during the war, and drew their conclusions.

The elements of the conflict between Iraq, Iran, and Kuwait are contained in the geographical boundaries established by the British partition of this segment of the Ottoman Empire after World War I. Iraq's outlets to the Persian Gulf are the cities of Basra, located on the Shatt al Arab river, the lower portion of which forms the border with Iran, and the city of Um Qasr, which is blocked by the Kuwaiti islands of Warbah and Bubiyan. Provocations in this area are *casus belli* for Iraq, and conflicts are easy to start, as was shown in the war with Iran, and, more indirectly, in the occupation of Kuwait.

## **The Republican Guards and the legitimacy of the regime**

"The report begins with a discussion of the Iranian capture of Al Faw in 1986, the act which, the authors believe, galvanized the Iraqis to make the bold changes in their military doctrine, which led to their ultimate victory in the war."

Iraq had been pursuing a strategy of "static defense" against Iran for several years prior to this point—a strategy which had as its greatest attraction the promise of limited casualties. The economic costs of this war were another matter however:

"Iraq had been funding itself since at least 1983 with borrowed cash—principally from its rich Arab neighbors. By 1986, an estimated \$20 billion had been received from the Saudis and Kuwaitis. . . .

"As long as Iraq appeared to be winning the war, the Gulf states were amenable to financing the effort. After Al Faw, perceptions changed markedly. . . .

"Iraq also had a large non-Arab debt problem. Aid from the Gulf states was not enough to cover Iraq's expenses, and so it had borrowed from international banks as well. By 1986, Iraq owed Soviet, European, and Japanese bankers nearly as much as it owed to the Arabs. . . .

"As had been the case with the Saudis and Kuwaitis however, the loss of Al Faw caused uneasiness within the international banking community."

Saddam Hussein ordered the capture of the city of Mehran, in an attempt to break the stalemate, and failed. These events led into the Extraordinary Congress of the Ba'ath Party in July 1986. The problem confronting the Ba'athists was that the Iranians were massing hundreds of thousands of troops in preparation for capturing the city of Basra in the fall, and the Iraqi Army had become moribund as a result of the prolonged static campaign. New blood and a reorganization were called for:

"The Ba'athists appear to have hit upon an effective scheme for luring the youth into the service. . . . Shortly after the Extraordinary Congress ended, the regime announced a further call up for the regular army. . . . Having done so, it next began to turn the screws ever so subtly on the students.

"The Ba'athists announced that schools would not reopen in the fall. Instead, the students would be required to attend summer camp where they would undergo basic military training. . . . The Ba'athists did not specify when the schools would reopen, creating the impression in the minds of the students that their deferments were about to be phased out. At this point the Ba'athists unveiled their snapper, so to speak. They announced that the Army would accept volunteers for the Republican Guards, and that youths from anywhere in Iraq could serve—previously only young men from Tikrit, Saddam's hometown, were eligible. In a country like Iraq, where practically all power is vested in the President, a Palace connection is extremely useful, and thus service in the Guards was an attractive proposition. . . .

"The fundamental point to keep in mind, we feel, is that Iraq won the war with Iran because of its greater sacrifice. . . . The Ba'athists in 1986 ordered what amounted to a total callup—knowing that their order could backfire on them. The Iraqi people might have refused the regime's demand, which, under the circumstances, would likely have caused the downfall of the Ba'ath. By complying—that is, by going along with the regime's appeal—the Iraqi people in effect gave the Ba'athists a vote of confidence. The regime now has a broader political base than at any time in its history. . . . There is virtually no sign that the Iraqi Army is estranged from the regime; if anything it appears to be its mainstay."

The expanded recruitment laid the basis for tackling the next problem, to shift from a static defense to an offense, and "get the nation to go to war in the midst of war." For the first time, the threat of Iraqi attack on Iranian infrastructure became a possibility.

## **Perfidy of Kissinger's Iran-Contra caper**

"The Iranians had threatened to retaliate against Saudi Arabia and Kuwait for any such damage done by Iraq. There seems to have been a condition tied to the monarchs' aid: They paid as long as Iraq observed certain restraints; chief among them was to go easy on Iran's infrastructure.

"At the same time Washington appears to have been pressuring Iraq on this same point," and sold the Baghdad government on the theory that "the moderate" Rafsanjani represented a "peace party" in Teheran, which would emerge if no drastic measures were pursued.

"Until the summer of 1986, the Iraqis were generally amenable to cooperating with the United States . . . then with the revelation of 'Irangate' the atmosphere changed. . . . The Iraqis quite clearly were shocked. The revelations undercut their whole strategy for bringing about a negotiated truce. . . . The leader of the peace faction—as the Iraqis believed—was Hashemi Rafsanjani. When Irangate revealed Rafsanjani as the principal negotiator for arms, the Peace Party Theory collapsed. . . . Once the Ba'athist leadership determined that a peace party did not exist, they opted for total war.

"Iran had been the first, in 1985, to attack civilian targets with Scuds when it rocketed Baghdad," and the Iraqis began their push to develop a long-range version of the Scud. The 1988 missile attacks on Teheran shocked observers, since "few had anticipated that Iraq possessed this capability."

Simultaneously, the Army began preparing a series of offensive drives, beginning with an attack on the Iranian occupied coastal city of Al Faw.

## **Leadership, not chemical weapons, won the war**

The Iraqi Army attacked with overwhelming force, and made use of its air power: "The effectiveness of the Iraqi Army's attack helicopters was so great that the Iranians im-

mediately charged that the United States had intervened with its helicopter forces. . . .

“Although surprised, the Iranians offered stiff resistance initially. . . . This resistance must be cited as evidence in refutation of the oft-repeated allegation of massive use of chemicals. Iraq, consistently sensitive to casualties, apparently wanted the Iranians to flee, as it left one pontoon bridge over the Shatt untouched. . . .

“It is significant what the Iraqis *did not* do next. There was no great celebration, no excessive propagandizing over the great victory. Instead, in a businesslike fashion which is becoming characteristic of this army, they moved to mock battles over similar terrain to that of their next objective.”

The Iraqis achieved their greatest territorial gains in the battle at Dehloran/Zubiadat, which resulted in a 45 kilometer penetration along a 130 kilometer front. “Massive quantities of equipment were captured. . . . The Iraqis then withdrew declaring they had no territorial ambitions. . . .

“It was apparent in 1982 that the Iraqis were not mentally or organizationally prepared to deal with the Iranian ‘human wave’ attacks. Given the initial success of the Iranian tactics, and combined with the unlimited nature of Iran’s stated war aims, the Iraqis—in a manner that was militarily understandable—reached out for every weapon possible. Chemical weapons offered a nearly perfect solution. . . . The allegations of their massive use, however, during the 1988 campaign are suspect. . . . We would also like to stress that we have seen no convincing evidence that gas was used to recapture Al Faw.”

### **Economic development a postwar priority**

“In the author’s view, Iraq’s military policies [in the period following the war with Iran] will be restrained. Baghdad should not be expected to deliberately provoke military confrontations with anyone. Its interests are best served now and in the immediate future by peace. Iraq is a resource-rich country; revenue from oil sales could put it in the front rank of nations economically. . . . Iraq has vast reserves of oil, an adequate river system and a largely literate population. It has a battle-tested army, and great pride in its accomplishment in the war. This adds up to a powerful state, if Iraq can ever solve its economic problems. . . . Force is only likely if the Iraqis feel seriously threatened.

“At the same time Iraq has enemies. . . . Indeed, some formerly not-too-active foes—such as Israel—have now come to constitute a much greater threat. . . . Israel backed the Iranians throughout the war. It practically initiated the Irangate conspiracy whereby it supplied Teheran with TOW and Hawk missiles, and had the Israelis their way, they would have tipped the balance of power to the Iranians.

“Despite the tensions, however, it is our belief that Iraq is basically committed to a non-aggressive strategy, and further that it will, over the course of the next few years, considerably relocate the size of its military.”

Additionally, an uneasy truce with Kuwait was facilitating the development of a port at Um Qasr, potentially removing the source of conflict with Iran.

At this point, it must be asked if subsequent events have proven the authors to be hopelessly naive in their assessment, and George Bush to be correct. The authors are forbidden from answering that question, but the internal evidence of the report leads to the conclusion that the United States deliberately intervened to sabotage the postwar recovery of Iraq, slowing efforts to develop new ports, halting the demobilization of the army, and increasing economic tensions with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. War debts were the time bomb under the economy.

“Now the piper must be paid; the bankers want their money, or at least the interest payments. The Ba’athists argue that they should be allowed to invest in economic recovery and industrialization so that they can become productive again and then pay off their debts. The banks want their money now.

“The failure so far to find a solution to this problem has put Iraq into a classic bind. It cannot easily bear the burden of so many men under arms, but neither is it able to return them to civilian life as long as there are so few jobs awaiting them. And, of course, every day that passes in which this situation is perpetuated only aggravates Iraq’s problem.

“Iraq appears to be trying to resolve the situation on a piecemeal basis. By bargaining hard with its creditors, it has been able to reschedule some of its debts. Money freed in this fashion has been invested in industrial projects. As areas of industry are built up, Iraq demobilizes a portion of its troops.”

This is not the picture, painted by George Bush, of a nation bent on conquest. How Iraq was provoked into military actions, which the Army study *predicted*, is the subject of the next section of the report.

### **The chemical weapons issue, again**

“United by a common interest, Iraq and the United States restored diplomatic relations in 1984, and the United States began to actively assist Iraq in ending the fighting. . . .

“In September 1988, however—a month after the war had ended—the State Department abruptly, and in what many viewed as a sensational manner, condemned Iraq for allegedly using chemicals against its Kurdish population. . . . Significant numbers of Kurds had launched a revolt against Baghdad and in the process teamed up with Teheran. As soon as the war with Iran ended, Iraq announced its determination to crush the Kurdish insurrection. It sent Republican Guards to the Kurdish area, and in the course of this operation—according to the U.S. State Department—gas was used. . . . The Iraqi government denied that any such gassing had occurred. Nonetheless, Secretary of State [George] Shultz stood by U.S. accusations, and the U.S. Congress, acting on its own, sought to impose economic

sanctions on Baghdad. . . .

"Having looked at all of the evidence that was available to us, we find it impossible to confirm the State Department's claim that gas was used in this instance. To begin with there were never any victims produced. International relief organizations who examined the Kurds . . . failed to discover any. The claim rests solely on testimony of the Kurds who had crossed the border into Turkey, where they were interviewed by staffers of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. . . .

"It appears that in seeking to punish Iraq, the Congress was influenced by another incident that occurred five months earlier in another Iraqi-Kurdish city, Halabjah. In March 1988, the Kurds at Halabjah were bombarded with chemical weapons, producing a great many deaths. . . . Iraq was blamed for the Halabjah attack, even though it was subsequently brought out that Iran, too, had used chemicals in this operation, and it seemed likely that it was the Iranian bombardment that had actually killed the Kurds. . . ."

### **Economic war against Iraq**

"The whole episode of seeking to impose sanctions on Iraq for something that it may not have done would be regrettable but not of great concern were this an isolated event. . . .

"Iraq suspects the motives behind repeated attempts by the United States to interfere in its internal affairs. . . . Moreover, the interference is hardly benign. The aforementioned economic sanctions proposal could prove to be devastating to the Iraqis. For example, under one of its provisions, the United States would withdraw support for International Monetary Fund loans to Iraq, virtually killing its credit rating. Along with this, trade is to be halted, which would interdict tons of grain currently being exported there from the United States. And the proposed sanctions would also have halted all technology transfers.

*"Of immediate concern to the Iraqis is the fear that the United States will abort their economic recovery. . . . Were the United States to impose sanctions at this crucial juncture the recovery might be doomed, which obviously would turn them against us. Rather than accept this passively we believe they would try to hurt us where we are most vulnerable, in the Gulf"* (emphasis added). Such sanctions were imposed in April 1990, long before the August 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

"The United States seems to be on a collision course with the Ba'athists. This is unfortunate and unnecessary. The root of the problem appears to be Washington's inability to appreciate the intensity of Iraq's determination to overcome its present economic crisis.

"The regime in Baghdad is committed to rebuilding Iraq after the war. It will do whatever is necessary to accomplish this. If the regime perceives that it is being blocked by the United States, it will lash out, using whatever means it has to retaliate."

### **From war to peace**

The analysis presented by Pelletiere, Johnson, and Rosenberger, is the background necessary if one is to understand the grim determination shown by Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz during his Geneva, Switzerland meeting with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, and in the press conference which concluded that fateful meeting. Events have proceeded exactly as the Army War College predicted they would, and for the reasons spelled out by Aziz.

The great tragedy is that in spite of the record of perfidy by the United States, and up until the imposition of sanctions by the Congress in April, the Ba'athist regime had made every effort to accommodate to the legitimate goals of U.S. policy in the region.

"Within the past decade we have seen remarkable diplomatic and military versatility on the part of Iraq. For example . . . midway through the fighting they . . . agreed to recognize the existence of Israel and to renounce terrorism." Contrary to inflammatory propaganda about Iraqi nuclear capabilities—a threat which is discounted in the near term by military scientists who have inspected Iraqi research facilities—the Iraqi government has agreed to open its missile sites, chemical weapons plants, and its nuclear facilities, if Israel agrees to open its nuclear weapons facility at Dimona. It is Israeli intransigence, backed by the U.S. State Department, which has prevented a solution to this problem.

The limited recommendations presented by the War College study are prudent, and supported by the analysis. Unfortunately, Bush was not prevented from beginning the bombings of Iraq on Jan. 16, but the study may yet help get out the truth of Bush's lunacy and contribute to achieving a cease-fire and negotiations. The only basis for a durable regional peace remains the "Oasis Plan" promoted by Lyndon LaRouche.

'From the prison in which the politician's career expires, the influence of the statesman is raised toward the summits of his life's providential course. Since Solon, the Socratic method has become the mark of the great Western statesman. Without the reemergence of that leadership, our imperiled civilization will not survive this century's waning years.'

—Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.

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