

Kissinger gaffe repeated

With Butler as a source of inflammatory and highly dubious “evidence” of Iraqi weapons violations, the British Foreign Office has been churning out a steady stream of war propaganda since February. This produced one serious gaffe which reopens the question of British Foreign Office penetration of the U.S. State Department. On Feb. 4, British Foreign Secretary Cook released a white paper, titled “The Iraqi Threat and the Work of UNSCOM,” which began with a litaney of Butler’s wild, unsubstantiated claims of Iraqi biological-chemical weapons of mass destruction. Eight days later, the United States Information Agency (USIA) released a document, “Fact Sheet: Iraq’s Record With UNSCOM,” which began with two pages, virtually taken verbatim, but without attribution, from the Cook white paper. Not since the days of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has the British

intrusion into the U.S. State Department been so flagrant.

As we go to press, President Clinton is travelling in Asia, and the Iraq showdown has subsided. But, British and Israeli propagandists, and their agents in Washington, are continuing to press ahead, for bombings, and for a full-scale “Contra” campaign on the ground in Iraq. As one of his last acts as Speaker, Newt Gingrich, Netanyahu’s close ally on Capitol Hill, had rammed through a bill providing \$97 million to fund an Iraqi “Contra” movement to overthrow Saddam. Some \$2 million of the fund has already been allocated to USIA, to launch “public diplomacy” in support of the currently non-existent Iraqi “Contras.” If terms like “Contra” and “public diplomacy” don’t send chills down the spines of national security planners in the Clinton administration, then they ought to take a refresher course on the lessons that should have been learned from the Iran-Contra fiasco.

How the British Israelites sprang the Iraq trap on Clinton

by Michele Steinberg

From the moment of the diplomatic settlement of the first Iraq crisis of 1998 in February, the government of British Prime Minister Tony Blair, acting on behalf of the British Empire’s Privy Council, has been the primary provocateur stirring up an Iraq crisis, not to destroy the regime of Saddam Hussein, but to wreck the government of President Bill Clinton.

This chronology provides a picture of how the British have run their propaganda, lies, and penetration of the U.S. policy apparatus to provoke an Iraq showdown. The two key British assets are, first, Israeli intelligence, which runs a vicious pressure campaign through the American side of the Likud/extreme right wing, allied with the so-called Christian televangelists of the Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell stripe; and, where that falls short, espionage, with operatives such as convicted spy Jonathan Pollard. While a pressure campaign mounts for Clinton to free Pollard, his yet-to-be-identified controllers in the United States continue to develop new Pollards, through a network of think-tanks, publications, and recruitment of active duty military personnel. And, second, the media empires, led by the British giants, the Hollinger Corp., and the Rupert Murdoch chain, interfaced with *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.

Their aim: a Middle East war, preferably now, which can serve to 1) keep the Clinton administration politically off-balance; 2) provide a pretext for Israeli Prime Minister Benja-

min Netanyahu to back out of the Wye Plantation agreement, and, ultimately, the Oslo Accords entirely; and 3) paint any chosen Third World country, through their propaganda outlets, as the new “boogeyman,” against whom the United Nations’ club of sanctions and military strikes can be wielded.

For the first time in decades, the British manipulation is not an “invisible hand”; it is out in the open, including assets such as their Hollinger Corp. empire, the Israeli Temple Mount Likud Party fanatics, the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM), and the U.S. neo-fascist network of Newt Gingrich and the Conservative Revolutionaries in the U.S. Congress.

The events of Nov. 14 encapsulate the British role: After Clinton had temporarily aborted the military strikes on Iraq, it was Blair who rushed out of 10 Downing Street sputtering to the news media that the Iraqi communiqué received by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan was “unacceptable.” Blair’s pressure on the White House to act was constant: The Prime Minister’s office announced that Blair had been on the phone with Clinton eight times that day; the British Broadcasting Corp. (BBC) said it was nine times. And, the more Blair ranted for the United States to bomb Iraq, the more Iraqi voices from Baghdad blamed the United States for abusing them.

While the attack on Iraq has been momentarily averted, it is clear that the British are increasing the pressure on the

Clinton administration. The British Israelite lobby in the United States, the same warmongers who take money from Clinton-hater and Kenneth Starr financier Richard Mellon Scaife, have declared that Saddam was “the winner” in this war of nerves. At the same time, the reports that Defense Secretary William Cohen and Secretary of State Madeleine “Meddling” Albright insisted that Clinton order the attack no matter what the Iraqi government did to meet the UN Security Council terms, have verisimilitude.

It useful to know how important the Blair government considers this Iraq matter. According to a communication from the British Embassy in Washington, a “British Government Website” on Iraq has been operational for some time (major statements were posted beginning in February 1998) to get out the British line. Available in English and Arabic, this “special Iraq Website . . . has been set up jointly by the British Foreign Office and Defense Ministry.” The news release also says, “Updated regularly with *news items* on the developing situation from a variety of U.K. government sources, the site also carries a *background dossier* on the work of UNSCOM in both English and Arabic. . . . The page also has links to related Websites worldwide.”

British intelligence briefing papers on “obstruction of UNSCOM” and “Iraq’s Weapons of Mass Destruction,” are clearly, by content analysis, the basis for the standard arguments for attacking Iraq with a severe, sustained bombardment. As for the United States, it is apparent that the state of policymaking is similar to that Sir Henry Kissinger described in his 1982 Chatham House speech—that, when he was National Security Adviser during the Watergate attacks on President Richard Nixon, his policies were drafted by the British Foreign Office.

A Chronology

Feb. 4: British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook authors a policy paper on UNSCOM, and the ongoing threat from Saddam Hussein to build and deploy weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including those using VX, anthrax, and botulism biowarfare agents. He puts out the official line, that no one will ever be safe from this as long as Saddam remains in power. This is released to all media, and to all Members of Parliament. Eight days later, this document, rewritten but largely lifted verbatim, appears as a U.S. Information Agency paper, without any mention of Cook or its British origin.

Feb. 14: Yossef Bodansky, research director of the Congress’ Republican Task Force on Terrorism, and a former Israeli Air Force officer and Jonathan Pollard handler, issues a report to justify new military assaults on the nations of Sudan, Yemen, Libya, and Algeria (before, during, or after a

strike on Iraq). The 40-page report claims that “400 Iraqi Scud missiles that could deliver chemical or biological weapons” have been “shipped to Sudan and Yemen.”

Feb. 17: Deputy Speaker of the British House of Lords Caroline Cox, the most vocal proponent of a full-scale *American* war against Sudan, declares in the House of Lords that Saddam has transferred Scud missile delivery systems, and other weapons of mass destruction, to Sudan, citing Bodansky and his report prepared for the Gingrichites in Congress as her source.

Feb. 20: The London *Times* says that Iraq has relocated its top missile scientists, and chemical and biological warfare experts, to Libya and Algeria, and that Iraq has done this both to protect its programs from an impending military strike, and to aid Libya’s and Algeria’s WMD programs. The hoax, traced to Sharon mafia warrior Bodansky, that Iraq has secretly dispersed its WMD, is put forward to justify the targeting of states in addition to Iraq. In August, Sudan is bombed by the United States “in retaliation” for the bombing of U.S. embassies in Africa, on the basis of this disinformation.

February 1998: In the United States, when it appears that a diplomatic solution to the Iraq crisis is possible, a fallback option is put into place to broaden and intensify the next war against Iraq. Richard Perle, Hollinger Corp. director and suspected member of the “X Committee” of Israeli intelligence moles in the United States, issues a plan to destroy Iraq through a “Contra”-type long-term operation.

On Feb. 8, Perle (labelled the shadow “Foreign Minister for Sen. Trent Lott” in the Nov. 12 London *Independent*) publishes his program in the *Washington Post*, entitled “No More Halfway Measures.” It begins, “Given the prospect of chem/bio weaponry in Saddam Hussein’s murderous hands, military action is long overdue. . . . The more fundamental threat is Saddam Hussein himself. . . . That is why even a massive bombing campaign will fail—unless it is part of an overall strategy to destroy his regime by helping the nascent democratic opposition in Iraq to transform itself into Iraq’s new government.” This is a very detailed plan that is the basis for the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998, that was rammed through Congress in October 1998.

On Feb. 20, Perle, under the auspices of the “Committee for Peace and Security in the Gulf,” emerges as the leading figure in a new anti-Iraq operation. In a letter signed by Perle and about 40 other officials of former U.S. administrations, they argue against bombing Iraq, unless the bombing is accompanied by a “total surrender” war plan. Former U.S. Rep. Steven Solarz (D-N.Y.) joins Perle in presenting this perspective.

March 3: Scott Ritter, a former U.S. Marine who boasts of his friendly relationship with the Israeli and British intelligence services, emerges as the “Rambo” of UNSCOM. The British Israeli plan to use UNSCOM operative Ritter to exceed the authority in the UNSCOM agreements, now identified by Ritter as “Operation Shake the Tree,” causes UNS-

COM's Richard Butler to remove Ritter from the teams. But, after an alleged "staff revolt," Butler reinstates him.

March 4-20: Following an agreement arranged with UN Secretary General Annan, UNSCOM inspections begin at the Iraqi Ministry of Defense, one of the disputed areas. The crisis atmosphere abates, and inspections continue.

June 23: BBC reports a leak from UNSCOM that tests on Iraqi warhead fragments show traces of VX, a very deadly gas. One day later, UNSCOM chief Butler, an Australian whose tenure, beginning in July 1997, kicked off the escalation of tensions and confrontations with Iraq, tells BBC that tests by the U.S. military at Aberdeen Proving Grounds show the presence of VX. (Tests done a month or so later by French and Swiss laboratories yield inconclusive and conflicting results.) The VX allegation signals a new round of "Shake the Tree" operations by UNSCOM, according to Ritter's account.

July 15: UNSCOM allegedly plans an inspection of a military secretariat in Iraq that is a subject of dispute between Iraq and the UN Security Council. According to Perle, in a speech at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), this inspection was "objected to" and blocked by a U.S. diplomatic official at the United Nations, thereby angering Ritter.

Aug. 2-4: The controversial "July 15" inspection is rescheduled, with Ritter scheduled to be on the team. Press accounts, including interviews with Ritter and a report in the *Irish Times* newspaper, say that U.S. officials, including National Security Adviser Sandy Berger and Secretary of State Albright, demanded that Ritter be taken off the job.

Aug. 4: The London *Times* states in an editorial that there will be a new Iraq crisis in October, because that is when a scheduled review of the lifting of sanctions against Iraq will take place according to a UN resolution; and because the Clinton administration will be too weak to deal with a crisis at a time when independent counsel Starr will be submitting his report on impeachment to Congress. The editorial by the *Times*, a mouthpiece for British intelligence, is considered a "signal piece."

Aug. 5: Iraqi officials suspend cooperation with UNSCOM, after delivering official protests regarding Butler's actions.

Aug. 6: A press campaign to free convicted spy Pollard begins. In a *Wall Street Journal* article entitled "Jailed Spy Was Right About Saddam," Angelo Codevilla, an associate of Perle with the Jerusalem- and Washington-based Institute for Advanced Strategic and Policy Studies, recounts the danger of Iraq's WMD capabilities, and attacks U.S. "softness" toward Iraq. He wildly claims that former deputy CIA director Adm. Bobby Ray Inman's decision to withhold U.S. satellite information about Iraq from Israel, was the motivation for Pollard to hand U.S. secrets over to Israel.

Sometime in August, Israeli Cabinet officials Sharansky and Edelstein demand of Vice President Al Gore, that the United States free Pollard.

Aug. 7: UNSCOM's Ritter resigns from his UN job,

claiming that officials in the Clinton administration were intervening to stop UNSCOM from conducting the inspections that Ritter's intelligence network wanted to carry out.

Aug. 7-present: Ritter is picked up by a conservative speaker's bureau, part of the Mellon Scaife/Hollinger network, to spread terror stories about Iraq and beat the drums for war.

Sept. 9: Citing Ritter's charges on Iraq, U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, announces that he will hold hearings on Iraq, saying he finds Ritter's charges "credible, specific, and substantial." Brownback says that the Clinton administration has shown "little resolve in containing Iraq and removing Saddam Hussein from power." Brownback's committee is involved in writing and in lobbying for passage of the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998, which calls for a "Contra"-style war against the Iraqi regime—that is, adoption of Perle's February plan. Zionist lobby-funded Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), chairman of the House International Relations Committee, announces that he will also hold hearings, based on Ritter's claim.

Sept. 16: At House National Security Committee hearings, Michael Eisenstadt, a fellow at the Zionist lobby's Washington Institute on Near East Policy (WINEP), attacks Clinton's policy of "food for oil," and "containment" of Iraq, as dangerously weak.

Sept. 28: The Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* interviews Ritter and publishes detailed accounts of his trips to Israel, where he is briefed and debriefed. Ritter says that he is under investigation by the FBI for security breaches in giving information obtained from the UNSCOM inspections to Israel.

Oct. 1: UNSCOM chief Butler admits in a public briefing that former UNSCOM official Ritter is illegally using confidential information against Iraq. This is one day after charges of UNSCOM abuse is aired by the Iraqi Ambassador to the UN General Assembly.

Within a couple of weeks, Butler issues an official UNSCOM report citing tests that show the Iraqis possess VX gas. According to news accounts, the report says that the French/Swiss reports which contradict the earlier American reports are unimportant.

Oct. 11: The *Washington Post* initiates a two-part series on Ritter entitled "Shell Games: The Hunt for Iraq's Forbidden Weapons: A Futile Game of Hide and Seek." The article details Ritter's contact with Israeli and British intelligence, and his history of demotions and trouble in the U.S. Marine Corps. The article reveals a close working relationship between Ritter and Iraqi "Contra" Ahmed Chalabi, the London-based leader of the Iraqi National Congress opposition group and a well-known fraud.

Oct. 14: Perle, in a keynote at an American Enterprise Institute forum on the Middle East, demands that CIA Near East chief Steve Richter be fired for gross incompetence, including because of his disagreements with Ritter; Perle de-

fends Ritter as a great hero. AEI constantly attacks Clinton policies, and, in 1996-97, it received about \$1 million from Richard Mellon Scaife-controlled foundations that also financed witnesses against Clinton for prosecutor Starr.

Oct. 16: The London *Independent* demands that Ahmed Chalabi get part of \$97 million in aid that Congress has mandated under the Iraq Liberation Act, that the U.S. government uses to fund the Iraqi opposition groups. Chalabi says that the Clinton administration opposed the money, but couldn't stop it because of the Starr investigation.

Oct. 11-30: Ritter is extremely active on the U.S. lecture circuit, right-wing radio talk shows, and think-tank conferences.

Oct. 30: Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz briefs the Iraqi Parliament on the penetration of UNSCOM inspection teams by Israeli nationals, i.e., intelligence operatives, travelling on false identity papers. The next day, Baghdad announces that Iraq will stop cooperating with UNSCOM weapons inspectors. Iraq claims that it has fulfilled the military conditions of the cease-fire, and demands that economic sanctions be lifted. The Iraqi government states that it will continue cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Administration, a second UN inspection body.

Oct. 31: The British government forces through a resolution against Iraq in the UN Security Council, which it chairs as part of the regular monthly rotation. (The British chairmanship expired at midnight.)

Nov. 1-4: The entire British cabinet, led by Blair, goes on a full-scale mobilization before the House of Commons, the House of Lords, and in the media, essentially declaring war against Iraq. Blair's line is that the threshold has already been crossed, and there is no diplomatic solution possible, or desired.

Nov. 2: Blair, at a news conference with German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, gives Saddam "a stern warning" that he would use "any means that are necessary" to force Iraq to comply with weapons inspections. Blair and Schröder say that the European Union (EU) is united against Iraq.

Nov. 3: A major British psychological warfare ploy surfaces, with *Guardian* articles about an Iraqi defector, Abbas Al-Janabi, now in London, who claims to have worked for Uday Hussein, Saddam's son, for 15 years. In the article, entitled "Life with the Brute of Baghdad," Janabi boasts, "I know everything about his private life, his business deals, the places he goes and the people he meets. . . . Uday Hussein, his brother Qusay, and two other men form a secret committee that supervises the 600-strong special brigade charged with concealing Iraq's banned weapons from the UN inspection team. . . . Even Tariq Aziz doesn't now where the weapons are. He thinks they are finished. He [Aziz] is important outside Iraq, but he is nothing in his own country." The article says that Janabi was debriefed by top intelligence agencies, and he said, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend."

Nov. 5: ABC Nightline, a major outlet for British propa-

ganda in the United States, features Ritter on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Ritter says that the 1991 cease-fire agreement was far too soft, and that he aims to push the United States into action against Saddam.

Nov. 5: British Foreign Secretary Cook announces that he will travel to the Persian Gulf, together with Defense Secretary George Robertson and Foreign Office hit-man Derek Fatchett, to mobilize regional governments against Saddam. In telephone calls to EU colleagues, Cook begins attacking continental opposition to a new war against Iraq. Cook warns of "severest consequences" if Iraq continues to limit cooperation with the UN, and he claims full legal authority to mount military strikes, even though no such language is in the UN resolution. Cook's trip comes just as U.S. Defense Secretary Cohen is leaving the region.

Nov. 6: Various Arabic dailies report that Saudi King Fahd told Cohen during their recent meeting that Saudi Arabia would not allow its territory to be used as a launching pad for military ventures against Iraq. It is reported that Secretary of State Albright and Vice President Gore held phone conversations with Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, to impress upon him the seriousness of the situation so that the Saudis would give permission.

Nov. 6: Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov meets with Palestine Liberation Organization Executive Committee General Secretary Mahmoud Abbas in Moscow; following the talks, Ivanov says that he had emphasized his government's desire to find a diplomatic end to the UN/Iraq crisis. Ivanov held similar meetings with other Arab diplomats.

Nov. 10: An *EIR* limited-distribution report summarizes how British cabinet officials were involved in an intense schedule of visits to the Middle East, and were building up a propaganda barrage to prepare the public in Britain, Europe, and the Middle East for a military strike. Over several days, British Defense Minister Robertson was in Kuwait, and other British officials either directly met or held discussions with the leaders of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council. Special efforts were made to convince Saudi Arabia to allow U.S. war planes to use Saudi territory.

The *Jordan Times* reports on various "military sources" located in Kuwait, who claim that a U.S.-led strike is imminent.

"Robertson," says the *Jordan Times*, "who arrived in Kuwait on Sunday night [Nov. 8], has said the current crisis would not be allowed to drag into the new year."

"On Nov. 9," the paper adds, "the defense ministers of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council were also scheduled to meet," and that the six "have in the last few days given Washington permission to use some of their military infrastructure for strikes against Iraq, Gulf and Western military officials said."

The *Jordan Times* account reports opinions of unidentified "Western officers" (probably from Robertson's entourage), that "once the final decision is taken, it will be quick."

The *Jordan Times* also reports that U.S. National Security Council spokesman David Leavy said that Clinton had made no decision, and was waiting for feedback from his advisers. The *Times* adds that another “senior U.S. official, who asked not to be identified, told Reuters that two basic military attack plans had been prepared by the Defense Department, one of them ‘larger and more punishing than the other.’ ”

Nov. 10: While the British issue crisis statements, WINEP hosts a forum to offer plans for the overthrow of Saddam, presented by Maj. Gen. Fahad Al Amir, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Kuwaiti Armed Forces. Fahad Al Amir’s remarks are immediately picked up the *Washington Times*, the *Washington Post*, and by Perle’s “Contra” group, the Iraqi National Congress (INC), whose press service, which attended the WINEP event, issues a release entitled “Kuwait Supports INC Plan to Overthrow Saddam.” It reads:

“U.S. military strikes should target Saddam Hussein and his military machine with the objective of toppling the regime . . . [including] the ring close to Saddam which maintains his survival. . . .

“He said, ‘Kuwait . . . favors establishment of a wide enclave in southern Iraq, akin to one already in the north, in which Iraqi ground forces would be prohibited and Shi’ite rebels encouraged to actively oppose the regime. In the south, the revolution is there. . . . It’s underground, it’s ready.’ ”

Nov. 10: Senator Brownback demands, “President Clinton must implement the Iraq Liberation Act and support the INC.”

Nov. 10: The *International Herald Tribune* cites “official sources,” that the Clinton administration is preparing a major bombing campaign unless Iraq backs down on the weapons inspection question. According to these unnamed sources, and unlike previous threats, the administration is fully committed to a military option if necessary.

These sources claim that they have regional support among the Arab countries (although official statements from Russia, and countries in the region, do not support such action).

According to the article, the United States is planning a swift and heavy bombing campaign followed by extensive air patrols. Nevertheless, the article admits that many military planners remain skeptical of the plan.

Nov. 10: The London *Daily Telegraph* runs an article entitled “Britain Warns Iraq: ‘Time Is Running Out.’ ” British Defense Secretary Robertson tours the Gulf States, trying to drum up support for a military strike. In Kuwait, he says, “Don’t underestimate the resolution of the international community. We mean it.” Kuwait apparently assures him of its support. Foreign Secretary Cook visits Egypt and Saudi Arabia the following week. The article cites Foreign Office sources as saying that they will allow another two weeks for a possible diplomatic solution.

Nov. 11: The *Washington Post*, in an article entitled “Carrier, Marines Rushed to Gulf—Time ‘Running Out’ for

Iraq, Cohen Says,” pieces together one-line comments from four separate U.S. government events, that U.S. Defense Secretary Cohen said UN and U.S. credibility are on the line. The article details deployment of U.S. Navy ships which are replacements for those already in the Gulf, but whose deployment schedule was moved up; the article mentions that these are only replacements, not increases in the deployment.

Absent war-mongering statements from the Clinton administration, the article relies on British assets in the United States who are not in government to fan the flames. It reports that there is a plan, pushed by former Defense Undersecretary Paul Wolfowitz and Gen. Wayne Downing (U.S. Army, ret.), to overthrow Saddam, but says, “that idea is not under serious consideration” by the administration. The article also reports on Fahad Al Amir’s speech to WINEP.

Nov. 11: Statement from the London office of Ahmed Chalabi, president of the INC Executive Council: “Any campaign to bomb Saddam will be counterproductive if it is not accompanied by a serious attempt to overthrow him. . . . President Clinton has recently signed the Iraq Liberation Act which authorizes him to provide military aid to the democratic Iraqi opposition. We urge him to move quickly to implement this law which commits the U.S. to removing Saddam and his regime.”

Nov. 11: Editorial in the Murdoch-owned *New York Post*, entitled “Pretending to Stop Saddam,” says, “Someone high up in the Clinton administration owes Scott Ritter a public apology. . . . [The administration] leaked baseless accusations that he was illegally slipping classified information to Israel . . . [and] Ritter was absolutely on target [about Saddam’s weapons of mass destruction]. . . . [Ritter] also found evidence that Iraq lacks only enriched uranium to detonate nuclear weapons.”

The *New York Post* says President Clinton has been weak and confused, and any lack of international support for overthrowing Saddam is his own fault.

Nov. 11-12: Speaking at Veterans’ Day ceremonies, Clinton indicates the possibility of military action against Iraq, but says we “hope—indeed we pray,” that it will not be necessary. In London, Blair issues a series of ultimatums against Saddam, including statements that seeking a diplomatic solution is neither necessary nor desirable. President Clinton orders additional personnel and equipment to the Gulf region for strikes against Iraq.

Nov. 18: The Hollinger Corp.’s *Daily Telegraph* publishes a blood-curdling guest editorial by Foreign Secretary Cook, headlined “We’re Ready to Bomb, Not Bluff,” in which he states that he expects Saddam to renege on the pledge to cooperate with arms inspectors, and vows a brutal military response. He also cites British support for Iraqi “Contra” groups, and asserts, with no foundation in fact, that Saddam is still stockpiling and manufacturing biological and chemical weapons—despite the fact that UNSCOM inspectors have found no evidence of such a buildup.

The *Daily Telegraph* confirms that Blair was pressing the hardest for President Clinton to go ahead with bombing, despite Saddam's agreement to unconditionally allow UNSCOM weapons inspections to resume, unfettered. The *Telegraph's* Hugo Gurdon writes from Washington: "It has emerged that Mr. Blair was more hawkish than anyone when Mr. Clinton consulted allies last weekend after calling off the first bombing and missile raids with 15 minutes to spare. The Prime Minister insisted that Saddam's second letter to Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General, was unacceptable and that the Iraqi leader could get off the hook only with a third letter explicitly renouncing his August and October pronouncements banning spot checks and then all searches by the inspectors. After Saddam responded to Mr. Blair's demand Mr. Clinton decided he could not go to war and kill thousands." The article predicts that there will still be a military confrontation with Saddam within days or weeks, because Iraq will not fully comply, and "it will leave the Anglo-American alliance with a choice described by one official here as a 'no brainer' between military confrontation and the demolition of Western credibility."

In short, although the immediate threat of military action against Iraq has abated, as the result of President Clinton's unilateral decision, London has not given up on forcing the United States into a militarily futile action.

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More Netanyahu games in the Middle East

by Joseph Brewda

The Israeli government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Nov. 20 began the first phase of what is now planned as a 12-week redeployment process, for the withdrawal of Israeli occupation troops from the Jenin area of the West Bank. The pullout follows an Israeli cabinet vote on Nov. 19 accepting the Wye Plantation agreement which President Bill Clinton brokered between Israel and the Palestinian Authority in October, in yet another effort to revive the moribund 1993 Oslo peace accords.

According to the agreement, Israel would pull out of 2% of the territory now under full Israeli control in the West Bank. An additional 7.1% of the West Bank currently under Palestinian civil administration, but Israeli security control, would also come under Palestinian security control as well. If the three phases of the pullout go as planned, about 40% of the West Bank will be under full or partial Palestinian control by mid-February. This is the first time in two years that Israel has relinquished Arab lands.

But no one should think peace is at hand. For one thing, the disposition of a few acres of arid real estate has nothing to do with peace. Nor can it be said that the Clinton administration, in devoting vast resources to supervise real estate haggling between the Israelis and Palestinians, is, by so doing, playing the role of a peacemaker.

The unfortunate reality is that Netanyahu and his backers are as fully committed to provoking war in the region, as they were in 1995 when they assassinated the architect of the Oslo Accords, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Unlike Netanyahu, Rabin wanted peace. No sworn agreement on Israel's part, as long as it is ruled by Netanyahu, changes that fact. Moreover, showing the actual nature of his regime, Netanyahu has already lobbed several timebombs since Wye, each of which could blow up the Wye agreement, and provoke a new Arab-Israeli war.

The Har Homa provocation

For one, the Israeli government on Nov. 12 issued a tender offer for the construction of more than 1,000 Jewish housing units in Har Homa in occupied Arab East Jerusalem. The project, which is part of a larger, multi-hundred-million-dollar plan to build a city with 6,500 residential units, is designed to provoke Palestinian violence, because it shows Israel has no intention of making Jerusalem's status an item of negotia-