

Countdown Has Begun To Iraq War Folly

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Despite the reiterated public assurances by National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of State Colin Powell, that “no decision has been made regarding Iraq”—assurances being religiously repeated by European leaders in mid-March—there can be little doubt that the decision to launch a war against Iraq has been made, with both military and diplomatic preparations under way.

Those preparations are being pushed on U.S. President George Bush by a “global empire” faction—easily identified with the name Zbigniew Brzezinski, for example—which has gained strength from the Sept. 11 attacks and growing desperation from the onrushing financial collapse. After the President’s State of the Union address, Secretary of State Powell asserted, contrary to his own earlier reservations about aggression against Baghdad, that “regime change” is the policy of the Bush Administration. Shortly thereafter, it was announced that Vice President Dick Cheney would make a tour of the Middle East and Persian Gulf, to pull together a coalition for the next war against Iraq.

At the same time, Washington announced that Anthony Zinni would be travelling to the Middle East, in an effort to broker a cease-fire between the Palestinians and Israelis, in a conflict which had reached unprecedented levels of violence. With Israeli aggression at its current levels, Arab nations’ tolerance of American aggression against Iraq, is impossible.

On March 11, the White House announced that Bush would travel in May, not only to Russia, but also to Germany and to France, where he would spend Memorial Day in a highly symbolic visit to the Normandy beaches. He will also have a summit meeting with British Prime Minister Tony Blair in April. Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill has also been deployed to the region, for important talks in Saudi Arabia.

An Unworkable Quid Pro Quo

The stage was set for a campaign against Iraq, in the sessions of the UN Security Council and Sanctions Committee, in New York in the week of March 4. U.S. Ambassador John Negroponte presented “classified intelligence material” which allegedly proves that Iraq is developing weapons of mass destruction. Reportedly he showed photos of trucks used by the Iraqis in the UN “Food for Oil” program, which he said were being converted into missile launchers. (This claim was publicly ridiculed by veteran UN arms inspector in Iraq, the American Scott Ritter, at forums in Washington.) Negroponte

was strongly supported by British UN Ambassador Sir Jeremy Greenstock, while back in London, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw wrote an article for the London *Times* on March 5, warning of the growing “nuclear weapons threat” from Iraq, and echoing Prime Minister Blair’s stated promise, that Britain would soon be releasing a dossier, on this “threat.”

Cheney began his tour with a visit to London on March 11, during which Prime Minister Blair pledged his support; then went on to the Middle East. Zinni arrived on March 14. The timing was part of a coordinated thrust: Zinni’s mission was to calm down the situation, so as to signal to the Arabs that Washington was finally doing something to stop the escalation, thus enabling Cheney to pressure the same Arabs to join the coalition against Iraq.

As Nathan Guttman of Israel’s daily *Ha’aretz* wrote on March 8, commenting on some critical tones coming from the administration against Sharon: “Another factor that prompted Powell’s criticism was Vice President Dick Cheney’s upcoming visit to the region. Cheney is coming to persuade Arab states to support a U.S. strike against Iraq—and that will be difficult to do if the television screens are full of nightly broadcasts of Palestinian suffering.” On March 12, the United Nations Security Council voted unanimously for a resolution calling for a “vision of a region where two states, Israel and Palestine, live side by side, within secure and recognized borders.” One leading Russian strategic analyst told *EIR* this was “strictly a move to cover the Israeli flank, as part of the preparations for war against Iraq are made. You can’t start a war against Iraq, until the horrifying violence between Palestinians and Israelis is calmed down.”

No Coalition Now

That the U.S. government’s aim is to prepare the war, was made clear in President Bush’s speech on March 11, and in a press conference on March 13. Bush’s *leitmotif* was that other nations had to accept U.S. determination to go after Iraq for its alleged determination to possess weapons of mass destruction. Bush said, “Every nation in our coalition must take seriously the growing threat of terror on a catastrophic scale—terror armed with biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons. America is now consulting with friends and allies about this greatest of dangers, and we’re determined to confront it.” In his remarks to the press, his first such press conference in five months, Bush went a step further, saying, “All options are on the table,” including nuclear weapons, “because we want to make it very clear to nations that you will not threaten the United States or use weapons of mass destruction against us or our allies or our friends.”

That Iraq was the case in point, was also explicit: “One thing I will not allow is a nation such as Iraq to threaten our very future by developing weapons of mass destruction.”

Cheney echoed Bush’s words almost verbatim. In a joint press conference with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, he declined to say whether they had discussed an attack against



Economic Monkey Wrench?

This would throw a monkey wrench into the current U.S. plan for a build-up to war. That plan now, is to introduce the inspections issue formally at the UN in May, when it comes up for review. An ultimatum will be presented to Baghdad, with the assumption that it will be rejected. Various diplomatic gestures will be made; then, in early Summer, it will be said that all such efforts have failed, and therefore war is necessary. The fact that France will have elections in April-May, and Germany in September, means Washington can count on the Europeans' being somewhat paralyzed. Considering weather conditions in Iraq, and

the scheduled mid-term elections in the United States in November, it is likely that the war plans may be set for September-October.

However there are, again, powerful factions in the United States and Britain who want war much sooner; just as there is growing opposition to the war in both countries. Lyndon LaRouche and his movement have become the hope of the entire Middle East, to somehow throw both the Iraq war and Israel's fascist aggression off the track. LaRouche says that above all, the oncoming economic crash is the "monkey wrench" in the war plans—even though it is, paradoxically, the most powerful factor driving the Brzezinski faction to a global religious war calculation.

It is an open secret that the United States is committed to do everything possible, to ensure that Iraq *not* comply with UN inspectors. A senior official in Cheney's office said, prior to his departure for his tour, that "the question of inspectors is secondary," and firmly rejected "the notion that an inspection regime solves the problem." Cheney himself went on record saying that any inspectors would have to be allowed total access, "everywhere and all the time." In short, the inspections issue is a ruse, and will be exploited merely to establish the pretext for war.

However, were Iraq to respond out of profile, a new situation could emerge, creating the need for new ideas in Washington.

Baghdad, but acknowledged that they talked about "the threat that weapons of mass destruction pose to all of us." He added, "Our next objective is to prevent terrorists, and regimes that sponsor terror, from threatening America or our friends and allies with weapons of mass destruction." Finally, "The United States will not permit the forces of terror to gain the tools of genocide."

The welcome Cheney received was not what he might have expected. In Jordan, his first stop, King Abdallah II told him outright, that he opposed any plan to attack Iraq, as it would undermine the anti-terrorism war, and destabilize the region. Abdallah urged the United States to address whatever problems there may with Iraq, through diplomatic and peaceful means. The Jordanian foreign minister added that Iraq's territorial integrity must be safeguarded. He pointed to the fears of violent repercussions of such a war inside Jordan, where over half the population is Palestinian. Furthermore, he pointed out that, were Iraq under siege, Jordan would have to pay \$500 million for alternative supplies of the oil it receives from Baghdad—money it does not have.

Egyptian President Mubarak told Cheney much the same thing on his next stop. Egypt is opposed to any American plan to overthrow Saddam Hussein, and is committed "to maintain the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq . . . to preserve regional stability." Mubarak introduced another element, of potentially decisive significance. He said he thought Saddam Hussein should be given the opportunity to comply with UN resolutions regarding inspectors. "And I think," he added, "as far as my knowledge is, that he is going to accept the inspectors." UN General Secretary Kofi Annan had met a week earlier with Iraqi Foreign Minister Naji Sabri, in what were characterized as constructive talks, about the inspections regime. Mubarak was intimating that Baghdad might surprise the UN and United States, by complying.

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