

Chicken-Hawks Squawk For Iran 'Liberation'

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Although reports confirm the analysis of Lyndon LaRouche, that the Iraq War would turn into a "Vietnam in the Desert," nonetheless, the same crew of chicken-hawks in Washington, which launched the march on Baghdad, are now calling for the "liberation" of Iran. This group, led by self-proclaimed "universal fascist" Michael Ledeen, is using exactly the same "cooked" intelligence to make the case for war against Iran: The Islamic Republic of Iran, they say, is just months or years away from having a nuclear arsenal, and is courting various terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda. Furthermore, the propagandists accuse the Iranians of sabotaging Middle East peace through support for Palestinian resistance movements. Finally, they argue that Iranian "assets" are making a credible bid for power in Iraq, even fantasizing that Shi'ite groups would engineer an Iranian-style Islamic revolution there. *Ergo*: Iran must be eliminated as a factor, its government subjected to "regime change," and a puppet government put in its place.

No one should doubt the seriousness of the anti-Iran campaign, even though its loudest proponents can be certified as lunatics. Unfortunately, this group is part of the junta which has taken control over U.S. government foreign policy. The fact that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld (himself a chicken-hawk) has threatened Iran, and even President Bush himself has joined the chorus of supporters of "internal revolution," shows how far the junta's reach is.

The scenario to destabilize Iran is already operational, and is unfolding on several levels: On the ground, Iranian student demonstrations are being fuelled by U.S.-based opposition television networks, which are broadcasting propaganda for overthrowing the regime in Tehran. Lyndon LaRouche, during his June 13-18 visit to Turkey, stated categorically that these demonstrations were "the work of U.S. intelligence agents."

On the diplomatic level, the United States is targeting Iran's nuclear program, as a prelude to political, and then military action. At the June 16 meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna, the U.S. government tried, unsuccessfully, to push through a condemnation of Iran's nuclear program. The IAEA report urged Iran to sign an additional protocol to its existing international treaty agreements, to allow inspections of its nuclear facilities on short notice. Iranian President Mohammed Khatami pledged

that Iran would collaborate fully with IAEA inspections, and Iranian officials for their atomic energy organization have agreed. Russian President Vladimir Putin stated at a June 20 Kremlin news conference that Khatami had personally assured him that Iran sought no nuclear weapons, and that "the Iranian leadership is ready to fully join all protocols." Despite this, U.S. media continue to accuse Iran of becoming a nuclear power.

Enter the 'Mujahideen e-Khalq'

On another level, Washington neo-conservative think-tanks are presenting various scenarios for a military confrontation and/or a strike against Iran's nuclear facilities. According to Washington sources, the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans (OSP) is proposing that the U.S. begin covertly backing the Iranian Mujahideen e-Khalq (MKO, a.k.a. MEK), which has been on the State Department's Foreign Terrorist Organizations list since 1997. On May 20, Daniel Pipes and Patrick Clawson, from the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), published "A Terrorist U.S. Ally?" promoting U.S. collaboration with the MKO, including weapons. "In November, when the Secretary of State next decides whether or not to re-certify the MEK as a terrorist group, he should come to the sensible conclusion: That it poses no threat to the security of the United States or its citizens, and remove it from the list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations. . . . [M]aintaining the MEK as an organized group in separate camps in Iraq offers an excellent way to intimidate and gain leverage over Tehran."

The MKO, as noted in the *Washington Post* on June 21, "in its four-decade history . . . has had many identities—mass political movement in Iran, tank-equipped army-in-exile in Iraq, U.S.-designated terrorist group. Now, former members and people who watch the group say it has become essentially a cult" around Maryam Rajavi and her husband Massoud. The MKO started in the 1960s with a Marxist-Islamic profile, and, in 1971, assassinated seven U.S. military advisors to the Shah of Iran. They were part of the 1979 revolution, alongside Ayatollah Khomeini, but later distanced themselves and became enemies of the regime. Members fled to Europe, but also to Iraq, where they became a violent, armed opposition to Iran, and received political, financial, and military backing from the Saddam Hussein regime. Those remaining in Iran were jailed and many killed. Those who had fled, mostly to France and Germany, sought political refugee status.

On June 17, French authorities deployed a large police cohort to raid MKO offices, confiscating materials, including \$7 million in cash, and arresting 159. Police found evidence that the group was planning terrorist attacks against Iranian diplomatic offices in Paris and elsewhere. Maryam Rajavi and 21 others were formally charged as terrorists on June 21. Some members launched protests, that included self-immolation. The French action was intended, according to other intel-

ligence sources, to shut down the MKO activity, which the French had accurately identified as U.S.-coordinated covert anti-Iran operations in Paris. In Tehran, officials made known their intention to request that Rajavi et al. be extradited. But the mood was different in parts of Washington: Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kans.) demanded that Paris release the MKO members, in the name of human rights and freedom! He urged the French to withdraw support for Tehran.

The MKO Lobby in the U.S.A.

The key agitator for the Iran destabilization is Michael Ledeen, who has qualified himself as a “universal fascist.” Ledeen is a close associate of Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Defense Policy Board member Richard Perle, who works at the *National Review*, the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA), and the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). In the June 16 *National Review Online*, Ledeen wrote, “The Iranian Revolution, 2003,” claiming that the Iranian “revolution” is “unstoppable” now, and demanding President Bush embrace it. Last year, Ledeen wrote *The War Against the Terror Masters*, which calls for U.S. preemptive action, to change the regimes of Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, and so forth. Ledeen’s most recent ravings were carried in the June 23 *Washington Post*, in an article entitled “Iran: Back the Freedom Fighters.” In it, Ledeen proclaimed that “democratic revolution has broken out in Iran,” and demanded full U.S. backing for the student demonstrations, not only to promote “the triumph of freedom in Tehran” but also to enhance the “regional struggle” of American in the Middle East.

In 2001, Ledeen founded the Coalition for Democracy in Iran (CDI) to call for regime change in that country. With him were, among others, the ultra-imperialist former CIA Director James Woolsey, who also sits on the Defense Policy Board. CDI, as reported in the June 15 *Washington Post*, supports Brownback’s proposed “Iran Liberation Act,” similar to the one for Iraq from 1997. Brownback has presented an amendment, for \$50 million for an Iranian exile TV network to propagandize for “regime change”—the type now being beamed into Iran.

If the MKO is to play the role of the stormtroopers on the ground, roughly analogous to the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan—with terrorist attacks inside Iran—the son of the late Shah is supposed to take on the job of government leader, roughly comparable to that of Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan. Ledeen’s CDI has been urging Reza Pahlavi II to emulate Iraqi National Congress leader Ahmed Chalabi (apparently, Ledeen is blind to the farcical failure of that caper in Iraq). But whatever the model, the role carved out for the Shah is clearly that of future Iranian leader. From his residence in suburban Virginia, he has been giving international interviews, announcing his readiness to take responsibility in Tehran. Most recently, in the June 23 German daily *Die Welt*, the young Shah praised the statements by Bush and others,

for supporting the student demonstrations, which, he said, had signalled the end of the regime. He went on to define his “mission” as introducing “regime change” which brings into being a “secular, democratic government” through a nationwide referendum.

Pahlavi has no popular base whatsoever inside Iran, where he is considered a joke. However, he is no stranger to regional politics, and his leanings are decidedly in the direction of those forces most committed to destabilizing the entire Middle East. Thus, it is no wonder that Reza Pahlavi II recently met in private with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and Israel’s Iranian-born President, Moshe Katsav.

Saner Voices Speak Out

As in the case of Iraq, whether or not Iran is hit, will be decided in Washington. And there is no consensus on what to do. The Administration is at odds with itself, on how to face the alleged (but unproved) nuclear threat, while other policy-shapers are raising their voices against *any* of the scenarios in discussion. Former Assistant Secretary of State Richard Murphy, now on the New York Council on Foreign Relations, was outspoken in remarks published by the June 23 *Washington Post*: “I would like to think we could eventually find a way to pick up the Iranian and Syrian proposals for a weapons of mass destruction nuclear-free zone in the Middle East. . . . Instead, the talk is all ‘Syria, shut down your chemical weapons program,’ ‘Iran, shut down your nuclear program.’ ”

In addition, Brent Scowcroft and Lawrence Eagleburger, both leading officials of the George H.W. Bush Administration, and now president and chairman, respectively, of the Forum for International Policy, are circulating a document by former Undersecretary of State Arnold Kanter, saying: “A policy of ‘regime change’ . . . runs the risk of creating an unintended but powerful reaction, that not only unifies the contending factions and stifles debate, but also stirs an intensified Iranian nationalism that slows and undermines the very forces on which we are pinning our hopes.” Kanter proposes that the U.S.A. resume contacts established in the “6+2” group on Afghanistan (Russia, America, and Afghanistan’s neighbors) within the United Nations. “We should be open to expanding the agenda to address other issues and concerns, and should be willing to engage in a bilateral dialogue as well as in UN-sponsored meetings. We should also be willing to explore hints from some Iranian officials that were the U.S. to agree to such direct exchanges, ‘everything’ would be on the table.”

LaRouche cited Scowcroft and Eagleburger, in his discussions in Turkey, as influential persons who are currently challenging the control of the junta over U.S. foreign policy. LaRouche’s own role in shaping U.S. policy towards Iran is fundamental, as his Turkish hosts and interlocutors, as well as leading figures in the Arab world, have acknowledged.