

Congress Takes First Steps Toward Curbing Cheney

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Scarcely two weeks have passed since the 110th Congress was sworn in, and already battle lines have been sharply drawn between the legislative branch and the embattled Bush-Cheney White House. And, as forecast by Lyndon LaRouche in his Jan. 11 Washington webcast, increasingly, Republicans are joining with their Democratic counterparts to challenge the permanent war dogmas of Bush-Cheney, and the words “double impeachment” are being heard around the Capitol.

Although the impulse for bipartisan cooperation in opposition to the escalation of conflict in Southwest Asia was already a critical theme, President George Bush’s Jan. 10 televised address, announcing the details of his proposed “surge” in ground forces into Iraq, vastly accelerated the revolt against what was widely seen as an unprovoked declaration of preventive war against Iran, and a violent repudiation of the Iraq Study Group report. This report had been released in early December 2006 by a bipartisan group co-chaired by former Secretary of State James Baker III and former House Foreign Relations Committee chairman Lee Hamilton, now head of the Woodrow Wilson Center. The Baker-Hamilton report called for the Bush Administration to begin diplomatic talks with both Iran and Syria, to finalize a just two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict, and to set a clear timetable for the withdrawal of American occupation forces from Iraq.

Long before the Jan. 10 Bush speech, it was known that the White House, taking its lead from Vice President Dick Cheney, had rejected the Baker-Hamilton recommendations. And most of the details of the proposed increase in U.S. troop strength in Iraq by 21,000 soldiers were also known. But sources in Washington confirmed to *EIR* that the President’s harsh rhetoric against Iran and Syria, combined with U.S. action on the ground, made lawmakers suddenly realize that LaRouche was right in warning that the Bush-Cheney Admin-

istration was hell-bent on military confrontation with Tehran and Damascus before leaving office.

Congress Begins To Act

A number of new laws and Congressional resolutions was introduced over the week after Bush’s disastrous Jan. 10 address to the nation, all aimed at denying the White House the authority to escalate.

Among the leading Congressional actions to date are:

- A bipartisan Senate bill to voice opposition to Bush’s surge policy, co-sponsored by Joseph Biden (D-Del.), chairman of Senate Foreign Relations Committee; Carl Levin (D-Mich.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee; and Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.), a decorated Vietnam veteran and possible Republican Presidential candidate. At least one other Republican Senator, Olympia Snowe (Me.) is also expected to sign on.

- A bill by Sen. John Warner (R-Va.), former chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and a U.S. Secretary of the Navy under President Ronald Reagan, that would endorse the Iraq Study Group recommendations. It is anticipated that this resolution will get widespread bipartisan support, including among Republican lawmakers who are afraid to make an outright break with the White House. Back in 2005, Senator Warner had joined with Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.) and a dozen other Senators, to defeat Vice President Cheney’s efforts to strip the Senate of much of its Constitutional power.

- A bill introduced by Rep. Walter Jones (R-N.C.), demanding that the Bush Administration go to Congress for permission before taking any kind of military action against Iran.

- A bill sponsored by the Progressive Caucus in the House, repealing outright the Congressional authorization for the use of force in Iraq, and providing funding for the with-



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Senators Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.) (left) and Joe Biden (D-Del.) are part of a group of Senators proposing a resolution stating that it is not in the national interest to deepen U.S. military involvement in Iraq. They call for engaging the nations of the Mideast to develop a regionally sponsored peace and reconciliation process.

drawal of all American troops within six months.

- A bipartisan House bill, sponsored by Rep. Wayne Gilchrist (R-Md.), stating that “an increase in American troop levels cannot resolve this conflict,” and endorsing the Baker-Hamilton call for diplomatic initiatives with Iran and Syria.

- A series of Senate bills, sponsored by Sens. Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.), Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) and others, to cap the number of American troops in Iraq at the current level of 130,000—thus stopping the Bush “surge.”

According to one military commentator, Col. Patrick Lang, former head of Defense Intelligence for the Middle East, if the Bush-Cheney White House goes ahead with the deployment of additional military forces in defiance of the will of the Congress, the President and the Vice President will be walking into an “impeachment trap.” Such a trap is exactly what Lyndon LaRouche demanded in his Jan. 11 webcast. LaRouche warned that the only way to avoid an expanded war, likely to last for generations, is to dump Cheney from the Bush Administration immediately.

Three Paths to Impeachment

There are at least three pathways to Cheney’s rapid removal from office. First, President Bush could conclude—under prodding from his father and other “Bush 41” allies—that Cheney is the biggest obstacle to a Presidential legacy. Bush Sr., White House political advisor Karl Rove, and other Bush family loyalists are deeply upset that, as of this moment, George W. Bush will go down in history as one of the worst American Presidents to ever hold office. With less than two years left in his Presidency, Bush is going to have to take

drastic remedial action to create even a modest legacy. On Dec. 31, 2006, *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof wrote a series of ten recommendations to the President on how to create a viable legacy. He urged Bush not only to embrace the Baker-Hamilton recommendations, but also to fire Dick Cheney right away, because Cheney was a magnet for hatred of his Administration, and only by removing him from office and replacing him with a more popular and competent Vice President could Bush hope to win back some public support.

Second, the U.S. Congress can prioritize oversight hearings that get at the crimes of Cheney. Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.), the new chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, has already prepared a report, itemizing 23 separate felony crimes committed by Cheney and Bush, in their first six years in office. Now that Democrats hold a majority in both the House and the Senate, the committees can subpoena witnesses and documents that were hidden for the past six years. Among the Cheney crimes already under probe are the fabrication of pre-war intelligence, to convince Congress to authorize the use of force against Iraq; violations of the U.S. Constitution by spying on American citizens; violations of the Geneva Conventions that ban torture of prisoners; and



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Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) (left) has introduced a resolution to restrict funding for the increase of troops in Iraq until President Bush gets Congressional approval. Chairman of the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee Rep. John Murtha (right) has reintroduced his 2005 resolution calling for a phased withdrawal from Iraq. It now has 87 co-sponsors.

lying to Congress about his ties to Halliburton, the corporation he once headed, which has received tens of billions of dollars in government contracts.

Third, Independent Counsel Patrick Fitzgerald can nail Cheney, for his role in the leaking of classified information about CIA agents to journalists. Fitzgerald was appointed in December 2003 to investigate which top White House officials were responsible for leaking the identity of CIA undercover officer Valerie Plame Wilson, wife of former Amb. Joseph Wilson. It is a Federal crime to identify an undercover CIA officer, and Cheney's former chief of staff, Lewis Libby, is now on trial for his role in that crime. Libby is charged with lying to a Federal grand jury. His lawyers have announced that they plan to call Dick Cheney as a defense witness, and this will afford Fitzgerald a unique opportunity to interrogate the Vice President, under oath, about his role in the Plame Wilson leak. If Cheney's role in that crime is revealed publicly, there will be a groundswell demand for his removal from office.

Any or all of these actions could remove Cheney from his position of power, and this would be a revolution in American politics—one that is vital at this moment.

Capital Budgeting

While recent surveys of American voters show that the Iraq war is the burning issue on the minds of most citizens, there is also grave concern about the collapse of the U.S. economy, the loss of decent-paying jobs, the looming blowout of the real estate hyperinflationary bubble, and other economic and financial crises. In response to inquiries from leading Congressional Democrats, Lyndon LaRouche wrote a policy document, "The Lost Art of Capital Budgeting," which has been circulating among Congressional offices for the past two weeks. In that document, LaRouche calls on Congress to return to former practices of massive investment in infrastructure growth, by the issuance of long-term, low-interest government credits. LaRouche argued that such long-term investment always generates more wealth and more revenue for the Federal government than is invested, while at the same time creating decent paying jobs in the manufacturing and construction sectors, and creating the conditions for overall physical-economic expansion.

LaRouche's proposal is being studied by scores of Congressional offices, and a LaRouche-commissioned bill, the Economic Recovery Act, to save the U.S. automobile manufacturing sector from total collapse, is likely to be debated soon as part of Congressional hearings on the real state of the U.S. economy. Mirroring LaRouche's capital budgeting call, this week, Sens. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) and Trent Lott (R-Miss.) reintroduced a bill to spend billions of dollars to expand America's collapsed national railroad infrastructure. Although modest in scale, the bill does represent a bipartisan impulse among senior lawmakers to tackle the issue of the economic crash—a sign of more such efforts to come.