

Cheney's New Cold War Drive Flops in Kazakhstan

by Jeffrey Steinberg

What if you launched a new Cold War and nobody came? That pretty much sums up Vice President Dick Cheney's week-long trip to the Baltic states and Central Asia in early May. At every stop, Cheney delivered a string of personal, provocative attacks against Russian President Vladimir Putin, charging that Russia had reverted back to its totalitarian Soviet-era roots, and was using its vast energy reserves to blackmail its neighbors, along with Western Europe and the United States. Cheney all but labelled the Moscow-Tehran collaboration as the "new axis of evil."

Cheney's tough-guy rhetoric, however, largely fell on deaf ears. Perhaps it was the Veep's own plunging approval ratings back at home—last clocked at 18% and shrinking. Perhaps it was Cheney's own reputation for pushing totalitarian measures, like prisoner renditions, torture interrogations, and spying on American citizens at home. If there is a dyed-in-the-wool totalitarian in the house, his name is Dick.

As one senior U.S. spook put it: "You can't separate the message from the messenger, and Dick Cheney has no credibility anywhere around the world. Bush wasn't about to deliver this kind of tough-language message. Condi Rice is busy working with her Russian counterpart, in trying to salvage talks with Iran over their nuclear program. The only alternative to Cheney would have been Rumsfeld, and that would have been even more disastrous. There is not exactly a deep bench of talent in the Bush Administration these days."

To make matters even worse for Cheney, the day he landed back in Washington, Bush chastized him publicly for saying nasty things about his "friend" Vladimir. Bush actually offered a mini-civics lesson: You don't conduct diplomacy by making personal attacks on heads of state. Asked about Cheney's conduct, in an interview with Germany's ARD TV on May 7, Bush replied, "If I stand up and constantly criticize Putin publicly, he's not going to be interested in listening to

what I have to say, and neither would I. When somebody feels like they can lecture to me publicly . . . I may not be interested in listening to them."

While Cheney's Baltic and Central Asian trip was one long string of diplomatic missteps and failed efforts to lure Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan into an anti-Moscow energy alliance with Ukraine and Georgia, Lyndon LaRouche warned that Cheney's clear intention to trigger a new Cold War chill with Moscow does represent a danger.

"President Bush is out of control," LaRouche said on May 11. "If Cheney is removed from office, that problem can be handled. But with Cheney running loose, stripped of much of his power, committing one blunder after another, but getting more and more desperate—that is a dangerous combination." LaRouche's solution: Dump Cheney from office now!

Stay Tuned for Rovegate

Adding to the climate of desperation around 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. is the anticipation of new action by Special Counsel Patrick Fitzgerald. As this issue of *EIR* goes to press, there is widespread expectation that senior White House political advisor Karl Rove is about to be indicted for his role in the Valerie Plame Wilson leak. Cheney's former chief of staff and top national security aide, Lewis "Scooter" Libby, is awaiting trial in early 2007 on perjury and obstruction of justice charges, stemming from the Wilson leak and the White House cover-up that followed.

Last month, Rove made one more appearance before Fitzgerald's Federal grand jury, and sources close to the case report that Special Council Fitzgerald grilled him on the contents of 250 pages of White House and Office of the Vice President e-mails that were first "discovered" in February. The sources say that a bill of indictment against Rove has already been drafted, and his final grand jury

appearance was to determine whether additional charges would be included.

A senior U.S. intelligence official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that a Rove indictment would devastate the Bush-Cheney White House. It would be universally read as an institutional repudiation of the entire Bush-Cheney Presidency. What is less clear, according to the source, is what impact a Rove indictment would have on Cheney's efforts to hold on to his job.

On the one hand, a Rove indictment would mean that a second trial of a top White House official would take place, centered on Cheney's role in the Plame Wilson leak. On the other hand, sources say that Rove is part of a growing White House faction that is convinced that Cheney must be forced to quit—for the good of the President and the good of the Republican Party. The GOP leadership is terrified that the November midterm elections will be a political massacre, the equivalent of the 1994 Gingrich Revolution that swept the Democrats out of the Congressional leadership for a decade. Cheney has become the poster boy for all the failed policies that threaten the GOP with political extinction; dumping the Vice now is seen by a growing chorus of party insiders as the long-overdue first step to salvaging the midterm elections and preparing for 2008.

All of these Byzantine White House maneuverings occur, as LaRouche repeatedly has observed, against the backdrop of a global financial and economic disaster—which throws off all political calculators and calendars, and could be the factor that sinks both Bush and Cheney.

New Rumbblings on Iran Attack

One tempting option for Cheney and Rumsfeld would be to launch the long-mooted air strikes against Iran's alleged nuclear weapons research sites. On May 12, Col. Sam Gardiner (USAF-ret.) warned that the combination of covert U.S.-backed irregular warfare operations on the ground in Iran and movements of U.S. aircraft carrier groups in the Persian Gulf region suggest the possibility of U.S. military action in June. "I would expect two or three aircraft carriers would be moved into the area. . . . I would expect the B-2s, the main firepower asset, to be flown on missions directly from the United States. I would expect B-52s to be flown in air strikes from the U.K. and Diego Garcia. Finally, a large number of cruise missiles would be fired from the carrier support ships."

Gardiner told *TheRawStory's* Larisa Alexandrovna that the initial bombing campaign could be conducted over a one-to three-day period. "Most of the strikes would be at night. The Iranian nuclear facilities will be targeted; more important however, a major effort would focus on Iran's capability to retaliate. The U.S. will target missile facilities, air bases, and naval assets. After the initial effort," he concluded, "there will be a pause during which time the Iranians will be told that if they retaliate, the air strikes would continue."

A well-placed Arab source has told *EIR* that Iranian asymmetric warfare assets, such as the Hezbollah in Lebanon,



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would be dealt with by direct military strikes as well—by Israel. According to the source, Israel would be given the green light to launch massive ground and air strikes into southern Lebanon, and could launch additional strikes against Syrian targets, were Damascus to take any steps to defend Hezbollah.

EIR also continues to receive confirmation that the Rumsfeld Pentagon is conducting illegal covert operations on the ground inside Iran today, and that this has the full backing of Cheney. Although there are differences of opinion over the size and scope of the operations, U.S. intelligence sources have confirmed that there are American-backed teams inside border regions of Iran near Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Azerbaijan. These teams have been conducting sabotage and ambush operations, as well as reconnaissance. The Mujahideen e-Khalq (MEK), an Iranian exile group formerly backed by Saddam Hussein and still on the U.S. State Department's list of international terrorist organizations, has been an active component of the covert actions backed by Cheney and Rumsfeld. There are even reports that recent activities by the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) inside Iran are being backed by the Bush-Cheney Administration.

If the circle of close advisors to President Bush thinks that these shenanigans in Iran could divert attention away from Bush's fast-sinking Presidency, they are dead wrong. For President Bush, the only pathway to political survival is to dump Cheney now. It will certainly make his friend Vladimir Putin more optimistic about their July summit get-together.