

Dick Cheney's Journey of Failures to Southwest Asia

by Hussein Askary

"He returned with only Hunain's shoes!"
—Arabic proverb

The background story of this classical Arabic proverb, dating back to the Eighth or Ninth Century's Islamic renaissance, is that a brutish and vulgar nomad went to a city in Hira to do some shopping for his family and tribe. In the marketplace, he saw a nice pair of shoes in the shop of the famous shoemaker Hunain. The nomad started bargaining with Hunain in an unpleasant manner, using harsh words. Hunain got angry and refused to sell the shoes to the nomad, who consequently started swearing and throwing very harsh and vulgar insults at Hunain. Therefore, Hunain decided to give the brute a lesson. As the nomad was on his way home, back to the desert, Hunain placed one of the shoes on the road, and the second some distance from the first, and waited there in hiding. When the nomad saw the first shoe, he said to himself: "Oh, how nice it is! It looks like one of Hunain's shoes. But I have no use for a single shoe." He threw it on the roadside and continued. A few minutes later, he found the other shoe. So he left his camel and goods and ran back to pick up the first shoe. In the meantime, Hunain took the camel and goods and headed back to the city. When the nomad came home to his family and tribe, they asked him, "What did you bring us from the city?" He replied, "Only Hunain's shoes!"

The reader of this report should be forewarned that, at the current moment, the Arab nations are unable to prevent or stop a potential U.S.-British-Israeli military strike against Iran. They are not powerful enough, united enough, nor farsighted enough for such an historic endeavor.

The purpose of this report is to give the American people and policymakers a picture of the emotions legitimately percolating in the Arab world, especially among traditional U.S. allies and friends. The thuggish crimes and behavior of Vice President Dick Cheney personally and the neo-con-dominated White House of George W. Bush have created such a politically and militarily explosive situation inside these countries, that its leaders are saying: "With such friends, who needs enemies?"

Before Arrival, 'Impeach Cheney!'

Even before Cheney started his tour of the region on May 9, it was widely anticipated that the tour would become a

colossal failure for the Cheney-Bush Administration's drive to enlist the countries of the region in an alliance with the U.S.A. and Israel in a new war in the region, this time against Iran. Cheney visited Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt.

That real purpose of Cheney's visit this time, as well as his visit in November 2006, was exposed in the region first by *EIR*. Days before Cheney arrived, dailies in Saudi Arabia, the U.A.E., Jordan, and other Arabic-language press launched a massive attack on Cheney, and exposed the intentions behind this tour, i.e., to create a sectarian "Sunni" alliance, with Israel and the United States, against "Shi'ite" Iran, and not to find a solution to the disasters created by Cheney in Iraq. What was more disturbing to the Arab nations, was that Cheney announced that he was not going to discuss the revival of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, a key issue for all Arab nations.

On May 7 and 8, the Saudi daily *Al-Hayat* published columns by Jihad al-Khazen, its former editor-in chief and owner. "I've read that Vice President Dick Cheney is visiting us, and I call on all Arab leaders to decline to receive him. I hope that the Arab leaders would read the following," stated al-Khazen. He listed all the lies used by this "war-party kingpin" to get the United States into war in Iraq, and asserted that, "the U.S. Administration did not commit any mistake in its information about Iraq; it lied intentionally."

Al-Khazen referenced former CIA director George Tenet's new book as further proof of Cheney's leadership of the war-mongering operations in the White House. "Cheney is such a shameless person, that he dodged serving in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War five times, but now is sending young Americans to die in Iraq," he wrote.

In conclusion, al-Khazen cited former American Democratic Presidential candidate George McGovern as saying in a recent article that "Cheney and Bush committed more serious impeachable offenses than Nixon and his Administration did, and I expect that Cheney and Bush will be forced to resign before 2008."

"I don't expect that, but I demand it, hope for it, and live for it," concluded al-Khazen. The following day, al-Khazen called on Arab leaders in *Al-Hayat*: "Please do not receive this man. His hands are stained with the blood of millions of Iraqis."



Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class John Hyde

Vice President Cheney aboard the USS John C. Stennis in the Arabian Gulf on May 11. Though still a guest of the United Arab Emirates, he used the occasion to threaten Iran, in violation of the sovereignty of his hosts.

The Jordanian dailies *Addustour* and *Al-Rai*, with close ties to the government, both editorialized against Cheney's intentions. *Addustour* called him "a dangerous, wounded predator," and said that he was behind the war plans against Iraq. It emphasized that "Cheney visited the region before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and again before the Israeli invasion of Lebanon last Summer, and the same Cheney is visiting the region now again. This is not so strange, because whenever the vultures hover around, there is blood and victims on the ground."

Addustour also blasted Cheney's description of the "moderate Arab states" (the Persian Gulf states, Jordan, and Egypt), and stressed that this is Cheney's intended "sectarian Sunni alliance" against Iran.

Al-Rai warned Cheney not "to harbor illusions about Arab support for war against Iran."

The U.A.E. dailies *Al-Bayan* and *Al-Khaleej* attacked Cheney's role in the U.S. policy disasters in Iraq and Palestine. *Al-Khaleej* called Cheney's tour "A Journey of Failures." The U.A.E. daily concluded: "After having bloodied the Iraqi nation and destroyed their country, this man has only one right choice to make, and that is to listen to the demands of all the people of the world: The time for a timetable for withdrawal has come."

Failure From Day One

Indeed, Cheney's visit was paved with failures all along. As soon as he arrived in Iraq, on a surprise visit (which vio-

lated Iraq's national sovereignty), a massive explosion took place in the Kurdish city of Erbil, claiming the lives of 60 people. As Cheney was meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Noori al-Maliki, on May 9, Katyusha rockets rocked the government's Green Zone, and thousands of Iraqi's demonstrated in Baghdad, Najaf, Karbala, and other cities. Their banners called Cheney a "terrorist leader" and "filth which is staining our land." The day after Cheney left, a majority of Iraqi parliamentarians responded to Cheney's orders on how to stabilize the situation in Iraq, by signing a petition calling for an end of the U.S. occupation of Iraq and a timetable for withdrawal of U.S. troops. This was the first such dramatic move in

the Iraqi parliament since the invasion in March 2003.

During his short visit to the U.A.E., Cheney was coldly received, and told that that state and the other Gulf countries wanted to have peace with Iran and a diplomatic resolution of the nuclear issue. On May 12, Cheney, while still an official guest of the U.A.E., issued a threat to Iran from aboard the U.S. aircraft carrier *USS John C. Stennis*. Through this act, he even violated the sovereignty of his hosts.

Reports in the Arabic press cited U.A.E. officials as saying that Cheney demanded that the U.A.E. remove all Iranian companies operating in the Emirates. Cheney's demands were swiftly rejected. The trade between the U.A.E. and Iran amounts to \$10 billion annually. As many as 500,000 Iranians work in or regularly visit the U.A.E. for business. There are 8,050 Iranian companies registered in Dubai. Furthermore, Dubai, with its modern ports, is the transshipment hub for goods from Asia, Africa, and Western Europe to Central Asia, through Iran's Bandar Abbas port and railway system.

A few hours after Cheney left the U.A.E., the state was preparing for an historic visit by Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad, the first visit of an Iranian President since 1979. The U.A.E. and Iranian officials stressed the importance of peace and dialogue in the Gulf, and the Iranian President reportedly made a groundbreaking announcement to the Emirati leaders that Iran was ready to share the administration of the three islands of Amu Musa, Greater and Lesser Tunb, in the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz. The three islands have been disputed by the two countries, which has been and a

source of mistrust and tension, since the British Empire, which was occupying the Emirates, manipulated this issue in 1971, by allowing the Shah of Iran to take over the three islands. The Arabic press called Ahmedinejad's offer "a great gift to the Arab Gulf states"—which had a summit meeting the same week—and a gesture of goodwill and peace. Likewise, the U.A.E. had released 12 Iranian sailors who were arrested earlier by the Emirati coast guard, also a gesture of goodwill on the eve of Ahmedinejad's visit.

In the last part of his tour to Southwest Asia, Cheney was told by the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to avoid a confrontation with Iran and seek a political solution for the Iranian nuclear program issue. At the same time, Mubarak urged Cheney to focus on the central issue in the region, which is the Israeli-Arab peace process.

The Egyptian official daily *Al-Ahram* published a lead editorial on May 15 stating, "Egypt's clear and unequivocal stance on how to bring down the tension in the region and finding a solution to the hot crisis spots in the Middle East, was delivered in President Mubarak's talks with U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney on Sunday."

Al-Ahram defined three points stressed by Mubarak: 1) The Palestinian issue is the key to dealing with the other crises in the region. The Arab peace initiative does not need more clarification; 2) a solution in Iraq will depend on national reconciliation among the Iraqis themselves; 3) Mubarak warned Vice President Cheney against any military confrontation with Iran around the Iranian nuclear program. If such a military confrontation takes place, it would have "dangerous consequences for the whole region."

Al-Ahram welcomed the possibility for U.S.-Iranian talks, even if they are limited to the Iraqi crisis.

Official Rejection of Cheney's War

Just one day after Cheney ended his tour, the leaders of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) held a summit meeting in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, on May 15, to discuss the aftermath of U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney's and Iranian President Ahmedinejad's visits to the region.

The General Secretary of the GCC, Abdulrahman Al-Atiya, who read the final statement to the press after the summit meeting, stated: "The leaders of the GCC discussed the details of the visit by U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney to the region, and were thoroughly briefed by the leaders of the United Arab Emirates and Oman about their discussions with Iranian President Ahmedinejad." The final statement called for "the necessity of finding a peaceful solution [to the Iranian nuclear program issue] which would spare the region more tension." Al-Atiya told the press that "the six leaders discussed the dangers posed by a military strike against Iran," and emphasized that "the summit renewed its commitment to the principled position of the GCC that it would not support a military strike against Iran."

Al-Atiya, who did not disclose details of the briefing given by the leaders of the U.A.E. and Oman to the summit about their talks with the Iranian President, said that Ahmedinejad's visit was "focused on Iran's desire to develop friendly and fraternal relations with the Gulf states." He emphasized that the leaders of the GCC "expressed their hope that the Iranian President's visit, which was an historic one, would contribute to easing the tension between the U.A.E. and Iran concerning the dispute over the three islands in the Gulf." He also stressed that "the leaders of the GCC expressed their hope that the U.S. and Iran would use their coming talks [in Iraq] to reach objectives that would enhance security and stability in the region."

The GCC includes Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the U.A.E., and Oman, all U.S. allies with facilities hosting American Air Force and Marine bases.

Al-Atiya described the U.S. presence in Iraq as "illegal occupation." When asked by reporters why he had used this description, he replied: "What is happening in Iraq now was described by King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz [of Saudi Arabia] in the last Arab summit as an illegal occupation, and it is this which has brought Iraq to this terrible crisis and all its consequences."

In Egypt, the former editor-in-chief of the official Egyptian daily *Al-Ahram*, Ibrahim Nafie, who is a close contact of President Hosni Mubarak, signed an op-ed in the same paper the day after Cheney concluded his visit to the region.

"There is no doubt left any more that the United States is fully responsible for everything happening in Iraq now: murder and mass destruction," wrote Nafie. "It was the U.S. which took the decision to invade Iraq on the basis of hollow pretexts, dissolved the Iraqi Army and government institutions, and created the vacuum which has led to the current chaos, and Iraq has become a theater for international terrorist groups which did not exist in that country during Saddam Hussein's reign."

Furthermore, Nafie charged that "the policy pursued by the U.S. Administration towards Iraq's neighbors, specifically Iran, has led to the worsening of the situation on the ground and the expansion of armed actions, killings and bombings." He argued that "Iraq has become a battle ground between the United States and regional powers that are settling their conflicts on the soil of Iraq by military means."

It is obvious that the Arab states are sick and tired of Cheney and his policy, but as the Jordanian daily *Al-Rai* put it, "Our Arab leaders are maybe polite with their foreign guests, but none of them is ready to go against their own nation's nationalist interests."

The Arabs cannot stop or overthrow Cheney. But the U.S. Congress can impeach him and put an end to the Administration which has made the republic of the United States of America the most hated "imperial" power in Southwest Asia and the world.