

# Propaganda hitmen target gullible to fork out funds for Gulf war

by Herbert Quinde

A gaggle of political “Rambozos,” many of whom served as propagandists in the “public diplomacy” apparat during the Iran-Contra fiasco, has regrouped to take the lead role as cheerleaders for Bush’s insane Persian Gulf policy. The operation is aimed at creating the phony public perception of overwhelming support for going to war against Iraq, even though national surveys demonstrate growing opposition to the policy.

The most visible group is the Coalition for America at Risk. The coalition, which is not registered with any state or federal agency, is an ad hoc group with no office or telephone number, but has purchased expensive television spots on prime time and has published full-page advertisements demanding that Bush act immediately to obliterate Saddam Hussein and Iraq.

The group is sponsoring a massive direct mail fundraising campaign aimed at spreading disinformation about the Gulf crisis among conservative and moderate political layers who are otherwise beginning to “smell a rat” in Bush’s push for a “New World Order.” The group was “organized in an attempt to counter other conservatives, led by columnist Patrick Buchanan, who have questioned Bush’s policies,” reported the *Washington Post* in a recent profile of the coalition. Richard Viguerie, the impresario of right-wing direct mail campaigns, has teamed up with the public relations firm of Republican Party operative David A. Keene to coordinate the coalition’s efforts. The mailings are primarily targeted at elderly contributors who were profiled as susceptible to a simplistic “patriotic pitch.” Because this sector of the population is well known to have discretionary funds, over the past decade, it has been cynically exploited by the fast-talking fundraising warriors of the Reagan Revolution who proliferated into a multitude of single-issue groups that still drown American households with political junk mail.

## The ‘Saddam rapes (white) women’ gambit

In a fundraising letter, the coalition writes: “Much is at stake and time is critical. Gas and oil prices are skyrocketing and threaten to bring the world economy to its knees. Every

day that goes by with Saddam Hussein still terrorizing innocent Kuwaitis—every single day—more people die, more women are raped, more children are mutilated, and more threats of international terrorism are levied against the free world.” (Never mind the fact that George Bush just met personally with the world’s biggest sponsor of international terrorism, Syria’s Hafez al-Assad!) The letter asks for big contributions for their “Emergency Action Kit” which shows “you how to *fight back* and help our President stop this terrifying holocaust.” The kit includes a petition in support of President Bush, a Coalition for America at Risk membership card, samples of letters to be sent to elected representatives and local newspapers, as well as a “fact sheet” outlining Saddam Hussein’s “history of terror,” and a bumper sticker—in short, everything but a secret decoder ring.

The packet also includes a “900” phone number which gives “access to the private American Broadcast System, with up-to-date and inside reports. . . . You may call anytime to hear the latest-breaking stories from the Gulf,” states the fundraising letter. At a cost of \$2 a minute to the caller, one can hear “news” messages that are a cross between a pathetic attempt at Edward R. Murrow and Tokyo Rose. There is a choice of two phone reports. One is titled “Inside Kuwait.” The other is “Report on Operation Desert Shield,” which opens: “This is Lt. Gen. James Vaught, USA (ret.). The military buildup in the Gulf continues as more U.S. forces from Germany, the U.S., and elsewhere continue to arrive along with additional forces from participating allies. As time passes, we should continue to improve allied combined and joint war fighting ability by conducting realistic maneuvers and exercises throughout the region, thus sending a clear message to Saddam Hussein that he will not win. The allied force is becoming more capable with each passing day, and by now has most likely surpassed Iraq’s fighting capability, quantitatively and qualitatively. Hence the allied ability to execute the Nov. 29 [U.N.] mandate authorizing the use of all necessary force to cause Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait after Jan. 15, 1991 is rapidly becoming a reality. Saddam Hussein should quit now. The period between now and Jan.

15 is Saddam Hussein's last, best opportunity to save his country and himself from massive pain and destruction which will surely come if he does not comply with the U.N. mandate."

Lt. Gen. James Vaught figures as a "coalition adviser" on the letterhead, and is the former chief of U.S. special forces teams jointly deployed by the Pentagon and the CIA. Vaught was the commander of the failed Operation Desert I, the Carter administration-directed attempt to rescue U.S. hostages in Iran in 1979. The rescue failure ensured Carter's election defeat. Maj. Gen. John K. Singlaub (ret.) who ran guns to the Nicaraguan Contras with Oliver North, is another advisory board member.

The coalition is headed by Amb. Sam. H. Zakhem, the U.S. ambassador to Bahrain during the second Reagan administration. Although the coalition says its activities are financed by well-heeled contributors, sources say that the bulk of the money is provided by the exiled Kuwaiti government. Ambassador Zakhem is a political associate of the Coors beer family, which is known to fund right-wing causes.

### Conserving the secret government

Other members of the coalition include a collection of the super-right-wing fringe. Scott Stanley, former editor of the John Birch Society's *Review of the News*, is a co-chairman. Stanley is known as a bit of a "wild man," according to his friends. He was arrested for disrupting the Namibia elections in 1988 by United Nations authorities overseeing the voting. The U.S. State Department and *Wall Street Journal* came to his defense. Gary Jarmin, who says he is an "ex-Moonie," is director of the American Freedom Coalition. Aram Bakshian is a Reagan speechwriter and editor of William Buckley's *National Review*. Lynn Bouchey is the head of the Inter-American Security Council. Tony Zagotta was president of College Republicans in 1989. Benjamin Hart is founder of the Heritage Foundation's Third Generation group. The conservative group was a salon for young up-and-coming right-wingers and neo-conservatives who worked in the nation's capital. Jonathan Pollard, the jailed Israeli spy and former Naval Intelligence analyst, reportedly attended Third Generation meetings.

But it is not clear if all who figure on the coalition's letterhead have in fact agreed to lend their name to the effort. John Rees, a member of the "Get LaRouche" task force and a professional government snitch and agent provocateur, says that he does not remember authorizing his name to be used by the coalition, although he is certainly not out of his element. In an interview, he disparagingly referred to the group as the "Coalition for a War." Rees served in the public diplomacy network both as a recruiter of low-level operatives and as a spy against groups opposed to the Reagan administration's Central American policy. Rees was partly to blame for the embarrassing exposé of the FBI's illegal targeting of

the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES). The *Boston Globe* reported in March 1988 that Rees gathered "intelligence" from private right-wing groups for use as "justification" of the FBI's illegal surveillance of CISPES.

### Bulletheads, ho!

The McCarthyite tone of the coalition is prevalent throughout its activities. Even though every major military and foreign policy expert—except for Henry Kissinger and a couple of his disciples—who has testified before the Senate has opposed a military conflict with Iraq, the coalition questions the patriotism of anyone opposed to Bush's Gulf policy and denounces such people as terrorists. In its fundraising letter, it cynically writes, "I hope you will now wish to enclose your most generous contribution. Already the 'Hanoi Hundred' and other friends of terrorists have undermined our President and our troops in the field. This is *outrageous*. Just responding to the usual extremist claque—the Ramsey Clarks and the other friends of terrorists—is costing a fortune. Please help us all you can." Speaking before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Dec. 4, Ambassador Zakhem stated, "Saddam Hussein will never back down if we give him the slightest hint that the world is wavering in its resolve to get him out of Kuwait or that the United States is divided and unwilling to use its military power."

This heavy-handed manner is no surprise since the coalition knows it is fronting for the administration. Late last summer, Doug Weed, the Bush administration's public liaison to right-wing groups who were grouching about the President's "liberal" stance on many issues, left the White House. He now serves on the coalition's board. The coalition's activities cohere with the mandate of National Security Decision Directive 77, titled "Management of Public Diplomacy Relative to National Security" (SECRET), dated Jan. 14, 1983, which secretly ordered the "organization, planning, and coordination of the various aspects of public diplomacy of the United States Government relative to national security. Public diplomacy is comprised of those actions of the U.S. Government designed to generate support for our national security objectives." NSDD 77, or possibly some more recent, equivalent secret presidential order, has empowered the creation of a psychological warfare apparatus aimed at bombarding the American population with pro-war propaganda.

But the propaganda effort is not being left simply to money-grubbing ideologues. The *Washington Post* reported that the premier public relations firm Hill and Knowlton is among seven firms hired by the Kuwaiti government "with the imprimatur of the United States government" to convince Americans its cause is worth dying for. Craig L. Fuller, chief of staff when Bush was vice president, is working side-by-side with Hill and Knowlton's Vice President Robert K. Gray on the project.