

The Guns of August 2007: Cheney's Finger Is Already on the Trigger

by Jeffrey Steinberg

On July 16, the London *Guardian* reported that President Bush, under the powerful influence of Vice President Dick Cheney, has tilted in favor of military action against Iran before he leaves office. According to the *Guardian* account, a series of meetings during June and July, involving top White House, Pentagon, and State Department officials, was used by the Vice President to assert that the diplomatic track, ostensibly pressed by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Defense Secretary Robert Gates, had failed to produce any results, and that no future U.S. administration would have the courage to act militarily against Tehran. President Bush, according to the account, went along with Cheney, and once again, the prospects for a new Persian Gulf preemptive war loom large over Washington.

Highly informed sources contacted by *EIR* confirmed and elaborated on the *Guardian* leak, which came from circles close to the White House who are adamantly opposed to the prospects of an American or Israeli preventive strike against targets inside Iran. *EIR*'s sources confirmed that President Bush had, indeed, tilted back towards supporting Cheney's position that Iran's alleged nuclear weapons sites must be hit preemptively, and that one of the most persuasive arguments mounted by Cheney and his neo-con allies, is that unless the U.S. strikes against Tehran, Israel will launch an attack, and this will create an even bigger mess for Washington.

Speaking for some of Cheney's London patrons, Patrick Cronin, director of studies at London's International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), a leading Anglo-American think tank, is quoted by the *Guardian*: "Cheney has limited capital left, but if he wanted to use all his capital on this one issue, he could still have an impact. . . . The red line is not in Iran. The red line is in Israel. If Israel is adamant it will attack; the US will have to take decisive action. The choices are: tell Israel no, let Israel do the job, or do the job yourself."

In fact, the consensus among American military strategists is that Israel does not have the capacity to do serious damage to Iran's now widely dispersed nuclear research program—unless it were to use nuclear weapons.

The Two Liebermans

As Cheney was making his power play inside Administration circles, he was receiving back-up from "the two Liebermans." In early July, Israel's Minister of Strategic Affairs,

Avigdor Lieberman, traveled to Brussels to confer with top NATO officials, and on his return, he told Israeli Army Radio that he had won backing from the United States and Europe for preemptive strikes against Iran's nuclear sites. Lieberman, who is known among Israeli analysts as "Israel's closest thing to a National Socialist," elaborated that, if Israel were to launch air attacks against Iran's nuclear sites, NATO would join in to defend Israel in the event of Iranian retaliation. Lieberman could not have been more blunt: "We're stuck in Afghanistan, and European and American troops are wallowing in the Iraqi quagmire, which is something that is going to prevent the leaders of countries in Europe and America from deciding on the use of force to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities. Therefore," he concluded, "at the end of the day, Israel is going to have to remove the nuclear threat posed by Iran with the means at its disposal, and it won't be able to count on international cooperation." But, the Israeli minister then declared, "Europe and the U.S. will support us."

The very day that Avigdor Lieberman was threatening Israeli preemptive strikes on Iran, July 11, Sen. Joseph Lieberman (I-Conn.) introduced an amendment to the defense spending bill, demanding that U.S. intelligence agencies report to Congress every 60 days on Iran's activities inside Iraq. Although Lieberman's amendment, which contained a string of dubious or outright false claims of Iranian combat support operations against American forces in Iraq, was clearly aimed at putting the Senate on record as supporting a warlike policy against Iran, the entire Senate sheepishly voted, 97-0, in favor of the Lieberman ploy.

Lest there be any doubt that Joe Lieberman's actions were tightly coordinated with Cheney, the text of the Lieberman amendment quoted extensively from Gen. Kevin Bergner, the former top military aide to neo-con Elliott Abrams at the National Security Council, who was dispatched to Baghdad in June 2007, to conduct White House "spin control" over the war reporting. Bergner has put out a steady stream of disinformation and/or exaggerated claims of Iranian involvement in the Iraqi insurgency. Bergner's propaganda from Baghdad, according to Pentagon sources, has infuriated the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who see it as a replay of the "stovepipe" of fake intelligence, funneled from the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans to the Vice President's office, in the run-up to the Iraq invasion. This time,

there is no pretense that the war propaganda is being vetted by the Pentagon intelligence services. It is being funneled directly from Baghdad via General Bergner, directly to Cheney, Lieberman, et al., and is increasingly showing up on CNN and other news outlets.

Impeach or Remove Cheney Now

The turn toward war against Iran, coming from the “usual suspects” in Washington, must be assessed against the backdrop of the July 1-2 Kennebunkport, Maine summit meeting between President George W. Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin. The two days of discussion, hosted by former President George H.W. Bush, represented a potential strategic breakthrough in U.S.-Russian relations. President Putin proposed a long-term strategic partnership between Washington and Moscow, encompassing all of Eurasia in a security alliance, built upon Lyndon LaRouche’s original strategic defense proposal, which later became President Reagan’s SDI. Just days before Kennebunkport, former President Bill Clinton, in a speech in Yalta, Ukraine, had also signed on to the proposal, indicating a powerful intervention by the institution of the U.S. Presidency—along with that of the Russian Presidency—to avoid war in Eurasia for decades to come.

It was in response to that initiative that Cheney made his move, and set the United States potentially back on a course towards near-term war, a war that would soon spread from Southwest Asia to other parts of Eurasia, and ultimately lead into World War IV—pitting the United States against Russia and China.

It is for this reason that LaRouche, in a dialogue in Washington with a group of diplomats on July 19 (see transcript, p. 4), asserted that the only way to avoid war at this late date, is for Dick Cheney to be either impeached or removed from office now—before the guns of August are fired.

It was also in this context that LaRouche reiterated his message to Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.), the ostensible Democratic Party front-runner for the Presidential nomination. LaRouche called upon Clinton to take the lead in the fight to remove Cheney from office, promising that if she does so, she will be “virtually acclaimed” as the next President, by an American electorate that is overwhelmingly demanding Cheney’s ouster.

LaRouche’s message is also resonating among leading Republican circles, who fear a total wipeout in the 2008 general elections, if Cheney remains long on the job—and if the preemptive strikes against Iran take place. While some Republican Party voices, including former Reagan Justice Department official Bruce Fein, former Presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan, and retired CIA officer and *American Conservative* columnist Phil Giraldi, all have demanded Cheney’s immediate ouster to stop an Iran fiasco, GOP leaders have so far failed to come forward to confront President Bush and force Cheney’s ouster. And Congressional Demo-

crats have chosen to dodge the Cheney bullet and opt for impotent gestures, like the all-night Senate debate over Bush Administration Iraq policy, in which Cheney’s name was not mentioned once. The ultimate cowardly act was the Democratic Senate capitulation to the “Buckleyite Damn-ocrat” Joe Lieberman’s Iran war gambit. Such cowardice and opportunism, LaRouche has frequently warned, could bring about the doom of the American republic and a global “permanent war” that would engulf the planet for several generations to come.

Cheney and Bandar

While General Bergner’s “wurlitzer” continues to churn out war propaganda from Baghdad, pushing the idea of military action against Iran to “save the lives of American GIs” fighting the “Iranian-backed” insurgency in Iraq, U.S. intelligence specialists have alerted *EIR* that there is growing worry about another aspect of the Iraq insurgency. Saudi Arabia, through Prince Bandar bin Sultan, Cheney’s chief ally and the purported national security advisor to King Abdullah, has been pouring money and weapons into Sunni tribes in western Iraq, who have now emerged as what some U.S. intelligence officials brand “al-Qaeda II.” These Iraqi Wahabi networks, distinct from the bin Laden/Zawaheri “al-Qaeda in Iraq” apparatus of largely foreign fighters, have emerged in recent months as a significant element within the overall insurgency. According to these sources, “al-Qaeda II” is part of Cheney’s scheme—designed in London by the likes of Dr. Bernard Lewis—to promote a permanent Sunni versus Shi’ite conflict in the region.

This Cheney-Bandar effort, the sources warn, is one of the driving factors, provoking Iran, and fueling the prospects of a near-term explosion. Earlier in July 2007, an emissary of Prince Bandar delivered \$750,000 to the Mujahideen-e Khalq (MEK), an Iranian exile group that formerly worked for Saddam Hussein, and which is on the U.S. State Department’s international terrorist organizations (ITO) list, for having assassinated American military officers in Iran. The MEK is actively engaged in sabotage and assassination operations inside Iran—with the enthusiastic support of Washington neo-cons, typified by Daniel Pipes, who recently attended the MEK gathering outside of Paris where the Bandar money was delivered.

The U.S. Department of Justice is already investigating Prince Bandar for his role in the BAE Systems scandal, involving the \$100 billion offshore covert operations fund, established under the British-Saudi “Al-Yamamah” barter deal. At least \$2 billion in “Al-Yamamah” funds went directly to Bandar’s bank accounts in the United States, and some of those funds went to a range of Wahabi insurgencies, according to U.S. intelligence sources. One question that Justice Department investigators should take up is whether some of those funds are now going to the MEK to fuel Dick Cheney’s Iran war schemes.