

Cheney and Perle To Go Down Like Ollie North?

by Michele Steinberg

New Yorker magazine and its senior investigative reporter, Seymour Hersh, have produced a devastating exposé of the shady dealings of Defense Policy Board Chairman Richard Perle, the self-described “Prince of Darkness” who works non-stop for a war against Iraq. Even before the *New Yorker*’s March 17 issue, with Hersh’s article called “Lunch with the Chairman,” hit the newsstands, the international wires from New York, to Washington, London, Baghdad, and Tel Aviv had felt the impact of its exposé. The exposure of Perle, and questions about two other prominent Administration figures—Vice President Dick Cheney and Henry A. Kissinger—could be the very “exit strategy” needed for Iraq. But this “exit strategy” requires that Cheney, Perle, and Kissinger be ousted from any position in the U.S. government because of potential conflict of interest and profiteering.

According to Hersh’s report, Perle and two other Defense Policy Board members, Kissinger and Gerald Paul Hillman, have not only spent more than 18 months, and untold amounts of government money, making war plans against Iraq in the bowels of the Pentagon; they also created a Delaware-registered company, Trireme Partners LP, in November 2001 following the 9/11 attacks, to make a handsome profit from America’s “war on terrorism,” and even more from an Iraq war. Profiteering? Conflict of interest? These are only some of the questions. But before delving into the dark recesses of the Perle dossier, there are a couple of other elements to consider.

Kissinger Resigns

There is the case of Trireme advisor Henry Kissinger. Recall the headlines of *USA Today* and other major press on Dec. 13, 2002: “Kissinger Quits as Chairman of 9/11 Panel.” Yes, the same Henry A. Kissinger who sits on the Advisory Board of Perle’s Trireme Partners LP, which is schnooring for government anti-terrorism contracts in the hundreds of millions of dollars, had been named to head an independent commission to “investigate” the intelligence failures prior to Sept. 11. When members of Congress, and families of those who died in the Sept. 11 attacks, wanted Kissinger and the Commission members to provide financial disclosure of their clients, Kissinger balked, and feigned indignation that such a request insulted his integrity. He resigned rather than provide the requested information.

Was Trireme one of the reasons why Kissinger balked about disclosing information on his clients? According to Hersh’s article, mid-December 2002 was an intense period of negotiations for Trireme, with Perle associates Gerald Hillman and Christopher Harriman deep in negotiations with Adnan Kashoggi, the Saudi multi-millionaire who had been the Iran-Contra middleman for Ollie North. Trireme was also meeting Harb Zuhair, an Iraqi-born Saudi businessman, in an effort to get \$100 million from Saudi princes and businessmen. Kissinger’s public role might have exposed this operation.

Then, recent news about Vice President Dick Cheney’s financial ties to Halliburton present even more of an appearance of conflict of interest. According to Pacifica radio’s report in January 2003, Halliburton—the company which was headed by Cheney until the Presidential election in 2000—gave him a \$20 million golden parachute, and is making *billions* of dollars from the war on terrorism and the drive for war on Iraq—is one of the major American companies bidding on contracts for “post-war” reconstruction of Iraq. So far, \$900 million in contracts are on the line, and the figures are expected to soar into the billions if Iraq is attacked by American military “shock and awe” methods. There’s one small additional detail: Halliburton is currently paying Cheney \$1 million a year in uncollected fees (obtainable when he completes his term of office).

According to news accounts in the London *Guardian* and elsewhere, a division of Halliburton called KBR, also known by the name Kellogg Brown & Root, is doing U.S. defense and anti-terror government work “building cells for detainees at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. It feeds American troops in Uzbekistan. And near the Turkish/Iraqi border, Halliburton helps run three military bases.” In July, reported Pacifica, the *New York Times* wrote “that Halliburton is the only company that has a contract with the Army that has an unlimited budget.” The *Times* said that “KBR is the exclusive logistics supplier for both the Navy and the Army, providing services like cooking, construction, power generation, and fuel transportation. The contract recently won from the Army is for 10 years and has no lid on costs.” But Halliburton is also up to its ears in shady dealings with Enron, and with charges that it overbilled the U.S. government. It has already paid \$2 million in fines.

Thus, the heat drawn by Richard Perle’s alleged extortion attempts against two prominent Saudi businessmen, could also make things very uncomfortable for Vice President Cheney. With Perle and Cheney under scrutiny for corruption and conflict of interest, the President could seize this opportunity to follow Lyndon LaRouche’s advice and purge the chicken-hawks from his Administration.

‘Blackmailing’ the Saudi Allies

According to Hersh, on Jan. 3, 2003, Perle held a lunch meeting in Marseilles, France, with former Iran-Contra mon-



Compelling reasons have become public during March, for President Bush to seek the removal of both Vice President Richard Cheney and Defense Policy Board head Richard Perle from government, as Henry Kissinger removed himself last year—for conflict of interest. Such departure of leading chicken-hawks can open an exit strategy from a new Mideast war.

eybags Khashoggi, and the Iraqi-born Saudi businessman Zuhair. Perle's purpose was to solicit \$100 million in investments in his Trireme Partners LP. Trireme is involved in homeland security and defense contracting, and has reportedly already lined up \$45 million in investments, including \$20 million from Boeing. Among the other principals in the company besides Perle and Kissinger are Gerald Hillman, a businessman with no prior experience in military or national security affairs, whom Perle placed on the Defense Policy Board (DPB); and Chris Harriman.

Hersh conducted interviews with several Trireme officials; members (unnamed) of the DPB; Khashoggi; and Saudi Ambassador Prince Bandar. According to those interviews, late last year, Khashoggi was approached by Harriman on behalf of Trireme; and just before Christmas, Khashoggi, Zuhair, Harriman, and Hillman met in Paris. Zuhair said he had just returned from Baghdad and, apart from the business deal, was interested in brokering a peaceful solution to the Iraq crisis, by working out a deal under which Saddam Hussein would admit he had weapons of mass destruction, but would leave Iraq with his sons and some top ministers, in return for the United States calling off the invasion. Harriman penned several memos in late December 2002 to Zuhair, memorializing the proposals. According to some accounts, the memos were endorsed by Perle, the principal of the firm. This led to the Jan. 3, 2003 lunch meeting in Marseilles among Perle, Khashoggi, and Zuhair, at which—according to Khashoggi and Zuhair—Perle pushed the idea of ten Saudi businessmen each kicking in \$10 million in investments into Trireme.

Prince Bandar, the long-serving Saudi Arabian Ambassador in Washington, told Hersh he got wind of the Marseilles meeting, and the Saudi government reacted furiously. "There is a split personality to Perle," Bandar was quoted telling Hersh. "Here he is, on the one hand, trying to make a

hundred-million dollar deal; and, on the other hand, there were elements of the appearance of blackmail—'if we get in business, he'll back off on Saudi Arabia'—as I have been informed by participants in the meeting."

Prince Bandar's account of the Marseilles session is more than credible. First, Perle has a track record of mixing his personal business with his political and ideological efforts, always in support of right-wing Israeli interests. As a principal in the defense contracting firm Abbington Associates, Perle promoted Israeli and American arms sales with Turkey; and he received tens of thousands of dollars a year during the 1990s as a consultant to another arms-selling firm—headed by Doug Feith, the current Assistant Secretary of Defense for Policy and a self-avowed follower of the Zionist fascist Vladimir Jabotinsky. Perle and Feith were two of the co-authors of the 1996 "Clean Break" strategy paper delivered to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The paper was a blueprint for abrogating the Oslo Accords, premised on provoking a war against Iraq.

Second, Perle is notorious, in both Washington and Riyadh, for his sponsorship of the July 10, 2002 DPB session at which Marc Rich's employee, Laurent Murawiec, delivered a violent diatribe against the House of Saud, calling for American occupation of Saudi oil fields and carving of an independent Eastern Province puppet state. Early this year, Murawiec repeated his rant at a security conference at Hertzliya, Israel.

Since the appearance of the Hersh article, Perle has tried, desperately, to dodge the accusations, claiming, to Hersh, that he had not discussed business at the meeting. Later, on CNN Late Edition on Sunday, March 9, Perle fumed at Hersh, calling him "the closest thing in American journalism to a terrorist." Despite Perle's protestations and threats to sue Hersh, the scandal is not going away—until Richard Perle does.