

Hersh Exposé Hits Cheney Cabal Like Political Tsunami

by Jeffrey Steinberg

The Cheney-Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz cabal that runs the Bush Administration's military and national security agenda, was hit with the political equivalent of a tsunami on Jan. 17, with the publication of a story by investigative journalist Seymour Hersh in the Jan. 24-31 issue of *The New Yorker*. Hersh revealed that the Administration is working on plans to launch missile and commando attacks against as many as three dozen of Iran's suspected nuclear and chemical weapons facilities, perhaps as early as Summer 2005. While the Administration's wanna-be imperialists, led by the Vice President, fantasize that such military strikes will trigger a "velvet revolution" of Gap Jeans-wearing young Iranians, who will peacefully overthrow the mullahs, in yet another Bush-induced outbreak of spontaneous Western democracy, experts warn that such an action would deepen the grip of the Islamic Revolution, and trigger regional chaos.

In his keynote address to an international symposium in Berlin, Germany on Jan. 12 (see *Feature*), Lyndon LaRouche warned that chaos is what Cheney and his neo-con minions are out to detonate in the Persian Gulf, as part of their imperial raw-materials grab. LaRouche warned that, in the insane world of Cheney and the neo-cons, the chaos gripping Iraq does not represent a policy failure, but rather, the successful opening shot of a campaign aimed at triggering a Thirty Years' War of religious and ethnic genocide throughout the oil-rich region. If Cheney and company have their way, over the course of the second Bush Administration, much of the world will be thrown into the same Dark Age; what George Shultz and Henry Kissinger call the "post-Westphalia System."

Hit Teams and 'Pseudo-Gangs'

Hersh's story also revealed, for the first time, that President Bush, beginning in the Summer of 2002, signed a series of secret Executive Orders, giving Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld *carte blanche* to dispatch Special Forces assassination squads around the world as part of the "global war on terror" (GWOT). These teams, Hersh reported, are already operational in at least ten countries, and their activities are conducted behind the backs of Congressional oversight committees, the American ambassadors, CIA station chiefs, and defense attachés.

The transfer of paramilitary covert operations from the CIA to the Pentagon's Special Operations Command (SOCOM), and the recently established Office of Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence, according to Hersh, eliminate the requirement that the President issue a formal Intelligence Finding, and inform the appropriate Congressional bodies, before launching covert operations. In Cheney-Rumsfeld doublespeak, these covert operations are now referred to as "black reconnaissance," to further conceal the fact that these death squads are run by the Cheney-Rumsfeld cabal, with no oversight, and to reinforce the idea that they are being deployed as part of normal U.S. military deployments in support of combat operations.

American diplomats are up in arms over this scandalous violation of international law, which among other things jeopardizes the safety of American embassy officials, who will be the first targets for retaliation, now that the existence of these death squads has been revealed.

With the departures from Foggy Bottom of Secretary of

State Colin Powell and Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, both retired military officers, there is no reason to expect that Secretary of State nominee Condoleezza Rice will lift a finger to defend the integrity and safety of the U.S. diplomatic corps. It was Rice's hysterical defense of every foreign and national security policy blunder of the first four years of the Administration, that led Sens. John Kerry (D-Mass.) and Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) to vote against her confirmation, in hearings of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee on Jan. 19. Senator Boxer all but called Dr. Rice a liar, for placing the defense of the Bush Administration's indefensible pre-Iraq-war intelligence fabrications above the truth. Senator Kerry, for his part, directly cited the Hersh article and the planned military attacks on Iran in his questioning of Rice. He had just returned from a tour of Southwest Asia, which brought him to Iraq and Syria.

In his detailed *New Yorker* account of the Bush-Cheney forced march to new war and mayhem in Iran, Hersh mooted that the Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz Pentagon would also be pursuing a favorite strategy of the British Empire: the creation of controlled terrorist cells, dubbed by the famous British counterinsurgent Gen. Frank Kitson as "pseudo-gangs."

Hersh reported that one of the architects of the new Pentagon strategy, John Arquilla, a professor of defense studies at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif., had written a widely studied piece in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, which drew upon the British imperial counterinsurgency lessons from the 1950s Kenya campaign of General Kitson: "When conventional military operations and bombing failed to defeat the Mau Mau insurgency in Kenya in the 1950s," Arquilla wrote, "the British formed teams of friendly Kikuyu tribesmen who went about pretending to be terrorists. These 'pseudo-gangs,' as they were called, swiftly threw the Mau Mau on the defensive, either by befriending and then ambushing bands of fighters or by guiding bombers to the terrorists' camps. What worked in Kenya a half-century ago has a wonderful chance of undermining trust and recruitment among today's terror networks. Forming new pseudo-gangs should not be difficult."

Of course, Arquilla failed to acknowledge that such "pseudo-gang" operations have been a cornerstone of Israel's "Terror Against Terror" program, which has failed, over the past 35 years, to quell the Palestinian uprising, instead recruiting whole new generations of insurgents.

The Covert War Has Already Begun

The Hersh story made it clear that the covert war against the so-called "axis of evil" state of Iran has already begun. Indeed, in her Senate confirmation testimony, Condoleezza Rice flashed the latest Bush-Cheney propaganda slogan, dubbing Iran, North Korea, Cuba, Belarus, Zimbabwe, and Myanmar the "bridgehead of tyranny." According to the *New Yorker* account, reconnaissance teams of U.S. Special Opera-



Seymour Hersh, who broke the story last year of the Abu Ghraib prison torture, now exposes "The Coming Wars: What the Pentagon Can Now Do in Secret."

tions personnel have been working inside Iran since the Summer, and are targeting Iran's suspected nuclear weapons sites, chemical weapons sites, and missile sites, preparing for U.S. rocket attacks, bombing raids, and commando assaults.

The U.S. effort, according to Hersh, is being backed by both Pakistan and Israel. Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Doug Feith, one of the leading Pentagon neo-cons, who co-authored the 1996 "A Clean Break" geopolitical strategy paper for then-Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu—the paper which first targetted Iraq, Syria, and Iran for regime change, is coordinating the anti-Iran insurgency campaign with Israeli intelligence and military planners, according to Hersh. Furthermore, Israeli commandos have been involved already in some of the on-the-ground operations, according to the *New Yorker* story. It is, in fact, the Ariel Sharon government's policy of "preventive assassinations" that Cheney and Rumsfeld have adopted, in grabbing control over the covert paramilitary operations formerly housed in the CIA, and dispatching their own death squads to countries such as Algeria, Tunisia, Sudan, Syria, and Malaysia—five of the countries named in the Hersh story.

Feith has reportedly assembled a team of Iran-Contra veterans to join in other aspects of the anti-Iran covert program. According to *EIR*'s sources, one of the Irangate criminals tapped by Feith is self-professed "universal fascist" Michael Ledeen. Ledeen is already under investigation for his role in peddling forged documents from the African state of Niger,

which purported to show that Saddam Hussein was illegally pursuing acquisition of uranium to build a nuclear bomb. Cheney and Rice exploited the fear of Saddam possessing a nuclear bomb to ram through the Iraq invasion, with scare propaganda about “nuclear mushroom clouds.” Ledeen has been a longtime proponent of all-out war to oust the mullahs in Tehran, and has called for the United States to tap the Mujahideen el-Khalq, a group on the U.S. State Department’s list of International Terrorist Organizations, as part of the effort. In a speech at the Willard Hotel in Washington on the eve of the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, Ledeen gloated that, after Iraq, the Bush Administration would next be compelled to fight the “GWOT” battle on Iranian soil.

Promoting Terrorism

The involvement of Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in the United States’ anti-Iran covert effort, according to Hersh, comes at a very high price. The Bush Administration has reportedly agreed to drop any efforts to shut down the nuclear material black-market operations of Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan, in return for Dr. Khan’s providing information on Iran’s alleged illicit nuclear weapons program. As Hersh wrote, “It’s the neo-conservatives’ version of short-term gain at long-term cost. They want to prove that Bush is the anti-terrorism guy who can handle Iran and the nuclear threat, against the long-term goal of eliminating the black market for nuclear proliferation.”

EIR’s own sources in the intelligence community in India, who usually have a precise reading on the situation in Afghanistan, confirmed the essentials of Hersh’s account of the U.S. deal with Pakistan, but added some further disturbing details. They charge that the Bush Administration used proof that officials of Pakistan’s ISI had advance knowledge about the kidnapping and murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl, and wanted to extract Pakistani help in infiltrating Iran, through the Balochistan region of Afghanistan. In return for silence on the ISI links to Pearl’s murderers, Pakistan agreed to provide assistance in the infiltration of Iran.

The recent ouster of Ismael Khan, Governor of Afghanistan’s Herat Province, bordering Iran, was intended, the Indian intelligence sources say, to clear the way for American covert operations teams to infiltrate eastern Iran from bases in Afghanistan, including a clandestine air base just a few miles from the Iranian border. Another price that the United States has been willing to pay for the Afghan secret basing: Washington has given Pakistan the green light to reintegrate the Taliban into the Afghan government. According to Indian sources, 81 Taliban prisoners have been released in recent weeks, and 400 more are soon to be freed. All of the Talibani held in the U.S. facility at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, are also reportedly being released because they “failed to provide any useful intelligence” on al-Qaeda’s operations.

In other words, if the Hersh and Indian reports are accurate, the Bush Administration has struck a deal with one of

the world’s leading nuclear weapons black-marketeers, and with the very Taliban regime in Afghanistan which the United States ousted from power as the opening shot in the GWOT.

Behind the Hersh Revelations

The Bush-Cheney White House responded to the publication of the Hersh story with an instant series of official denials. U.S. intelligence community sources say that two aspects of the Hersh story have top White House officials—led by Dick Cheney—especially spooked. First, the story is seen as a particularly damning leak, originating from the legions of recently purged intelligence community veterans, particularly CIA veterans, who would like nothing better than to bring down the Bush-Cheney Presidency in a replay of Watergate—or worse. Second, the Hersh story was constructed in such a way that the Administration has been unable to pin down any of Hersh’s key sources.

Yet, at the same time that Team Bush was engaging in frantic damage control over the Hersh revelations, Vice President Cheney was telling TV host Don Imus that the United States and Israel are, indeed, on the verge of launching unprovoked attacks on Iran. Appearing on the “Imus in the Morning” show just hours before he and President Bush were sworn in Jan. 20, Cheney delivered an open threat to Iran: Dismantle your nuclear program or we will give Ariel Sharon the nod to bomb Iran. Using his best Orwellian prose, Cheney told Imus: “Given the fact that Iran has a stated policy that their objective is the destruction of Israel, the Israelis might well decide to act first, and let the rest of the world worry about cleaning up the diplomatic mess afterwards. . . . We don’t want a war in the Middle East, if we can avoid it.”

Even the *Washington Post*, the next day, got it right about Cheney’s invitation to Sharon to bomb Iran. Political columnist Al Kamen, reporting on Cheney’s threats that Israel “might act first” to take out the alleged Iranian nuclear and chemical weapons sites, wrote: “In June 1991, during a visit to Israel after the Persian Gulf War, then-Defense Secretary Cheney gave Maj. Gen. David Ivri, then the commander of the Israeli Air Force, a satellite photograph of the Iraqi nuclear reactor, Osirak, which the Israelis had taken out in an airstrike 10 years earlier.

“ ‘For General David Ivri,’ Cheney wrote on the photo, ‘with thanks and appreciation for the outstanding job he did on the Iraqi Nuclear Program in 1981, which made our job much easier in Desert Storm’ So was Cheney concerned? Or was this diplo-speak to the Israelis to ‘do the right thing’?”

Cheney’s Fascist Fit

Cheney’s war talk aside, the Hersh revelations, and the Democratic Party’s recently found spunk in challenging the Administration’s non-existent “mandate,” have made for some frayed nerves at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue—despite

Bush and Cheney's efforts at appearing triumphalist. Thus, for example, when Senate Judiciary Committee chairman Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) dared to publicly chastize Attorney General nominee Alberto Gonzales, for outright refusing to respond to a number of questions submitted by his Committee members, as part of the confirmation hearing process, the White House practically bit Specter's head off, demanding that he toe the White House line or face losing his chairmanship. And when the powerful GOP chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, Bill Thomas (R-Calif.), described the Bush-Cheney scheme to loot the Social Security Trust Fund by turning it over to Wall Street "private accounts," as "a dead horse," he, too, was inundated with harassing calls from top White House officials. The *New York Times* reported on Jan. 19 that Cheney is actually the driving force at the White House, pushing the Social Security ripoff, a scheme long embraced by Cheney's guru, ex-Secretary of State George Shultz.

The psychological strains have been building since the beginning of the year. According to a well-placed Republican source with close ties to the Bush Administration, Cheney nearly had a meltdown on Jan. 6. Attending a White House strategy session just hours before the historic Joint Session of Congress to ratify the Electoral College vote, the Vice President was informed that Senator Boxer had joined Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones (D-Ohio) in formally challenging the Electors in Ohio, a state that decided the outcome of the Nov. 2, 2004 election by just over 100,000 votes, amidst massive reports of voter suppression and GOP fraud, heavily implicating Ohio Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell, who also happened to chair the state Bush-Cheney re-election campaign.

According to the source, Cheney told White House attorneys that, when Boxer and Tubbs Jones formally challenged the Ohio vote, triggering mandatory two-hour debates and votes in the two Houses of Congress, he would rule them out of order and quash the debate. Shocked White House attorneys reminded Cheney that he could not unilaterally override the U.S. Constitution and the procedures set forth in an 1877 Act of Congress governing the formal process for an Electoral College challenge.

A Raging Bull

After a heated back-and-forth, the Vice President reportedly relented, and, hours later, did preside over the historic Joint Session, in his capacity as president of the U.S. Senate. As one eyewitness in the House Gallery reported, Cheney's anger at the proceeding was palpable. During the Senate vote on the Ohio vote irregularities, following two hours of historic debate, Cheney stood near the door of the Senate chambers, alone, quietly fuming. The *New York Times* the next day editorially called the debate a serious challenge to the Bush-Cheney claims of an electoral mandate.

It was a classic Cheney performance. The Vice President,

who was the architect of the Bush Administration's disastrous Iraq war, its post-9/11 doctrine of "preventive nuclear war," its mammoth tax cuts for the super-rich, the Halliburton no-bid government contracts worth billions of dollars for the Veep's old firm, and the leak of the identify of covert CIA operative Valerie Plame, has no use for the U.S. Constitution, particularly its General Welfare clause, when it stands in the way of his radical agenda. In a recent interview for The History Channel, Cheney spoke of his vision of an imperial Presidency, totally out of sync with American historical precedents. For Cheney, the Presidency encompasses absolute monarchy and papal infallibility. He candidly boasted that, as Secretary of Defense in 1990, he had urged President George H.W. Bush not to go to the Congress to seek authority, under the War Powers Act, to invade Iraq.

The question on the minds of many Americans today, particularly many leading traditional Republicans, is: When will Cheney's antics cause the Administration and the Republican Party to crash-land?

The Jan. 12 issue of the widely read newsletter *The Big Picture*, published by long-time Republican Party campaign strategist Richard Whalen, took up the Cheney issue in the following terms:

"Vice President Dick Cheney is behaving more like the *de facto* Chief Executive each day. He is focussed and intense, taking charge inside the White House more firmly and thoroughly than ever before." The new National Security Advisor, Steve Hadley, whom Whalen describes as Condi Rice's "docile successor," now allows Cheney's chief of staff, Lewis Libby, "to run the 7 a.m. White House senior staff meeting." Cheney, Whalen wrote, has moved against two old guard allies of Bush, Sr.—Brent Scowcroft and James Baker III—by dumping Scowcroft as head of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, and blackballing several Baker nominees to be Rice's State Department deputy. According to Whalen, early in January, Cheney and Paul Wolfowitz held a private sit-down with President Bush, "with Condi Rice conspicuously absent. They urgently laid out what a top-level source calls 'a breathtakingly comprehensive plan' to centralize in the Pentagon control over all Iraq-related intelligence, cutting out CIA, DIA and the military service agencies."

But Whalen also observed that Cheney is moving at such breakneck speed in order to consolidate his position before the scheduled Jan. 30 Iraqi elections, which are expected to be a fiasco. Cheney knows that a disaster in late January could "trigger a Congressional GOP revolt against Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and his Iraqi policy." Whalen named Sens. John McCain (Ariz.), Richard Lugar (Ind.), and John Warner (Va.) as three prospective Republican leaders of a move to oust Rumsfeld, and perhaps Cheney. "A debacle and soaring U.S. casualties in a bloodbath" in Iraq "could spell both Rumsfeld's and perhaps Cheney's downfall."

And not a moment too soon.