

Bipartisan Briefing Focuses on Cheney's October Surprise

by Carl Osgood

On Oct. 11, Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) left the campaign trail to return to Washington to do something which the U.S. Congress has so far refused to do, that is, conduct oversight of Vice President Dick Cheney's planned "October Surprise" attack on Iran. The five witnesses gathered by Kucinich largely agreed that Iran is not a threat, that it is the Bush Administration that is making moves towards war, and that the war danger is aggravated, not by Iran, but by the Administration's own policy. They also agreed that opening a dialogue with Iran is an absolute necessity if we want to avoid a showdown. Lyndon LaRouche, in discussions with *EIR* staff, noted, however, that many strategic analysts, including those opposed to the Cheney war policy, make a miscalculation when they assess the danger of a near term attack by the United States on Iran; the miscalculation is due to their failure to understand the global financial collapse, and the rapidity with which it is occurring. The oversight briefing called by Kucinich, while sparsely covered in the media, was nonetheless an essential contribution to stopping Cheney's backers in their planned attack.

Significantly, Democrat Kucinich's briefing was co-sponsored by Republican Rep. Ron Paul (Tex.). Though unable to attend, Paul, in a statement for the oversight briefing, noted the "moral, intellectual, and practical failure" of the interventionist foreign policy of the United States, particularly with respect to Iran (see statement below). He said that the problem with interventionism is primarily one of "unintended consequences," though it is debatable whether or not those consequences are, in fact, always unintended. He concluded by quoting John Quincy Adams, who said that America "goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy," but is rather "the well wisher to the freedom and independence of all." If America were to behave otherwise, "she would involve herself beyond the power of extrication, in all the wars of interest

and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy and ambition, which assume the colors and usurp the standard of freedom."

In his opening statement, Kucinich pointed out that as the ranking member on the House National Security, International Relations and Emerging Threats subcommittee, he had set up a classified briefing for members on Iran, but both the Defense Department and the State Department refused to show up. "Their refusal to be accountable is the reason we are here today," he said. The five witnesses were former U.N. weapons inspector Dr. David Kay; retired Col. Sam Gardiner (USAF); Alfred Cumming, a specialist in intelligence and national security affairs at the Congressional Research Service; Dr. Trita Parsi, president of the National Iranian American Council; and Joseph Cirincione, formerly with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, now senior vice president for national security and international affairs at the Center for American Progress.

Iran Is Not an Imminent Threat

Kay began by describing what is known about the Iranian program, as he understands it. He asserted that the program is, indeed, a nuclear weapons program, as indicated by the fact that the Iranians hid the program from the International Atomic Energy Agency for many years, and that the IAEA discovered that Pakistani nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan had provided essential design information for weapons to Iran in 1987 or 1988. He made clear, however, that there is a very big difference between having the intent (which the Iranians deny) and having the ability to produce nuclear weapons, which, he argued, the Iranians do not have, and won't have for at least five, and maybe ten years or more. He said that the Iranian program depends heavily on access to foreign assistance and technology, which is a "vital checkpoint" in their program, and the weapons designs they have so far been



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis

Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) (shown here) and Rep. Ron Paul (R-Tex.) called an oversight briefing on whether Iran poses a threat, and whether the Bush Administration is going to launch a military strike against Iran.



Shape Photos

Former UN weapons inspector David Kay concluded that "Iran does not and will not pose a nuclear threat to the United States."

known to be supplied with, are for first generation devices which are unsuitable for the missiles in their inventory. For these and other reasons "Iran does not and will not pose a nuclear threat to the United States," Kay said.

It's the Iraq Playbook all Over Again

The panel members all noted the similarities between the current drive towards war with Iran and the buildup to the invasion of Iraq in 2002 and early 2003. Gardiner outlined what he calls "the seven truths," that is, what the Administration believes about Iran, some of which he says are true, and some are not. These "truths" are:

- Iran is developing weapons of mass destruction;
- Iran is ignoring the international community;
- Iran supports Hezbollah and terrorism;
- Iran is increasingly asserting itself in Iraq;
- The people of Iran want regime change;
- Sanctions are not going to work;
- You cannot negotiate with these people.

"Once you understand the framework within which they approach the problem," he said, "you sort of come to the notion that there aren't many options left except the military option." He noted that the war against Iraq actually started long before the March 2003 invasion, with something called "Operation Southern Focus," a bombing campaign that began in the Summer of 2002, weeks before Congress voted to authorize the use of force. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's guidance to U.S. Central Command was to "keep it below the CNN line." Every air strike was portrayed as simply an act of self-defense by U.S. and British aircraft enforcing the southern no-fly zone.

Gardiner said that the evidence suggests that a similar strategy is under way against Iran. He believes the United States has been in Iran for two years, in the form of special forces. The United States is also training the Mujahideen-e-Khalq, the Iranian terrorist group that Saddam Hussein gave refuge to for many years. Gardiner did not address the question of the United States use of nuclear weapons against Iran

during the panel discussion, but when asked about it by *EIR* afterwards, he said, "I think it's part of the plan."

Gardiner also argued that the Bush Administration has probably backed off from an attack on Iran before Election Day. He said that over the last three weeks, Bush Administration statements about Iran have dropped off, and the mine countermeasure ships that had received prepare-to-deploy orders had not yet departed their home port, meaning they now could not get to the Persian Gulf before Election Day. However, drawing such a conclusion from such an indication attributes to Cheney's backers rationality that they do not have. Their calculations are driven by the speed of the financial collapse, not military considerations.

Cirincione began his opening remarks by declaring that the Bush Administration is "following the Iraq playbook." He noted that the Administration is arguing a false choice between appeasement and war; they're exaggerating the threat; they're undermining negotiations, whose failure they then use as an argument for the military option; they promote an optimistic assessment about the results of military strikes; there are Iranian dissidents whispering the same scenarios into the ears of the Administration, that Ahmad Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress were doing in 2002; and the neocon press, including the *Weekly Standard* and the *National Review*, have cover stories arguing for war.

The Danger of a Global War

While the panel members may not have a full understanding of the forces behind Cheney and Rumsfeld's war drive, they clearly understand what a U.S. strike on Iran would mean. "If you like the war in Iraq," Cirincione said, "wait until you see the war in Iran. This will be something we have not seen in a generation. This will be a massive, global war." He added that the Iranians "have a half-dozen asymmetrical responses that will cause havoc for U.S. forces in Iraq, for our ally Israel, and for our economy." And yet, outside of the efforts of a handful of members, there is no debate in Congress as to whether such an attack is worth the risk, and whether it



Joseph Cirincione charged that the Bush Administration is “following the Iraq playbook, and is arguing a false choice between appeasement and war.

would even accomplish the supposed objective.

Cirincione’s comments came after Kucinich had turned the discussion towards the consequences of a U.S. strike on Iran, noting that the Iraqi cleric Moqtada al-Sadr has already stated that he would order his militia to attack U.S. troops in Iraq if the U.S. hits Iran. Gardiner also noted that al-Sadr controls the Facilities Protection Service, which guards the oil pipeline infrastructure in Iraq, and which would be “destroyed very quickly.” He also reported that the Iranians have moved missiles into firing areas that they used during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War, which brings their missiles within range of U.S. troops in Iraq.

But looming behind these likely consequences is the backfire potential inside Iran, itself. Dr. Parsi blew apart the neo-con fantasies about regime change in Iran by pointing out what happened after Iraq invaded Iran in 1980. “In 1980, Ayatollah Khomeini was in the midst of a vicious political struggle for the future of the Iranian revolution,” he said, “He had not consolidated his power, not yet.” But then Saddam Hussein launched his invasion. “In spite of their differences, Iranians rallied around the flag. They united. Within weeks, more than 100,000 volunteers rushed to the front lines to fight the invaders. In fact, according to many experts, Ayatollah Khomeini and the Islamic Republic survived not in spite of, but because of the Iraqi attack.” The same thing would likely happen in the event of a U.S. attack, he said, and the nuclear program would be accelerated, not stopped. He also said that Iranians in the United States have no love for the regime in Tehran, but they’re also watching what’s happening in Iraq and they feel “no envy” for what’s happening there.

The panelists all agreed that the alternative to war is dialogue and negotiation, which the Bush Administration has not engaged in. “The hardest thing for me personally to understand,” Kay said, “is the continued refusal to talk directly to countries like North Korea and Iran. . . . I fundamentally believe that the failure to engage in direct discussions is what

is at heart wrong with this process.” Cirincione added that what Iran really needs is security assurances, and the United States has to be prepared to offer them. In addition to dialogue with Iran, Congress should also do its job. Cirincione said that there has to be a realistic threat assessment done by the intelligence community, it should be made public, and Congress should hold hearings on it, to include dissenting views.

Financier Interests Behind the War Drive

These assessments all assume that the drive for war originates from within the neo-cons inside the Bush Administration. In a statement issued on Oct. 9, Lyndon LaRouche clarified that “The war-drive comes from the Anglo-Dutch Liberal international financier faction. There are shadings of differences among elements of the international financier forces behind the war-drive, but the war-drive comes as much from within Europe itself as the U.S.A. This is the same faction as the Winston Churchill faction behind the Truman war-drive of April-May 1945 onward.

“The John Train case, as we have documented it, is the primary source of this threat to civilization. The neo-cons are merely the low-level lackeys of the Anglo-Dutch-synarchist alliance of financiers in the Venetian tradition and in the ghost of Prince Rainier of the neo-Nazi Monte Carlo lodge which includes the case of Henry Kissinger.

“ ‘Neo-con faction,’ is therefore a serious error of strategic estimate of the nature of the European Anglo-Dutch Liberal core of what is being reflected in the U.S.A.”

Rep. Dennis Kucinich

Another Confrontation In the Middle East?

Below is the Oct. 11 opening statement by Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio), at the Congressional oversight briefing. His remarks were entitled: “Is the Administration preparing for war in Iran? Is Iran an imminent threat?”

The news is filled with this Administration’s strong statements and scary characterizations about Iran’s ties to terrorists and its nuclear ambitions. In 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said, “there’s no question that there have been and are today senior al-Qaeda leaders in Iran, and they are busy” (*Guardian*, May 29, 2003); Richard Perle, then chairman of the Defense Policy Board, said, “Iran is exactly the case that the President has been talking about since Sept. 11” (CNN Capital Gang, May 31, 2003), or as Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld said in 2004, “Iran has for many years figured on the list of terrorist states. The possession of weapons of mass destruction by a terrorist state and the presence

there of a terrorist network presents a threat to the world” (BBC monitoring, Aug. 14, 2004)

The news is also filled with suggestions that the U.S. might already be moving against Iran and has been for many months. As early as 2003, the Administration was reportedly drafting war plans against Iran, according to a Russian newspaper. In 2004, the world press reported new U.S. military arrangements with Azerbaijan and Kazakstan, in 2006, Seymour Hersh reported the presence of U.S. troops in Iran; and just a few weeks ago, *Time* magazine reported that “prepare to deploy” orders were given to the Eisenhower task force, a group of Navy ships, to go to the seas off Iran, which would result in their deployment by Oct. 21.

As ranking member of the National Security, International Relations and Emerging Threats subcommittee of the Government Reform Committee, I have been trying to conduct oversight to get to the bottom of these questions. We have written to the relevant agencies. We even held a classified briefing. But the Department of Defense and the State Department refused to show up.

I repeat, the Department of Defense and the State Department refused to submit to questions from a committee of Congress about actions and plans against Iran.

The American people have a right to expect that their government will work, and that Congress will conduct oversight, and that the executive branch will submit to Congress’ questions. What does it say when agencies refuse to appear to answer Congress’ questions?

Their refusal to be accountable is the reason we are here today. We have five of the nation’s top experts on these questions related to Iran. They have reviewed the open sources, they have a lifetime of relevant professional experience, and they are here to discuss what the Department of Defense and the rest of this Administration don’t want told to the American people: a sober assessment of Iran’s nuclear ambitions and what, if any, threat it poses to Americans, and the real story of the steps this Administration is taking toward another military confrontation in the Middle East.

Rep. Ron Paul

Interventionist U.S. Policy Is a Failure

Below is the statement by co-sponsor Rep. Ron Paul (R-Tex.) to the Oct. 11 Congressional oversight briefing.

I am pleased to co-sponsor this very important event with my colleague, Rep. Dennis Kucinich, and I appreciate all the effort his office has made in organizing such a distinguished panel to discuss our Iran policy. I would just like to say a few

words about U.S. foreign policy in general, and as it relates to Iran.

The current “crisis” with Iran clearly underscores the moral, intellectual, and practical failure of the interventionist foreign policy that the United States has been pursuing over the past several decades. In 1953 we gained the enmity of the Iranian people when our Central Intelligence Agency overthrew Iran’s popular and democratically elected leader, Mohammad Mossadegh, over a shift in Iran’s oil policy. The Shah was installed in power, and thus began an era of brutal, dictatorial rule. In 1979, the Iranian people rose up to throw out a regime they viewed as an American puppet and relations with Iran have been strained ever since. In the brutal Iran/Iraq war in the 1980s, the United States again intervened, this time on the side of Iraq, to whose leader we shipped weapons and intelligence. Shortly after that we were back in the region to invade our erstwhile ally, Iraq, whose leader had suddenly become intolerable to U.S. foreign policy. It is dizzying.

The problem with interventionism is primarily the problem of unintended consequences. The above typifies how complicated these interventions can turn when allies become enemies and then allies again, and we have to re-intervene to address problems created by our initial intervention. It goes around and around, and it costs us billions of dollars. It makes us enemies across the globe. Does anyone wonder why the U.S. is no longer held in high esteem overseas?

Our interventionist foreign policy often creates more problems than it solves. Take Afghanistan, for example. The very people the United States trained and supported in their struggle against the Soviet invasion became the Taliban, which, as we know, harbored the terrorists who planned and carried out the attacks against the United States on 9/11. Thus the very weapons and training we shipped to Afghanistan to intervene in that conflict more than 20 years ago were used against the United States when we invaded Afghanistan after 9/11. Talk about unintended consequences!

Who does not believe that all this could have been avoided if we could only finally return to the foreign policy that was so wisely counseled by our Founding Fathers? It is worth revisiting the oft-repeated but seldom heeded quote by our sixth President, John Quincy Adams:

[America] goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own. She will commend the general cause by the countenance of her voice, and the benignant sympathy of her example. She well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself beyond the power of extrication, in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy, and ambition, which assume the colors and usurp the standard of freedom.

U.S. Attack Would Bolster Iran Government

Here is the testimony of the president of the National Iranian American Council, Dr. Trita Parsi, to the Congressional oversight briefing.

Thank you. It's a great pleasure being here today and I'm particularly grateful that our hosts have created this opportunity to discuss these very important issues.

There are many issues about Iran, and a potential military conflict with Iran that haven't been sufficiently discussed and debated in Washington. Whether Iran actually is a threat is one of them, as is the question of whether Iran poses an imminent problem or if time is available.

Another question that has received far too little attention is what the reactions of the Iranian people would be to a military conflict and how that in turn would affect America's position in the strategically vital region of the Persian Gulf and Caspian Sea in the long term.

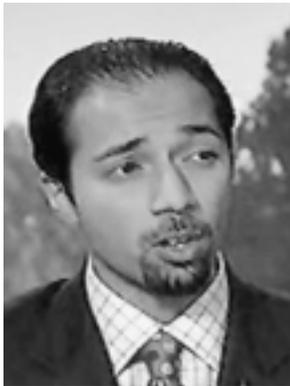
It is a well known fact that America has lost much—if not most—of its soft-power in the Middle East. The Muslim streets are angry at us, particularly in countries whose governments we tend to be on good terms with.

In 2003, according to a Pew Poll, only 15 % of Indonesians, the world's largest Muslim state, viewed America favorably. In Pakistan, only 13%, Turkey 15%, and Jordan, a whopping 1%.

Winning the hearts and minds of the peoples of the region is extremely important. We cannot achieve any other of our objectives if the masses in the Middle East oppose us. At a minimum, the idea that we support democracy rings very hollow if we don't care what the peoples of the region think of us.

We clearly have to do more, much more, to win the hearts and minds of the peoples of the Middle East.

By all accounts, however, we don't face this problem in Iran. The population in Iran tends to have very favorable views of American culture, American values, and of Ameri-



Dr. Trita Parsi

cans. There probably isn't a single Iranian that doesn't have a relative that lives in the United States and is part of the approximately one-million strong Iranian-American community. These Iranians hear from their American relatives of all the opportunities that exist in America, of the good lives that they have here.

This does not mean, however, that they also favor U.S. foreign policy. In fact, polls show that they don't.

But their favorable view of America is a great strategic asset that can help advance American interest in the region for generations to come.

So while we have to continue to work to win the hearts and minds of other people in the Middle East, in Iran, all we need to do is to make sure that we don't lose them.

By the first bullet, by the first bomb, or by the first boot on the ground, we will lose this asset.

Perhaps the reason why Iranians like Americans so much is because they are so similar. When under attack, when terrorists fly into the Twin Towers, Americans unite, they rally around the flag.

Iranians do the same. They are no different. In fact, there is very compelling historical evidence for this.

In 1980, Ayatollah Khomeini was in the midst of a vicious political struggle for the future of the Iranian revolution. He had not consolidated his power, not yet.

Then, in September 1980, Saddam Hussein invaded Iran.

In spite of their differences, Iranians rallied around the flag. They united. Within weeks, more than 100,000 volunteers rushed to the front lines to fight the invaders.

In fact, according to many experts, Ayatollah Khomeini and the Islamic Republic survived not in spite of, but because of the Iraqi attack.

If history repeats itself, as it often does, then an attack on Iran would likely result in:

- Iranians rallying around the flag—rather than people turning on their government, as Saddam thought.
- The Iranian government would strengthen its hold on the country—rather than being toppled.
- The hearts and minds of the Iranian people (which has taken us a full generation to win back) would be lost rather than America being greeted as a liberator.
- And, I might add, the Iranian nuclear program would most likely accelerate, rather than be destroyed.

The asset that is the hearts and minds of the Iranian people should not be forgotten in this debate. It is particularly important to the Iranian-American community that this aspect is made known to decision-makers in Washington.

The data that we have at the National Iranian American Council shows that even though Iranian Americans overwhelmingly do not favor the current government in Iran, they look at what is taking place in Iraq, and they simply don't feel envy. And I think we can rest assured that people in Iran feel the same way.