

Can Genocide in Iraq Be Stopped?

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

When President Bush was confronted with the results of a study showing that 655,000 Iraqis had died since the war began in 2003, he went into characteristic denial, insisting that “only” 30,000 had died. U.S. Commander in Iraq Gen. George Casey seconded him, saying, “I have not seen a number higher than 50,000, and so I don’t give it that much credibility at all.”

The study, conducted by Johns Hopkins University’s Bloomberg School of Public Health in conjunction with an Iraqi university, and published in the prestigious *Lancet* medical journal, was done by doctors, who surveyed 47 randomly selected areas of Iraq—encompassing 1,849 households and 12,801 people—to calculate the change in death rates over the years since the U.S. invasion. The final estimates came from an extrapolation of these results to the whole country, of about 26 million. The number of “excess deaths” thus found, amounted to 610,000 by violence, provoked by the invasion and war; the rest were due to diseases. These results show that the *rate* of violent deaths per capita, doubled between May 2004-05, and June 2005-06. In the former period, the rate was 6.6 per 1,000, and in the latter, it was 12 per 1,000.

Bush et al. questioned the methodology used in the survey, which, however, was endorsed by medical professionals. Paul Bolton, a Boston University School of public health researcher who has conducted surveys throughout the world, hit the nail on the head, when he declared the methodology to be accurate. “The President mainly relies on figures that come from passive surveillance, where you have institutions like hospitals that collect data as bodies are brought to them,” Bolton was quoted in the *Boston Globe*. “When the President says these studies are different, they are different. But the passive method is the flawed one.”

Bush’s denial is not only clinically consistent with past behavior. It also points up the criminal insanity of his Administration’s war policy overall. The point is, ultimately, not how many hundreds of thousands of people have been killed through violence or increased sickness rates due to the war; each of those statistics refers to a sovereign human being, unique, irreplaceable, with father, mother, siblings, and children; each was a single discrete human being who *did not have to die*.

The point is that this war is genocidal. And, as Paul Craig Roberts, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury under Ronald Reagan, wrote in *Antiwar.com* on Oct. 12, 2006, the compari-

son to be made is with Hitler’s regime.

The fact is, that the Iraq situation is utterly out of control, and the fate of the Bush-Cheney regime—and everything that implies—hangs in the balance. New public opinion polls in the United States indicate a major shift of voter preference against the Republican Party, not only due to the stench of the Mark Foley scandal, but also as a result of growing disgust with the Iraq disaster. The response of the Bush-Cheney team appears to be to opt for a new war, by attacking Iran, perhaps even with nuclear weapons. Whether or not they succeed in flying forward towards another such criminal adventure, before or after the elections, the manifest intention on their part drives home the point even more: This entire regime must go, and a new political combination be brought into power, to introduce radically new economic and foreign policies, such as those prepared by the LaRouche movement, now in discussion among policymaking circles worldwide. As LaRouche put it in a recent paper, the justified war which has to be fought and won, is that against the real enemy, the forces behind Bush-Cheney.

Sectarian Warfare

There is no sign of any let-up in the violence. On the contrary, the internecine warfare, pitting Shi’ites against Sunnis, Arabs against Kurds, and so forth, is on the rise, as are the casualties among the U.S. and British troops.

UN Deputy Secretary General Jan Egeland issued a cry of alarm Oct. 12 from Geneva, when he stated: “Our appeal goes to everybody who can curb the violence: religious, ethnic, cultural leaders have to see that this has spiraled totally out of control.” He reported that “sectarian violence and military operations have now resulted in the displacement of 315,000 people in these past eight months”; 1,000 people per day are being displaced, and 100 per day are being killed.

Reports from Iraq describe the social conflict in terms that defy belief. Each neighborhood of Baghdad, for example, is identified as Sunni or Shi’ite; one speaks of a district, such as Adamiyya, as being “occupied by the Sunnis,” and other districts as having been “liberated” from the Sunnis (or the Shi’ites, as the case may be). Iraqis have resorted to procuring phony identity cards, so as to be able to pass as Shi’ite or Sunni, depending on what roadblocks, or neighborhoods, they have to pass through. Generally, they avoid entering territory considered “occupied” by the other side, and use maps drafted specifically for the purpose.

This ethnic/sectarian fighting has been responsible for the executions of Iraqis, found daily in groups. Typically the bodies are found blindfolded, hands tied behind the back, and bullet holes in the head.

Sources inside Iraq also report on the disintegration of the education system, the backbone of any civilized society. Because of the violence, mothers do not send their children to school. Teachers have been victims of murders, and it is estimated that about a third of the registered educators actu-



U.S. Army/Sp. Christa Martin

Despite rising U.S. casualties and the unpopularity of the war with American citizens, the Bush Administration insists it will “stay the course,” and Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker says he will keep up troop strength until 2010. Here, U.S. Army soldiers conduct a cordon and search operation in Mosul, Oct. 4, 2006.

ally show up for class.

Those forces officially associated with the occupiers are targeted, among them the Iraqi police. Thus, as Gerald Burke, National Security Advisor to the Iraqi Interior Ministry, told a meeting of the Senate Democratic Policy Committee on Oct. 12, “We budgeted for 10 Iraqi policemen killed every day and 15 wounded in action to the point that they had to be retired from action.” On Oct. 13, an explosion at the office of the leader of an Iraqi special intervention team of the police, trained by the United States, killed the commander, Col. Salaam Maamuri, and wounded eight other officers.

If the ethnic/sectarian fighting is the lawful result of the de-Ba’athification policy imposed by Paul Bremer, then-head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, the lack of security provided by Iraqi police forces, is a result of U.S. negligence, incompetence, and stupidity. Bremer’s policy declared the overwhelming majority of Iraq’s military, police, and civil servants to be criminals, banned from any employment. This left all those agencies bereft of any professionally trained personnel, and declared the Ba’ath Party members, Sunnis, to be open game for rival Shi’ite forces. As for the police forces, Burke pointed out in his testimony to the hearing, that the United States had failed “to recognize the importance of security in the post-conflict environment, in particular our failure to support the rule of law.” He reported that he, an Army veteran with 25 years’ experience in law enforcement, had been part of a team of six, sent to Iraq in May 2003, by

the Justice Department, to assess the criminal justice system. His group called for 6,000 civilian police trainers, but was promised only 1,500; only 24 actually arrived six months later, and by mid-2004, not even 100 had arrived. The “militarization of the police training,” done by the soldiers and Marines, ignored the rule of law, and human rights, he said.

Although the ethnic/sectarian warfare has been in the forefront, the casualties among the U.S. and U.K. occupying forces have escalated dramatically, especially in the later Summer months. In the first 12 days of October, 44 U.S. troops were killed. On Oct. 10, a huge fire broke out at a U.S. ammunition depot. Although no casualties were reported, the event was singular, as it had been sparked by mortar fire by resistance forces. Like earlier attacks on positions considered “secure” inside the Green Zone of Baghdad, this mortar attack pointed up the vulnerabilities of the U.S. forces, just as the Hezbollah rocket attacks, including anti-ship missiles, shocked the Israelis in the recent Lebanon war.

Iraqi Puppet Regime Under Fire

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made an unannounced (for security reasons) visit to Iraq the first week of October, and informed Nouri al-Maliki, the current Prime Minister under the occupation, that he had about two months to end the violence. True to pluralistic democratic form, Rice called on all sides to end the fighting. Al-Maliki had just days earlier declared a state of emergency, followed by the

introduction of a new pacification plan for the capital. This plan envisioned the establishment of committees, with representatives of all the main ethnic/sectarian groups, in each neighborhood, who should work to cool down the violence.

Such committees will not work in the context of a highly divisive conflict. Nor do they have a chance of success, if the United States is launching armed raids against specific forces. For example, on Oct. 9, the *Washington Post*, among others, reported on a massive raid launched by U.S. and Iraqi forces on the militia of Moqtada al-Sadr, in Diwaniya, killing several, and losing an A1M2 Abrams tank in the six-hour battle. Nadawi, an al-Sadr official, said the raid broke an agreement struck after the failed U.S. attempt to drive al-Sadr's forces out of their southern strongholds in 2004: "The agreement states that the American forces do not enter our cities or residential areas in Diwaniyah and all over Iraq. This has been followed until now." He said there was concern that the United States may launch a full-scale assault on the Sadr City neighborhood of Baghdad.

What, then, is the perspective for the Iraqi government? Journalist Robert Dreyfuss, writing in TomPaine.com on Oct. 5-6, raised the possibility that the United States might "give a wink and a nod" to the U.S. military and Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad to get rid of al-Maliki, as President Kennedy gave the green light in 1963 to topple South Vietnam's President Ngo Dinh Diem. "The Diem coup didn't go well," Dreyfuss notes (Diem was killed, and what followed was a series of corrupt military governments that never gained the support of the South Vietnamese population). "Considering how unlikely it is that Bush has even heard of Diem, I doubt he's learned the lesson."

Dreyfuss reviewed certain signs that al-Maliki's days might be numbered, including statements by Sen. John Warner (R-Va.) at a Oct. 5 press conference, to the effect that the government had two to three months to get the situation under control. Condi Rice's two-month ultimatum has already been mentioned.

Regarding possible alternatives to the status quo, Dreyfuss presented four scenarios: a resignation of al-Maliki, which would be dangerous, since it would open a period of greater political instability; a national unity government, something which has been tried, and failed; a military coup d'etat, led necessarily by former Ba'ath Party officers; or, a covert coup, by former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, backed by the military. Dreyfuss points out correctly that any such coup, whether overt or covert, would have to have the blessing of Ayatollah Ali Hosseini al-Sistani, the highest Shi'ite authority in Iraq; otherwise a Shi'ite backlash would be immediate. Al-Sistani, however, recently admitted that he feared even he would not be able to prevent civil war.

U.S. contingency plans, if they exist, are being kept under wraps. U.S. military leaders are now saying they will keep up the troop strength until 2010, according to Gen. Peter Schoomaker, Army Chief of Staff. Gen George Casey, who admit-



Gen. Sir Richard Dannatt, Chief of Staff of the British Army, said in public what many U.S. and British active-duty military officers believe, but none has said openly until now: We should get out of Iraq, because "our presence exacerbates the security problem."

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ted this was a "tough situation," said there were no plans to increase the troop deployment, but if he needed more soldiers, he would ask for them. Bush and Cheney keep repeating that the U.S. will "stay the course."

As for the British, they seem to have some among their ranks with a more pragmatic view of things to come. On Oct. 13, the *Daily Telegraph* reported that Gen. Sir Richard Dannatt, Chief of Staff of the British Army, said the Brits should get out. "We should get ourselves out some time soon because our presence exacerbates the security problem," he said. "I don't say the difficulties we're experiencing around the world are caused by our presence in Iraq, but undoubtedly our presence in Iraq exacerbates them. We are in a Muslim country and Muslims' views of foreigners in their country are quite clear." Dannatt said things might have been different if Britain had been invited in by the Iraqi people. But "the military campaign we fought in 2003 effectively kicked the door in."

Interestingly, Dannatt criticized the "planning for what happened after the initial successful war fighting phase," which, he said, "was poor, probably based more on optimism than sound planning. The original intention was that we put in place a liberal democracy that was an exemplar for the region, was pro-West and might have a beneficial effect on the balance within the Middle East. Whether that was a sensible or naive hope history will judge. I don't think we are going to do that. We should aim for a lower ambition."

What must be factored into these complexities, are two crucial developments: first, the vote on Oct. 12, by the Iraqi parliament, which favored a law to create federal regions. Although most Sunni groups, and even some Shi'ite parties, boycotted the session, those who showed up were enough to pass the measure. Such a move to establish autonomous regions in Iraq, with the Kurds in the north, the Sunnis in the center, and the Shi'ites in the south, is a recipe for partition.

The second development is the ongoing drive, spearheaded by Cheney et al., for a military strike against Iran. Were such an attack to occur, even more asymmetrical war-

fare would be unleashed in the entire region, including possibly Iranian military interventions into Afghanistan and Iraq, against the occupying forces.

What To Do With Iran

The momentum for an immediate attack against Iran appears to have abated somewhat—as a result of the expanding campaign led by the LaRouche forces internationally, the continuing exposés by military, political, and intelligence outlets regarding the military consequences, and, finally, the open hearings on a possible “October Surprise” in the House of Representatives, under Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio—see *National*). But this does not mean the battle has been won.

Were forces in the U.S. government serious about solving the crises wracking the entire region, they would reconsider Iran as a possible ally in the effort. This would require a complete overhaul of Administration policy, something possible only through a political ouster of the current regime in Washington.

Iran has responded to the growing danger of an attack, in two modes. First, by preparing the political institutions (and population) for the worst. On Oct. 10, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khamenei, held a meeting with the leaders of the three branches of government (the Executive, Judiciary, and Legislative), together with Hashemi Rafsanjani, head of the Expediency Council. From initial English-language summaries of the speech, it appears that the highest political figure in Iran was mobilizing forces for the worst. He stated that Iran was under attack; the “authorities” are unified, he asserted, but must be on high alert “against enemies’ efforts of sowing discord.” Normal dissent and criticism of the government are fine, he said, but once a decision is made, all have to line up behind it; the upcoming elections of the Assembly of Experts and Municipal elections are important, and should be run with legitimacy, without meddling by civil or military circles. Khamenei reiterated Iran’s commitment to maintain its nuclear program, as has President Ahmadinejad, on several occasions.

At the same time, other authoritative figures in Iran continue to extend the olive branch to what they hope might be rational forces on the other side of the divide. As reported in the official *Tehran Times* on Oct. 12, Hassan Rowhani, the former head of Iran’s National Security Council, and former chief negotiator for nuclear matters, again entered the debate, to say that there could be a solution to the deadlock on Iran’s nuclear program, if the options presented to Iran were expanded. “Putting Iran into a situation that has only two options, sanctions or suspension [of its enrichment program], is not acceptable,” he said.

Rowhani revealed that agreement had been reached with France and Germany on the matter, but that the United States sabotaged it. He stated, “Formerly, we agreed on a formula with France and Jacques Chirac, in which Iran would conduct

[uranium] enrichment and the West’s concerns would be allayed. That, unfortunately, faced U.S. opposition. The German government agreed with the plan, but the U.S. prevented Britain from agreeing with it, and it was halted.” He concluded: “There are other formulas for enrichment which we can compromise on. If the West stops making threats, most likely a compromise can be reached.”

The consortium idea is one that President Ahmadinejad had initially floated during his speech to the United Nations General Assembly in September. Since then, it has been repeated and discussed in various venues, but has, as Rowhani indicated, been killed repeatedly by the United States.

On the same day, the Russian paper *Kommersant* published a leak, according to which Iran is ready to offer both Moscow and Washington deals to overcome the crisis. Elements of the “plans” reportedly offered have been known, but what is new is that, according to *Kommersant*, these ideas were discussed between Iranian negotiator Ali Larijani and Russian Security Council Secretary Igor Ivanov, during his recent visit to Tehran.

What they discussed, according to the paper, is the following: Iran would offer Russia a prominent role in the Southwest Asia region, as mediator in major conflicts—for example, in Lebanon and Palestine. Iran would use its influence to allow Russian companies a share of the oil business in Iraq, including work in oil terminals in the south, where Iran’s influence is the greatest. Furthermore, according to this report, Larijani offered Ivanov help in identifying the assassins of four Russian diplomats in Iraq, and to arrange security for Russian engineers deployed to southern Lebanon for reconstruction efforts.

Larijani also reportedly told Ivanov that Iran was ready to stabilize the situation in Iraq, through its influence over the Shi’ite forces there, as well as more broadly in the region, using its influence with Hezbollah and Hamas. What Iran wants in return, is the right to enrich uranium. Larijani reportedly said Iran would “renounce the possibility of industrial uranium enrichment, on the condition that the country is allowed to keep all of the technology that it currently possesses. Teheran considers this offer to be a colossal concession,” writes *Kommersant*. The paper concludes that this offer might “turn out to be extremely tempting for the Russian diplomat” engaged in the talks of the UN Permanent Five plus Germany, and the UN Security Council.

Whether or not the *Kommersant* report be accurate in every detail, there is no reason to question the thrust of the argument, which has been made by Iran on other occasions: Tehran is ready and willing to engage constructively with the West—including the “Great Satan” United States—to introduce elements of stability in the highly volatile Southwest Asian theater, on condition it be given its rights to nuclear technology, to national independence and sovereignty, and to territorial integrity—like any member of the community of nations.