

# Cheney and Neo-Cons Plotting More Wars

by Jeffrey Steinberg

On March 11, 2003, as final preparations were under way for the neo-cons' greatest triumph—the invasion of Iraq—*New Yorker* magazine investigative reporter Seymour Hersh exposed an extortion scheme by neo-con Richard Perle, to extract tens of millions of dollars out of the Saudi royal family, in league with the infamous Iran-Contra arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi. The scheme involved a Perle company, Trireme Partners LP, which wanted a piece of the billions of dollars in homeland security contracts soon to be issued by the Kingdom. The proposal, according to Prince Bandar bin Sultan, then the Saudi Ambassador in Washington, smacked of a quid pro quo: Perle, a leading critic of the Saudi regime, would drop the propaganda barrage and the calls for regime change, coming out of his Defense Policy Board, and the Saudis would cough up.

Several senior U.S. intelligence officials recently told *EIR* that some higher-ups in the Saudi royal family, perhaps including Prince Bandar, who is now the national security advisor to King Abdullah, regret that they didn't take the bait and pay off Perle and his partners back in January 2003. A few million dollars might have saved them several years of headaches, as the neo-con propaganda Wurlitzer waged a non-stop regime-change campaign against them. But even more to the point, suddenly, the Saudis, along with several other Sunni Arab regimes, find themselves as strange bedfellows with Washington's neo-cons and with the Ehud Olmert government in Israel—in common cause against Iran.

A Nov. 3, 2006 teaser from *Vanity Fair* magazine revealed that the neo-cons are going through a major retooling—wiping their hands of the entire Iraq fiasco, and placing the blame for the failure squarely on the shoulders of President George W. Bush and his team of national security incompetents and nincompoops. In a preview of a story to appear in the January 2007 *Vanity Fair*, author David Rose delivered excerpts from interviews he conducted in October 2006 with some of the cream of the neo-con crap—starting with the “Prince of Darkness,” Perle himself, and also including Kenneth Adelman, who gained infamy by proposing that the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq would be a “cakewalk”; Michael Ledeen, Frank Gaffney, and Michael Rubin.

Lovers of Iraqi faker Ahmed Chalabi, and Iraq warhawks to a man, these neo-cons are now saying that if they had it to do over again, knowing that the Bush-Cheney-Rice team was the most incompetent national security management group in

the post-World War II history of America, they would have opted for an alternative to war.

In a scene worthy of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, these modern-day Brutuses have stabbed President Bush and Condi Rice in the back. As far as the neo-cons are concerned, according to a number of informed Washington sources, both Iraq and George W. Bush are yesterday's news. They are now preparing to survive the fall of the House of Bush, and are already making plans for the next confrontations: against Iran and Russia, to name the top two targets *du jour*.

While the Bush Presidency is flaming out in the aftermath of what has been dubbed the “Nov. 7th Massacre,” the neo-cons are still a formidable force inside the Republican Party, with some leading neo-con superstars, like John Podhoretz, already touting Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) as the elephant they intend to ride back into the Oval Office. Across the aisle, another crew of hardcore neo-cons is preparing to surface within the Democratic Party, should a donkey take the Presidency in 2008. It is reminiscent of the Jimmy Carter era, when scores of life-long “Scoop Jackson Democrats,” led by Perle, Stephen Bryen, Ledeen, Gaffney, and Elliott Abrams, slithered over to the GOP as “Reagan Democrats,” and, after Ronald Reagan's landslide victory in 1980 over Jimmy Carter, occupied top civilian posts at the Pentagon, and cushy consulting jobs with the Reagan National Security Council.

Whichever party lands in the White House come January 2009, the neo-cons hope to be there to share in the spoils. Either way, they are busily organizing a “Get Iran” war alliance with frightened Sunni regimes in the Persian Gulf and Arab world *and Israel*—to make sure that the Bush-Cheney regime commits one more fatal atrocity—a military strike on Iran's purported secret nuclear weapons sites—before leaving office (see preceding article).

To make sure that this Iran war happens before Team Bush leaves office, the neo-cons are working through their one reliable partner remaining inside the regime—Vice President Dick Cheney. Cheney's office remains Neo-con Central, with David Wurmser and John Hannah still on staff. Elliott Abrams remains the Cheney “mole” at the National Security Council.

According to Middle East and Washington sources, this crew was responsible, earlier this year, for trashing all efforts by the Syrian regime of Bashar Assad to reopen direct peace talks with Israel, talks that no Israeli regime prior to that of Ariel Sharon, would have flat-out rejected, no matter how much pressure came down from Washington.

More recently, they are reportedly pushing a covert weapons-smuggling operation into the West Bank, arming Fatah factions to launch what would rapidly become a full-scale civil war against Hamas. The noted retired Israeli general, Shlomo Brom, in a recent paper for the Jaffe Center at Tel Aviv University, warned that such an outbreak of communal violence among the Palestinians would be *bad* for Israel, provoking a likely split between a Fatah-controlled West Bank

and a Hamas-run Gaza Strip. Both sides would be vying to prove that they are more effective in terrorizing Israel, through suicide bombings and rocket attacks, the general warned, and this would make life unbearable in the Jewish state.

Arab sources have added that in his recent trip to Washington, Lebanese Druze leader Walid Jumblatt was given a similar offer of “covert military aid” to take on Hezbollah inside that war-ruined nation, which still hasn’t recovered from its 15-year civil war (1975-90). Such covert operations, aimed at provoking the neo-cons’ beloved perpetual warfare throughout the Eastern Mediterranean region, do not depend on Pentagon muscle, so the departure of Donald Rumsfeld from the scene, and his replacement by former CIA Director Robert Gates, a Brent Scowcroft and James Baker III ally (and presumable a Dick Cheney enemy), does not necessarily interfere with the game.

In fact, as the Democrats prepare to take back control of the U.S. House and Senate in January 2007, they face a world map of hot-spots, all set to blow, with the slightest provocation (see map, p. 53).

Several senior Washington intelligence veterans, and one regional vice president of a major U.S. defense firm, say that their greatest fear—between now and the New Year when the Democrats take the keys to Capitol Hill back—is a “Gulf of Tonkin” incident, a provocation covertly arranged originating from Washington, that would provide the pretext for war. The most likely target of such a scheme: Iran. The most likely architect of such an operation: Dick Cheney and his remaining coterie of neo-con troublemakers and whatever assets they have recruited from within the Special Forces community and the “black operations” side of the intelligence community. One burning question is whether President Bush has already signed a Presidential Intelligence Finding, authorizing these covert tricks.

On Oct. 10, 2006, the web-based magazine *World Politics Watch* ran a provocative story, echoing the new neo-con scheme, under the headline “Mideast Realignment: Could Iran Unite Arabs and Israelis?” Noting the rumors, officially denied by both sides, that Prince Bandar had secretly met in Jordan with a top Israeli government official, Frida Ghitis wrote that “a handful of Middle East observers were not surprised to hear of possible talks between Israel and the kingdom. That’s because they predict a major realignment will reshape this region. The cause,” she continued, “of this gradual but far-reaching political transformation is fear of Shi’ite Iran by Sunni Arabs. As a result, the traditional enemy of Arabs, Israel, could gradually begin developing a subtle but powerful alliance with Sunni Muslim regimes in the Arab world. . . . It is this natural convergence of interests that has the potential to recast the political landscape from the traditional one of Arabs versus Israelis, which has dominated the Middle East since the late 1940s, into a Sunni vs. Shi’a alignment, with Israel and Sunni governments on the same side.”

This, Washington sources emphasize, is the latest neo-con wet dream. For years the neo-cons have been preaching their own brand of Leon Trotsky’s “Permanent Revolution,” masked in the cry for “democracy.” From the start of the Bush-Cheney regime up to recent months, the number one target of these latter-day Jacobins had been what Middle Eastern historians referred to as the “Sunni Stability Belt,” the ruling combination of hardline monarchies and dictatorships that kept the oil patch safe and stable from the time of Sykes-Picot (1916) on. Now that the neo-con “Shi’ite Card” has turned Iraq into Hell-on-Earth, the flexible neo-con fantasists have modified their rhetoric, to suddenly find common cause with the very Sunni Arab monarchs and dictators whom they targetted only months ago, with such schemes as their 1996 “A Clean Break.”

The neo-cons are shameless sophists, who have no problem distorting the truth beyond recognition—if it suits their goal of perpetual power. Will the Sunni Arab lions and the Israelis be so stupid as to walk into this trap?

Stay tuned.