

The Iran War Is on The Front Burner

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

The war that Dick Cheney has been planning against Iran, has moved from the back burner to the front, and those who say they do not see this are either blind or complicit. Military deployments are in place, as laid out in detail in a Sept. 16 feature by Michel Khossudovsky in *Global Research*, while the statements of intent to wage war, issued by President Bush and Vice President Cheney, have been hyped in British and American news outlets.

The fact that war is high on the agenda, was denounced by the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei, who made a dramatic exit from an ongoing meeting of the IAEA board of governors on Sept. 11, in protest against the manifest intent of the U.S. and U.K. delegations, as well as the rotating EU presidency representative, to proceed to military aggression. ElBaradei, who was so furious that he initially refused to talk to the press, had clearly stated, in his Sept. 10 report to the body, that the course chosen by the IAEA, to proceed with diplomacy and inspections, was succeeding in providing the necessary clarifications of outstanding questions about Iran's nuclear energy program.

The IAEA chief's report reflected a recent agreement struck between the agency and Iran, regarding a framework for resolving all remaining issues, and, step by step, closing the file. ElBaradei stressed, "This is the first time that Iran has agreed on a plan to address all outstanding issues, with a defined timeline." He called for a "double time-out," meaning the suspension of Iranian enrichment activity along with a suspension of sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

Iran's ambassador to the IAEA, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, on Sept. 12, welcomed ElBaradei's latest report as a "major step forward," and criticized certain states for "questioning the merits of the Iran-IAEA modality agreement," meaning the

United States and United Kingdom. That agreement (see *EIR*, Sept. 7) had effectively pulled the rug out from under those warmongers who argued that since Iran's program was military, it had to be stopped by military means.

Since the IAEA meeting, ElBaradei has gone to the press almost daily, to reassert his conviction that there is no reason to attack Iran on the nuclear issue; but that, at the same time, the intention for an attack is clearly there. On Sept. 17, he told the press, "We need always to remember that use of force could only be resorted to when ... every other option has been exhausted. I don't think we are at all there. ... There is a UN Charter and there are rules for the international use of force. I hope everybody would have gotten the lesson after the Iraq situation, when we see a drama unfolding every day." ElBaradei noted that thousands of "innocent civilians have lost their lives on the suspicion that a country had nuclear weapons." He recalled that he had tried to continue inspections in Iraq, but had been prevented by the U.S. war. Now, he said, he was conducting negotiations with Iran, which were bearing fruit. Thus, "I think what we need now to do is to encourage Iran to work with the agency to clarify the outstanding issues" in the over four-year-old IAEA investigation. He gave a clear time frame for results to be produced: "By November-December we will be able to know whether Iran is acting in good faith or not, and if not, then obviously we will have a different situation. ... But people need to bear with us. People need to understand we are dealing with an issue that has a lot to do with peace and security and regional instability in the Middle East, and I would ask everybody to hold their horses until we go through the process."

ElBaradei also addressed the climate of hysteria being created by the warmongers, and the complicit press, which



IAEA/D. Calma

On March 16, 2003, a week after IAEA head Dr. Mohammad ElBaradei testified to the UN Security Council, debunking the Niger-Iraq nuclear weapons documents as “shoddy forgeries,” Vice President Dick Cheney directly challenged the ElBaradei testimony and attacked the credibility of the IAEA, in an interview with Tim Russert. “I disagree.... I think Mr. ElBaradei is frankly wrong,” Cheney blustered. Of course, we now know who was right and who was wrong. ElBaradei is shown here on Sept. 12, briefing reporters about his work on Iran’s nuclear program.

deliberately ignore the reality on the ground. “I have made it very clear that I don’t see today a clear and present danger in regard to the Iran nuclear program,” he said. Then he characterized the talk of war as “a lot of hype” which reminded him of a statement by George Orwell to the effect that “in a time of hype, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act.” ElBaradei commented: “If that is the case, I will continue, I can promise you, to be a revolutionary, by giving the truth in an objective and impartial manner.”

Warmongers of the World, Unite

Due to the fact that the war party did not succeed in Vienna, to corral the IAEA members into endorsing punitive measures against Iran, the Bush-Cheney Administration announced that it would hold a meeting on Sept. 21, to discuss “broadening UN sanctions against Iran for its refusal to suspend nuclear activity,” as State Department spokesman Sean McCormack put it. The meeting is to bring together the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, plus Germany, the so-called 5+1.

At the same time, the drumbeat for war became louder. Over the Sept. 15-16 weekend, the British press worked overtime to promote the cause of war in Southwest Asia. From the *Sunday Observer*, to the *Telegraph* and *Sunday Times*, the message delivered was unequivocal: “Bush Setting Up for War With Iran,” announced the *Telegraph*, while the *Observer* headlined, “Time Is Running Out To Avoid War With Iran.” The *Telegraph* retailed the line that the Pentagon had a list of 2,000 targets in Iran, adding that Cheney was

committed to deploying nuclear bunker-buster bombs against presumed Iranian nuclear sites. The press also referenced the provocative Israeli strikes over Syria, as part of the regional war process.

Then, on Sept. 16, a bombshell was dropped from Paris. French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner (notorious for his endorsement of military interventions for “humanitarian reasons”), issued a blunt statement that France must be prepared for a war with Iran. Although Prime Minister François Fillon later tried to water down the remarks, the message was clear. And no one could forget President Nicholas Sarkozy’s recent visit with the Bushes at Kennebunkport. Following his return to Paris, Sarkozy, according to source reports, started sending notes to various European capitals, that the message he had received from Bush was that war with Iran was inevitable.

The French intelligence leak-sheet, *Le Canard enchaîné*, lent credence to Kouchner’s remarks, reporting that the war against Iran is ready to go. It quotes a former CIA official who said that Israeli officers were lobbying the Pen-

tagon and White House for a military intervention. In addition, *Canard* reported that Antonov jets had been rented in Ukraine and Belarus to transport American military material from Iraq, Central Asia, and Djibouti to the Diego Garcia base in the Indian Ocean. The same source also signaled the arrival of stealth bombers to Qatari bases, reinforcing the armada there.

Kouchner’s remarks provoked a storm of criticism from those quarters seeking to avoid war, to wit, Russia and China. On Sept. 18, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Losyukov lodged his protest in an interview with *Vremya Novosti*. “Generally speaking,” he said, “bombings of Iran would be a bad move that would end with catastrophic consequences.” He added, “We are convinced that there is no military solution to the Iranian problem. It’s impossible. Besides, it is quite clear that there is no military solution to the Iraq problem either. But in the case of Iran, everything could be even more complicated.” He concluded by characterizing any U.S. military action as “a big diplomatic and political error.”

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov also spoke out against any military aggression, and the Chinese Foreign Ministry issued a statement saying the diplomatic course should be pursued. As reported by Itar-TASS, Lavrov said that Moscow was alarmed by reports of possible military action. He made these remarks, pointedly, at a joint press conference with visiting French Foreign Minister Kouchner himself. Lavrov stated: “The multiplying reports that some contemplate the introduction of military sanctions against

Iran cause Russia's alarm. It is hard to imagine what this can be fraught with for the region." He went on to say that "Russia remains committed to the agreement that the UN Security Council will not go beyond the bounds of supporting the IAEA; and that, "not a single problem has a military solution, and the same applies to Iran's nuclear program." Regarding renewed talk of sanctions, he said, "Once we have agreed to take collective action, and this agreement materializes as consensus work within the UN Security Council, what aims does the introduction of unilateral sanctions pursue then? We should never forget that part of the agreement, within the framework of the group of six international mediators, that provides for wider dialogue with Iran, including on issues of regional security."

Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Liu Jianchao lashed out at Kouchner's views the same day. Speaking to press, Liu said: "We should avoid threatening others with military actions," and, "We are opposed to military actions in dealing with international affairs. We believe that negotiations would be the best option meeting the interests of international community."

But, in cheerful disregard for such informed warnings, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, en route to the Mideast for a round of cosmetic peace diplomacy, aimed at pacifying Muslims in preparation for the Iran war, lashed out at those seeking a diplomatic solution. She targetted the IAEA and ElBaradei in no uncertain terms. Rice was quoted by Reuters, speaking to reporters on Sept. 19 as saying: "We believe the diplomatic track can work, but it has to work both with a set of incentives and a set of teeth. The IAEA is not in the business of diplomacy. The IAEA is a technical agency that has a board of governors of which the United States is a member." She went on to specify, "It is not up to anybody to diminish or to begin to cut back on the obligations that the Iranians have been ordered to take." Although she carefully tiptoed around Kouchner's statements indicating a war option with Iran, Rice stated, "The key here is that we are committed to a diplomatic track, but the President has not taken any of his options off the table."

Back to the Drawing Board

The real script being prepared to justify a new war, however, is the construction, that Iran is responsible for rising casualties among U.S. troops in Iraq, and for the general process of destruction of the entire nation. Iran, according to this new Hollywood-style fiction, has been sending in weapons, especially the deadly IEDs (improvised explosive devices), to kill American GIs, and training Shi'ite militias to fight the same occupying forces. Anyone with a brain in his head, or, lacking that, at least a functioning Internet connection with access to international news wires from the region, should know this is a classic fallacy of composition—or more simply stated, lying propaganda—of the same caliber as that churned out by Ahmed Chalabi or Tony Blair's teams, claiming that Saddam

Hussein's Iraq had the *Wunderwaffen* and could strike down the West in 45 minutes.

Dick Cheney (the man who organized the stovepiping of disinformation before the Iraq fiasco) is foremost among those propagating this line. On Sept. 14, Cheney delivered a speech in Grand Rapids, Mich., reiterating his harangue against Islamic terrorists, who, he claimed, seek to "establish a radical empire covering a region from Spain . . . to Indonesia," which thus justified the war on terrorism anywhere, everywhere, and forever. Indicating the next front to be opened, he stated: "Coalition forces [in Iraq] have . . . conducted operations against extremists supported by Iran—a country whose paramilitary organization traffics in lethal material." The same day, the indefatigable VP addressed the Central Command, Special Operations Command and the 6th Air Mobility Wing at the MacDill Air Force Base in Florida. Cheney, reading from the same prepared text, said, "Governments that support or harbor terrorists are complicit in the murder of the innocent, and must be held to account." Eager to clarify just whom he had in mind, Cheney again mentioned Iran.

The "paramilitary organization" in question, Cheney and Bush have elaborated on several occasions, is the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), whose al-Quds (Jerusalem) unit they accuse of being involved inside Iraq. Recent reports had it that the Bush-Cheney Administration was about to officially designate the IRGC as a terrorist organization, a move said to be preparatory to imposing sanctions on its financial assets in the U.S.A. Given that such an outfit probably does not have millions stashed away in accounts at JPMorgan Chase, or elsewhere in the United States, such a designation would serve rather to justify moving militarily against its alleged positions, inside Iran or Iraq.

This, in fact, is the new scenario on the drawing boards. Gen. Kevin Bergner had been deployed by Cheney to Iraq, precisely to cook up some "evidence" that the Iranians were providing weapons and training to anti-U.S. forces there. As reported by AFP, as well as Russian wires Gen. David Petraeus and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker both supported this charge, in their testimony before Congress on Sept. 11.

Dovetailing with this line, is the notion that Iran has been supporting the Shi'ite militia leader Moqtadar al-Sadr, in an internecine Shi'ite battle with the mainstream group, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), which is part of the ruling coalition in Baghdad. Although rivalries among Shi'ite groups do exist, the version presented by the Cheney crew is just short of preposterous. First, it must be stressed that the government of Shi'ite Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, with SCIRI support, has been aggressively attacked by Washington (and its new-found lapdog, Paris) as incompetent, and calls have been made for it to be replaced. Cheney's candidate to replace Maliki is Ayad Allawi, a man of

dubious connections, to say the least, but who would toe Cheney's line.

Secondly, regarding intra-Shi'ite conflicts, it must be noted that al-Sadr announced a unilateral ceasefire—a cessation of *all* armed activities, including against the occupying forces—for six months. This was read by Iranian sources who spoke with *EIR*, as an explicit sign of support by Sadr for the beleaguered government of Maliki. Finally, and most important, Maliki has been consulting with the supreme religious authority of all Shi'ites, the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, in an effort to stabilize the government. Maliki went to Najaf on Sept. 5 to meet with Sistani, and, following the talks, told the press: I discussed with him the case of the government. I asked his help in forming a government and nominating new ministers, or if there is the possibility to form a new government based on technocrats. Maliki did not indicate what the cleric's response had been, Reuters reported.

Sistani's role is crucial. His principled stance on the Iraq crisis, from the beginning of the invasion, has been that he would support a democratically elected parliament and government, in hopes that such a government would end the occupation. On several occasions, Sistani has met with different Shi'ite and other leaders, in an attempt to forge national reconciliation. For this, he has been rewarded with a series of assassinations of his top aides, the sixth, just weeks ago.

The talks between Sistani and Maliki were prompted also by a serious crisis that had ensued, following clashes in the Shi'ite holy city of Karbala on Aug. 28, which had been characterized as fighting between rival Shi'ite groups. Maliki said he was considering giving these cities a special status. "I am considering that holy shrines and sacred cities be peaceful places and disarmed of weapons and under the protection of the Iraqi army," Maliki said. Iranian sources told *EIR* that the clashes had been instigated by outside forces, not by any of the rival Shi'ite groups, as the press had claimed. Then, on Sept. 13, the *Tehran Times* came out with a report indicating that the force behind the massacres in Karbala was none other than the Mujaheddin el-Khalq (MKO/MEK), the Iranian terrorist organization which, after having been protected in Iraq by Saddam Hussein, is now protected by the U.S. occupying forces there. The *Tehran Times* political desk reported that three months prior to the massacre, "closed-circuit cameras captured a 23-year-old woman and 13-year-old youth who were gathering information about the various entrances to the Imam Hussein (AS) shrine. After their arrest, it became clear that they had been sent by the Mojahedin Khalq Organization (MKO) to locate ways to sneak into the shrine for terrorist operations."

The paper described how the attack was planned. Members of Moqtada Sadr's al-Mahdi militia, trying to enter the shrine, were prevented by security forces. Then, clashes began which led to 52 dead and 300 injured. "At first glance, it

seemed to be a clash between rival Shia groups seeking to monopolize power and another indication of the extreme insecurity in Iraq, especially in Shia areas," the paper commented. But, this is not the case. According to witnesses, large amounts of weapons were distributed to people near the Sadr group's position, giving the impression that that group had been handing out arms. Among the weapons were some made in Iran—to leave a clear lead. The Iraqi Interior Ministry has conducted investigations into the event, concluding that the MKO was behind the incident.

This incident, attributed by the Chenyacs to "Iranian-backed Shi'ite factions inside Iraq," is being pushed into the stove pipe of disinformation, to motivate a military attack against Iran.

On the military level, the preparations for confrontation with Iran are proceeding apace. In addition to the detailed information given by *Global Research*, noted above, there is the news, released by the *Wall Street Journal* on Sept. 10, that the U.S. is preparing to build a military base near the Iraq-Iran border, allegedly to intercept the flow of weapons into the country. Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch, commander of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division, was quoted saying the base would include fortified checkpoints as well as X-ray machines and explosives-detecting sensors. The base is to be placed just four miles from the Iranian border—a blatant provocation. The *Sunday Telegraph* on Sept. 16 reported that General Petraeus was going to visit London to brief Prime Minister Gordon Brown and others on such plans. Petraeus was expected, according to this account, to press the British to cancel their plans to withdraw 5,000 troops from Iraq, and instead, to deploy them along the border with Iran.

Iran's Version of the Olive Branch

In response to these preparations for yet another war, the Iranian leadership has been seeking ways to avoid a conflict which it knows would be catastrophic. In addition to Iran's overtures to the IAEA, Tehran has dispatched its diplomats to meet with key countries, like Russia and China.

Inside Iran, on Sept. 7, former President Hashemi Rafsanjani, now head of the Expediency Council, was elected head of the Assembly of Experts. Iranian sources have told *EIR* that Rafsanjani, a moderate, has the full support of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

At the same time, there has been a leadership change in the Revolutionary Guards Corps. Ali Khamenei, who is also Chief Commander of the Armed Forces, named Brig. Gen. Mohammad Ali Jafari as the new commander. In his first press conference in his new position, Jafari announced the military's readiness to face threats. "Relying on people's support that is organized within the military framework, great intelligence superiority, and its missile capabilities, the IRGC is fully ready to defeat any possible aggressive move."