

Cheney's Ouster May Be Last Chance To Stop World War III

by Jeffrey Steinberg

The latest word from the Democratic chicken-coop on Capitol Hill is that, if President Bush orders military strikes against Iran, both he and Vice President Dick Cheney will be immediately impeached. This is the newest prize-winning excuse-of-the-week being circulated by a number of leading Democratic lawmakers to their key constituents, who remain fit-to-be-tied over the Dems' capitulation to Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), who has declared, for months, that impeachment is "off the table."

Just when you thought that things couldn't get worse, Congressional Democrats, having failed to support Rep. Dennis Kucinich's (D-Ohio) H.R. 333, calling for the impeachment of Cheney, have now gone one step further towards capitulating to another devastating Cheney-Bush war, through legislative acts of treachery that have given the White House a green light to bomb Iran back to the Stone Age—even as internal political developments in Iran suggest that the war party in Tehran has been weakened.

On Sept. 26, by a vote of 76-22, the U.S. Senate approved an amendment to the defense authorization bill, calling on President Bush to list Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a "foreign terrorist organization," subject to a wide range of economic sanctions. Military experts consulted by *EIR* confirmed that, while the designation principally authorizes economic measures, the ambiguities of the Bush Administration's so-called "Global War on Terror" makes the Senate vote a de facto endorsement of military action.

As the result of the amendment, which was introduced by two of Cheney's leading Senate allies—Joe Lieberman (I-Ct.) and Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.)—President Bush can order a bombing campaign against Iran at any time, without having to go to Congress for further authorization, according to a number of constitutional scholars and military analysts.

While two particularly egregious sections of the amendment were removed after protests by Sen. James Webb (D-Va.), prompting some Senators to claim that the vote was not a de facto authorization to go to war, it remains to be seen whether the White House, particularly Cheney, will abide by that strict "interpretation."

The same day that the Senate was providing Bush and Cheney with their backhanded authorization for war, the House of Representatives was caving in similarly. By an overwhelming vote of 408-6, the House passed the Iran Sanctions Enabling Act, which would impose sanctions against any foreign or American companies investing more than \$20 million in Iran's energy sector. According to Inter-Press Services' Jim Lobe, the Iran Sanctions Enabling Act has been the number-one legislative priority of the Israeli Lobby since the beginning of the year.

Once again, the stage has been set for a Bush-Cheney preemptive war. As Lyndon LaRouche has been warning for months, the only sure-fire war avoidance option left is the immediate ouster of Dick Cheney from office.

Scenario for World War III

On Sept. 25, retired CIA officer Philip Giraldi penned a frightening piece for antiwar.com, which took up the potential consequences of a U.S. military confrontation with Iran. Under the provocative title "What World War III May Look Like," Giraldi spelled out an unfortunately realistic scenario for an escalation of military conflict between the United States and Iran, triggered by a low-level skirmish between U.S. and Iranian soldiers along the Iraq border. Under Giraldi's scenario, a full-scale war erupts between the United States and Iran, which soon spreads to Iraq, where Shi'ite insurgents engage in large-scale asymmetric combat with American sol-

diers, who finally have to shoot their way out of the country, at tremendous loss of life. Ultimately, the conflict spreads to the Eastern Mediterranean, Central Asia, and the Indian subcontinent; it sparks a war between India and Pakistan, a violent coup in Afghanistan, a war between Israel and Syria/Lebanon, rioting throughout the Muslim nations of the Asia Pacific region, and, ultimately, U.S. use of nuclear weapons, which draws both Russia and China to the brink of intervention. As Giraldi concludes, "World War III has begun."

While we are hopefully some distance away from such an Armageddon nightmare, the onrushing global financial meltdown, and the tensions and war-moves throughout Southwest Asia make it a most appropriate time to take seriously the warnings offered by the former CIA officer.

Furthermore, according to a variety of Washington military sources, the U.S. Air Force is stepping up war plans against Iran through a planning unit called Project Checkmate. Created in the 1970s to plan out strategic warfare against the Soviet Union, Project Checkmate was revived in the early 1990s, as the air-war planning unit for Operation Desert Storm. In June of this year, Project Checkmate was reactivated, to plan for future wars, targetted immediately at Iran, and, in the longer term, against North Korea and China. According to a Sept. 23, report in Rupert Murdoch's London *Sunday Times*, Project Checkmate is the Air Force's *primo* planning agency. Col. John Warden (USAF), who ran Project Checkmate in the 1990s, told the *Times* that the unit is vastly better situated to plan out the next war than the staff at the Central Command. "The Centcoms of this world are executorial—they don't have the staff, the expertise, or the responsibility to do the thinking that is needed before a country makes the decision to go to war. War planning is not just about bombs, airplanes and sailing boats," he told the *Times*' Sarah Baxter.

A wide array of Washington insiders interviewed by *EIR* confirm that there is a humongous faction fight inside the Bush Administration, over war on Iran. Vice President Cheney remains the chief proponent of preventive war, and Defense Secretary Robert Gates, with the backing of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the CIA, opposes it, arguing instead for robust diplomacy. One centerpiece of the fight is the still-pending National Intelligence Estimate on Iran's nuclear program. The report was, according to several sources, completed in February and submitted in draft to the White House; but it has been sent back to the intelligence community at least four times. The reason? The report concludes that Iran will not have the capacity to build a nuclear bomb until sometime in the next decade—after Bush-Cheney have left office.

Giving Ahmadinejad the Saddam Treatment

One of the more clearcut indications that the war party is still pressing for an attack on Iran came during the visit of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to New York City, to address the United Nations General Assembly. U.S. intelligence sources have confirmed that Ahmadinejad was sent to

the United States, under orders from the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Kamenei, to signal that *Iran is prepared to compromise and avoid war*. In appearances at Columbia University, on CBS-TV's "Sixty Minutes," and in a closed-circuit broadcast into the National Press Club in Washington, the Iranian President was repeatedly insulted and ridiculed. As one long-time Middle East observer put it, "Ahmadinejad was given the Saddam Hussein treatment," referring to an early 1990s Diane Sawyer interview with Saddam, in which he was publicly trashed, as a signal that the United States was turning towards war.

Just hours after Columbia University President Lee Bollinger delivered a 30-minute "bill of indictment" against the Iranian leader, in introducing him to a university audience, a group of scholars and journalists gathered at the Washington, D.C. campus of Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), to discuss the Iranian situation. One speaker, M.J. Rosenberg of the Israel Policy Forum, an organization created after the 1993 Oslo Accords to promote a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict, lamented that Dr. Bollinger's behavior had reminded him of "the Soviet Union."

The forum was convened to release a new book by SAIS graduate Dr. Trita Parsi, on the complex and treacherous relationship among Israel, Iran, and the United States. Dr. Parsi and the other speakers highlighted the recent signals by the government in Tehran, that it wishes to resolve all the issues of conflict with Washington, through diplomacy and compromise, not military conflict. The re-emergence of Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, as a counterweight to President Ahmadinejad; the recent progress in Iranian negotiations with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) over Iran's nuclear energy program; and the Iranian government's release of a number of Iranian-American dual citizens from custody, were all cited as evidence of a turn in Iranian diplomacy towards the United States. Furthermore, Dr. Parsi cited the May 2003 communiqué between then-Iranian President Seyyed Mohammad Khatami and then-U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, offering comprehensive bilateral talks "with no preconditions," as evidence that Iran has been seeking a diplomatic rapprochement with Washington for a long time. That May 2003 offer was flat-out rejected by the Bush White House, with Cheney and then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld most aggressively opposing any talk with Iran.

EIR's own sources emphasize that Iran's top leadership has woken up to the fact that at least some factions inside the Bush White House are intent on a military confrontation with Iran, before leaving office, and that the Iranians are attempting to demonstrate that they are prepared to negotiate.

It is in this context that LaRouche has again warned Congress that its failure to force Dick Cheney's ouster from office could go down as the fatal act of cowardice that destroyed the American Republic.