

London's Man Cheney Blows Up Iraq, To Trigger War on Iran

by Jeffrey Steinberg

In the wake of the April 9-10 Capitol Hill testimony by Gen. David Petraeus and Ambassador to Baghdad Ryan Crocker, the Bush Administration, according to senior U.S. intelligence sources, has ordered American forces inside Iraq, to escalate the military campaign against Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr and his Madhi Army. Lyndon LaRouche promptly denounced this action as totally psychotic, and guaranteed to blow up the Iraqi situation, which is already fragile, at best.

According to the sources, U.S. military forces will increasingly take the lead in battling the Shi'ite militia in Baghdad's Sadr City neighborhood, and in the southern region of Basra. This, LaRouche warned, is guaranteed to throw Iraq into further chaos. "Is President Bush actually psychotic?" he asked.

Reliable sources in Baghdad and Washington trace the provocation against al-Sadr back to Vice President Dick Cheney's recent visit to Baghdad, during his ten-day tour of the region. In his meetings with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, according to the sources, Cheney pressed for a military assault on the Madhi Army, even though a ceasefire between rival Shi'ite factions had been recently extended. U.S. intelligence sources report that the combined Iraqi-American-British military operations aim to crush al-Sadr's militia long before the scheduled provincial elections in October. Al-Sadr's forces are in control of Basra, and by all projections, would likely win the provincial vote, further undermining the Bush Administration-backed al-Maliki coalition, which also includes the al-Hakim SCIRI (Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq) group. All three Shi'ite factions—al-Maliki, al-Hakim, and al-Sadr—enjoy the backing of Iran.

Shifting Targets

The U.S. is counting on Saudi Arabia to continue pouring money into the Sunni tribes, in the Anbar and Diyala provinces, to prevent a new outbreak of anti-American insurgency in that part of the country. This was evident in the testimony of both General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker, who downplayed the threat coming from the Sunni al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), while focusing on the growing threat coming from Iran. However, this reliance on Saudi Arabia to maintain the calm in the Sunni regions of Iraq is fraught with danger. It is known, according to U.S. military and intelligence sources, that the Saudi support is not reliable, particularly as the Saudis view the U.S. support of the Shi'ite al-Maliki government as evidence that Washington will back a Shi'ite domination of Iraq.

Furthermore, as one senior U.S. intelligence official emphasized to *EIR*, the "900-pound gorilla in the room" is the role of Saudi intelligence in the 9/11 attacks, a role that the Bush Administration has gone to great lengths to hide from the public, but which is recognized among some leading American intelligence officials. They bristle at the idea that the U.S. can trust the Saudis to genuinely work for American interests, in bankrolling the Sunni tribes in Iraq. It is widely believed that, in response to continuing American support for a Shi'ite majority government in Baghdad, and a belief that a new U.S. administration will withdraw the majority of U.S. troops from Iraq, Saudi Arabia is building up a Sunni buffer state in the bordering areas of Iraq.

The sources add that, within the Pentagon, both Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, and a majority of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, oppose the acceleration of U.S. counterinsurgency operations against al-Sadr. For one thing, they are concerned

about other threats to the stability of the larger region, including the prospects of a major escalation in fighting in Afghanistan and the bordering regions of Pakistan. In recent testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, two retired U.S. Army generals, Barry McCaffrey and William Odom, had strongly asserted that the Iraq situation could not be settled militarily, and called for a U.S. troop withdrawal, accompanied by a new U.S. diplomatic initiative, including direct talks with Iran and Syria.

Gates has personally promoted diplomatic contact with al-Sadr, emphasizing that the cleric represents a large number of Shi'ites in the south of the country, and in major parts of the capital city of Baghdad. Al-Sadr's family is one of the leading Shi'ite families in Iraq; his father and uncle were revered clerics, and the political movement he leads has a long history there, including during the worst periods of the Saddam Hussein regime, when many other Shi'ite factions fled the country. Crocker acknowledged this profile, during questioning from Senators.

Gates and the Joint Chiefs' opposition to the recent military provocation is part of their ongoing battle with Vice President Cheney, who is committed to bombing Iran before the administration leaves office. The clock is running out, and Cheney is escalating the drive to get President Bush to okay military strikes against targets inside Iran, according to U.S. intelligence sources.

One senior U.S. intelligence source told *EIR* that Cheney has recently scored two tactical victories over the Defense Secretary: The Vice President successfully sabotaged Gates' efforts to advance U.S.-Russian cooperation, during President Bush's recent meeting with outgoing Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Russian leader's vacation home in Sochi; and Cheney's order to al-Maliki, to attack the Madhi Army preempted Gates' push for U.S. diplomatic outreach to al-Sadr.

Made in London

LaRouche painted an even more dire strategic picture, one that is largely missed by American policymakers and intelligence officials. The entire Iraq fiasco was a "Made in London" operation, in which then-British Prime Minister Tony Blair played a dominant role in drawing the United States into the Iraq invasion and ensuing quagmire. The British, then pulled their forces out of Basra in 2007, setting the stage for the Shi'a-on-Shi'a confrontation, into which the United States has now been drawn. The psychotic policy of the Bush White House, LaRouche concluded, borders on treason—although President Bush, personally, could make a very compelling case that he is not guilty, by virtue of insanity. LaRouche suggested that medical records from the President's year-long drug rehabilitation treatment for cocaine addiction, while he was purportedly serving in the Texas Air National Guard, during the Vietnam War period, might assist in his insanity defense.

As the result of the Bush Administration walking into the

British trap, which is part of a larger British drive to orchestrate a world war between the trans-Atlantic powers versus Asia, LaRouche warned, we now have both Russia and China preparing strategic asymmetric warfare against the West. India is headed in the same direction, and even Japan will be forced, albeit reluctantly, to join with the rest of Asia. Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda has announced that he will travel to Moscow on April 25-26, to meet with Putin and his successor Dmitri Medvedev.

"We are staring at World War III," LaRouche warned, "orchestrated from London. And most so-called strategic thinkers in Washington are clueless about the British role."

Rear-Guard Efforts vs. Cheney and London

In the context of Cheney's resurgent power, and Bush's deteriorating mental condition, a number of admittedly rear-guard efforts have been initiated, from within U.S. institutional circles, to avert a preventive strike against Iran.

In recent weeks, former U.S. Undersecretary of State Thomas Pickering, one of the most senior and respected U.S. foreign service officers, co-authored a proposal to break the deadlock around Iran's nuclear program. In the March 20 issue of the *New York Review of Books*, Pickering, William Luers (president of the UN Association of the U.S.A.), and MIT nuclear scientist Jim Walsh called for Iran to participate in an international consortium for the production of nuclear fuel—under tight International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) supervision. The proposal has been favorably received in Tehran, according to official Iranian government statements; however, the Iranian government will not issue any official response, unless the proposal is formally presented by the U.S. government or the United Nations.

On April 14, Pickering gave an interview with the London daily, the *Independent*, in which he provided some details of a five-year diplomatic back-channel process between the United States and Iran, on the nuclear issue. Pickering identified the UN Association of the U.S.A. and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), headed by former UN weapons inspector in Iraq, Rolf Ekeus, as sponsors of the talks, which took place around the world, but not in the U.S.A. or Iran.

It is noteworthy that the Pickering secret diplomacy began right after Iran offered the United States a "grand bargain" of comprehensive diplomatic talks, including on the nuclear issue, in early May 2003—soon after the U.S. invasion of Iraq. At the time, Cheney and then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld rejected the Iranian initiative outright, asserting that U.S. policy was "regime change."

Rumsfeld is gone from the administration, but Cheney has eight months more to convince President Bush to order Stratcom to launch "Global Strike" against Iran. Were Cheney to succeed, all of Southwest Asia would be thrown into the kind of permanent chaos that Cheney's string-pullers in London so desperately want.