

The Committee to Bomb Iraq

Project for a New American Empire

By Mike Zmolek

Current tactical plans for a US invasion of Iraq are designed to shatter Iraq “physically, emotionally and psychologically.” This is according military strategist Harlan Ulman, whose concept of the “shock and awe” approach to invasion will be, in his words: “rather like the nuclear weapons at Hiroshima - not taking days or weeks but minutes.”

The United States Air Force plans to assault Iraq with more the 3,000 precision-guided bombs and missiles in the first 48 hours of an invasion of Iraq, including up to 800 cruise missiles, twice the number that were used in the entire 40 day bombing campaign in 1991. According to one Pentagon official, “There will not be a safe place in Baghdad. The sheer size of this has never been seen before, never been contemplated before.”

Who is dreaming up this monstrous attack? Do names like Richard Perle, Newt Gingrich, Bob Kerrey, Jeane Kirkpatrick or George Schultz ring a bell? These are some of the members of the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq (CLI), a front-group for Washington’s pro-war lobby. CLI’s board is drawn primarily from officials who are deeply implicated in serving the military-industrial complex. CLI chairman Bruce Jackson is a former Vice President of defense contracting giant Lockheed Martin. Chairing CLI’s advisory board is former Reagan-era Secretary of State George Schultz, current board member and past president of the Bechtel Corporation, a corporate giant in defense, nuclear and oil contracting, and one-time supplier of parts for Saddam Hussein’s chemical weapons. At least fifteen of CLI’s members have served in the Department of Defense, many as members of the Defense Policy Board.

CLI’s mission statement advocates “freeing the Iraqi people from tyranny,” supporting the reconstruction of Iraq’s economy and supporting the establishment of democratic institutions in Iraq. While these goals may be laudable, the fact that the defense industries represented by the lobbyists that stack CLI’s board stand to profit directly from an invasion of Iraq presents a clear and present conflict of interest.

The core of CLI is drawn from two super-hawkish think-tanks: The American Enterprises Institute (AEI) and its offshoot: Project for the New American Century (PNAC). At least six members of CLI are drawn from AEI, among them such infamous characters as Richard ‘the Prince of Darkness’ Perle, Jeane ‘double standard’ Kirkpatrick and Newt ‘Mr. Ethics’ Gingrich. The AEI/CLI pundits have recently been publishing articles screaming for an invasion of Iraq, with titles such as: “The US Must Strike At Saddam Hussein” (Richard Perle), “Act Now: Get Rid of Saddam” (Danielle Pletka), “Strike Sooner Rather than Later” (Newt Gingrich).

AEI’s primary sponsor is the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, from which AEI received over a million dollars in 2001 alone. By way of a program known as the New Citizenship Project, Inc., PNAC has also received hundreds of thousands of dollars from the Bradley Foundation. The Allen-Bradley Company of Milwaukee, a maker of electronic and radio components, was sold in 1985 to Rockwell International, a leading defense and aerospace conglomerate. The sale caused the assets of the Bradley Foundation to soar, catapulting it to the status it enjoys today as the premier right-wing foundation in the US, and a major force behind campaigns against affirmative action, and in favor of welfare reform and school vouchers.

AEI has received lesser amounts from the Olin Foundation (funds from the Olin family's chemicals and munitions fortune) and the Sarah Scaife Foundation (funds from the Mellon industrial, oil and banking fortune), among others. The Scaife Foundation is one of the top four conservative foundations in the US. At one time its largest single holding was stock in the Gulf Oil Corporation.

The basic idea driving Project for the New American Century is that the US is faced with an unprecedented opportunity to expand its power and influence by military means as the sole superpower of the globe. PNAC is intimately linked with CLI: PNAC's Chairman Gary Schmitt is CLI's Secretary, and PNAC co-founders William Kristol and Robert Kagan sit on CLI's board.

Published in September 2000 (prior to the Bush inauguration), PNAC's manifesto is entitled "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategies, Forces and Resources for a New Century." This report anticipates, step-by-step, the foreign policy of President George W. Bush: withdrawal from the ABM treaty; development of small, tactical nuclear weapons; ending the self-imposed moratorium on US nuclear testing; increasing the defense budget; and permanent allocation of US forces around the globe as "constabulary missions" (global policing).

The report's core policy recommendation is to "Fight and decisively win multiple, simultaneous, major theater wars." Topping the target list are three old enemies that previously were at war with the US and survived intact: the regimes of Iraq, Iran and North Korea. Regarding "regime change" in Iraq, the report makes US priorities explicit: ". . . the United States has for decades sought to play a more permanent role in Gulf regional security. While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein." This sheds light on why the Bush administration is pushing to go to war even when Iraq has agreed to weapons inspections.

Additionally, while control of Iraq's oil is certainly a motive for invading Iraq, the report also proposes military expansion in regions where oil is not a part of the equation. Thus, according to author Steve Fine, "the resource is the relative factor while the military policy of expanding bases remains the constant." Reading this document, it becomes apparent that the primary goal of invading Iraq is the expansion of more US military bases in the region, in order to turn not just Iraq but the entire Middle East into an American protectorate.

Posing today as the would-be "liberators" of Iraq are the same far right Pentagon and military contractor superstars who supported the Ba'ath Party's coming to power in a military coup in July 1968, who helped arm both sides in the Iran-Iraq War, who supplied the components for making weapons of mass destruction to Saddam Hussein, and who showed no mercy to the Iraqi people during 12 years of economic and social devastation under sanctions. Their explicit agenda is the expansion and preservation of US military pre-eminence across the globe. Their corporations will profit directly from this invasion, whilst US taxpayers will be asked to bear the cost.

The Iraqi people deserve better "allies" than this. Americans who genuinely want to promote freedom and democratic institutions in Iraq should abhor the level of violence the US is once again preparing to inflict on the Iraqi people.



Note: An alternate (longer) version of this article with references is available on line at: www.endthewar.org/cli1.htm

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