

'Liberating Iraq' with Nuclear Weapons

We are at a dangerous crossroads: in the weeks leading up to a planned invasion of Iraq, President Bush has threatened to use nuclear weapons, while at the same time reassuring the Iraqi people in his State of the Union Address that the day Saddam Hussein is "removed from power will be the day of your liberation."

Washington, London and Tel Aviv are working hand-in-glove on the nuclear option, which involves not only the deployment of America's 'mini-nukes' but also of conventional nuclear warheads against Iraq, such as Britain's 'Trident' and Israel's 'City-buster'. *"President George W. Bush has already warned the Iraqi dictator that if he uses either chemical or biological weapons against allied troops, the response would be nuclear."* In the words of a White House spokesman: *"the US will use whatever means necessary to protect us and the world from a holocaust."* (Quoted on NBC 26 Jan. 2003).

Tony Blair's position on nukes is consistent with that of George W. In the words of his Defense Secretary Geoff Hoon: *"They [Iraq] can be absolutely confident that in the right conditions we would be willing to use our [Trident] nuclear weapons."*

Meanwhile, in a leaked 'secret' plan, the Pentagon has outlined specific Iraqi sites, which could be targeted with so-called 'tactical nuclear weapons' or 'mini-nukes'. Routine computer simulations are currently underway at the Pentagon *"focussing on the resultant 'collateral damage' including the spread of radioactive dust... If the computer tests suggest an 'acceptable' civilian casualty rate, Washington would presumably not be squeamish about using bunker-busting [mini] nukes."* (Times of India, 4 Feb. 2003). As one commentator put it: *"we're going after Iraq because of its weapons of mass destruction and then saying we might hit them with ours."*

In a Strangelovian logic, nuclear weapons are viewed as a means 'to preventing a holocaust' and 'liberating Iraq'. The Pentagon has intimated, in this regard, that the 'mini-nukes' (with a yield of approximately 5,000 tons) are harmless to civilians because the explosions 'take place under ground'. Each of these 'mini-nukes', nonetheless, constitutes – in terms of explosion and potential radioactive fallout – a significant fraction of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. Britain's nuclear warheads, on the other hand, have an explosive capacity which is six times that of Hiroshima. They could be launched against Iraq from Britain's Trident submarines which are currently patrolling the Persian Gulf.

While debate regarding Washington's 'pre-emptive' nuclear option lies buried in the inner pages of the newspapers, the headlines and news tabloids are cluttered with thousands of repetitive stories, not to mention op-eds and editorials on Iraq's 'weapons of mass destruction'. (See p. 20.)

Moreover, in the weeks leading up to the invasion of Iraq, the media and its pundits have zeroed in on the alleged 'links' between Al Qaeda and Iraq. Baghdad is now accused of providing biological weapons to Islamic terrorists, who, 'sooner or later' will be using them in terrorist attacks against the US.

In early February, Secretary of State Colin Powell delivered his controversial UN address, pointing to *"the sinister nexus between Iraq and the Al Qaeda terrorist network."* Barely mentioned by the US media, Powell's justification for 'the use of force' was, in part, based on a phony 'British intelligence report', which turned out to have been plagiarised, copied and pasted off

the internet, from an article written by a graduate student. (See p. 15.)

Meanwhile, in the US and around the world, the anti-war movement has gained impetus following the January 18th and February 15th mass rallies. In the UN Security Council, France, Russia, China and Germany signified their firm opposition to the Bush administration's war plans. A further slap in the face came when chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix, reporting to UN Security Council on February 14th, politely dismissed the evidence presented by Colin Powell.

Fake Terror Alert

The propaganda machine, not to mention US diplomacy, had gone disastrously wrong. The day following Colin Powell's flopped presentation to the UN Security Council, the Bush administration declared a 'high risk', 'Orange Code' Terror Alert. Disinformation was now being fabricated in a totally improvised fashion. Anti-aircraft missiles were immediately deployed around Washington. The media became inundated with stories on Iraqi support to an impending Al Qaeda attack: *"The nation is now on Orange Alert because intelligence intercepts and simple logic both suggest that our Islamic enemies know the best way to strike at us is through terrorism on U.S. soil."* (New York Post, 11 Feb. 2003).

A fabricated story emanating from the CIA on so-called 'radioactive dirty bombs' had, in fact, been planted in various news chains (ABC News, 13 Feb. 2003). Sec. Powell warned that *"it would be easy for terrorists to cook up radioactive 'dirty' bombs to explode inside the U.S. ... 'How likely it is, I can't say... But I think it is wise for us to at least let the American people know of this possibility.'"* (ABC News, 9 Feb. 2003). Meanwhile, network TV warned that, *"American hotels, shopping malls or apartment buildings could be al Qaeda's targets as soon as next week...."*

The hidden agenda was not only to link Baghdad to Al Qaeda, the intent was to create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, which would muster unbending support for President Bush and weaken the anti-war protest movement. (See p. 46.) Following the announcement, tens of thousands of Americans rushed to purchase duct tape, plastic sheets and gas-masks.

It later transpired that the terrorist alert was fabricated by the CIA, in all likelihood in consultation with the upper echelons of the State Department (ABC News, 13 Feb. 2003). The FBI, for the first time, had pointed its finger at the CIA. While tacitly acknowledging that the alert was a fake, Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge decided to maintain the 'Orange Code' alert: *"Despite the fabricated report, there are no plans to change the threat level. Officials said other intelligence has been validated and that the high level of precautions is fully warranted."* (ABC News, 13 Feb. 2003).

A few days later, in another failed propaganda initiative, a mysterious Osama bin Laden audio tape was presented by Sec. Colin Powell to the US Congress as 'evidence' that the Islamic terrorists "are making common cause with a brutal dictator". (US official quoted in *The Toronto Star*, 12 Feb. 2003). Curiously, the audio tape was in Colin Powell's possession prior to its broadcast by the Al Jazeera TV Network. (*Ibid.*)