

A U.S. Cabal Pulling America to War

By Conn Hallinan

Sometime this fall, probably before the mid-term elections, the U.S. will probably be at war with Iraq. But why are we headed to war in the Mideast? Not because Iraq is engaged in terrorism. According to the CIA, it isn't. Not because Iraqi arms threaten our security. According to most arms inspectors, Iraq is essentially disarmed.

No, it will happen because more than a decade ago a small cabal of political heavyweights in the administration of George Bush the First, who now also run the foreign and defense policy of George Bush II, sat down and drew up a blueprint to rule the world. *X-Files* fantasies?

Their names should be familiar: Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, Secretary of State Colin Powell, and Lewis "Scooter" Libby, Vice President Cheney's chief of staff. Their goal is to "shape" the world to "preclude the rise of another global rival for the indefinite future," in the words of one of the group's leading thinkers, Zalmay Khalizad (now special envoy to Afghanistan).

The tone of these people is chilling. Our allies are cast as a bunch of spineless whiners, international agreements are dismissed as straitjackets, and the "enemy" portrayed as a mob of wogs, easily scattered by a show of cold steel. In his briefing of senior White House staff on the Mideast, Bernard Lewis of Princeton (another "team" member) argued that "in that part of the world, nothing matters more than resolute force and will."

Homework was undoubtedly the collected works of Cecil Rhodes and Rudyard Kipling.

When Bush addressed the nation Sept. 20, he called on the American people and our allies to join a "war on terrorism." But in the intervening six months, the goals of that war have

changed drastically. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice told Lemann that the policy was not just to go after terrorists, but to prevent the accumulation of weapons of mass destruction in "the hands of irresponsible states."

This is a handy little distinction, because on Feb. 5 the CIA said there was no evidence that Iraq has engaged in any terrorism directed at the United States or its allies. And while the administration has trumpeted that Iraq blocked all arms inspections three years ago, few people outside of Washington (except British Prime Minister Tony Blair) actually think that Iraq has such weapons.

As Scott Ritter, former head of the UN Special Commission on Concealment says, "It was possible as early as 1997 to determine that, strictly from a qualitative standpoint, Iraq had been disarmed."

Would it make a difference if Iraq agreed to inspections? Nope. When asked that question by CNN, Powell replied that "even then the United States believes the Iraqi people would be better served with a new kind of leadership."

The latest rationale for invasion is that Iraq has ties with al Qaeda, a charge based more on tortured logic than intelligence. CIA Director George Tenet recently told Congress that, while there was no evidence that such ties exist, the "mutual antipathy" that the two had for the United States "suggests that tactical cooperation between the two is possible." If one can find two flimsier words than "suggests" and "possible" to launch a war, it would be great to hear them.

The lack of evidence linking Iraq to terrorism is deeply disturbing to our allies. Even America's strongest ally, Britain, is split on an invasion. More than 122 Labor members of Parliament have signed a petition opposing any attack. By

shifting the target from terrorism to weapons that might fall into the hands of terrorists, virtually any country becomes a target. The administration has already lined up Syria, Iran, Somalia, and Sudan once Iraq is toppled. That invading any of these countries would violate international law and the UN charter doesn't faze these people.

U.S. foreign policy has been hijacked by a group of unelected unilateralists who seem determined to drag America into an endless morass of brushfire wars to achieve the goal of unrestrained power. They are doing this without consulting with Congress or the American people, and unless citizens act now to hold them accountable, our world is going

to get a lot more dangerous than it already is.

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