

Genocide against Iraq proceeds on schedule

by Joseph Brewda

Since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on Aug. 2, U.S. President George Bush has repeatedly redefined U.S. military policy toward the Gulf. With victory against Iraq declared as of Feb. 27, the Bush regime is beginning to redefine its conditions for postwar peace.

The first pretext for the deployment of U.S. troops into Saudi Arabia in early August was the supposed need to defend that kingdom from imminent Iraqi invasion. On Nov. 8, Bush redefined the mission to be the "liberation" of Kuwait through "offensive operations." Then, on Nov. 22, Bush told U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia that preventing Iraq from developing a nuclear bomb was yet another U.S. aim. By the time that the U.S. began ground operations on Feb. 23, the assassination or overthrow of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was another administration objective. Earlier, in September, Secretary of State James Baker said that the real purpose of the deployment was U.S. "jobs."

But while the professed objectives have changed, the war schedule that the Bush administration imposed on itself did not. Speaking on ABC News "This Week with David Brinkley" Feb. 24, Secretary of State Baker reported that the date for the onset of the ground war had been decided long ago. The administration, he said, did not change its schedule despite any of the Iraqi withdrawal proposals of previous days, including those following the dramatic negotiations in Moscow.

According to unidentified senior administration officials cited in the *Washington Post* on Feb. 25, the precise date and hour of the initiation of the ground war—Feb. 23 at 8:00 p.m.—had been planned well before Feb. 17.

On Feb. 18, people throughout the world became hopeful that peace could be secured, after the Soviets unexpectedly began sponsoring negotiations with Iraq on a possible withdrawal from Kuwait. In response to questions about these negotiations, the White House issued a statement that day saying that the military plan "remains on schedule." On Feb. 21, only hours after the Soviets announced that Iraq had agreed to withdraw, Bush spokesman Marlin Fitzwater again stated that "there is no change at this point in our schedule for prosecuting the war."

Even Iraq's agreement to withdraw from Kuwait within three weeks—as announced Feb. 22—did not cause George Bush to delay the start of the ground war by even one hour. Bush denounced the proposed withdrawal as "unacceptable,"

simply because Iraq would not withdraw in one week. Meanwhile, in yet another added U.S. condition, Pentagon spokesmen stated that day that "unconditional withdrawal" meant soldiers abandoning all weapons and walking back to Iraq—even before a cease-fire.

An impossible peace

Now that the Anglo-Americans have won the war, they are now changing their conditions for peace.

On Feb. 27, Defense Secretary Richard Cheney told an American Legion gathering in Washington that "even after we've achieved our military objectives, even after we've destroyed his offensive military capability and expelled his forces from Kuwait, liberated Kuwait—the world will still be vitally interested in the future course of events with respect to the kinds of activities and policies pursued by the government in Baghdad."

That intentionally vague mandate was partially elaborated on later that day by White House spokesman Fitzwater. The United Nations resolution calling for "peace and stability" in the Gulf region, Fitzwater explained, actually authorizes the victors to reduce Iraq's military forces. "Assuming that the U.N. resolutions are met, that would require that we continue this effort to degrade his military structure." With most of the Iraqi military shattered, it is difficult to understand what the administration means, except near-total disarmament.

On Feb. 28, the jingoistic *Washington Times* reported that officials of the Judge Advocate's office of the U.S. military are already in Kuwait "compiling evidence that could be used to prosecute Saddam" for war crimes. Earlier in the week, Fitzwater had reported that "we continue to keep track of evidence" on supposed war crimes, "that would be useful in that purpose."

That economic sanctions will continue against Iraq seems to be agreed upon by the imperial powers. On Feb. 26, the London *Financial Times* asserted, "Mr. Saddam must be given no room to flourish again. This implies a continuation of sanctions." Moreover, all the U.S. press are screaming that Iraq must pay reparations for the reconstruction of Kuwait, a bill of some \$65 billion. *Financial Times* columnist Robert Goodman gloated on Feb. 26 that it would take Iraq "a good 15 years of oil earnings just to cover the reparations"—even if its economic infrastructure were intact.

Even conservative U.S. estimates put the war damage to Iraqi infrastructure at over \$100 billion, not counting tens of thousands of civilian casualties. Every electrical power station in Baghdad has been intentionally destroyed, while the city's available water supply is less than one-tenth of what it was before Bush's war.

More frank than their American counterparts, some British newspapers have reported that the targeting of economic infrastructure, a departure from all previous Middle East wars, was the centerpiece of coalition strategy against Iraq.