

Iran may be next to get 'Desert Storm' treatment

by Joseph Brewda

A few days after Bill Clinton won the U.S. presidential election on Nov. 3, government officials and establishment mouthpieces in Washington, London, and Paris discovered that Iran was a growing threat to the Persian Gulf region. Much attention was suddenly focused upon the fact that Iran had occupied the United Arab Emirates' Persian Gulf island of Abu Musa—in August. Then there was the concern over the Iranian purchase of two Russian submarines and a Chinese nuclear reactor, purchases that had been public knowledge months earlier. Since then, a steady stream of articles, pronouncements, and threats indicate that Iran is being set up for the "Iraq treatment." The main target of the operation, however, would be not Iran, but Europe.

The incoming Clinton administration has already made clear that its main concern will be domestic economic policy. For Clinton's advisers, this concern necessarily translates into aggressive trade war, especially against Germany and Japan. The 1990 war against Iraq occurred for similar reasons. U.S. President George Bush and then-British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher needed to be able to interdict Mideast oil supplies by occupying the Arabian oil fields, in order to blackmail newly reunified Germany against adopting independent economic and financial policies. The type of aggressive financial and economic measures against Japan and Europe that the Anglo-Americans now envision, requires even greater blackmail capability to be successful. The occupation or destruction of Iran's oil fields is one way the Anglo-Americans may strike.

Targeting Iranian industry

Some important features of the campaign against Iran first became evident during the second week of November, when it was reported that the U.S. had launched a campaign to cut off Iran from advanced technology imports. The Bush

administration convened a meeting of the Group of Seven (G-7) countries—the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy, Canada, Japan, and Germany—to discuss an embargo against Iran on purchases of "dual-use" technology, or technology with both civilian and military industrial applications. This was the first time such a meeting was called to discuss a particular country, and the alleged motivation was that Iran is developing weapons of mass destruction. "New revelations about how western dual-use exports helped Saddam Hussein turn Iraq into a dangerous military power appear almost daily," said the *New York Times* on Nov. 16. "It's important not to make the same mistake with Iran." The paper reported that Washington intended to place Iran on the same COCOM list of prohibited exports that it had earlier used against the Warsaw Pact countries.

The *Washington Post* reported on Nov. 17 that the U.S. government had successfully blocked Iranian efforts to obtain equipment from Argentina and China, which would have allowed it to convert natural uranium into "precursor forms of highly enriched uranium used in nuclear weapons." Zeev Eytan, an official at the Tel Aviv Center for Strategic Studies, also told the British news agency Reuters that he and other Israeli experts believed Iran would have nuclear weapons within a few years. "If they obtained plutonium, uranium, or experts from the defunct Soviet Union or the Asian republics, this could shorten the road to the bomb," Eytan said.

Earlier, on Nov. 13, Japanese Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe declared that such an embargo, covering everything from computers to chemical complexes to steel plants, was unacceptable. "We cannot agree 100% with the United States," he told a news conference, "because our ties [with Iran] go a long way back and it is different from Iran-U.S. relations."

Japan, like Germany, has major investments in Iran de-

signed to aid Iran's reindustrialization program, while simultaneously allowing for needed oil exports to both oil-dependent states. For example, the Japanese, together with the Italians and Russians, are developing a joint project worth over \$1.7 billion in the Iranian half of a giant offshore gas field that Iran shares with Qatar. Germany, Iran's largest trading partner, has just completed a \$2 billion power plant in Iran. Its exports and investments in Iran rose by 50% in 1991 alone. Through such investments, Iranian steel production increased 34% in the first seven months of 1992, the fastest rate of growth in steel production in the world at present.

Media blitz on 'terrorism'

Fanning the flames, the U.S. media began playing up claims of Iran's supposedly unique sponsorship of international terrorism. Anglo-American agencies began encouraging Mideast countries to make similar charges (of varying accuracy) against Iran. Cable News Network reported on Nov. 16 that the U.S. had secretly indicted several suspects in the kidnaping and killing of Americans abroad in the 1980s. Quoting U.S. intelligence sources, CNN said that the Justice Department had tracked down many of these suspects to Iran.

On Nov. 14, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who played an important role in the 1990 war against Iraq, denounced Iran in unusually strong language before the Egyptian Parliament. "Iran should completely stop intervening in the internal affairs of Arab and Islamic countries," he said, accusing it of being behind a wave of shootings of western tourists in southern Egypt. Egypt had previously accused Sudan of responsibility for the incidents. That weekend, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres met with Mubarak in Cairo. Afterwards, Peres announced that he is also worried about Iran's ambitions and intentions in the Mideast.

Responding to the charges, the *Teheran Times*, a mouthpiece of the Iranian Foreign Ministry, raved on Nov. 16 that "Iran will never fire the first bullet at its neighbors but rather defend them . . . but if any fire comes at the Islamic Republic, then the Egyptian President and the other mercenaries will not be alive to defend the oil-rich states."

Also on Nov. 16, the Algerian government cut its diplomatic staff in Teheran to a "symbolic level" and ordered Iran to cut its mission in Algiers to the same level. "For more than a year, the Islamic Republic of Iran has led a campaign of interference and open hostility against Algeria and its institutions," a Foreign Ministry statement reads, referring to Iranian support for the outlawed Islamic Salvation Front, which almost took over the Algerian government last year.

Accompanying all these charges were hectic diplomatic visits: Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher met with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on Nov. 16; the same day, the German Army's inspector general, Gen. Klaus Naumann, met with Israeli Chief of Staff Gen. Ehud Barak. A few days later, German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel

went to Israel to promise that Germany would combat growing anti-Semitism. That week, French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas was touring the Gulf, warning of Iran's excessive armaments and occupation of Abu Musa Island, while selling arms himself. "The danger from Iran," was a reported theme of talks between Clinton and Bush on Nov. 19.

The destabilization of Iraq

One important feature of this media blitz is to prepare a new round of destabilization of Iraq intended to overthrow Saddam Hussein. By depicting Iran as the new threat, Anglo-American planners apparently hope to convince Iraq, and Arabs generally, that Iraq will be preserved and even backed, in order to prepare for a new offensive against Iran. The story goes like this: The Anglo-Americans are really serious about hitting Iran; Iraq is the only regional power capable of inflicting damage on the ground; therefore, the Anglo-Americans will have to lift their pressure on Iraq.

In other words, the same channels that duped Iraq into going to war with Iran in 1980, and into invading Kuwait in 1990, are at it again.

In the next phase of this destabilization, these channels will attempt to negotiate a post-Saddam succession, whereby Iraq's now endangered territorial integrity would supposedly be preserved in return for Saddam's ouster.

To aid this campaign, Anglo-American and Israeli media began surfacing the line in late October that the Clinton administration would not be as hardline Zionist as it had appeared. So, Lord Mayhew's *Middle East International*, in an editorial published Nov. 6, opined that "Governor Clinton may shed some of his committed Zionist advisors in favor of those with greater foreign experience from the Carter era." The Israeli magazine *Jerusalem Report* published a cover story in its mid-October issue warning that "insider speculation says the Democrat's Mideast advisers have a pro-Israel tilt. But several key figures, including Carter administration retreats, raise question marks for some American Jews."

The recent reorganization of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), whose chairman was bounced after claiming in a taped phone call that the Israeli lobbying group had close ties to Clinton, was depicted as part of some Clinton purge. As result such ploys, recent secret Clinton camp offers to various Arabs officials were seen by some as credible.

This "discovery" of Clinton's good intentions is all the more remarkable, since it was the Democratic Carter administration, together with the British government, that was responsible for the 1979 overthrow of the Shah of Iran and his replacement by Khomeini. Shortly thereafter, the Carter administration and Britain lured both Iraq and Iran into a mutually destructive eight-year war, sustained through the arming of both sides. Among the key Carter operatives was then-Undersecretary of State Warren Christopher, now chairman of Clinton's transition team.