

are with us and against Saddam.”

It goes without saying that Ahmed Chalabi’s wide-ranging interview represents precisely the thinking of the British geopolitical centers which have been designing Iraq policy for the United States since at least 1990. Chalabi is nothing but a tool of these forces; he functions very much like Baroness Caroline Cox, the British intelligence agent in charge of destabilizing of Sudan. Cox, too, has spent enormous effort and time testifying before the U.S. Congress, with “proof” of Sudanese human rights violations, fabrication of weapons of mass destruction, etc., to justify American military intervention against the country.

Chalabi is no aristocrat, but a small-time thug. He would not be capable emotionally or militarily of taking part in any such operation, nor would he be capable of providing political leadership anywhere. His function is that of a tool, to be inserted into certain locations, to turn certain keys.

### Chalabi’s mission

Most important in Chalabi’s mission—like those of Cox—is to ensure that the official stamp of approval of the U.S. President is placed on the military assault which has been orchestrated by the British. So far, London has succeeded in making the continuing air strikes appear as American acts. Significantly, the British have flown far fewer missions with the U.S. planes since the end of Ramadan, than they did in December. Significantly as well, there have begun to appear in the British press, voices of “dissent” against the “American policy” on Iraq. Thus, for example, a *Guardian* commentary on Jan. 28 titled “Britain Should Not Act as a Puppet of the U.S. over Iraq. France Doesn’t.” The article argued that Tony Blair, whose “Iraq policy is a disaster,” should talk to French President Jacques Chirac, and should shift policy. Britain is accused of behaving, “whenever required, as Washington’s lobotomized puppet.”

Or, in the *Guardian* on Feb. 5, an editorial titled “Washington’s Vassal,” argued that Britain should break the special relationship and hook up with France, under whose leadership “Europe is beginning to resist American hegemony.” Author Ian Aitken singles out Iraq policy as the test case. Britain has made a mistake in joining the “perilous confrontations now taking place daily in the skies over Iraq,” and in “defying the United Nations and humiliating its General Secretary,” etc. The piece makes the point that, if Britain were to pull out, Washington would be smashed: “For this is the essential vulnerability of the United States: Without Britain’s support, they would be almost completely isolated, and thereby greatly weakened in the exercise of the almost unlimited power they have acquired as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union.”

Perhaps one item Chalabi left out of his scenario is worth considering: What happens if the United States continues with its drive to force a change in government in Baghdad, and the British ally suddenly reconsiders the entire affair?

## Opposition builds to Iraqi ‘Contra’ schemes

by Jeffrey Steinberg

When the commander of the U.S. Central Command, Marine Gen. Anthony Zinni, appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Thursday, Jan. 28, 1999, to voice his strong reservations about a “Contra”-style program to overthrow Saddam Hussein, he had the explicit backing of a faction of active-duty and retired flag officers, according to a highly placed U.S. military source. *EIR* had been alerted to the Zinni testimony 24 hours in advance by the highly decorated retired military officer, clearly indicating that Zinni’s views were shared by a number of leading American military strategists.

But, while General Zinni’s remarks before the Senate were clearly aimed at throwing cold water on the Iraqi Liberation Act (a 1998 bill rammed through Congress by neo-conservative Republicans that mandates Clinton administration backing for a ragtag collection of Iraqi opposition groups), momentum nevertheless continued to build toward some kind of military confrontation between the United States and Great Britain on the one side, and the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq on the other.

Under these paradoxical circumstances, muddled still further by President Clinton’s continuing preoccupation with the impeachment trial in the U.S. Senate, it remains for the President to step forcefully into the breach, and “just say no” to those who are pressing for a new military showdown with Saddam before a viable diplomatic solution to the Middle East crisis can be reached.

Over the past weeks, military confrontations between American and British fighter jets and Iraqi air defense units have been a daily occurrence. And, while General Zinni’s public statements, buttressed by similar comments from White House and State Department spokesmen, indicate an ebbing of the momentum for a “quick-fix” military confrontation with Saddam, employing opposition “Contra” groups backed by U.S. Special Forces teams, the region remains on a hair-trigger for escalated military confrontation—at least on the scale of the December 1998 “Desert Fox” bombing campaign.

The focal points for such a renewed military showdown are the British government of Prime Minister Tony Blair, and some members of the Clinton administration “Principals Committee,” a group of cabinet- and lower-level Presidential advisers who prevailed on the President last December to approve the bombing campaign which he had nixed just one month earlier.

Chief among the Principals Committee hawks is Leon Fuerth, Vice President Al Gore's primary national security adviser, who enjoys the unique position as a full member status on the Committee. A December 1998 profile of Fuerth in the *New Republic* identified him as the individual most responsible for prodding President Clinton into a military showdown with Saddam.

There is increasing evidence that Richard A. Clarke, recently named as the administration's counter-terrorism czar (he also sits on the Principals Committee whenever national security matters are discussed), is a longtime ally of Fuerth, and another "Get Saddam" advocate. Clarke was the State Department official in charge of the diplomatic side of "Operation Desert Storm," the 1991 Bush-Thatcher war against Iraq; and, according to a recent profile in the *New York Times*, Clarke was responsible for the Clinton administration's decision to bomb sites in Afghanistan and Sudan, in retaliation for the Aug. 7, 1998 car-bomb attacks against U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

In addition to Fuerth and Clarke, the British have in recent days once again launched a campaign to instigate military confrontation with Saddam—a confrontation that would only serve to further isolate President Clinton from key allies in Asia, in the Arab world, and in Russia. British Foreign Office spook Derek Fatchett made a late-January tour of the Persian Gulf and Middle East, pressing for a military showdown and touting the prospects of a successful "Contra" campaign against the Saddam regime. His visit was followed by, in rapid succession, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and Defense Minister George Robertson, both key players in last December's pressure campaign on President Clinton that led to Desert Fox.

So, while National Security Adviser Sandy Berger and President Clinton himself have been reluctant to carry out military operations against Iraq that offer little prospect of getting rid of Saddam Hussein, but which would cause severe hardships to innocent Iraqi civilians, there remains a grouping within the national security team that is more closely aligned with hawks in London, on the American right, in the pro-Netanyahu wing of the U.S. Zionist lobby, and in Israel.

It is in this context that General Zinni's remarks provided an important counter to those who are pushing for a disastrous replay of the "Contra" and "Afghansi" irregular warfare programs against Iraq.

### **The general says 'no'**

On Jan. 28, General Zinni testified, along with Assistant Secretary of Defense for Policy Walter Slocombe, at Senate Armed Services Committee hearings on Iraq.

In a heated exchange with Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), Zinni made it perfectly clear that he has zero confidence in the Iraqi opposition groups' ability to challenge Saddam Hussein. "Sir, there are 91 opposition groups," the general said. "We follow every one of those opposition groups in great detail. I will be honest. I don't see an opposition group that has the

viability to overthrow Saddam at this point. I think it would be very difficult and I think if not done properly, could be very dangerous."

Later in the hearings, General Zinni returned to the subject in a response to Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.): "Senator, I had the unfortunate experience of . . . three tours of duty in Somalia and I have Afghanistan and Iran in my area of responsibility. I've seen the effect of regime changes that didn't quite come about the way we would have liked. And the last thing we need is another rogue state. The last thing we need is a disintegrated, fragmented Iraq, because the effects on the region would be far greater, in my mind, in my judgment, than a contained Saddam.

"Now Saddam is dangerous. Saddam should go," he continued, ". . . but it is possible to create a situation that could be worse, and that's my concern. These groups are very fragmented. They have very little, if any, viability to exact a change of regime in and of themselves. Their ability to cooperate is questionable. Even if we had a Saddam gone, by any means, we could end up with 15, 20, 30 groups competing for power. The effect that it might have . . . could further destabilize the region."

### **Salami tactics**

As noted above, the advocates of a U.S. special warfare showdown with Saddam are not idle—particularly the Anglo-Israeli assets in the administration.

Martin Indyk, the Australian-born U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs, a former executive of the official Israeli lobby, the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), just concluded a tour of the Persian Gulf along with Francis Ricciardone, the recently appointed special State Department emissary to the Iraqi opposition groups.

In a Feb. 2 interview with Kuwaiti national television and *Al Qabas* newspaper, Indyk declared, bluntly, that there exists an ongoing state of war between the United States and Iraq.

Indyk, who was also in London with Ricciardone, meeting with British Foreign Office representatives and the Iraqi opposition groups, said that the Clinton administration has a new policy on Iraq called "containment plus regime change," and cited a statement made by President Clinton in November 1998 to the effect that this is the policy. Prior to that statement, the U.S. policy on Iraq was simply "containment." Indyk clarified the President's orders: The change must come "from inside Iraq" and "the U.S. will maintain . . . the territorial integrity of Iraq."

Both those issues are points of contention with the British, who have no qualms about breaking up Iraq into three separate entities—a Kurdish entity in the north that would further Kurdish destabilizations against neighbors Turkey and Iran; a mini-state around Baghdad; and a Shiite entity in the south.

Indyk also described a kind of "standing order" for military action at any time: "There are four red lines" the crossing of which would be met with military force. First, "if he threat-

ens his neighbors, particularly Kuwait. . . . Second, if he reconstitutes his weapons of mass destruction or deploys them, we will destroy them if we can detect them. . . . Third, if he moves north against the Kurds. . . . Fourth, to enforce the no-fly zones.” Indyk explained that Saddam Hussein has “crossed the red line” on number four, so “we are using force.”

When Ricciardone gave his first interview, jointly with Indyk, to Kuwait’s *Al Qabas*, he made clear that even under the terms of the Iraqi Liberation Act, opposition groups will not automatically receive lethal aid.

“I did say to the Iraqi opposition, I did acknowledge that the law has been misunderstood, it has been misrepresented. . . . I did say that to the Iraqi opposition that it is not an offer of cash. It’s not an offer of military equipment. Such an offer may materialize” from the President, but don’t make assumptions.

### Fierce debates elsewhere

Elsewhere in Washington, the policy brawl over how to deal with Saddam has also been playing out. A Jan. 28 Washington conference on the topic “After Saddam,” featuring the director of the CIA’s National Intelligence Council, the director of AIPAC’s think-tank, and an official from the Middle East Institute (staffed by State Department veterans), was the occasion of fierce debate on U.S. policy toward Iraq. The conference, sponsored by the Middle East Policy Council, an old-school “Arabist” think-tank like the Middle East Institute, drew 100 active and retired government officials and diplomats.

Leading off the event was Ellen Laipson, vice-chairman and director of the CIA’s National Intelligence Council, who laid out what Iraq would probably look like after Saddam is overthrown. Iraq would be united, unstable, and undemocratic, she said, with uncertain relations with its neighbors. According to Laipson, the widespread claim that U.S. efforts to overthrow Saddam would lead to the breakup of the country, is not true. The Kurds and Shiites themselves know that that would not be a viable option. But while Iraq would remain unified, it would not be stable in the short term, by reason of the economic, political, and social consequences of the 1991 war, continuing conflict with its neighbors, and the effects of the overthrow of Saddam itself. It almost certainly would not be democratic, since only the educated classes want democracy.

Laipson then delivered her bombshell, apparently never before publicly stated by a senior U.S. official. The U.S. will impose conditions on any new Iraqi state that comes into being after Saddam, she said, because of Iraq’s long history of hostile relations with its neighbors. Such conditions are needed to protect these neighbors from potential Iraqi aggression. In other words, Iraq’s de facto loss of sovereignty will continue into the indefinite future, even after a successful U.S.-instigated coup.

Patrick Clawson, the research director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), the think-tank for

AIPAC, laid out the Zionist lobby’s reasons why the U.S. must overthrow Saddam. According to Clawson, eliminating Saddam is the only way to end the possibility of Iraq’s developing weapons of mass destruction. Secondly, it would mean the U.S. would be less reliant on Saudi Arabia, and could even leave the region. This is very important, he said, since the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, having different cultures, can never be true allies. Third, it would make Israel more relaxed, and more prepared to make concessions to the Palestinians. Finally, it would allow for U.S. oil companies to move into Iraq, since a post-Saddam regime would welcome U.S. domination of its oilfields.

In the ensuing acrimony, even the conference chairman, former Kissinger aide Charles Freeman, retorted that while Israel has long sought to downgrade U.S.-Saudi relations, that must not be allowed to happen; nor should anyone believe that there is no cultural basis for strong U.S.-Arab relations.

The highlight of the event was the remarks delivered by Andrew Parasiliti, the research director of the Middle East Institute, who sharply denounced as fools all sides in the present policy debate over Iraq. All the talk of overthrowing Saddam is dishonest, and does not reflect U.S. intentions, Parasiliti said. First of all, the Iraqi opposition groups specified for military aid have zero possibility of overthrowing Saddam. Second, since U.S. air power alone would be insufficient to overthrow Saddam under any circumstances, the U.S. government is being dishonest on what it has planned.

Parasiliti then launched into what he said would be required to overthrow Saddam. First of all, the U.S. must announce a Marshall Plan to reconstruct Iraq, to be implemented following Saddam’s ouster, to give Iraqis a reason for pressing for his removal. Second, the U.S. must ensure that at least half of Iraq’s unpayable debt is cancelled, and that the rest will be suspended until such a time as Iraq has rebuilt itself. Third, the U.S. must announce a general amnesty for all top political, military, and intelligence officials, except for a select few closely associated with Saddam, to make clear that there will be no general reprisals. Finally, Parasiliti said it must be recognized that even a democratic post-Saddam regime would necessarily seek to develop weapons of mass destruction, since Israel, Pakistan, and India have nuclear bombs, Iran is attempting to build a bomb, and Syria has chemical weapons. Accordingly, that issue can be resolved only in a regional context, addressing all these other states’ programs.

All this, he said, would be U.S. policy, if the U.S. were really serious about overthrowing Saddam. If, however, the U.S. does not want to go down this route, it can adopt an alternative program. That would be to declare a policy of massive retaliation against Iraq, if Iraq were ever again to threaten Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Having made that threat unambiguous, credible, and clear, unlike the current confusing situation, the U.S. must then lift the embargo—having nothing to fear from a completely terrorized and contained Iraq—and rebuild the region.