

Despite Congress, a Growing Chance To 'Jam Up' Iraq War

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Once the U.S. Congress had capitulated on Oct. 10 and voted a resolution—albeit with significant opposition—authorizing President George W. Bush to wage war on Iraq, the idea spread that war is now “inevitable.” One authoritative figure expressing this view was Gen. Anthony Zinni, former head of the Central Command, and a harsh critic of aggression against Iraq.

But this actually marked the start of a new phase, in which the war can still be stopped, despite the Congressional vote. Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche, who catalyzed the swelling opposition to the resolution with 7-8 million mass leaflets in two months, believes that the process leading to war can be effectively “jammed,” if the European resistance, in particular, does not waver. Now that Bush has committed himself (due to international pressure) to go through the diplomatic motions in the United Nations Security Council, it is possible that a group of nations can kill the U.S.-U.K. resolution authorizing war. There is a two-resolution solution proposed by France: a first resolution would mandate the UN inspections teams back into Iraq; and if they were hindered or sabotaged in their work, a second resolution could authorize the use of force.

Can the UN Respect Its Charter?

President Bush has gone on record that if the UN will not pre-authorize war, he will go it alone, so such diplomatic measures in themselves cannot stave off a conflict. But if the process of sending inspectors into Iraq, evaluating their work, etc., is actually initiated, this will gain time for those seeking to prevent the worst. In LaRouche's estimation, if a full-fledged war can be postponed through the end of this year, it is likely that the financial and economic breakdown crisis will hit with such force, as to render war plans meaningless. This

is the perspective of his campaign mobilization in America.

If in 1991, the UN rubber-stamped the “crusade” of George Bush “41” against Iraq (“with God's blessing,” said evangelist Billy Graham), today the situation is radically altered. Due to the worldwide economic crisis, the fanatical drive for imperial power by the U.S. utopian warhawks, and their threatened Clash of Civilizations against Islam, close U.S. allies in Europe, as well as long-standing friends among developing sector nations, have stood up and said, “No.” Inside the elite permanent five members of the Security Council, attempts by the United States and U.K. to ram through their resolution have met with staunch resistance. Russian President Vladimir Putin, following a meeting with Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi in Moscow on Oct. 16, reiterated Russia's rejection, saying that a new resolution may be acceptable, but not one which authorizes the use of force. Putin telephoned French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac, to reconfirm their identical positions.

Chirac again made his country's stance clear, in remarks to the Lebanese daily *L'Orient-Le Jour* on Oct. 16, reaffirming his commitment to a two-stage process, and rejecting any resolution authorizing use of force. The Chinese government, though less outspoken, has repeatedly declared its commitment to a peaceful solution.

This translates into a deadlock inside the Permanent Five, which could be broken if America and Britain were to accept the French approach. If they refuse it, any one of the other three could exercise its veto power.

The fact that Washington has been concentrating its maneuvering on the Permanent Five, has insulted the other ten Security Council members, whose votes are also necessary to pass any resolution. Nine of the 15 members must approve; but they are not even being informed of the Permanent Five's



Though President Bush (here calling Presidents of Security Council permanent members) got his war-resolution capitulation from Congressional Democrats, worldwide opposition to war, in the Security Council (above) and elsewhere, has escalated, not diminished, in reaction. If the war is delayed, an “economic time-bomb” could derail it by year’s end.

consultations. The gravity of the decisions to be taken, and the arrogance with which the pro-war forces have proceeded, have catalyzed a healthy spirit of resistance among the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) nations. An open Security Council debate was demanded by 114 NAM nations, and agreed to. Eighty governments signed up to speak, most to denounce the U.K.-U.S. approach.

President and spokesman for the NAM, South African Ambassador to the UN Dumisani Kumalo, exposed the illegitimacy of the U.S.-U.K. stance: “The UN is asked to declare war on Iraq, and this contradicts the principles of the UN Charter. The UN Security Council is on the verge of entering into uncharted waters and the situation now is different from others, and it cannot be left to its 15 members to decide alone.” The NAM is standing on the UN Charter which calls for peaceful resolution of crises like that over Iraq. They argue that any decision, including the use of force, would affect all the Middle East and other parts of the world. Kumalo also attacked the Permanent Five for discussing the issue among themselves, excluding the other ten Security Council members. He called on the ten to become “fully engaged,” and said the NAM also opposes the French two-resolution approach.

Worldwide Resistance Grows

This UN line-up reflects escalating, not shrinking worldwide resistance to the war, since the Congressional vote. This emphatically includes within the United States itself.

Most vocal and prominent among the nay-sayers have been the professional military, persons whose direct experience with war has shaped their judgment. General Zinni, although resigned to the inevitability of this war, spoke out against it again on Oct. 14 at Virginia Military Institute, to

warm and repeated applause (see article in *National*). He warned that any U.S. occupation would involve heavy American casualties, and said no evidence existed of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and no rational reason, to go to war. “War in Iraq [is] a bad military and diplomatic move that should be put on hold until the war on terrorism is dealt with and the economy strengthens,” Zinni said. “It’s a mine field. . . . We get along fine with other things that are far more terrible. . . . You’d better be sure. . . before we do this and there are another 58,000 names on a wall in Washington.”

In the German daily *Die Welt* on Oct. 16, Gen. Wesley Clark, former head of the Allied Command Europe, spelled out “what could happen if” certain scenarios were followed. Without explicitly denouncing the war, he soberly presented its risks. Even assuming it began with massive, sustained aerial

bombardments against military installations, with limited “collateral damage,” and ended within 14 days, still 250,000 men would have to be on hand, 75,000-100,000 to be deployed. The “best scenario” would be that after the aerial attacks, the Iraqi military would raise a white flag. Then, Clark said, “our problem will be dealing with the hundreds of thousands of hungry and armed deserters.” Rebellions and violence could break out between pro- and anti-government forces and factions. If Saddam Hussein has and deploys chemical or biological weapons against the 12-14 million Shi’ites in the South, how to protect them without exposing U.S. troops to danger? If Israel were hit and retaliated, this “could mean tens of thousands of civilian victims.” The war would destabilize the entire region.

The most significant evidence of a raging fight in the Pentagon was a feature on Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in the Oct. 16 *Washington Post*, re-run the following day, again front page, in the *International Herald Tribune*, thus guaranteeing international impact. The article focussed on the growing opposition to Rumsfeld within the Pentagon, where the military is not listened to. Rumsfeld is felt to be arrogant and indecisive. He is said to have targetted particularly the Joint Staff—the staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—firing personnel and shutting down operations. Rumsfeld accuses them, and the military generally—especially the Army—of being “risk averse”; i.e., unwilling to accept American casualties. Not surprisingly, the article reports that the Army is most hostile to Rumsfeld, and most skeptical of his drive to bring the military into the “information age.” The report states that all three (civilian) service secretaries, Army, Navy, and Air Force, are considering leaving before the end of this year, in disgust with Rumsfeld.

On the War Front

No one knows better what dangers a new war against Iraq will bring, than those nations and governments in the region itself. Contrary to 1991, when many Arab states joined the war coalition, this time, none has, with the de facto exception of Qatar. There, the United States has been building up the El Obeid air base, as its key installation in the region, after the Saudis decided not to allow their country to be the launching-pad for war as in 1991. On Oct. 15, Saudi Defense Minister Prince Sultan told *Al-Hayat* that “Saudi Arabia will not provide any military assistance in any strikes against Iraq,” reiterating Crown Prince Abdallah’s statements that the country would not provide bases for attacks. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal echoed the same position: “I had never said that Saudi Arabia agrees to allow the use of its territory to strike Iraq. . . . We will refuse to enter into a war against Iraq.” Despite factional differences among the royal family, all are in agreement against the war, and aware that the break-up and possible occupation of Saudi Arabia is on the same drawing board as the Iraq war plan.

Iran, which signed a far-reaching defense pact with Saudi Arabia, is also 100% opposed to war. During a meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in Turkey, Iranian President Seyyed Khatami stated: “As the Islamic Republic of Iran, we have great respect for Iraq’s territorial integrity. We are certainly opposed to a possible military intervention in Iraq. . . . We want Iraq to comply with UN resolutions.” Khatami went to the sensitive Kurdish question: “Turkey’s Kurds are Turkey’s citizens, Syria’s Kurds are Syria’s, Iraq’s Kurds are Iraq’s, and Iran’s Kurds are Iranian citizens. Turkey, Syria, and Iran are against the establishment of a government that would end this.”

Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit implied that he would deny the United States bases: “We are the strongest country of the Middle East. It is essential that Turkey acts as the sentinel of the region. . . . We know that the U.S.A. cannot carry out this operation without us. That is why *we are advising that it abandon the idea*. We are telling [Washington] that we are worried over this matter.”

Secretary General of the Arab League Amr Moussa said, “Arab states cannot be part of or join an alliance directed against an Arab nation without justification. And if, as some suggest, the justification is weapons of mass destruction, then the logical solution lies in the return of inspectors to Iraq to see for themselves.” Asked if defense treaties with the United States would bind Gulf states to give bases, Moussa said, “I don’t think that any military agreement with the United States contains articles on helping to attack Iraq.”

Moussa made these statements in Qatar, joining other Arab leaders who have been pressuring that government. Qatar is now not only the base for U.S. operations, but the host country to Al-Jazeera TV, which has become a mouthpiece for Osama bin Laden. Saudi Arabia has been demanding that the Qataris shut down the network, on grounds that it broadcasts slanders against the Kingdom. This is the public side of

a conflict between the two, which is actually over the war. On Oct. 14, an attempted coup was reported against the Qatari leader, Sheikh Al-Thani. Egypt’s *Al Gumhuriya* said U.S. soldiers arrested several Qatari army officers for the plot. Pakistani and Yemeni soldiers were also reportedly involved. Whether or not it was a serious coup attempt, the report sent an unmistakable message to the Qatari government, that its pro-U.S. stance is not appreciated. And one day later, Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani issued a pro forma statement against the war.

Terrorism as War Preparations?

The utopian war faction is also aware of the “economic time-bomb” factor LaRouche pointed to, and is moving for war all the faster. Since early October, a new war argument has been thrust into the foreground. Formerly, the motivation was, officially, to eliminate the weapons of mass destruction Iraq allegedly has. The new argument is that Saddam Hussein works with the international al-Qaeda terrorist networks, which are said to be behind the recent spate of attacks, from that against the French tanker *Limburg*, to the killing of U.S. soldiers in Kuwait, to the atrocity in Bali. The attacks, which began on Oct. 4 and continued through Oct. 15, occurred almost as a backdrop for public statements of the new line: An attack on Iraq continues the war against terror begun after Sept. 11. Opponents have insisted, of course, that war on Iraq would derail the internationally supported war on terrorism.

The story of Iraq/al-Qaeda links first surfaced in later-discredited reports of contact between al-Qaeda’s Mohammed Atta and an Iraqi diplomat in Prague. Some die-hards, such as warhawk Richard Perle, are still pushing this story, but the main emphasis is being placed on new assertions of links.

President Bush revived them on Oct. 7 in his Cincinnati speech: “We know that Iraq and the al-Qaeda terrorist network share a common enemy—the United States of America. We know that [they] have had high-level contacts that go back a decade. Some al-Qaeda leaders who fled Afghanistan went to Iraq. . . . We’ve learned that Iraq has trained al-Qaeda members in bomb-making and poisons and deadly gases.” In his Oct. 14 remarks following the Bali terrorist attacks, Bush explicitly insisted al-Qaeda and Iraq are linked. Asked a set-up question, “How does this [the Bali bombing] play on your policy on Iraq?” Bush answered, “Our thoughts about Iraq relate to the war on terror. . . . [The United States] will fight, if need be, the war on terror on two fronts. . . . Iraq is a part of the war on terror.”

Next day in Michigan, Bush went further: “We need to think about Saddam Hussein using the al-Qaeda to do his dirty work, to not leave fingerprints behind.” He received immediate support from British Prime Minister Tony Blair, while France’s Chirac flatly rejected any such allegations. As the political and diplomatic battle intensifies, further terrorist actions are likely to occur and be “linked” to Iraq.