

Zinni: Heads Must Roll For Debacle in Iraq

by William Jones

Gen. Anthony Zinni, the former commander-in-chief of the U.S. Central Command, practically called on May 23 for the resignations of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Deputy Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, for their key role in the formulation and implementation of a fatally flawed Iraq policy, which has become a strategic disaster for the United States, and has increased the danger of terrorism in the world at large.

Zinni, using the occasion of the publication of a book of memoirs he wrote together with Tom Clancy, the noted author of numerous novels and non-fiction works dealing with military and strategic themes, took off the gloves on CBS's "60 Minutes."

"Who was responsible for the Iraq debacle?" Zinni was asked. "I blame the civilian leadership of the Pentagon. They promoted and pushed it, even creating their own intelligence unit to support it," Zinni said. "Somebody has screwed up. But whose heads are rolling?" Zinni wondered. "I blame the civilian leadership of the Pentagon directly. Because if they were given the responsibility, and if this was their war, and by everything that I understand, they promoted it and pushed it—certain elements in there, certainly—even to the point of creating their own intelligence to match their needs, then they should bear the responsibility," he said.

Earlier in the month, on May 12, speaking at a Center for Defense Information Board of Director's dinner, General Zinni had delineated what he regarded as the ten mistakes of the Administration's Iraq policy. These included the attempt to give a false rationale for going to war, a reliance on Ahmed Chalabi's "Gucci Guerrillas" from London, and the blatantly erroneous "cakewalk" theory of neo-conservatives Richard Perle and Ken Adelman, who tried to completely obfuscate the real difficulties the United States forces would encounter in trying to establish a puppet regime in Iraq.

The continually climbing casualties for American soldiers and marines, as well as the much-publicized scandal at the Abu Ghraib prison, have forced patriotic elements within and without the U.S. military—and given them the opportunity—to begin to really take on the ideological extremists in the Bush Administration around Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney. The massive circulation of LaRouche LaRouche's statements in and around Washington and around the country, and of his campaign's series of *Children of Satan* pamphlets exposing the Cheney-Rumsfeld clique as a gang of murderous criminals, has served as the essential catalyst in bringing together the forces needed for an all-out offensive to eliminate the neo-con cabal.

"In the lead-up to the Iraq war and its later conduct, I saw, at a minimum, true dereliction, negligence, and irresponsibility; at worst, lying, incompetence and corruption," Zinni said on the "60 Minutes" program. "I think there was dereliction, in insufficient forces being put on the ground, and fully understanding the military dimensions of the plan. I think there was dereliction in lack of planning." "The president is owed the finest strategic thinking. He is owed the finest operational planning. He is owed the finest tactical execution on the ground. He got the latter. He didn't get the first two."

Zinni also confirmed that his estimates, when he was the commander of Central Command, were pretty much in agreement with the necessary troop numbers estimated by Army General Erik Shinseki, numbers which had been ridiculed by Rumsfeld as much too high, but which were confirmed by reality in the aftermath of the Iraq war.

'If in a Hole, Stop Digging'

Zinni placed the blame for this dereliction clearly on the clique of neo-conservatives around Cheney and Rumsfeld. "I think it's the worst-kept secret in Washington. That everybody—everybody I talk to in Washington has known, and fully knows, what their agenda was, and what they were trying to do," said Zinni.

He, like many others before him, also faced the slander of being anti-Semitic for taking a stand against this particular gang of cut-throats, all of whom are closely tied to the right-wing Likud network around Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and the Jewish murderers of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. "And one article—because I mentioned the neo-conservatives who describe themselves as neo-conserva-



Gen. Anthony Zinni's blast against the neo-con war planners on "60 Minutes" May 23 received widespread national and international coverage in following days.

tives—I was called anti-Semitic. I mean, you know, unbelievable that that's the kind of personal attacks that are run when you criticize a strategy, and those who propose it. I certainly didn't criticize who they were. I certainly don't know what their ethnic religious backgrounds are. And I'm not interested."

"I know what strategy they promoted," Zinni continued. "And openly. And for a number of years. And what they have convinced the President and the secretary to do. And I don't believe there is any serious political leader, military leader, diplomat in Washington that doesn't know where it came from."

More importantly, Zinni noted, were the serious blunders with regard to the aftermath of the war and the so-called reconstruction of the country. But he made it very clear that the solution was not simply withdrawing all U.S. troops from Iraq and abandoning it to chaos and civil war. In his comments to the CDI dinner on May 12, Zinni said, "You know, there's a rule that if you find yourself in a hole, stop digging. The first thing I would say is we need to stop digging. We have dug this hole so deep now, that you see many serious people, Jack Murtha, General Odom, and others beginning to say, it's time to just pull out, cut your losses. I'm not of that camp. Not yet. But I certainly think we've come pretty close to that."

Most serious have been the blunders in the post-war attempt to stabilize the country after the "official" ending of hostilities. "As best I could see," Zinni said, "I saw a pickup team, very small, insufficient, in the Pentagon, with no detailed plans, that walked onto the battlefield after the major fighting stopped, and tried to work it out in the huddle, in effect, to create a seat-of-the-pants operation on reconstructing a country."

"I give all the credit in the world to Ambassador Bremer as a great American who's serving his country, I think, with all the kind of sacrifice and spirit you could expect. But he has made mistake after mistake."

And what were those mistakes?

"Disbanding the army," said Zinni. "De-Baathifying, down to a level where we removed people that were competent and didn't have blood on their hands, that you needed in the aftermath of reconstruction, alienating certain elements of that society."

In an earlier interview with this writer, General Zinni had underlined the need for a rapid physical reconstruction of the country, creating jobs for Iraqis. In his comments to the CDI dinner he was even more emphatic, calling for an economic reconstruction conference. "I would invite every Iraqi business man I can convince to come, and I would invite foreign investors, and I would ask them to come together, hold this conference over a period of weeks, to define what these business men need to establish their business, to make it grow, to re-establish it, to protect it; the kind of investment they need, the infrastructure," Zinni said. "But the key is jobs, jobs, jobs. Jobs for Iraqis. I would go to the contractors in there, and say,

I don't want to see truck drivers that are coming from Peoria, Illinois. I want to pay truck drivers that are Iraqis. It doesn't take a hell of a lot of talent to drive a truck. Why aren't Iraqis driving trucks for their own reconstruction and redevelopment?"

But in order to achieve this, he insisted, there would have to be a real cooperative relationship established with the UN and the members of the Security Council. "We can't keep dropping paper on the UN," Zinni said. "It's time for a group of adults, called the Perm Five, the permanent five members of the Security Council, to sit down and come up with some agreeable, mutually-developed UN resolution that would allow other countries now to participate. And I think there are many out there at different levels, especially in the region, that would want to participate and help; and before it comes too tough and too costly, we need to get them in. It will probably mean some of these Perm Five members and others will want to have a say in the political reconstruction and economic reconstruction, but so what?"

Zinni's comments also reflected an understanding of some of the points underlined in the LaRouche Doctrine on Southwest Asia, asking regional nations' help in securing the borders, and in providing regional military officers with a good knowledge of the language and the people, to be assigned to U.S. military units from the company level on up, in order to give some sound advice to those U.S. forces that may remain in Iraq.

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