

Iran: Regime Change Option As Bad As Military Strike

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Now that the opposition to a military strike against Iran, inside the United States, and internationally, has reached critical proportions, some fools are contemplating what they consider a fallback option, known as “regime change by other means.” This will be no more promising than the totally discredited scenarios for military strikes, to knock out Iran’s nuclear energy facilities. That, however, does not mean that the nutty boys at the drawing boards will not pursue it; quite the contrary. Nor does it mean at all that the military option is off the table; that will be the case, only when Dick Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Bush are out of the capital.

The scenario for mobilizing forces inside Iran against the current government is not new. In fact, since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Anglo-American circles, buttressed by Israeli elements, have been plotting to overthrow the regime. What is new, are reports, by Iranian, Turkish, and other regional media, as well as by intelligence sources in the region, of operational activities being stepped up in the recent period. If such reports mean that the neo-con fanatics are seriously making such a bid, then such quarters should be made aware, not only that it will not work, but that escalating such insurgent operations will further exacerbate a catastrophic crisis in Iraq. For, if a military strike against Iran’s nuclear facilities would set the entire region in flames, terrorist and separatist military activities against Tehran would light the fuse on a bomb called “Kurdistan,” threatening the stability and territorial integrity of three nations in the region: Turkey, Iraq, and Iran. None of Iraq’s neighbors sit back and let this happen, and will exert all power at their disposal to protect their nations.

The reason why public debate has shifted somewhat, at least in the public domain, to the regime change option, lies

in the fact that an unprecedented rebellion has broken out among senior U.S. military figures, against Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, whose dismissal they have demanded. Although ostensibly, the generals’ revolt was occasioned by criticism of Rumsfeld’s handling of the Iraq War, their move was prompted as much by their recognition that the same neo-con warmongers were planning a strike against Iran, which they thereby sought to prevent.

The Revolt of the Generals

According to *EIR* sources, Chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Peter Pace received a letter from a large group of active duty generals and admirals, who said that, were an attack to be ordered against Iran, they would resign en masse. Another active duty officer, Lt. Gen Victor Renuart, planning director for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the *Telegraph* on May 1, regarding options against Iran: “Any action militarily is very complicated. And any action by any country will have second-order effects, and that is a strong case to continue the diplomatic process and make it work.”

At the same time, Russia and China have continued to stonewall any and every attempt to force a resolution through the UN Security Council, for sanctions and/or military moves against Iran.

Thus, the shift, at least for public consumption, towards the regime change option.

President Bush made his pitch for regime change, in his January State of the Union message, in which he addressed the people of Iran, pledging his support for their struggle for democracy.

Moves in the Senate and the Congress have bolstered

his approach. The Iran Freedom Support Act, passed by the House April 27, calls for tightening of sanctions until Iran dismantles its nuclear program, and for “financial and political assistance” to individuals and organizations which promote democracy. But such Congressional action does serve to give a veneer of credibility to anti-Iranian government operations on the ground, as if they represented some bona fide “democratic” impulse in the country.

Military Operations

More serious, are the military operations going on inside Iran, which are all characterized as coming from ethnic or political opposition groups. The most vocal of the opposition groups, and certainly the one with the greatest overt backing from political groups in Europe (the European Parliament, the British Parliament, etc.) and in the United States, is the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK/MKO), the terrorist organization which, under the protective refuge of Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, had organized deadly terrorist attacks in Iran over years, including bombings and assassinations of numerous political figures. After the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, the MEK was granted special status by the occupying powers, and was allowed to maintain its armed militias, as well as to continue its propaganda and terrorist warfare against Tehran, under the U.S. protective umbrella.

Recently, the front organization of the MEK, Maryam Rajavi’s National Council of Resistance in Iran, has relaunched its propaganda drive, demanding that political bodies like the European Parliament and the U.S. Congress lift its status as a terrorist organization, and allow it to “lead the resistance” for regime change against Tehran. The MEK has, as mentioned, an armed force of trained terrorists, but has no support inside Iran. Therefore, despite its logistical capabilities and training, its political potential is limited—unless it were to receive official endorsements from Europe and the United States.

Serious military attacks have been launched in Khuzestan, Iran’s southwest province near the Persian Gulf, by ethnic Arab Sunni elements, including major bombings in April and June 2005. The Iranian authorities apprehended the perpetrators in August, who “confessed to their connection to separatist and opposition groups and also their affiliation to alien intelligence services, especially that of England.” The events repeated themselves in early 2006, when further bombings occurred. Khuzestan province has also been a key distribution point for the flooding of drugs from Afghanistan into Iran—another aspect of the destabilization program.

And, in Baluchistan, the southeastern province of Iran, bordering on Pakistan and Afghanistan, ethnic Baluchis have been mobilized for actions against the central government, backed up by dissident Pakistani elements, according to former Chief of Staff Gen. Mirza Aslam Beg.

The most serious threat, however, comes from the Kurds,

an ethnic population which lives in an area overlapping Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. In late April, the *Turkish Daily News* reported that Kurdish insurgents from the terrorist Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), had been launching attacks from northern Iraq into both Iran and Turkey. The Turkish military, in response, deployed an additional 40,000 troops into the country’s southeast to reinforce the 250,000 (!) it already has there, because of an increase in incursions by the PKK. “The PKK is trying to send half of its 4,900 militants based in northern Iraq here and preparing for attacks in Turkey’s cities,” a Turkish official told the *Turkish Daily News* on April 22.

The Turkish position was anything but defensive. On April 25, Turkish Chief of Staff Gen. Hilmi Ozkok declared that Turkey would cross the border into northern Iraq, if need be, to wipe out PKK terrorists, and appealed to article 51 of the UN Charter to justify this stance. Justice Minister Cemil Cicek made an appeal, just prior to the arrival in Ankara of Secretary of State Condi Rice, for the United States to expand its intelligence sharing on the PKK, to actual operational moves, something that Rice left up in the air. On May 3, the Turkish military stated again that it would continue to make use of its right to enter Iraqi territory, in hot pursuit of the PKK terrorists. In response, U.S. State Department spokesman Sean McCormick urged Turkey to refrain. Iraqi President Talabani, a Kurd, also protested.

At the same time, Iranian Kurdish guerrillas crossed from northern Iraq into Iran on April 21, leading to clashes with Iranian forces which repelled the attack.

Again, in early May, Kurdish terrorists stepped up their attacks. The deputy commander of Iran’s Armed Forces Chief of Staff for Cultural and Defense Affairs, Brig. Gen. Alireza Afshar, said on May 1, that Iran would deal ruthlessly with cross-border incursions. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid-Reza Asefi had earlier reaffirmed the country’s commitment to repel the attacks coming from Iraq. “Certain terrorist groups,” he said, intend to cause insecurity on the borders of the two countries by taking advantage of the ineffective control over the area and possible support from foreign forces deployed in Iraq to undertake operations.” He said, “Iran will not allow any cross-border operation of any terrorist group against Iranian or Iraqi interests consistent with their commitment to the international campaign against terrorism.”

Iran was not just stating positions. On April 21 and 26, according to Iraqi reports, Iranian forces entered Iraq and shelled PKK targets. Again, at the beginning of May, according to Aref Ruzhdi, an Iraqi official from the Kurdish party, PUK, led by Iraqi (Kurdish) President Talabani, Iranian military fired on PKK positions in northern Iraq, in the Kandil Mountains north of Ranya.

Were the PKK insurgency merely a military matter, it could be dealt with, considering the massive forces deployed by Ankara and the determination displayed by Tehran. But

Iran Contras

A number of extremely reliable Arab and American intelligence sources have reported that the Bush Administration already has “boots on the ground” inside Iran, running a multi-front “Contra”-style destabilization. These operations, which are still on a relatively small scale, involve ethnic and tribal paramilitary forces, conducting ambushes, assassinations, and “blind terrorist” bombings—with the active involvement of American, British, Pakistani, and Israeli “advisors,” the sources report.

While some European governments are naively taking this “Contra” program as a de facto assurance that the Bush Administration has postponed any “big” air war campaign against Iran until after the November elections in the United States, such assurances are not all that solid, particularly as long as Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld are still in office, and are steering U.S. national security policy.

For now, there are three confirmed “Contra” fronts being conducted (see the map): Attacks from the Kurdish region of northern Iraq into Iran, using Kurdish assets with an Israeli involvement; attacks from the Baluchistan region on the Pakistani border, with Pakistani military assistance; and Mujahideen e-Khalq (MEK) operations, also staged from border areas of Iraq, where the MEK have large camps.

Two recent incidents underscore the operational nature of this. In March, attacks launched from Baluchistan killed an estimated 22 local government officials; and an April Kurdish ambush killed five Iranian soldiers.

Source indicates that the Israeli “role,” beyond training and logistical assistance in Kurdish commando operations into Iran, involves planned heavy attacks on Hezbollah



positions inside southern Lebanon, coincident with a full-scale U.S. air campaign against Iran. This is to preempt asymmetric warfare retaliation by Iran against U.S. and Israeli assets. Arab sources say that Israel has a Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld green light to deal with Syria if it gets into the act by defending Hezbollah positions inside southern Lebanon. Furthermore, Arab sources have pointed to a recent naval basing agreement between the United States and Turkey, granting the U.S. Navy access to three Turkish ports—two on the Aegean Sea and one in the Mediterranean. The latter could be important if the United States became directly involved in strikes on Hezbollah positions in southern Lebanon, backing up Israeli ground and air assaults.

Above all else, this “Contra III” operation, now in its early phases, is a revival of the thoroughly discredited 1996 “Clean Break” scheme of Richard Perle, David

there is a larger, political dimension which must be grasped. The Kurdish question is an integral part of the ongoing Iraqi political crisis.

A Deeper Dimension

Iraqi Prime Minister-designate Jawad al-Maliki is now called upon to strike a deal with the Sunni and Kurdish factions in Parliament, to form a government. The Sunnis are demanding that the Constitution be revised, and that all commitments to federalism be struck out. The Kurds, on the other hand, are committed to federalism, as a stepping-stone to independence.

The problem is yet more complex: The Kurds are demand-

ing that the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, be recognized as the capital of their autonomous region, which most Kurds refer to as “Kurdistan,” the proto-independent state. This is being challenged by Turkmen, as well as Shi’ite and Sunni Arabs. As reported by the *Washington Post* on April 25, (Arab) Shi’ite militiamen, both from the Mahdi Army and the Badr Brigades, have been flowing into the city. Moqtadar al-Sadr’s representative in Kirkuk was quoted saying that 7,000 to 10,000 Shi’ites were prepared to fight with his forces, if need be. In response, the Kurdish Peshmerga militia has reinforced its troops in the city and in nearby Tuz. This is a recipe for civil war in the North.

In this context, the U.S. neo-cons’ playing the PKK card

Wurmser, and Douglas Feith, to fundamentally alter power arrangements in Southwest Asia, through “regime changes” in key Arab states, Palestine, and Iran.

U.S. sources added a fourth “Contra” front to the “regime change” campaign inside Iran. During Azerbaijani President Heidar Aliyev’s meetings with President Bush and Vice President Cheney the week of May 1, he came under tremendous pressure to assist in the activation of Azeri minority destabilizations inside the northwestern region of Iran, bordering on Azerbaijan. One senior U.S. intelligence source warned that, if Aliyev allows himself to be drawn into the Bush Administration schemes, a more likely consequence will be his own overthrow, given his shrinking popularity and his country’s longstanding cooperation with Tehran (the two nations’ Presidents met recently and signed various military agreements). Dick Cheney, before becoming Vice President, was a trustee of the U.S.-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce, along with Richard Perle, Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.), and Zbigniew Brzezinski.

Sources have also reported on a flood of opium and heroin streaming into Iran from Afghanistan, as another feature of the U.S.-led “regime change” operation. During the 1980s, the United States used narco-terrorists as a key source of funding and logistics for both the Nicaraguan Contras and the Afghan Mujahideen.

Both American and Arab sources also warned that these on-the-ground provocations against the Tehran regime are likely to backfire, driving the Cheney-Rumsfeld bloc within the Bush Administration to quickly revive their air war schemes to attack Iran’s nuclear program sites. One experienced U.S. military source warned that such low-intensity operations are soon likely to result in the capture or killing of an American “advisor,” and that this will have serious diplomatic repercussions for a Bush Administration that is already widely discredited in the eyes of governments around the world.—*Jeffrey Steinberg*

(with Israeli help), is playing with dynamite. If the PKK terrorist activities spark moves toward an independent Kurdistan, as noted earlier, then Iran and Turkey will be forced to deploy all capabilities available to protect their countries from secessionist tendencies. In the decades-long war between the PKK and Turkey, 30,000 people died. Turkey is willing today to deploy whatever is needed, to prevent a repetition of that disaster. If they have almost 300,000 troops on the scene, they are not joking.

The entire region is about to blow. Unless the pyromaniacs who started the fire—Cheney, Rumsfeld, Rice, and Bush—are removed from office, the danger of the region’s descent into Hell is great.

Book Review

The Philippines’ Fight For Nuclear Energy

by Mike Billington

Trailblazing: The Quest for Energy Self-Reliance

by Geronimo Z. Velasco

Manila: Anvil Publishing, 2006

209 pages, paperback, 350 pesos

Twenty years ago, the Philippines received the final approval from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to turn on the fully completed nuclear power plant in Bataan, which was to provide 16% of the energy needed in the island of Luzon, including the capital, Manila. This was to be the first commercial nuclear power plant in all of Southeast Asia, representing the scientific and industrial coming of age of the Philippines, and by implication its Southeast Asian partners, in the post-colonial era.

The plant was never opened. The father of that nuclear facility, Geronimo “Ronnie” Velasco, has finally, after these 20 long years, written a memoir of his work as Minister of Energy, and CEO of the Philippines National Oil Company (PNOC) between 1972 and February 1986, when then President Ferdinand Marcos was deposed in a military coup supported and directed from Washington, under the cover of a “people’s power” movement. Eliminated along with Marcos and Velasco were the nuclear power plant, the government control of the oil and energy utilities, and the 11 major industrial projects that were to be fueled by these national energy programs. The hysteria induced in the population at that time against the Marcos regime was to no small extent the result of an international campaign by synarchist banking circles in the West, now known as the neo-conservatives, against nuclear power, aimed at undermining the energy independence of sovereign nations.

Velasco’s book, and private discussions with this author, demonstrate a clear understanding of the evil character of that attack on the Philippines by the Anglo-American financial and oil interests, even if he is not always clear on the reason for that subversion. The fact that it took 20 years to write this book reflects the fact that only now is there an audience for