
Iraq: The New Great Game

By Rahul Mahajan, Green Party candidate for Governor of Texas and author of *The New Crusade: America's War on Terrorism* (2002).

In the run-up to the Gulf War, government officials put forth a bewildering array of reasons for the war, culminating with Secretary of State Baker's fatuous claim that "it's about jobs."

In this coming war, perhaps the earliest and most consistently telegraphed since Cato the Elder's repeated calls for the destruction of Carthage, a similar confusion reigns. The same reflexively secretive administration that didn't want to disclose which companies it met with and for how long when formulating its energy policy has released at least four different plans for achieving "regime change" — widely-announced "covert" operations, the "Afghan strategy," "Gulf War lite" and the "Baghdad/inside out option." It has also released numerous reports of generals, military strategists and other insiders who oppose the war, to the point that people seriously wonder what's going on.

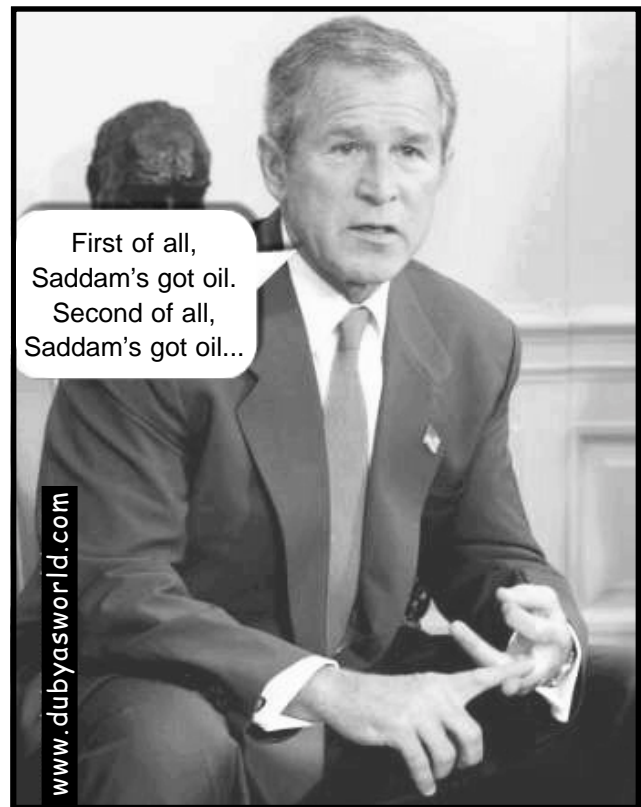
This confusion has reached such heights that many are beginning to call this a "Wag the Dog" war, an attempt to avoid a Republican disaster in the November elections. While the exact timing may be affected by domestic considerations, the claim that they are the reason for the war itself is implausible when you consider that there has been talk about war on Iraq ever since September 11, 2001, at a time when the world was Bush's oyster. In fact, the war is simply a continuation of the "regime change" policy of over ten years' standing — except that in the post-9/11 world the government believes that it can get away with anything by invoking terrorism as a threat.

So what is really going on? Let's start with what are *not* the reasons for the war. None of those put forth by the Bush administration hold water.

Shortly after 9/11, there was an attempt to relate Iraq to the attacks. The original claim that Mohammed Atta, one of the hijackers, met with Iraqi intelligence in Prague earlier in the year, quickly fell apart, as Czech officials engaged in an array of recantations and re-recantations. There are also allegations, recently resurrected, that Iraq had a terrorist training camp at Salman Pak, where Islamic fundamentalists were trained in how to hijack planes. It's hard to argue against any of this simply because there's so little there. In fact, for months the administration stopped claiming any connection, unthinkable had there been any concrete evidence. The best current argument for this connection is Donald Rumsfeld's dictum that "the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence."

The main reason given for the war, of course, is the threat of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

Scott Ritter, formerly one of the most hawkish of the U.N. weapons inspectors in Iraq, has stated repeatedly that Iraq is "qualitatively disarmed," although there's no way to



account for every nut and bolt and gallon of biological growth medium in the country, it had (as of December 1998) no functional capacity to develop biological, chemical or nuclear weapons. The common counter-argument is that Iraq could acquire them and the longer we wait the greater the chances.

Given the widespread credulous acceptance of this argument, it's worth noting that even the extremely one-sided, pro-war panel on the first day of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's hearings on Iraq, was unable to produce any reason why Saddam would jeopardize his position by plotting an attack that would surely invite massive retribution. In fact, although he has used weapons of mass destruction before, most notably against the Kurds (at which time he was aided and abetted by the U.S.), the most plausible scenario in which he would use them again is under threat of a U.S. attack.

Beyond that, successive U.S. administrations have done all they could to sabotage arms control in Iraq and worldwide.

First, in December 1998, President Clinton pulled out the weapons inspectors preparatory to the "Desert Fox" bombing campaign — even though he knew this meant the end of weapons inspections. This is normally reported in the press as the "expulsion" of the weapons inspectors.

Next, in a move that stunned and angered the international community, George W. Bush killed the proposed enforcement and verification mechanism for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention — in December 2001, after the threat of bioweapons attacks was particularly clear.

Passed in 1972, the convention has over 100 signatories, including Iraq and the U.S. Because of the lack of an enforcement mechanism, countries were free to violate

**So what is really going on?
Let's start with what are *not*
the reasons for the war.
None of those put forth by the
Bush administration hold water.**

it, as did Iraq and the U.S. — both have attempted to weaponize anthrax, for example, as we found out when U.S.-developed anthrax killed six Americans in the fall of 2001.

In 1995, those signatories started negotiations to provide enforcement through mutual, intrusive inspections. For six years, the U.S. government threw up constant roadblocks, finally terminating negotiations. The reason? Biological weapons inspections in the U.S. might imperil the profits of biotech companies. Of course, had the enforcement mechanism passed, it could have been used to press for inspections in Iraq.

Even worse, in March 2002, the U.S. removed Jose Bustani, head of the Organization to Prevent Chemical Weapons, from office. According to George Monbiot of the *Guardian*, it was because Bustani's efforts to include Iraq in the Chemical Weapons Convention (subjecting it to chemical weapons inspections) would deprive the U.S. of a *casus belli* [i.e., an excuse for war].

There is consensus by arms control experts that weapons inspections in Iraq were extraordinarily effective in finding and dismantling weapons of mass destruction. Clearly, the administration isn't really concerned about this threat.

Constant protests in Senate hearings and elsewhere to the contrary, the administration is also not concerned about democracy in Iraq. Consider the U.S. reaction to the Iraqi intifada, the mass uprising of Iraqis after the Gulf War, in response to a call by George Bush, Sr., to overthrow Saddam. In February and March of 1991, at the peak of that rebellion, Saddam's regime was seriously imperiled.

To save his regime, the U.S. military deliberately lifted the existing no-fly zone, allowed Saddam to use helicopter gunships against the rebels, seized arms depots so rebels couldn't arm themselves and allowed the Republican Guards safe passage through its ranks to put down the uprising.

At the time, Richard Haas of the State Department explained, "What we want is Saddam's regime without Saddam." In 1996, on ABC, Brent Scowcroft explained further that the U.S. did not want a popular democratic movement that overthrew Saddam — it wanted a palace coup.

When all the official justifications collapse, what is left is the same ugly three-letter word that has always been at the core of U.S. Middle East policy — oil. It's important to clarify, however, that U.S. policy is neither simply about access to oil, which is how mainstream commentators frame it, nor is it completely dictated by oil companies, as some on the left claim.

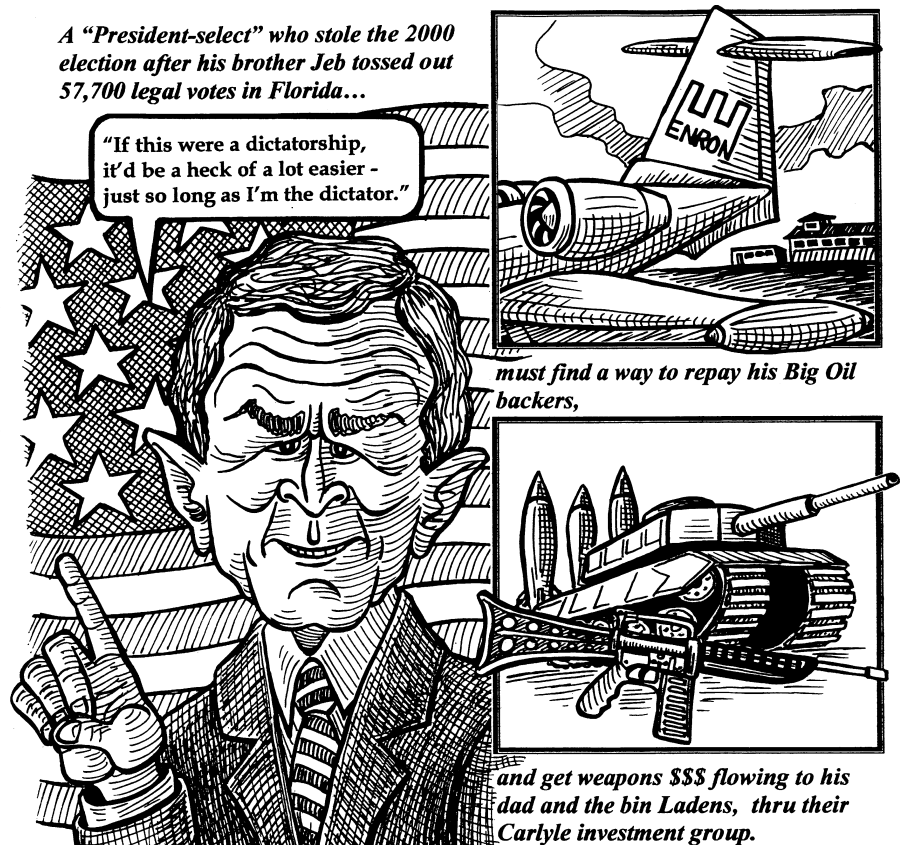
Access to oil can be obtained by paying for it, as other countries do. The U.S. has a different attitude because it is an empire, not merely a nation. On any given day, U.S. troops are in 140

countries around the world, with permanent bases in over half of those. After two decades of structural adjustment and one of "free trade," the U.S. has more control over the internal policies of other countries than the elected governments of those countries. Although "globalization" was recently the more visible face of this imperial expansion, it always had a military underpinning — and currently the military aspect is dominant.

This empire is predicated, like past empires, on political control for the purpose of economic control and resource and surplus extraction. Oil is the world's most important resource, and control of the flow and pricing of oil is a potent source of political power, as well as a significant source of profits. Oil companies, arms companies and general corporate America are all intimately concerned with U.S. Middle East policy.

Iraq nationalized its oil in 1972, taking complete control over the selling and pricing of oil and over the use of oil revenues. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait put an end to that.

The sanctions imposed after that and maintained to this day have had many effects. In addition to causing the death of over 500,000 children under the age of five (according to a UNICEF study), sanctions have partially broken Iraqi control of Iraq's oil. Starting with a complete ban on oil sales, they were gradually modified so that now there are no restrictions on sales. Iraq cannot make its own decisions about oil exploration and investment, nor until recently about repair of existing oil production facilities. Most important, all revenues from oil sales are deposited in a bank account in New York administered by the UN Secu-



Source: Excerpt from *Secrets of Sept. 11*, by William Thomas and David Work. This 34-page "Tru Comix" book illustrates the agents and agendas behind Sept.11 and the war for Central Asia's oil and poppy pipelines. To order, call toll free during east coast business hours: 1-877-726-4599. For more information, see <www.lifeboatnews.com>

rity Council. Money is disbursed from that account, only with the permission of the U.S., and almost exclusively to foreign corporations.

The sanctions have turned the Iraqi regime permanently against the U.S. If they were lifted, the government would make oil exploration deals with French and Russian companies, not U.S. ones. Continuation of the sanctions is a constant political burden for the U.S. The Bush administration wants a war to extricate itself from this stalemate, by replacing Saddam with a U.S.-friendly dictator who will make deals with U.S. companies and follow U.S. dictates.

The Afghanistan war was the opening move in a potentially far-reaching gambit. It was not particularly about fighting terrorism — it was planned before 9/11, and even U.S. government officials have concluded (*New York Times*, June 16, 2002) that it may have made “rooting out” al-Qaeda more, not less, difficult, because of the geographic dispersion caused by the war. It was also not just about a natural gas pipeline through Afghanistan, although those plans seem to be going forward. It also got the U.S. military into all seven “stans,” including potentially oil-and-gas-rich Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

If Bush gets his Iraq war, given Russia’s rapprochement with NATO, there will also be a complete military encirclement of Iran, the other part of the “axis of evil” (North Korea was thrown in for ballast). At that point, Iran will find it increasingly difficult not to accede to U.S. wishes.

ExxonMobil, Shell and other companies are currently negotiating with Saudi Arabia to do natural gas exploration. Although the Saudis say they will never allow foreign corporations to get their hands on crude oil, this is an important beginning.

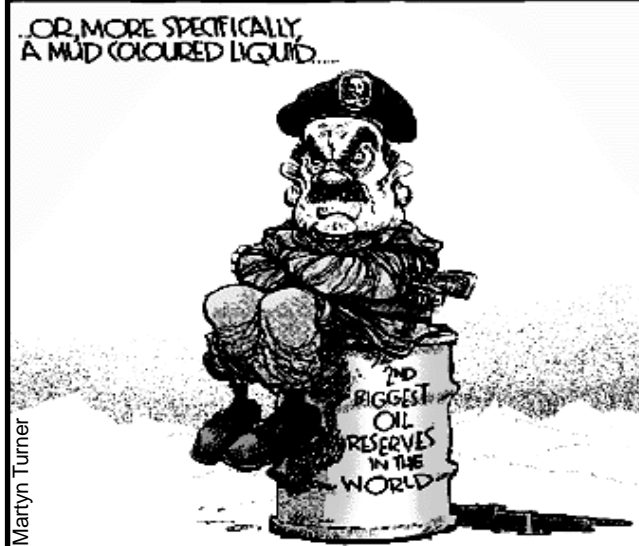
According to “The New Oil War” (*Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2002), OPEC countries have not increased their pumping capacity in over twenty years. This is the natural consequence, though the article doesn’t say it, of the dual U.S. policy of propping up corrupt feudal elites that use the revenues from oil sales to invest in U.S. and European corporations instead of investing them in their own economies and of “containment” (i.e., targeting for destruction) those few countries, like Iraq and Iran, that do try to develop their internal economies. Over the next twenty years, world requirements for Middle East oil are expected to double.

The U.S. seeks nothing less than to establish complete control over all significant sources of oil, especially in the Middle East, which holds roughly two thirds of the world’s proven reserves. The twin requirements of U.S. imperial control and the constant feeding of an industrial system based on ever-increasing levels of fossil fuel consumption dovetail with the systematic attempts of the U.S. to keep Middle Eastern countries from developing independent economies to set the stage for large-scale re-colonization, through war, covert action and economic coercion.

This war is not about minor domestic squabbles between Democrats and Republicans, but about a very ugly New World Order, in which innocents in the Middle East, Central Asia and the U.S. pay for the imperial dreams of an increasingly detached American elite.

Source: August 2, 2002. <www.rahulmahajan.com/iraqoil.htm>

YOU MIGHT HAVE BEEN WONDERING WITH ALL THE NASTY, OBNOXIOUS REGIMES IN THE WORLD WHY THE USA PICKS ON THE REGIME IN IRAQ...?
...WELL THE ANSWER IS AS CLEAR AS MUD.....



“[Saddam] sits on top of 10% of the world’s oil reserves. He has enormous wealth being generated by that.”

Dick Cheney, U.S. Vice-President, multi-millionaire and former CEO of multi-billion dollar Halliburton Corp., an oil services company that has profited richly from Iraqi oil.

“Iraq is a Rich Prize”

President Bush is proposing a war of plunder by the most powerful nation in the world against one of the weakest. Iraq is a rich prize for ExxonMobil, ChevronTexaco and the rest of corporate America. When Bush speaks of “regime change” he means the replacement of an independent Iraq by a semi-colonial regime, headed by a U.S. stooge like Hamid Karzai, the U.S.-installed president of Afghanistan, which would cede effective control of the country’s resources to U.S. and British interests.

The military occupation of Iraq and seizure of its oil resources will provide a massive windfall to the energy monopolies that exert enormous influence over U.S. foreign policy, and dominate the Bush administration. Control of petroleum resources provides not only economic benefits, but also enormous political and strategic leverage. By grabbing Iraq’s oil, the U.S. will greatly enhance its position against its nominal allies in Europe and Asia, which are greatly dependent on Persian Gulf petroleum exports, as well as against Russia, China and regimes throughout the Middle East and northern Africa. Having extended its political and military reach in Central Asia through the war in Afghanistan, a U.S. conquest of Iraq will give the U.S. ruling elite a position of unrivaled dominance in the two most important oil-producing regions.

Source: Editorial Statement, World Socialist Web Site, September 9, 2002. <www.wsws.org/articles/2002/sep2002/iraq-s09.shtml>

The Struggle for "Free Access" to Middle East Oil

By James A. Paul, Executive Director of Global Policy Forum, New York, and Chair of the NGO Working Group on the Security Council.

Iraq possesses the world's second largest proven oil reserves, currently estimated at 112.5 billion barrels, about 11% of the world total and its gas fields are immense as well. Many experts believe that Iraq has additional undiscovered oil reserves, which might double the total when serious prospecting resumes, putting Iraq nearly on a par with Saudi Arabia. Iraq's oil is of high quality and it is very inexpensive to produce, making it one of the world's most profitable oil sources. Oil companies hope to gain production rights over these rich fields of Iraqi oil, worth hundreds of billions of dollars. In the view of an industry source, it is "a boom waiting to happen."¹ As rising world demand depletes reserves in most regions over the next 10-15 years, Iraq's oil will gain increasing importance in global energy supplies. According to the industry expert: "There is not an oil company in the world that doesn't have its eye on Iraq."² Geopolitical rivalry among major nations throughout the past century has often turned on control of such key oil resources.³

Five companies dominate the world oil industry, two U.S.-based, two primarily UK-based, and one primarily based in France.⁴ US-based Exxon Mobil looms largest among the world's oil companies and by some yardsticks measures as the world's biggest company. The U.S. consequently ranks first in the corporate oil sector, with the UK second and France trailing as a distant third. Considering that the US and the UK act almost alone as sanctions advocates and enforcers, and that they are the headquarters of the world's four largest oil companies, we cannot ignore the possible relationship of sanctions policy with this powerful corporate interest.

U.S. and UK companies long held a 75% share in Iraq's oil production, but they lost their position with the 1972 nationalization of the Iraq Petroleum Company.⁵ The nationalization, following ten years of increasingly rancorous relations between the companies and the government, rocked the international oil industry, as Iraq sought to gain greater control of its oil resources. After 1972, Iraq turned to French companies and the Soviet government for funds and partnerships.⁶ Today, the U.S. and UK companies are very keen to regain their former position, which they see as critical to their future leading role in the world oil industry. The U.S. and the UK governments also see control over Iraqi and Persian Gulf oil as essential to their broader military, geostrategic and economic interests. At the same time, other states and oil companies hope to gain a large or even dominant position in Iraq. As de-nationalization sweeps through the oil sec-

"Iraq possesses huge reserves of oil and gas — reserves I'd love Chevron to have access to,"

enthused Chevron CEO Kenneth T. Derr in 1998.



tor, international companies see Iraq as an extremely attractive potential field of expansion. France and Russia, the longstanding insiders, pose the biggest challenge to future Anglo-U.S. domination, but serious competitors from China, Germany and Japan also play in the Iraq sweepstakes.⁷

During the 1990s, Russia's Lukoil, China National Petroleum Corporation and France's TotalFinaElf held contract talks with the government of Iraq over plans to develop Iraqi fields as soon as sanctions are lifted. In 1997, Lukoil reached an agreement to develop Iraq's West Qurna field, while China National signed an agreement for the North Rumailah field. (China's oil import needs from the Persian Gulf will grow from 0.5 million barrels per day in 1997 to 5.5 million barrels per day in 2020, making China one of the region's most important customers).⁸ France's Total at the same time held talks for future development of the fabulous Majnun field.

U.S. and UK companies have been very concerned that their rivals might gain a major long-term advantage in the global oil business. "Iraq possesses huge reserves of oil and gas — reserves I'd love Chevron to have access to," enthused Chevron CEO Kenneth T. Derr in a 1998 speech at the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco, in which he pronounced his strong support for sanctions.⁹ Sanctions have kept the rivals at bay, a clear advantage. U.S.-UK companies hope that the regime will eventually collapse, giving them a strong edge over their competitors with a post-

Saddam government. As the embargo weakens and Saddam holds on to power, stakes in the rivalry rise, for U.S.-UK companies might eventually be shouldered aside. Direct military intervention by the U.S.-UK offers a tempting but dangerous gamble that might put Exxon, Shell, BP and Chevron in immediate control of the Iraqi oil boom, but at the risk of backlash from a regional political explosion.

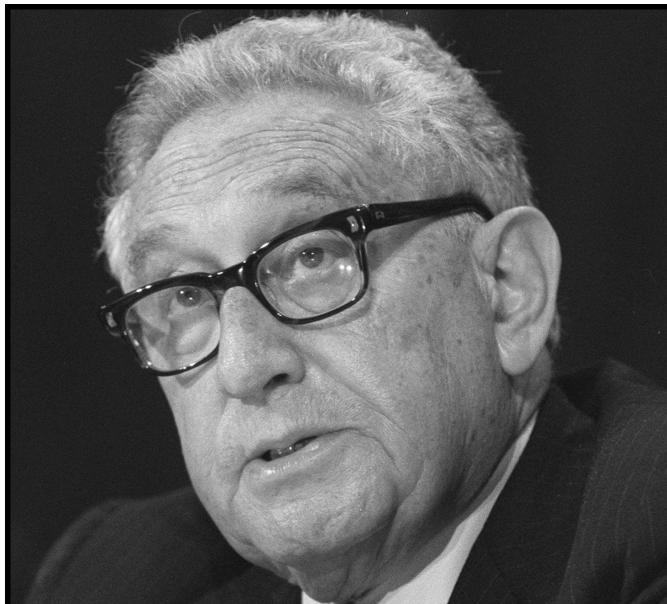
In testimony to Congress in 1999, General Anthony C. Zinni, commander in chief of the U.S. Central Command, testified that the Gulf Region, with its huge oil reserves, is a "vital interest" of "long standing" for the U.S. and that the U.S. "must have free access to the region's resources."¹⁰ "Free access," it seems, means both military and economic control of these resources. This has been a major goal of U.S. strategic doctrine ever since the end of World War II. Prior to 1971, Britain (the former colonial power) policed the region and its oil riches. Since then, the U.S. has deployed ever-larger military forces to assure "free access" through overwhelming armed might.¹¹

A looming U.S. war against Iraq is only comprehensible in this light. For all the talk about terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and human rights violations by Saddam Hussein, these are not the core issues driving U.S. policy. Rather, it is "free access" to Iraqi oil and the ultimate control over that oil by U.S. and UK companies that raises the stakes high enough to set U.S. forces on the move and risk the stakes of global empire.

Endnotes:

1. Conversation with the authors, June 5, 2002.
2. *Ibid.*
3. See, for example, Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: the epic quest for oil, money and power* (New York, 1991).
4. In order of size these firms are: Exxon Mobil, Royal Dutch-Shell, British Petroleum-Amoco, Chevron-Texaco and TotalFinaElf. Royal Dutch Shell is often described as a British-Dutch company, while TotalElfina is sometimes described as a French-Italian company.
5. Major shareholders in IPC were: Shell, BP, Esso (later Exxon), Mobil and CFP, the French national company.
6. For an account of this period, see Joe Stork, *Middle East Oil and the Energy Crisis* (New York, 1975), 188-194. Since 1918, France considered Iraq to be its main source of international oil reserves and its main means to gain parity with the Anglo-American companies (see Yergin, *op. cit.*, 188-191).
7. See Michael Tanzer, "Oil and Military Power in the Middle East and the Crimean Sea Region," *The Black World Today* web site, Feb. 28 and Mar. 6, 2002.
8. From U.S. Department of Energy, *International Energy Outlook*, Table 13.
9. Text as posted at <www.chevron-texaco.com/news/archive/chevron_speech/1998/98-11-05.asp> At the time, Condoleezza Rice, currently U.S. National Security Advisor, was a board member of Chevron. Though it is tempting to point to the many oil and energy industry connections of the Bush administration, including the President and Vice President, oil issues have consistently had a heavy influence on U.S. foreign policy, regardless of party or personalities.
10. Testimony to the Senate Armed Services Cttee., April 13, 1999.
11. See Michael T. Klare, *Resource Wars: the new landscape of global conflict* (New York, 2001).

Source: August 2002. <www.globalpolicy.org/security/oil/2002/08jim.htm>



"Oil is much too important a commodity to be left in the hands of the Arabs."

Henry Kissinger, U.S. Secretary of State under Presidents Nixon and Ford.

"Uninterrupted, Secure ... Access to Gulf Oil"

By Stephen Gowans

Central Command (Centcom), headed by General Tommy Franks, is the U.S. military command in the Middle East and East Africa. It has formulated a "theatre strategy" based on "the broad national security interests and objectives expressed in the President's National Security Strategy [NSS]."

Centcom's theatre strategy is built around "dual containment of the rogue states of Iraq and Iran...to protect the United States' vital interest in the region – uninterrupted, secure U.S./Allied access to Gulf oil."

For emphasis, Centcom adds: "Primary among U.S. interests in the USCENTCOM [operating region] is uninterrupted secure access to Arabian Gulf oil." And this, the Middle East command plans to achieve, by ensuring that "free market economies...take root and flourish," consistent with the President's emphasis on using the U.S. military to preserve and extend free markets and free trade, an emphasis articulated in his recently presented NSS.

A government that lets it be known it's prepared to destroy whole populations in first strike attacks to enforce the primacy of U.S. values of open markets, can hardly be expected to be incensed by Iraq's regrettable record of human rights violations and military aggression.

Access to oil, on terms suitable to U.S. corporations, is a more interesting prize.

Source: Excerpt from "Oil, not Saddam Hussein's 'evil,' key to U.S. invasion plans," What's Left in Suburbia, September 25, 2002. <www3.sympatico.ca/sr.gowans/oil.html>

The Bush Administration's Master Oil Plan

Defense Secretary Rumsfeld begins each day with a prayer...



By Michael T. Klare, professor of peace & world security studies, Hampshire College, Amherst, Mass., and author of *Resource Wars: The New Landscape of Global Conflict* (2001).

Beneath the surface of day-to-day crisis management, one can see signs of an over-arching plan for U.S. policy: a strategy of global oil acquisition.

In April 2002, the Bush administration took bold steps to implement this strategy in several far-flung regions of the world. In the Caspian Sea basin – said to harbor the second biggest reservoir of untapped petroleum after the Persian Gulf – the U.S. is building new military bases and providing training to local military forces. In Colombia, U.S.-equipped government forces will soon be guarding the Occidental Petroleum Company's Cano Limon oil pipeline. And in Venezuela – the U.S.'s third largest oil supplier – embassy personnel met with leaders of an abortive coup against President Hugo Chavez.

All of these developments are obviously tied to other foreign policy considerations besides oil. The U.S. clearly seeks to promote stability and fight terrorism in these and other areas of the world. But it is also true that the areas that are garnering the greatest degree of attention from Washington – the Middle East, the Caspian Sea basin and the Andean region – are also areas that figure prominently in the administration's long-term energy strategy.

The aim of this strategy is simple: to procure as much of the world's oil for ravenous U.S. markets as possible. With domestic U.S. production facing progressive decline and with national consumption rising every passing day, the U.S. must obtain more and more of its oil from abroad. Exploitation of the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) could reduce U.S. oil imports by a tiny amount, but would not make a significant difference.

The only way to significantly reduce imports is to increase the fuel efficiency of U.S. motor vehicles – but because Bush is reluctant to require this, the administration has instead launched a global effort to expand U.S.

access to foreign sources of petroleum.

This campaign was first laid out in the national energy plan drawn up by Vice President Dick Cheney in early 2001 and released in May, 2001. Because the plan calls for drilling on ANWR and was prepared with assistance from representatives of the scandal-ridden Enron Corporation, Congress and media have ignored its foreign policy implications. However significant the domestic debate over Enron and ANWR, it is its international repercussions that are most likely to affect the U.S.'s long-term future.

The Cheney report makes three key points:

- The U.S. must satisfy an ever-increasing share of its oil demand with imported supplies. Presently, the U.S. imports about 10 million barrels of oil per day (53% of its total consumption). By 2020, daily U.S. imports will total nearly 17 million barrels, or 65% of consumption.
- The U.S. cannot depend exclusively on traditional sources of supply like Saudi Arabia, Venezuela and Canada for this additional oil. It will also have to obtain substantial supplies from new sources, such as the Caspian states, Russia and Africa.
- The U.S. cannot rely on market forces alone to gain access to these added supplies, but will also require a significant effort on the part of government officials to overcome foreign resistance to the outward reach of U.S. energy companies.

In line with these three principles, the Cheney plan calls on the Bush administration to undertake a wide range of initiatives aimed at increasing oil imports from overseas sources. It calls on the president and secretaries of state, energy and commerce to work with leaders of the Central Asian countries and Azerbaijan to boost production in the Caspian region and to build new pipelines to the West. It also calls on U.S. officials to persuade their counterparts in Africa, the Persian Gulf and Latin America to open up their oil industries to greater U.S. oil-company involvement and to send more of their petroleum to the U.S..

The Cheney team is well aware that U.S. efforts to gain access to increasing amounts of foreign petroleum could provoke resistance in some oil-producing regions. By 2020, the report notes, the U.S. "will import nearly two of every three barrels of oil [it consumes] – a condition of increased dependency on foreign powers that do not always have America's interests at heart."

This means, of course, that U.S. efforts to obtain increased supplies of foreign oil will require more than trade deals and diplomacy – it will also require the threat of, or the use of, force to dissuade hostile forces from attempting to obstruct the flow of petroleum to the U.S. This, in turn, will require an enhanced U.S. capacity to operate militarily in areas of likely fighting over oil. It is for this reason that Washington is expanding U.S. military presence in the Persian Gulf area and beginning to establish such a presence in the Caspian basin (notably in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan). And, while these efforts have been accelerated since September 11, 2001, it is important to note that they began well before that date.

Source: Pacific News Service, April 23, 2002.

Oil Wars: Mideast, Central Asia, Africa and Latin America

By Gopal Dayaneni, oil campaign coordinator, Project Underground and Bob Wing, managing editor, *War Times*.

War — what is it good for? President Bush says war will stamp out terrorism. But to map the “war on terrorism” is to map the world’s oil.

In the Middle East, the administration has announced that its top priority is a massive invasion of Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein. Hussein is a ruthless leader, but the U.S. supports many dictators. Washington has him in its gunsights because he is the chief opponent to U.S. control over the vast oil wealth of the Persian Gulf. The new policy is meant to intimidate perceived U.S. foes, especially Iraq, which President Bush openly vows to attack. Coupled with the massive investment in missile defense, it reveals the official ascendancy of an aggressive U.S. military posture advocated by the far right since long before September 11.

In Afghanistan, the “war on terrorism” has produced a pro-U.S. government — and U.S. military bases in the nine surrounding countries. Those Central Asian countries are rich in oil and natural gas. By military action, the U.S. is trying to clear the way to lay pipelines to the West and to the growing Asian markets — with Afghanistan at the crossroads.

In the Caspian Sea basin, the U.S. has been building new military bases and training local defense forces in the wake of September 11. The former Soviet Republics of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are bursting with an estimated five trillion dollars worth of unexploited oil and natural gas. After the Persian Gulf, this is the largest reservoir of petroleum in the world.

Oil is also at the center of recent U.S. actions to export its “war on terrorism” to Latin America and Africa. In Colombia, the U.S. is ready to give \$98 million to government forces to guard against rebel disruption of Occidental Petroleum’s oil pipeline. In Venezuela, the U.S.’s third largest supplier of oil, the U.S. met with and helped fund the leaders of a failed coup against the democratically elected president.



Control of oil is key to control of the world economy. Bush calls his war program Enduring Freedom. But...it is more likely geared to produce Everlasting Profits.

The U.S. recently increased military aid to Nigeria, Africa’s largest supplier of oil to the U.S.

The Cheney-Enron Plan

The petroleum industry is the most powerful in the world. It fuels modern industry, agriculture and transportation. Its capital flows shape the global financial system.

Big Oil also dominates the Bush administration. The President, Vice President Dick Cheney and almost all the top ranking officials in the administration have been top corporate oil executives or have longstanding ties to the industry. The exceptions, like Secretary of State Colin Powell, are linked to the military and defense industries.

The administration’s oil strategy was set forward in the national energy plan drawn up last year by Cheney with notorious assistance from executives from Enron and other energy giants. Not surprisingly, the plan opposes an increase in the fuel efficiency of U.S. motor vehicles. And it calls for exploitation of the pristine Alaska National Wildlife Refuge even though such drilling would make no significant difference in the larger energy situation.

The War Business

This is why Washington seized upon the September 11 tragedy to expand its military presence in oil-producing countries throughout the world. Pepe Escobar, columnist for *Asia Times*, observes: “There’s no business like war business. Thanks to war against Iraq, the U.S. has its military bases in the Persian Gulf. Thanks to war against Yugoslavia, the U.S. has its military bases in Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia. Thanks to war against the Taliban, the U.S. is now in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan,” Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan.

Escobar believes that even larger stakes are involved in U.S. wars to control world oil. “If the U.S. controls the sources of energy of its rivals — Europe, Japan, China and other nations aspiring to be more independent — they win.” Control of oil is key to control of the world economy. Bush calls his war program Enduring Freedom. But Escobar believes it is more likely geared to produce Everlasting Profits.

Source: *War Times*, June 2002. <www.war-times.org>

Quotations Highlighting Oil as Motive for War

The major prerogative of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and Central Asia is to establish control over the production and distribution of its oil and gas resources. Iraq happens to be the world's second largest source of oil. Control of Iraq, either directly or indirectly through a U.S. imposed puppet regime would:

- (1) provide the U.S. with stable access to Iraq's oil fields;
- (2) provide U.S. oil firms with favorable access to oil production sharing agreements;
- (3) prevent or hinder the use of oil revenue to fund regional economic development at the expense of U.S. hegemony; and
- (4) provide a strategic base from which to destabilize and eventually topple the government of Iran, another oil-rich nation, thus completely encircling the bottom half of the oil-rich Caspian Basin.

Here are some statements that support this view:

"[The] U.S. should jettison half-measures and invade and occupy Iraq.... firm evidence should be unnecessary for the U.S. to act. It doesn't take careful detective work to know that Saddam Hussein is a perpetual enemy of the U.S.... At the very least, Iraq should be allowed to be dismembered by its perpetually warring factions, or, ideally, invaded and occupied by the American military and made into a protectorate.... [The aim] would be a pro-Western and reasonably successful regime, somewhere between the Shah of Iran and the current government of Turkey.... It would guarantee the West's access to oil, and perhaps break up OPEC.... And it would be a nice economic benefit to the U.S."

Richard Lowry, editor of the *National Review*, "End Iraq to conclude the Gulf War, ten years later," Oct. 15, 2001.

A Pentagon consultant believes the administration intends to attack Iraq soon, but that the objective would be limited to "seizure of Iraqi oil fields."

Vernon Loeb and Thomas E. Ricks, "Bush Developing Military Policy Of Striking First – New Doctrine Addresses Terrorism," *The Washington Post*, June 10, 2002.

"If we win the war, we are in control of Iraq, it is the single largest source of oil in the world, it's got huge reserves, which have been suppressed because of Iraq's actions, and Saddam's. We will have a bonanza, a financial one, at the other end, if the war is successful."

Charles Krauthammer, Syndicated Columnist, WUSATV, Aug. 3, 2002.

"When there is a regime change in Iraq, you could add 3 to 5 million barrels [per day] to world supply. The successful prosecution of the war would be good for the economy."

Larry Lindsey, President George W. Bush's economic adviser, cited by Davis, *The Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 16, 2002.

"The removal of Saddam is, in effect, the removal of the last threat to the free flow of oil from the Gulf.... There is nothing like [Iraq's oil fields] anywhere else in the world. It's the big prize."

Gerald Butt, Gulf editor, *Middle East Economic Survey (MEES)*. Cited by Michael Theodoulou and Roland Watson, "West sees glittering prizes in giant oilfields," *MEES*, July 11, 2002.

"A U.S.-led ouster of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein could open a bonanza for American oil companies long banished from Iraq, scuttling oil deals between Baghdad and Russia, France and other countries, and reshuffling world petroleum markets, according to industry officials and leaders of the Iraqi opposition. Although senior Bush administration officials say they have not begun to focus on the issues involving oil and Iraq, American and foreign oil companies have already begun maneuvering for a stake in the country's huge proven reserves of 112 billion barrels of crude oil.... [W]ith the end of sanctions that likely would come with Hussein's ouster, companies such as ExxonMobil and ChevronTexaco would almost assuredly play a role, industry officials said. 'There's not an

oil company out there that wouldn't be interested in Iraq,' one analyst said."

Dan Morgan and David B. Ottoway, "In Iraqi War Scenario, Oil Is Key Issue – U.S. Drillers Eye Huge Petroleum Pool," *Washington Post*, Sept. 15, 2002.

"This war business has obfuscated, hidden, beaten down any discussion of domestic issues. I think the president may have a two-pronged plan here, one over oil and the other is to win the fall election.... The political operatives in the White House have been very careful to spin [the motives for war] away from oil.... Anytime anybody tries to see a connection, they spin it the other way."

Jim McDermott, Member, House of Representatives (D-Wash), on Sept. 13. Cited by Jeff Johnson, "Threat, Bush Wants Saddam's Oil: Demos - Iraq No Imminent," *CNS News*, Sept. 14, 2002.

"All of the U.S. policies in the Middle East since World War II have been rooted in the desire to control the enormous oil reserves there - and certainly to control the price of oil and the profits from oil."

Howard Zinn, Excerpt from interview, *Socialist Worker*, Sept. 6, 2002. <www.socialistworker.org/2002-2/421/421_06_Zinn.shtml>

"There is no imminent threat by Iraq against the U.S. Iraq does not have nuclear capabilities that anyone has been able to specifically determine, nor does it have the ability to deliver such a weapon, nor does it have the intent to do so. It could be said by Iraq that they alone are facing the imminent threat.... Oil is a factor. How much is anybody's guess, but to discount it as a factor is, I think, misleading.... It's not a conspiracy theory to bring it in because, after all, it is the second largest oil supply in the world."

Dennis Kusinich, Member, House of Representatives (D-Ohio) on Sept. 13, 2002. Cited by Jeff Johnson, *CNS News*, Sept. 14, 2002.

Source: Excerpt from "Ulterior Motives, The Push For War on Iraq," Center for Cooperative Research <www.cooperativeresearch.org/wotiraq/Ulterior_Motives.htm>