



FROM THE WILDERNESS

*A Nonpartisan, Non-sectarian, MAP from the Here That Is,
Into the Tomorrow of Our Own Making*

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WHAT IF?

- Something Priceless Has Been Lost Forever - A Sober Look From Europe at the Trap Closing on the U.S.**
- The Bush Administration Has Been Suckered**

March 30, 2003, 1300 (FTW), AMSTERDAM -- In this, perhaps the most multi-cultural city in all of Europe, where English is universally spoken as a second language, something has shifted and it is very noticeable. When I enter any sidewalk café and, through the mélange of accents from British, to French, to German, to Middle Eastern, to Chinese, to Indonesian, ask for a coffee and a croissant, my American accent produces a subtle but tangible reaction in the crowd. A cone of silence develops in my immediate vicinity, as people on the street listen for my attitude and watch my bearing to see if I am a "Bush American". Do I support a war that is universally hated here and that has woven a thread of quiet fear through the sidewalks, bicycle paths and canals?

This is the city that sheltered Anne Frank during the Nazi occupation of 1940-44. This is the city where the first and only really significant, non-violent civil strikes against Nazi rule took place throughout occupied Europe. This is the city where one finds more Rembrandts and Van Goghs than anywhere else on earth. This is also the city that is home to the world's most famous red light district and cafés that sell hashish legally. This is the city that is known for its universal tolerance of everything except that which harms.

One of my subscribers, a German who has come to the conference at which I am speaking, seeks me out. We talk of what is happening in the world and I realize that slowly, but inexorably, Americans are becoming identified here as "The New Germans", "The New Occupiers."

News coverage here at the Hotel Grand Krasnapolsky, perhaps Amsterdam's best-known hotel, is vastly different from America. Not only is there CNN, there is the BBC, and stations from France, Italy, Germany, Asia and the Arab world. The war looks vastly different through these eyes. It looks bad enough on CNN.

I am speaking at a conference sponsored by *Nexus Magazine*, an eclectic Australian publication with large followings in Australia, continental Europe, Britain and the U.S. I listen intently to one of the speakers, a famed Dutch journalist named Willem Oltmans, as he discusses the war. Now in his 70s, Oltmans fought in the Dutch resistance and blew up Nazi troop and supply trains. He is a national hero.

He is unequivocal in his message. "Bush is an idiot and he has been suckered by Russia, Germany, France and China."

I was already on this page.

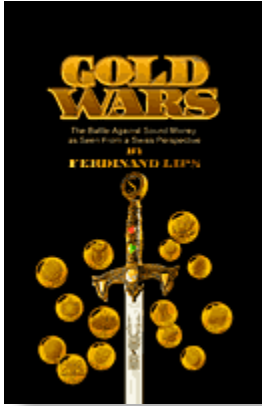
Oltmans does not hesitate to compare the current American government to the Third Reich. Its tactics and propaganda are all too familiar to him.

I was already on this page.

(continued on page 22)

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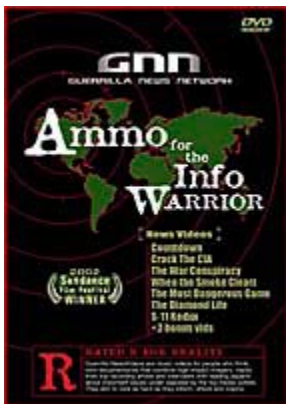


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[In some of his best writing ever, former West Point instructor and retired U.S. Army Special Forces Master Sergeant Stan Goff breaks down for us what really happened in the Iraqi war, with our media, and to us here at home. As the so-called coalition prepares to declare "Victory", Goff reminds us and perhaps tells many for the first time how the Iraqi campaign was actually fought. His research, instead of relying on America's despicable pretense at journalism also included: The Independent UK, Le Monde, The Herald, The Hindu Times, The Asia Times (an excellent paper), Al-Jazeera, and the Financial Times. It parallels exactly what I saw in European television coverage during a recent trip to Amsterdam.

The difference is not one of interpretation or bias. It is first a difference of which events get told and which do not. Massacred women and children seen by a New York Times photographer are not elements of spin. Massacred Iraqi soldiers with white flags of surrender still beside their bodies are not propaganda. These are crimes. Most will be surprised to learn that U.S. troops intentionally provoked the looting of Iraq's priceless antiquities. And I have not heard a single mention in American media about the extent to which depleted uranium was employed, or the fact that its dust – which will remain poisonous for four billion years – will be killing perhaps hundreds of thousands of people for decades and certainly long after Saddam's memory has faded behind the images of our next stage-managed crisis.

Goff has the courage to say two things that only he can say with force: First, Saddam Hussein was a symbol of anti-imperialism and those in the world who hoped for a better showing from him were right in thinking that he was the lesser of two evils. Saddam was a chance to check an insanity that seems more contagious and far more deadly than SARS. Saddam is no longer a potential threat to anyone. But what of Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz and George Bush and their Neoliberal alter images? Soon, I will be concluding a detailed investigation on how the Empire very likely rigged even that game and allowed Saddam to escape to Russia in exchange for a quick victory that may not endure.

Second, Goff points out that the American progressive movement failed utterly – as it usually does – to make any difference because it failed to address real issues and it permitted the debate to be framed around the caveat, "Sure he's a horrible guy but..." Their protests accomplished nothing but self-serving propaganda for an entire class of Americans, which some analysts call the Lily-Livered Left. The war is over and people who could have been doing things that matter instead of rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic and seeking recognition for it have gone back to Starbucks for another latte and more discussion about which guru's views are most fashionable and proper.

Both Goff and I have seen dead and mutilated bodies of men, women and children up close and personal. They are the difference between fantasy and reality.– MCR]

WOLVES AND SHEEP

(apologies to Canis lupus)

A short history of the Bush Mafia's war in Iraq

By Stan Goff

ORWELL & CAPONE

The World Bank, under the direction of James Wolfensohn, is posing a problem for neocon Wolfowitz. The World Bank, though dominated by the US which has 16.2% of voting shares, has an institutional loyalty to multilateralism. As the US unilateralism advocated by US neocons gives the back of its hand to the very foundation of the UN, which is the institutional manifestation of multilateralism, there is predictable conflict between the two Wolves. The World Bank Wolf is a neo-liberal, while the Defense Department Wolf is a neocon.

-Henry C. K. Liu

April 21, 2003, 1200 PDT (FTW) -- **M**r. Liu, who runs an investment company, and who has written extensively on "dollar hegemony," has hit another nail on the head. I would add entertainment media cheerleader Wolf Blitzer, CNN's Pentagon sycophant in Kuwait City, as representative of the neon press; *neon – a colorless, inert, gaseous element that lights up on command.*

The self-congratulation of the Junta right now is only matched by the despair of those who, in the first days of unexpected Iraqi resistance, thirsted for an American tactical defeat in Iraq.

That's because people don't have a head for numbers. The same arithmetic that told us before the Bushist aggression began in earnest, that the Iraqis could not defeat the Americans, should also tell faint-hearted anti-imperialists that US

military might is not infinite. But those who treasure both fantasy and despair remain impressionists, allergic to weights and measures.

Someone very dear to me recently died – Mark Jones – who insisted on grasping things firmly, especially those most consequential things that we might sidestep because of an emotional paradox – like the fact that we are now certainly entering a very dark period of human history within which there are, with equal certainty, historic opportunities for human emancipation. They are times that will require our deepest compassion and our most dispassionate – and sometimes ruthless – cunning.

In that spirit, let's review the adventure in Iraq.

Rumsfeld's war plan was initiated on the 20th of March, with expectations that the high-tech advance northward from Kuwait would resolve all major tactical difficulties within two days. Simultaneously, another Rumsfeld scheme, "decapitation" strikes, was launched to target Saddam Hussein. The whole venture was designed to come off like Bill Gates meets Caesar.

Instead, it came off like Orwell meets Al Capone.

The Orwellian aspect, of course, was an American press that can no longer lay even the scarcest claim to being journalists, and its complete merger with the Department of Defense, specifically Central Command (CENTCOM).

THE FALSE START

Beginning almost immediately after the first tanks crossed their lines of departure into Southern Iraq, we were witness to the surreal recurring spectacle of the *CENTCOM-Lie-of-the-Day* – a parade of spin doctors from the military, *which included the actual commander, Tommy Franks*, who would make erroneous and often ridiculous claims about the progress of their aggression – even as the entire Rumsfeld lunacy unraveled before the eyes of the world in the face of sparse, but extremely courageous and totally unexpected, Iraqi resistance.

Umm Qasr had fallen. Well, not yet. Basra was taken. Well, not yet. A brigade of Iraqis surrendered. Oops. Fudged casualty statistics. Phantom Republican Guard columns advancing south. Saddam is dead rumors circulated daily. Chemical weapons sites were discovered, then un-discovered. The victims of American bombs were *really* caused by falling antiaircraft debris from the Iraqis.

The wild stories, outright lies, and subsequent rationalizations were reiterated uncritically by CNN, MSNBC, and Fox, among all the others, to an ovine American public (the most notable exception being Black Americans, who have remained largely skeptical of the whole enterprise). In-bedded ("embedded") reporters, who had been completely immersed in US military units – self-censoring, based on deep identification with and absolute dependence upon those units – sent back pre-screened images almost minute by minute, and the world saw its first truly stage-managed war.

Then cracks developed in the stories. The internet allowed legitimate journalism to end-run CENTCOM News Network. And the generals, chafing under the arrogant presumptuousness of Donald Rumsfeld and smarting from setbacks in the field, began to "leak."

Sixty miles out of Baghdad, the whole advance screeched to a halt. CENTCOM explained the "operational pause" as an exercise in flexibility, "all part of the plan."

By the 27th of March, Bush and his piss-boy Tony Blair had an emergency meeting.

The bombing of Baghdad, circumspect until then, was intensified – almost a gratuitous act of frustrated rage. Independent journalists reported the same targets being hit from the air as many as six nights in a row.

The generals went back to the drawing board. The 4th Infantry, whose equipment was stranded on the ocean when the Turkish government denied the Americans their Northern Front, prepared to deploy as reinforcement. Supply lines were shored up by diverting combat power to convoy security, in order to resupply the points of the advance Army along the Euphrates valley and the Marines along the Tigris. Some troops were low on water and down to one MRE a day. Sandstorms had eaten into the engines of the Abrams, Bradleys, and helicopters, and fuel was low.

On March 27th, the 173rd Airborne Brigade parachuted onto Northern Iraq's Harrir Airfield with Kurdish security waiting on the ground. CENTCOM referred to this operation as "opening a Northern Front."

On the 29th of March, a suicide bomber in Najaf killed four GIs and the Rules of Engagement (ROE). Now the war would begin to take on a Vietnam-like character for American soldiers and Marines, who were pushed one step closer to seeing the entire Iraqi people as the enemy. It was after this the non-in-bed press from outside the US would begin to send out photos of dead Iraqi soldiers, heads blown off next to the white flags that the US soldiers didn't think to remove from the scene. And civilians would be more routinely shot dead en masse at US checkpoints.

Generals grew nervous as the "operational pause" began to stretch out and US positions became almost semi-permanent installations, bait for hit-and-run guerrilla attacks. CENTCOM said on March 31st that the US might wait weeks to begin its assault on Baghdad, probably a ruse to lure defenders at Baghdad into the open to strengthen positions so they might be attacked more effectively by air. The same day, Robin Cook, the former chief cheerleader for the imperial assault on Yugoslavia, launched a scathing criticism of Tony Blair.

Euphoria began to infect the Arab world. People began to identify with the tenacity of these Iraqi defenders of their homeland against the juggernaut of US militarism. Many anti-imperialists outside the Arab world caught the same bug. No head for numbers.

URANIUM RAIN

Bombs began to rain on Baghdad again. Colin Powell was trying to placate the Turks. Rumsfeld – stung with deep humiliation – began to make threatening noises at the Iranians and Syrians, as the firestorm of recriminations in Washington raged, and the damaged umbilical supply line from Kuwait was repaired.

By April 1st, US ground forces on point had refueled and refit, and they were ready to resume the offensive. The cautious advance North began on the 2nd, with the 3rd (Mechanized) Infantry Division backed by paratroops from the 82nd and Apache helicopters from the 101st advancing on the Karbala Gap and the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force moving on Al Kut in the Tigris Valley. Special Forces in the north were organizing with the Kurds, as supplies now flowed in by air, for an attack on Mosul and Kirkuk (where some of the richest oilfields in the world lie).

The Iraqis fought a delaying action in the Karbala Gap, but multiple engagements had given US commanders the experience necessary to develop counter-measures to the Iraqis' new Russian-trained asymmetric tactics, and the Iraqis now began to suffer from a loss of command and control as well as a genuine lack of fresh tactical adaptation. US commanders had adapted, however, and regained their technological advantage, their logistical tail, and above all their air superiority.

Iraqi combat losses were horrific, and in short order, the Nebuchadnezzar and Medina Divisions of the Republican Guard melted back into Baghdad, leaving small ambushes along the route to delay the Americans.

Firing precious anti-aircraft weapons became a death warrant, and the Iraqi triple-A was retired northward, probably beyond Baghdad. And US commanders had forged a seamless integration of A-10 Warthogs with ground units to open up defenses in advance of ground attacks.

The A-10 is a 30 mm Gatling gun with an airframe built around it – firing 3,000 rounds a minute of depleted uranium alloy bullets. It is comparatively slow, so it can only be put to good use when there is total air superiority. But it is one of the most agile fixed wing aircraft in history. In one second, the A-10 can reduce a tank to a scorched shell or shatter a fighting position. Working in pairs, the A-10s can rubble a multi-story building in five minutes, or – as General Barry McCaffrey demonstrated in 1991 – they can transform a retreating column of thousands of men and hundreds of tanks into a meandering file of smoldering wreckage and dismembered corpses.

Corpses have now become a familiar phenomenon for a new generation of US soldiers. Many will return now with their heads filled with corpses and their bodies filled with depleted uranium. They will have their moment of intoxicating adulation in public and the corpses will sneak up on them in private. Then the DU will sneak up on them.

Some people learn to live with corpses. Some learn to relish the freedom of killing and develop a taste for it. Perfect masculinity is sociopathic. A young Marine who had just killed a woman at a checkpoint said, matter of factly, “The chick was in the way.” Gangster. Badass.

Others, as the transitory adulation fades, will sense the barrenness of their wounded psyches backlit by the barrenness of a decaying consumer culture, and their alienation will flower into addiction, psychosis, and suicide. And then will we see *Them* as pathological.

We didn't see that pathology on April 3rd, not in the troops, not in ourselves, not on CNN. Like the air, we breathe alienation until we take it for granted. On April 3rd, we watched the seizure of Saddam Hussein Airport on the outskirts of Baghdad, and CENTCOM led the cheer.

Rumsfeld's pet drones began buzzing like Tigris River mosquitoes over Baghdad, trying to vindicate themselves at \$37 million apiece for Global Hawks, \$40 million for Predators (not factoring in years of R&D money). They shot pictures of Iraqis pointing skyward at them, as combatants took the complex counter-measure of stepping under a doorway to evade their digital gaze. Then the real planes came.

A-10's again, like lethal storms tearing into Baghdad's suburbs, trashing the homes and histories of the ancient city in advance of the next ground assault.

This was the new strategy: incremental murder. And it began to gain traction.

Saddam Hussein Airport was renamed by its occupiers. Ali Hassan al-Majid - “Chemical Ali” in the press frenzy to find new caricatures for their hallucinations – was bombed, and this story was fanned for days – the latest smokescreen to preoccupy herd-America so it wouldn't be awakened to the uncaricatured corpses.

WAR OF SYMBOLS

The 3rd Infantry made its little foray – a reconnaissance in force – into Baghdad on April 5th, met with sporadic but furious resistance from those who lurked in doorways as the drones flew helplessly over the day before. The hospitals in Baghdad were now overwhelmed, corpses lying sloppily under blankets in the corners of rooms, the most critical left to die while doctors and nurses worked around the clock to salvage the salvageable with meager resources. Reports filtered out past the compliant media that the floors were swimming in human blood.

The Iraqi fighters – now a symbol to a hopeful and humiliated Arab world – found reality singularly unsymbolic. Their new Russian-trained tactics were being met with the cancellation of Rumsfeld's cyber-war and the US adaptation of sending blood down the streets with the A-10's. Their decentralization – at first an advantage, even when applied in an often amateurish and tragically costly way – now became simple disarray in the face of the lethal rain of uranium.

The US was demonstrating its resolve to conquer Baghdad by converting it to rubble if necessary, and civilians were paying an appalling price. Even some “leftists,” safely ensconced in Europe and the US, began publicly dressing down the Iraqi combatants for not paying the ultimate price to turn Baghdad into an Armageddon.

The lights went out in Baghdad, and the US forces tore a path to the banks of the Tigris. On April 7th, the US tested its bunker buster munitions on a house where they claim they thought Saddam was hiding. The US press made scant mention of the civilian deaths, including children, as CNN, et al, went into yet another three-day speculation frenzy about the visceral status of one man.

Killing civilians was routine by now. This harrowing description from Laurent Van der Stockt, a Gamma Agency photographer with the New York Times Magazine:

On the morning of April 7, the Marines decided to cross the bridge. A shell fell onto an armored personnel carrier. Two marines were killed. The crossing took on a tragic aspect. The soldiers were stressed, febrile. They were shouting. The risk didn't appear to be that great, so I followed their advance. They were howling, shouting orders and positions to each other. It sounded like something in-between a phantasm, mythology and conditioning. The operation was transformed into crossing the bridge over the River Kwai.

Later, there was some open terrain. The Marines were advancing and taking up position, hiding behind mounds of earth. They were still really tense. A small blue van was moving towards the convoy. Three not-very-accurate warning shots were fired. The shots were supposed to make the van stop. The van kept on driving, made a U-turn, took shelter and then returned slowly. The Marines opened fire. All hell broke loose. They were firing all over the place. You could hear 'Stop firing' being shouted. The silence that set in was overwhelming. Two men and a woman had just been riddled with bullets. So this was the enemy, the threat.

A second vehicle drove up. The same scenario was repeated. Its passengers were killed on the spot. A grandfather was walking slowly with a cane on the sidewalk. They killed him too. As with the old man, the Marines fired on an SUV driving along the river bank that was getting too close to them. Riddled with bullets, the vehicle rolled over. Two women and a child got out, miraculously still alive. They sought refuge in the wreckage. A few seconds later, it flew into bits as a tank lobbed a terse shot into it.

Marines are conditioned to reach their target at any cost, by staying alive and facing any type of enemy. They abusively make use of disproportionate firepower. These hardened troops, followed by tons of equipment, supported by extraordinary artillery power, protected by fighter jets and cutting-edge helicopters, were shooting on local inhabitants who understood absolutely nothing of what was going on.

With my own eyes I saw about fifteen civilians killed in two days. I've gone through enough wars to know that it's always dirty, that civilians are always the first victims. But the way it was happening here, it was insane.

Resistance had shrunken into pockets, some still doggedly determined, and much simply disappearing behind this valiant screen. Tens of thousands of Iraqi combatants are missing to this day, and speculation that they might eventually use Syria as a jumping-off point to stage operations back into their nation has led the US administration to rattle its saber, even as its capacity to wage war effectively anywhere else in the world right now is next to zero.

If ever there were a time to thumb one's nose at the US, it is now. They are a big dog at the end of a thick chain.

The imperial crowing about this lopsided attack is tempered behind the scenes by the knowledge that – contrary to all the bullshit about destruction of Iraqi units – the boldest sacrifices by Iraqi fighters were made not in conventional confrontations but in delaying tactics. Those tactics worked. The Iraqis took good advantage of the US aversion to high “friendly” casualties and their obsession with “force protection.”

The fact is, the lion's share of Iraqi forces managed an orderly retreat... somewhere...and the US suspects Syria. Perhaps. Perhaps they are still in Iraq. Perhaps they quit. Perhaps not.

There are still thousands of tanks and armored personnel carriers unaccounted for in Iraq, and they didn't drive themselves away. Hundreds of thousands of small arms. Up to 3,000 wire-guided anti-armor missiles. Over 1,500 artillery pieces, a half dozen SCUD launchers, 1,000+ MOWAG light anti-aircraft weapons as well as a decent supply of unfired Surface to Air Missiles, a dozen Hind attack helicopters, several dozen smaller choppers, and up to two dozen PC-7 and PC-9 fixed-wing aircraft.

These numbers haunt US military commanders, as they should.

On April 8th, the US tested the new limits of its impunity by deliberately attacking a convoy with the Russian Ambassador, then claimed it was a “crossfire.” Only days before, Rumsfeld in one of his more frequent fits of pique, had made threatening noises at the Russians.

Al-Jazeera had been publicly chastised days earlier in a CENTCOM briefing for daring to show American dead (and thereby eroding domestic support for the adventure). They should have paid attention. When Al-Jazeera engaged in journalism in Afghanistan, the Americans had unapologetically bombed their offices.

On April 8th, the American forces destroyed the Al-Jazeera offices in Baghdad and simultaneously attacked independent journalists in the Palestine Hotel. The symbolism of the name was not lost on the Arab world, as the US tested the feasibility of eliminating witnesses.

Counter-symbolism was deployed the following day. As the US continued the slaughter, thrusting from three directions

into Baghdad and initiating its attack to take Kirkuk, the American military gathered together a sparse crowd around a Saddam Hussein statue, then pulled it down while the fake crowd cheered. The in-bed press, in a shameless and slavish display, kept their lenses tight to make the paltry mob appear larger. That image plays still today – long after it has been repeatedly exposed as a tawdry scam. They even refused to show the American flag that one over-enthusiastic young Marine had used to cover the statue's face. A little *too much* symbolism there.

Rumsfeld cracked on television once, uttering over and over “It’s a liberation, it’s a liberation, it’s a liberation.”

Then the looting began, and the US stood by. I saw it in Haiti. Let the chaos rein for a bit and they will beg for order, even if it comes from unwelcome quarters. Certain facilities were protected, like the Oil Ministry building. Then there was the most symbolic event of the war, in my opinion.

Iraq is the geographic and cultural cradle of Western civilization. The US military was sent to attack this cradle of civilization, and the US military initiated the looting of the Museum of Archeology, where 7,000 years worth of priceless artifacts were kept to posterity. Eyewitnesses report that before the looting began, Americans had been keeping the streets clear with gunfire. Then they pulled up in front of the Museum and started firing into it. I saw a tank round's hole in the front on a CNN report, far too high for a looter to have made it. They murdered the two Sudanese guards in front of the administrative building, then directed the looters, *through the US military's Arabic translators*, to enter the building and gut it. By April 15th, the National Archives as well, where millions of pages of historical documents, some centuries old, were stored, was looted, and the precious records burned by a street mob while US military looked complacently on.

THE NON-DENOUEMENT & MORAL IMPERIALISM

The rest of the story could sound like a denouement. Kirkuk fell. Mosul fell. But it's just begun. Now politics begins, and we'll see just what kind of tar baby we have here.

The military “victory” is secure. The Washington gangsters have won their new turf, let's see if they can keep it. There will certainly be no attack on Syria. Again, those who fear this have not done the arithmetic, political or military. The United States has extended its military reach almost to its conventional limit, number one, and the objective was Europe and China, with Iraq's petroleum the strategic objective.

Anti-imperialists, all people of moral courage, need to quit letting these gangsters and their sycophant press spook them, and quit confusing ruling class blather with ruling class motivations.

The apocalyptic Bushite nonsense about Evil is a sop to the Christian right in the United States who believe this period is the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. They are a key part of the Bush junta's popular base in the United States, and – as Christian Zionists – part of the powerful popular Israel lobby. But the Neocons' blueprint, laid out some years ago, for leaping over this period of an impending severe crisis of US hegemony, is hard-eyed secularism. Their true weakness is bourgeois myopia and incredible hubris. They are constitutionally incapable of understanding history as a process that involves the masses.

Neoliberalism – the *form* of US imperialism – was falling into disarray before September 11th. It was a transformation of US imperialism that dated back to the Nixon administration, itself a strategy to overcome profound structural weaknesses in the system – not the least of which was the organic composition of capital – wherein the industrialized North *collaborated* in the harvest of the dependent global South. The character of that transformation has been written on at length – but dollar hegemony was its linchpin, and the basis of dollar hegemony, at the end of the day, was military might.

The most fundamental characteristic of Neoliberalism was that this “benign” leadership of the US was accepted by lesser imperial powers because the US served as an essential umpire for a *multilateral* system of exploitation and accumulation.

The difference between the Neoliberals (think of the Democrats) in the US and the Neocons (think Republican within Republican) is not on the question of exploitation and accumulation. They are equally devoted to preserving the status and privileges of the US ruling class, of which both are a part.

The difference revolves around two opposing delusions; the Neoliberal delusion that there is a way to return to the multilateral gluttony of the recent past – with the US reassuming its role of benevolent father – and the Neocon delusion that the US can have its economic cake and eat it too by playing the part of a global protection racket on energy markets.

The Neoliberals cannot solve the problem of rebellion in the periphery and the falling rate of profit. The Neocons cannot solve the problem of military costs – economic and political.

Meanwhile, back in the USA, the initiation of wholesale hostilities on March 20th erased the broadest basis of unity for the anti-war movement.

The strength of the broad anti-war movement prior to H-hour was the convergence of different political tendencies, including many sections of the managerial and ruling classes, around a single demand: No War!

Any attempt now to preserve those alliances intact flies directly in the face of reality. They cannot hold because their basis had disappeared, and our differences will now come out into the open. Many people were moved from questions about the motivations for war, to a clear anti-imperialist perspective. Now is certainly a good time to stress education and consolidation of those sections of the population who are still in a teachable moment – especially ordinary workers and people of color.

Anti-imperialists (and I am one) are standing exposed again, no longer folded unobtrusively into the larger mass. Liberals (including neoliberals) are already retreating to their old paths. If we are not careful, we will be tempted down those same paths, which look well kept but ultimately lead nowhere. Emblematic of that retreat are certain rhetorical and political strategies that

were tolerated in the diversity of the pre-H-hour movement, but which must now be challenged from the left.

Not least among them is the denunciation of Ba'ath Party leadership, especially of Saddam Hussein. This is a world-class red herring. Ba'athism was a movement that cannot be judged through the rosy lenses of Western morality. It's akin to measuring Black prejudice with the same yardstick used to measure white prejudice. The reality of power relations makes these points of view irreconcilably and qualitatively different.

Moral imperialism is a very slippery slope.

Ritual denunciation of Saddam Hussein before, during, and after the latest invasion did not prevent the anti-war movement from being mercilessly red-baited and patriot-baited.

What it *did* do was set the stage for a huge fraction of the pre-H-hour anti-war movement to have its legs knocked out from under it when tanks rolled north. The failure to grasp the nature of US imperialism and how it was responsible long before the war – as a global system – for every single aspect of the situation in Southwest Asia, left so-called progressives grappling in the dark after ahistorical moral comparisons, generally based on a thirteen-year campaign of demonization, and more recently, calling for the UN to take up the task of occupation.

Michael Keaney, an economist living in Finland put it well when he noted that:

...various people in the metropolitan left are, in the midst of all that is going on at present, spending valuable time and resources telling others on the left 'I told you so' or lecturing them on the finer points of 'democracy' when the real task at hand is to work against imperialism. Under current circumstances, the effective result of getting even slightly bogged down by this 'sugar-coating' is to legitimate imperialism. We surrender valuable ground when we give any credence whatsoever to the propaganda claims of cruise missile liberals and neo-cons alike concerning other regimes whose development has been twisted, tortured, stunted, manipulated, thwarted, squashed, halted... by the constant interference of the metropolis which has, to use Edward Said's very appropriate phrase, 'driven them crazy after decades.' And right now I don't really need to hear about the venality of 'Saddam'. [A] proper class analysis of pre-invasion Iraq would be in order so that we might understand better how things will develop in the future. But quite honestly, for the time being and until it is proved otherwise, Saddam Hussein and his cohort are a part of the anti-imperialist movement.

This recognition will become more important if there is a real struggle against the American occupiers. That struggle cannot be held to account by the standards of Western progressives, even of Western leftists. It will require a form of unity and struggle appropriate for those who engage in the resistance, and it will not be pretty enough for BMW Bolsheviks sipping *lattes* while they plan the revolution for places they've never lived.

We can't possibly know – at least most of us can't – what a nascent Iraqi resistance might look like, or even if it exists at *this point*.

We might be seeing it now, in the ubiquitous mini-rebellions against American occupation, street mobilizations that are forcing the US military to withdraw or overreact. Rejections of US-installed colonial surrogate leadership. That would certainly queer the US pitch and, to sustain disruption, it will require blinding the US to plans and intents. That will mean merciless ferreting out of collaborators with the US. It might mean suicide bombing. Some might disappear, leaving the country to sharpen their skills; precision marksmanship and non-technical communications, mechanical ambushes, small-unit planning. Organizing units and staffs, some blending back into the population to monitor the mood of the street. Let the situation ripen. The fault lines are already appearing in Iraqi society, and resistance to the Americans has begun even before the guns have fallen silent. Wait and plan for one or two totally unexpected and devastating blows delivered when their guard is down, one year, one and a half, maybe more, from now, organizing the insurgency in the meantime, setting up safe houses and rat lines, developing intelligence networks, establishing tactical caches and supply lines. It's all speculation.

We just don't know. But neither does the Bush Crime Family.

What we must understand is that progressives cannot stand against *whatever is necessary* to expel the invader. As Henry Liu says, we cannot let the White Man's Burden become our burden by falling into the trap of moral imperialism. We cannot put an abstract morality above the people.

We cannot join that herd.

This is far from over.



Unholy Grail: The Quest for Genetic Weapons

- **Food Crops and Livestock Are An Easy First Target for Gene-Specific Weapons – Has It Already Happened?**
- **A Realistic Look at Probabilities, Responsibilities and Ethical Questions Arising From Experience and the One Nation Arousing the Most Suspicion – The United States**

by Kellia Ramares

(Special to *From The Wilderness*)

[In the conclusion of her two-part series on gene-specific bioweapons Kellia Ramares reveals an easily overlooked truth. The most likely and easiest targets of such weapons are food crops and livestock which would provide the attacking nation with a degree of deniability. Then, in her conclusion Ramares states two facts that are probably all too obvious. Of all the nations in the world the U.S. is the most likely to develop such weapons and history and that human nature teach us to expect them, and soon. – MCR]

Mar. 11, 2003, 00:30 PST (FTW)

TALKING ABOUT ETHNIC WEAPONS: NOT IN POLITE COMPANY

The web sites for Human Genome Project Information are maintained on the web site of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory.⁵² Part of the web site is devoted to information on Ethical, Legal and Social Issues.⁵³ That page stated that “The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have devoted 3% to 5% of their annual Human Genome Project (HGP) budgets toward studying the ethical, legal, and social issues (ELSI) surrounding availability of genetic information. This represents the world’s largest bioethics program, which has become a model for ELSI programs around the world.”⁵⁴

The issues raised on that page were: Fairness in the use of genetic information by insurers, employers, courts, schools, adoption agencies, and the military, among others; privacy and confidentiality of genetic information; psychological impact and stigmatization due to an individual’s genetic differences; reproductive issues including adequate informed consent for complex and potentially controversial procedures, use of genetic information in reproductive decision making, and reproductive rights; clinical issues; uncertainties associated with gene tests for susceptibilities and complex conditions; conceptual and philosophical implications regarding human responsibility, free will vs. genetic determinism, and concepts of health and disease; health and environmental issues concerning genetically modified foods (GM) and microbes; and commercialization of products including property rights (patents, copyrights, and trade secrets) and accessibility of data and materials.⁵⁵ This page contains no mention of military applications of genetics, or the possible development of ethnic weapons.

Likewise, the page that is devoted to Minorities, Race, and Genomics⁵⁶ contained information about conferences for minority leaders to inform them about the benefits of genetic research, and to discuss ways of helping more minority group members to develop careers in genetics. Issues that would be of primary interest to minority group individuals, i.e. genetic testing, use of genetics in the courtroom, patenting and other business issues, and careers in genetics were the subjects of the conferences. But the issue of interest to the continued survival of minority groups, i.e. the development of gene-specific ethnic weapons, was not on the agenda.

Howard University, perhaps the most prestigious of the historically black colleges and universities in the United States, has a National Human Genome Center.⁵⁷ The formation of the Center was announced on May 1, 2001. Its mission is “to explore the science of and teach the knowledge about DNA sequence variation and its interaction with the environment in the causality, prevention, and treatment of diseases common in African American and other African Diaspora populations.”⁵⁸ The program contains an ethics unit (GenEthics), which will be a source of bioethics information for the University and larger community as a whole. But again, military applications of genetics, and the implications of those applications for minorities is not mentioned

among the many aspects of ethics with which the GenEthics unit will concern itself.

Of course, this is not to say that any attendees of the minority conferences or the participants in the Howard University National Human Genome Center or any other human genome research facility in the world never discuss or research the ethical implications of genetic weapons. But the lack of open acknowledgement of the topic is disturbing. It is also not surprising to Edward Hammond of the Sunshine Project. He told **FTW**: “Genetically targeted weapons or ethnic weapons are a big No-No to talk about in the world of biological weapons control. You don’t do it because you get scoffed at the minute that you do it. I personally think that people are sticking their heads in the sand about it.”

AGROTERRORISM: THE LIKELY FIRST CASE SCENARIO

The first genetic weapons are likely to be aimed, not at humans, but at agriculture. This is because so much more is known about plant and animal genetics through years of work sequencing their genomes and because modern agriculture has developed genetically uniform crops, which could be more easily attacked than people. Agricultural genetic weapons could also have a similar effect on a people as a direct genetic weapon, by wiping out many of the food sources of a geographically concentrated ethnic group.

Dr. Mark Wheelis, a microbial biochemist and geneticist at the University of California Davis, focuses his research on the history of biological warfare, and on biological weapons control. He sees anti-agricultural bioweapons as being within the reach, not only of states, but also of agricultural corporations, organized crime, terrorist groups and individuals.⁵⁹

According to Wheelis, reasons to attack agriculture would include: attacking the food supply of an enemy belligerent; destabilizing a government by initiating food shortages or unemployment; altering supply and demand patterns for a commodity, or commodity futures, and for other manipulations and disruptions of trade and financial markets.⁶⁰

An agricultural bioattack would be easier to carry out than one directly against humans because there are many plant and animal diseases that humans could disperse without harming themselves by handling the bioagents. Fields have little or no security. If the goal is an economic one, such as to disrupt trade, the creation of only a few cases may be necessary to require the quarantine or destruction of a region’s crops or animals.⁶¹ One example of the havoc an agricultural disease can wreak on farm economies occurred in England in 2001, when over the course of 9 months, 5.7 million animals were slaughtered at a cost of 2.7 billion pounds after an outbreak of foot and mouth disease.⁶²

TERMINATOR TECHNOLOGY: A GATEWAY TO GENETIC ATTACKS ON AGRICULTURE?

Terminator Technology, developed by St. Louis-based Monsanto Corporation, is the rubric for any of several patented processes of genetic engineering for the “control of plant gene expression,” that result in second generation seeds “committing suicide” by self poisoning when an outside stimulus, most often the anti-biotic Tetracycline, is applied to the crop.⁶³

The goal of Terminator is to destroy the millennia old practice of seed-saving, thus forcing farmers to buy new seed in the market each year. Not surprisingly, Monsanto has been busy buying up seed companies. As of 1998, Monsanto owned Holden Foundation Seeds, supplier for 25-30% of US maize acreage, Asgrow Agronmics, the leading soybean distributor in the US, De Kalb Genetics, the second largest seed company in the US and the ninth largest in the world, and Delta and Pine Land Company.⁶⁴ This latter acquisition has given Monsanto control of 85% of the U.S. cotton seed market.⁶⁵

Though technically not a genetic weapon as we have defined such in this article, Terminator technology and corporate monopolies on seed development and distribution can make the world more vulnerable to gene-specific attacks on crops by proliferating genetically identical plants.

In an interview with **FTW** in January 2003, Dr. Wheelis said:

Since plant varieties are particularly highly inbred, and many domestic animals are very highly inbred, although not to the extent that many plants are, this does mean that, unlike humans, where there is a tremendous heterogeneity in any population, there’s a very high degree of genetic homogeneity. So you can travel for a hundred miles in [the] Midwest and see thousands of square miles planted with exactly the same variety of maize. And that means, using what one knows of the maize genome, and of this particular variety of maize, it might be possible to develop a chemical agent that will affect one variety of maize, but not another. Or a particular virus might be able to be engineered so it is able to infect on particular strain of maize or rice or whatever, but not others. And so this does raise at least the theoretical possibility, that one could tailor chemical or biological weapons to attack varieties of domestic crops or animals that were used in certain parts of the world and yet these chemicals or infectious agents would be harmless or much less harmful to other varieties.

FTW: *Then...the mere fact that there are companies out there looking to spread a particular strain or species of maize, rice, whatever, and really the doing in of indigenous or farmer-developed crop could actually make it easier for genomic weapons?*

Wheelis: *Yes, for sure. One of the most robust defenses against genotype specific weapons is a considerable amount of*

genetic heterogeneity. And in many parts of the developing world there are many different varieties of crops, often grown very close to each other. So you can find different land races of maize, for instance, in Mexico, grown only a few kilometers apart. Yet they're remarkably different strains of maize. And so that kind of genetic heterogeneity in which over a large geographic area there are many different varieties of the same crop, sometimes several varieties cultivated together on the same plot of land, makes those crops quite resistant to any kind of genetic specificity of a weapon.

In contrast, in the developed world, we commonly plant very large acreages, at very high densities, of identical, not just similar, but identical genotypes of whatever crop we're talking about. And so that makes this high density, low genetic diversity monoculture quite vulnerable to this kind of attack, whereas the lower density, intercropped, genetically variable agriculture of much of the developing world is not so susceptible to this.

Thus, ironically, it is the United States, a major agricultural producer, and the world's biotech leader and superpower that could be devastated by a genetically specific agricultural bioattack.

But Monsanto is also targeting the developing world. Dr. Harry B. Collins, Vice President for Technology Transfer at Delta and Pine Land Co., now owned by Monsanto, said in 1998, "The centuries old practice of farmer-saved seed is really a gross disadvantage to Third World farmers who inadvertently become locked into obsolete varieties because of their taking the "easy road" and not planting newer, more productive varieties."⁶⁶

Modern chemical dependent farming is anything but an "easy road" for farmers of the developing world. Dependence on chemical inputs has raised the cost of farming in the Global South with devastating consequences. Radio journalist Sputnik Kilambi has covered the suicides of farmers in India:

Between 1997 and the end of 2000, in just the single district of Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh, 1,826 people, mainly farmers, committed suicide. Most of the deaths were debt-related. Rising input costs, falling grain and oil seed prices, closures by banks, all policy-driven measures, crushed them. ... Small and marginal farmers of Anantapur have no other option. The region is a monocrop area and suffers from inadequate irrigation.... Ironically, says K. Gopal, it is the younger farmers, who in principle are open to modernization, that are most liable to commit suicide. "They're very enterprising, risk-taking farmers. They're willing to go in for modern agricultural practices, with a view to increase ease, to increase profitability. They go in for modern agricultural practices; they even go in for the use of insecticides, for the use of good quality seeds. What this shows is that modern farming does not have any validity for the small and marginal farmer kind of situation in which we are faced. The technology is not relevant; the profitability is not relevant; the liability is not valid."

For K. Gopal it is clear that the Andhra Pradesh government wants the farmers to get out of farming, to make way for the brave new world of corporate and industrialized farming. The Israelis have set up such a model in [an] area where the farmers grow exotic items like gerkins and baby corn for the urban middle and upper classes. The old relationship between farmer and land has been totally destroyed....⁶⁷

Corporate farming is doomed to failure as the End of the Age of Oil makes the petrochemically-derived pesticides and fertilizers on which it is dependent uneconomical and, inevitably, unavailable. But if, in the meantime, indigenous farmers and farming practices, including seed saving and cultivating genetically diverse crops, are destroyed, we may not need to develop "ethno-bombs" to destroy the only race genome researchers say there is: the human race.

CONCLUSION: IT'S NOT THE KNOWLEDGE; IT'S WHAT WE DO WITH IT.

With genetic research having a potential for beneficial use, the question is not whether to conduct the research, but how and to what end. The "how" is extremely important to indigenous and other minority populations who have been exploited by white Western science for centuries. On February 19, 1995, representatives of 17 indigenous organizations meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, issued a "Declaration of Indigenous Peoples of the Western Hemisphere Regarding the Human Genome Diversity Project."⁶⁸ The document opposes the Human Genome Diversity Project, condemns the patenting of genetic materials and demands "an immediate moratorium on collections and/or patenting of genetic materials from indigenous persons and communities by any scientific project, health organization governments, Independent agencies, or individual researchers."⁶⁹ The document reaffirmed "that indigenous peoples have the fundamental rights to deny access to, refuse to participate in, or to allow removal or appropriation by external scientific projects of any genetic materials."⁷⁰ Indigenous concerns are well founded, especially in light of the shameful history of white scientific practice that has indigenous people still struggling to reclaim sacred artifacts and the very bones of their ancestors from museum shelves.

But even this document, so strongly opposed to genetic research on indigenous people, sounds a contradictory note. "We demand that scientific endeavors and resources be prioritized to support and improve social, economic and environmental conditions of indigenous peoples in their environments, thereby improving health conditions and raising the overall quality of life." Among the Pima Indians of Arizona, for example, 50% of people between the ages of 30 and 64 have diabetes.⁷¹ What if genetic research could find the cause and even a treatment for the high incidence of diabetes among American Indians and Alaska Natives?

The question "To what end?" concerns us all. What if Israel, which apparently is researching genetic difference between

Jews and Arabs to develop an ethnic weapon, altered its foreign policy to embrace the genetic research that links the two peoples? 72

The U.S. Department of Energy is doing research within the Human Genome Project on chromosomes 5, 16 and 19. DOE says, "Particular genes of interest are those mediating individual susceptibilities to environmental toxins and ionizing radiation." 73

Is DOE looking to refine dosage levels for radiation treatments for cancer, or is it trying to figure out how many people will survive strikes with tactical nuclear weapons?

Even a cursory survey of the scientific literature in genetics indicates scientific interest in the genetic differences within and between peoples. In addition to possible medical applications of this research, there are other intriguing questions, about historical human migration patterns and the distribution and relationships of languages, for example, which should be of no military interest. But research that does turn up differences in the genetics of socially defined ethnic groups is open to abuse, in all likelihood by governments, even if the scientists doing that research intended no such thing. The way to prevent such abuse is to strengthen the moral repugnance to biological, chemical and genetic weapons and to create legal means to enforce the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. Right now, the political and ethical dialogues are simply not keeping up with the pace of scientific advancements in genome research. Dr. Wheelis of U.C. Davis says:

[M]y sense is that the United States, some time ago, decided that chemical and biological weapons, and possibly even nuclear weapons, were going to be proliferating worldwide. And that current arms control regimes had been unsuccessful in preventing that--and that additional international negotiations didn't look to hold out much hope for actually restraining weapons proliferation. Now I personally disagree with this. But I think that's the position that many in the United States government have come to. They've concluded that there's clear evidence of chemical and biological weapons proliferation in the world. That neither the biological weapons convention, nor the chemical weapons convention have been effective. And finally, that the protocol for the biological weapons convention offers no promise as a tool to increase the safeguards against proliferation. And so I think the United States is in more of a responsive than a preventative mode. I think we basically decided prevention of proliferation has failed; it's going to happen anyway; there's not much we can do about it. And so we should go into a mode in which we respond."74

But the conventions have no teeth because the United States keeps resisting all efforts to give them any. Dr. Barbara Hatch Rosenberg has written:

*Since the BWC came into force in 1975, biotechnology has progressed rapidly, its military potential has not gone unnoticed, and suspicions have multiplied. Anxious to increase transparency and ensure compliance with the Convention, the state parties in 1986 adopted an annual information exchange as a Confidence Building Measure (CBM). The ineffectiveness of this 'politically-binding' measure led the parties in 1991 to initiate the process of developing a legally-binding Protocol to monitor compliance. Ten years later this process became stalemated over the implacable opposition of the Bush Administration to any legally-binding instrument.*75

If the United States will not legally commit itself to compliance with the Convention, on what legal, moral, or rational basis can it go to war against Iraq or any other nation claiming that the other nation is creating chemical or biological weapons?

Kellia Rames earned a B.A. in economics, with honors, from Fordham University in New York in 1977. She also earned a law degree from Indiana University-Bloomington in 1980. She has been a reporter for KPFA-FM in Berkeley, CA for nearly four years. There, her specialty is toxics reporting. Kellia is also an Associate Producer for WINGS - Women's International News Gathering Service, a Contributing Editor for OnlineJournal.com and a reporter for Free Speech Radio News, which is heard in over 50 stations throughout the United States. Kellia's latest project is R.I.S.E. - Radio Internet Story Exchange, an Internet-based public affairs program. The R.I.S.E. website is <http://www.rise4news.net>.

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- DynCorp Devastation of Civilian Life in South America Looks Like Ground Clearing and Depopulation on Behalf of the Oil Companies
- Burning Chemicals Produce Same Gas Used in Nazi Death Camps

PLAN COLOMBIA: THE PENTAGON'S SHELL GAME

Stopping the hard drug trade, ending a 35 year-old civil war, eliminating human rights abuses and returning political stability to one of the oldest democracies in the Americas all sound like good ideas, but the bottom line in Plan Colombia has more to do with big business, and particularly the oil business, than any of the above.

by Peter Gorman – Special to *From The Wilderness*

(An earlier version of this story was published in
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March 31, 2003, 0100 PST (FTW) -- "On the worst days, there are sometimes more than 30 of them," she says. "They come in with nothing but their muchilas, backpacks. They've left everything to get out of Colombia. Or even worse, they come from our own border here in Ecuador. They are sick. Some have sores and rashes. They can't breathe; they complain their joints ache or that they can no longer see clearly. No one believes us but that doesn't mean it isn't true."

The woman paused. Her name is Sister Carmen Rosa Perez and she is a nun working at the Iglesia Miguel de Sucumbios in Lago Agria, the largest city in Sucumbios, one of the districts that fronts the Putumayo river. Across the river is the Colombian province of Putumayo, a remote region in northwest Amazonia that has become the center of both Bill Clinton's Plan Colombia and George Bush's expanded Andean Initiative. Sister Carmen's job since October, 2000 has been to see to the refugees from Colombia's raging civil war and get them properly registered. In two years she and the other nuns at the church have registered 3,676 refugees of the combat. The vast majority has come from Colombia, to escape the violence of the right wing paramilitaries, the AUC, the leftist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the FARC, or the Colombian military. But in the past several months, she says, there are more and more Ecuadorians passing through the church as well. They come because they have been brutalized, either by the conflict spilling across the river that separates the two countries, or by the loss of their crops to the defoliation that plays such a key part of Plan Colombia.

"At first they came to escape the violence, but now they mostly come to try to find work and food to feed their families. The spraying has killed all their crops, all their animals, even the animals of the forest are gone."

THE BUSINESS OF PLAN COLOMBIA

When Bill Clinton unveiled Plan Colombia in late 1999, its stated goals included eradicating the coca and opium poppy

plants used to make cocaine and heroin, respectively, while helping the Colombian government end its civil war, reduce human rights abuses, and reestablish political stability through aid to its military and police forces. There was beauty in the Plan's simplicity: eliminating the plants which produced the drugs that generated black market funding for its civil war would almost solve all the problems facing Colombia simultaneously. And while President Bush has expanded Plan Colombia's vision—along with renaming it The Andean Initiative—to include the deconstruction of all “terrorist groups” operating in Colombia, he's kept the other stated goals in place.

Yet Plan Colombia may not have been fueled by a sense of US righteousness nearly as much as it was by the push of big business. The war in Colombia had been raging for more than 30 years, after all, before the US decided to get involved. Cocaine use had already peaked during the crack epidemic of the late 1980s and 1990s and was on the decline long before intervention in Colombia became a White House imperative. But in 1996, the US-Colombia Business Partnership was founded to represent US companies with interests in Colombia, and a well-financed lobbying effort for just such intervention began. The companies represented by the Business Partnership included Occidental Petroleum Corp, Enron Corp, Texaco and BP Amoco, among others. Each had huge stakes in Colombia.

The early winners in the \$1.3 billion Plan Colombia sweepstakes that Congress approved in 2000 were three military contractors. Sikorsky Helicopters, of Stratford, Connecticut, secured a \$360 million contract for 30 Black Hawk helicopters; the Ft. Worth-based Bell got a \$66 million contract for 33 of its Huey helicopters, and DynCorp, out of Reston, Virginia had an ongoing contract for crop fumigation renewed for two years for nearly \$600 million. Thus DynCorp, a company which primarily utilizes former military personnel for its government contracts worldwide became the linchpin of Plan Colombia. St. Louis-based Monsanto, the pharmaceutical giant which had provided Agent Orange as a defoliant during the Viet Nam war was also a beneficiary as one of its products, Roundup—glyphosate— was chosen as the Plan Colombia herbicide.

The biggest potential winners in the Plan Colombia sweepstakes though, the oil companies, will have to wait a while for their payoff. But when it comes it will be a good one. The US Geological Survey Hollin-Napo Unit, part of the World Petroleum Resource Assessment 2000 was released just prior to the passage of Plan Colombia in April 2000. What it indicated was that there were between 130 and 300 commercially viable but undiscovered oil fields in the region covering Southern Colombia, northeastern Ecuador and northwestern Peru. The heaviest concentration of those are in Putumayo in Colombia and across the river in Sucumbios, Ecuador. Estimates of field size begin at 1 million barrels—less is not commercially viable—and top out at 750 million barrels. But those estimates may be low: One of the fields pinpointed in the Survey was discovered in 2002 and has 1.41 billion barrels of proven reserves, doubling Ecuador's known oil reserves.

But standing in the way of most of the oil exploration in Putumayo is civil war and coca; in Sucumbios there is the protected reserve status of much of the land and it is diligently protected by local and foreign environmentalists.

Another issue that exists in both Putumayo and Sucumbios is the difficulty of pinpointing oil reserves because of the thick jungle canopy that covers much of the region. Satellite photography, an invaluable tool in oil exploration, cannot see through forests.

Gordon Staples, Research and Product Developer for RADARSAT, a Canadian Satellite Imaging company says that “In the dense forests of Central Canada geologists see variation in forest-type which implies geological formation—they can read the topology despite not seeing it. But in areas of dense tropical jungle the geology is that much more complex. In other words, the differentiation between oil deposits and subsurface water deposits is considerably easier if there is no ground cover.”

COCA IN COLOMBIA

There are more than 200 species in the Erythroxylaceae, or coca, family, but only two have a high enough cocaine alkaloid content to have any commercial value: Erythroxylum coca v coca, or Bolivian coca and Erythroxylum novogranatense v novogranatense, Colombian coca. Both species have been cultivated for at least 3,000 years and the plant's leaves have traditionally been utilized for religious, social and medicinal reasons. But until recently, only Bolivian coca was used in the manufacture of cocaine. It grows well in the moist tropical forests on the eastern slopes of the Andes mountains in Bolivia and Peru at altitudes ranging from 1,500 to 6,500 feet and has an alkaloid content considerably higher than any of the others.

Despite its lower alkaloid content, during the mid-1990s, when Colombia overtook Peru as the world's number one producer of coca, Colombian coca was pressed into commercial use because Bolivian coca doesn't grow there. Colombian coca grew well on either mountain slopes or in the sweltering lowland jungle and was particularly drought resistant.

With a lesser alkaloid content, meeting 70-80% of the world's demand for cocaine necessitated growing more acreage than was needed with Bolivian coca, which led to major increases in acreage under cultivation in the last 10 years. Colombia, for instance, was estimated to be growing about 250,000 acres as late as 1998. But State Department numbers suggest that during 2001, Colombia had roughly 420,000 acres under cultivation, an increase of 40% over four years. That increase, much of which has taken place in the southern Colombian state of Putumayo, has been a perfect pretext, generating numbers that justify Plan Colombia's key stated component of coca eradication in the media, and therefore the US public's eyes.

ERADICATION

During 2001, the first year spraying was done under the banner of Plan Colombia, US Ambassador to Colombia Anne

Patterson estimated that 198,000 acres of coca were fumigated, much of that in Putumayo. But with the onset of Plan Colombia came the onset of problems for the people in the region. Farmers claimed that despite US assurances from the State Department that spraying would be pinpoint and only utilized on coca crops of more than seven acres, thousands of people with small family farms were sprayed as well, got sick and were ultimately displaced by the spraying. Additionally, there were complaints of animals dying and food crops poisoned.

The US denied the allegations, insisting that the product being used, a variant of Monsanto's household herbicide Roundup, was safe. On April 30, 2001, shortly after Plan Colombia's coca fumigation began, William R. Brownfield, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs wrote in the Philadelphia Inquirer that "The agent used in aerial eradication is the herbicide glyphosate... It is one of the least harmful herbicides to appear on the world market... Accounts claiming that glyphosate causes damage to humans, animals and the environment are unfounded."

Deputy Assistant Secretary Brownfield was either misinformed or lying. Four months before he opined in the *Inquirer*, Dutch journalist Marjon van Royen had published an admission by the State Department in the Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*, that it wasn't Roundup, but Roundup Ultra that was being used in the spraying in Colombia. Additionally, the State Department admitted that a Colombian product called Cosmoflux was added to the spray mixture as a surfactant to help keep the herbicide on the plant long enough to do its work. But with their admissions, the State Department was quick to add that both Roundup Ultra and Cosmoflux were approved by the US Environmental Protection Agency.

That was nonsense. The EPA had never heard of Cosmoflux and according to a spokesperson even now they have not tested it: "We don't examine products made for use in a foreign country."

The question of whether it was Roundup or Roundup Ultra that was being used, and the presence of Cosmoflux is not a minor one in the context of the collateral damage spraying might do to food crops, animals and people. Roundup Ultra is considerably stronger than the regular Roundup found in garden centers. It was only approved for use in the US in November 2001, and then only for certain commercial, non-agricultural applications. The handling instructions correspond to the highest Environmental Protection Agency toxicity rating, Class 1, while common Roundup falls into the lower, Class 3 rating. Aside from Roundup Ultra's toxicity, there is also the question of the chemical formulation of Cosmoflux. Scientists who have requested the Cosmoflux formula to conduct such testing have been told by the State Department that the information is "proprietary" and "classified."

Despite US denial that Roundup Ultra combined with Cosmoflux is hazardous to humans and animals in Colombia, the warning label of common Roundup alone suggests otherwise. Regarding humans: "Do not allow workers into treated areas for a period of four hours." Regarding animals: "We recommend that grazing animals such as horses, cattle, sheep, goats, rabbits, tortoises and fowl remain out of the treated area for two weeks." Regarding plant life: "Avoid contact of herbicide to foliage, green stems, exposed non-woody roots or fruit of crops, desirable plants, and trees because severe injury or destruction is likely to result."

The Roundup label makes particular note of drift as well, under a section boldly headlined "ATTENTION," in which it is stated in capital letters: "AVOID DRIFT. EXTREME CARE MUST BE USED WHEN APPLYING THIS PRODUCT TO PREVENT INJURY TO DESIRABLE PLANTS AND CROPS."

Those warnings were more accurate than Deputy Assistant Secretary Brownfield's assessment of the damage the fumigation campaign was doing. Two health and environmental studies were carried out after complaints from campesinos were made shortly after Plan Colombia spraying began: one in southern Colombian department of Putumayo and the other in the northern Ecuador province of Sucumbios. The Colombian study, by biologist Elsa Nivia between February and April of 2001 indicated that more than four thousand people in Putumayo were suffering from acute eye irritation, respiratory problems, heart arrhythmias, skin lesions and rashes, temporary paralysis and temporary blindness among other health problems. Additionally, thousands of animals had died, and food crops were destroyed.

The Ecuadorian study, done in May and June of the same year under the direction of Dr. Adolpho Mondonaldo was even more revealing, as Ecuador was not supposed to be sprayed or affected by drift. Dr. Mondonaldo, studying villages at distances of two, five and ten kilometers from the Putumayo river on the Ecuadorian side found that 100% those living within two and five kilometers of the river suffered the identical symptoms as those living in Putumayo, Colombia. Among those people living 10 kilometers from the river 89% suffered identical symptoms. And as in Colombia, damage to food crops was severe, reaching 85-90% reduction in production.

The US State Department would not comment on the studies.

The complaints were not coming from those with what the US described as "commercial plantations"—more than seven acres. The vast majority came from farmers who, as a CIA 2002 bulletin titled "Coca Factsheet, A Primer" noted, had less than one hectare of coca under cultivation. And the complaints were not coming only from what the Colombian government repeatedly called "environmental extremists." In the Spring of 2001, the German government complained that chemical drift had destroyed several fish ponds they'd underwritten; Colombia's own Human Rights Ombudsman office contacted the State Department to call for an end to the fumigation. Klaus Nyholm, chief of the United Nations drug control efforts in Colombia weighed in as well, claiming that the spraying was driving coca farmers to clear new areas of virgin jungle in which to grow.

The indigenous peoples of Putumayo also complained bitterly about the spraying in an open letter to the Colombian and US governments and several environmental groups. The letter, dated July 10, 2002, was titled "SOS From the Indigenous Peoples of Putumayo." It was signed by members of 13 distinct tribal groups and reads, in part, "We hold the Colombian

government responsible for the misery, hunger, destruction and violence that fumigation causes in our territories. Fumigation is death. Fumigation is ethnocide. Glyphosate kills. It destroys food crops and pastureland and contaminates the water.... The indigenous people of Putumayo reject the cultivation of illicit crops. But we equally reject the violent methods with which it is combated.”

The closest the US has come to accepting that there might be problems came on September 5, 2002, when the Bush Administration, presented a report on the health and environmental risks of glyphosate to Congress. In it, it was noted that aerial spraying of herbicide “may cause eye irritation to farmers on the ground” but poses no “unreasonable risks or adverse affects” to humans or the environment. Environmentalists railed against the report’s results, noting that the Administration was investigating its own program with no outside oversight.

In addition to the problems caused directly by the spraying of the toxic Roundup Ultra-Cosmoflux herbicide mix, according to the product’s safety sheet, when Roundup is burned “4% of the volume released into the air is acetonitrile.” Acetonitrile is methyl cyanide (CH₃CN), which is metabolized into hydrogen cyanide (HCN) by the human body, the same gas used in the Nazi death camps. It is so dangerous to humans that the safety instructions include a caution that “When burned, stay out of smoke,” and goes on to note that “firefighters or others who may be exposed to vapors or products of combustion should wear full protective clothing and self-contained breathing apparatus.”

Drug Enforcement Administration documents produced in connection with early glyphosate spraying of Colombian marijuana fields list some of the hazards of inhaling burning glyphosate as “chest pains, cough, abdominal cramps, dyspnea [difficulty breathing], nausea, headache, chills, lassitude and fatigue.” Other DEA documents conceded additional health problems include “pale to ashen-grey skin, shallow pulse, hypotension, transient paralysis and tachynea.”

The issue is important because the coca growers in Colombia, like the farmers throughout Amazonia, utilize the slash-and-burn method of agriculture: they cut a section of forest and burn the vegetation on it to produce potash, which enhances soil nutrients. “There are no tractors here,” says Sister Carmen of Sucumbios, who was raised in Colombia. “The people also cut and burn their fields after spraying and we think they are suffering for breathing of those burning chemicals. But there are large interests here at work, political and economic interests.”

The State Department’s Rebecca Brown-Thompson was unaware that 4% of the volume released in burning glyphosate would metabolize into hydrogen cyanide. “But then why is that a problem?” Told that the farmers in the region were slash-and-burn agriculturalists, she pleaded ignorance. “I didn’t know that. They really do that there?”

GETTING THE DRIFT

The drift problem from the fumigation campaign has reached the point where Sister Carmen says the “frontier region has changed drastically since Plan Colombia’s inception.”

Cesar Cerda, a Quichua Indian whose village in Sucumbios is near the Putumayo frontier says “The planes come to the river. Sometimes they come to our side and spray. Even when they don’t the spray comes across the river and kills our food. Our platanos, our yucca, our coffee is all gone. Even our animals are dead, and there are no animals to hunt in the forest because they have gone somewhere else.”

Asked if he or his representatives had complained to the government, Cerda said they had. “They won’t come because they say there is no problem here. Why? Because they have made pacts with the United States. But the truth is that life on the river has changed since Plan Colombia started.”

Sister Carmen says that both the church where she works and the indigenous groups have sent repeated requests to Quito, Ecuador’s capital, asking for an investigation of the drift that has come into Ecuador. “They always promise they will send someone but they never have. Our government backs Plan Colombia, so why should they come? In whose interest would it be to investigate the complaints of the victims?”

Despite official denials, the drift of glyphosate affected so many people that a class-action lawsuit on behalf of the people of Sucumbios against DynCorp was filed by the International Labor Rights Fund in September, 2001. The suit alleges that the drift in Ecuador is purposeful, rather than the result of pilot error or an accident of wind. Among the allegations in the lawsuit are that “the American oil industry maintains a lobbying group in Washington D.C. under the name the U.S.-Colombia Business Partnership that lobbies the Congress of the United States, and the Executive Offices and related agencies of the United States, for continuous funding and expansion of Plan Colombia.

“Plaintiffs further allege on good faith, information and belief that contributing members to the U.S.-Colombia Business Partnership, include Texaco, Inc., Occidental Petroleum and BP Amoco, which have or expect to have oil interests in the region of Ecuador where Plaintiffs reside...”

“Plaintiffs allege...that the spraying of Plaintiffs’ persons, lands and livestock with toxic fumigants is nothing less than an act of mercenary war carried out surreptitiously by the DynCorp Defendants...”

The State Department’s Brown-Thompson says the suit is unfounded. “We use satellite imagery to pinpoint areas to be sprayed, then send in planes to verify the presence of large areas of illegal crops,” she says. “After that, the crops are sprayed, and subsequently those sprayed areas are checked to see that no additional crops were affected.”

Calls to several crop-dusting companies in the US southwest found that to limit drift, spraying is done at an altitude that was equal to the height of the plant being sprayed. But reports from Colombia and comments from the US State department indicate

that the spraying in Plan Colombia is generally being done at heights of 50-100 feet. Crop-dusters, as a point of pride, like to touch the plants they are spraying. "The planes are never more than one-to-three feet from the ground when we're spraying cotton, maybe 5 feet when it's corn," said one pilot at Ballard's Crop Dusting in Winter, Texas.

Asked how much drift would occur with a plane flying at 10 feet, the pilot said, "at least 50 feet on either side of the plane."

Corky Wilson, owners of Wilson Aerial Spray in Lockney, Texas, agreed. "Hell, if you're flying at 10 feet you're not crop dusting. You're burning. The only time we do that in Texas is to kill mesquite trees."

Told that the US admits its planes frequently spray at altitudes of 50-100 feet, Wilson laughed. "You're burning the whole forest now. Hell, at 20 feet on a windless day you've got a 150 foot drift on either wing. At 100 feet you got a cloud that might travel miles."

AN ALLEGATION

While most of the problems related to Plan Colombia appear to be occurring along the border regions of both Colombia and Ecuador, startling new allegations have been made that spray planes are going deep into Ecuadorian Amazonia. Inez Sheguango Fonaqen, a Quichua Indian and the Regent of the territory along the upper Rio Napo, claims that central Amazonia is also being fumigated. "Planes come into Ecuador regularly," she told this reporter. They are spraying the jungle here, killing the jungle and jungle animals here."

Asked how they could come in unnoticed, Shenguango says "They come at night with no lights and fly over the jungle. I have asked the government for film camera to prove it, but the government won't give me one. They say our communities are inventing the problems and inventing the story."

Two things do hint that she may not be off the mark. The first is that in July, 2001, US Ambassador to Colombia Anne Patterson told reporters "there are...plans to outfit some crop dusters with night-vision scopes to enable pilots to spray after dark, when they are less exposed to fire from guerrillas, paramilitaries or farmers who grow coca."

The second came from the State Department's Rebecca Brown-Thompson, who, when asked about the possibility of night incursions into Ecuador, said: "They cannot be our planes entering Ecuador. But I can only speak for the US Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. I cannot speak for other areas of government."

If the allegation were true, of course, it would be proof that at least one key element of the Plan Colombia/Andean Initiative campaign really is to defoliate the region, and if that were true it could only be to get at the commodities the region has to offer. Oil is a known commodity. There may be others.

NEW OIL LEASES IN PUTUMAYO

While the allegation made by Inez Sheguango may or may not finally be proven true, the presence of oil, and plenty of it, in both the Colombia department of Putumayo and the Ecuadorian province of Sucumbios is a reality. Aside from the ITT field, earlier this year Colombia's state-owned oil company, Ecopetrol, signed contracts with two firms to explore for oil in blocks located in Putumayo. Canada's Petrobank Energy and Resources has contracted to explore 30,000 hectares in Putumayo's Moqueta region, while the US Argosy Energy International has signed a contract to explore the 20,000 hectare Gayuyaco area. Ecopetrol has estimated that Putumayo has a minimum of 2.4 billion barrels of undiscovered oil reserves. Ecopetrol is hoping to sign several more contracts in Putumayo before the end of the year.

ENDGAME

It is difficult to imagine that oil company representatives met with ranking members of the State Department and explained that if the rainforest and people in southern Colombia and northern Ecuador were eliminated, they would deliver enough oil to cushion against any future problems in the Mideast. The time delay in drilling and delivering the oil to market precludes this. But the fact is that the entire planet is running out of oil, so longer term concerns are just as important. Nevertheless, even if the intentions of Plan Colombia/the Andean Initiative were honestly to eliminate the cocaine and heroin and take the money out of Colombia's civil war the fact is that Plan Colombia will ultimately be about oil.

The pursuit of rebels by the Colombian military in the south, along with the spraying of coca fields there, is forcing both the rebels, as well as the campesinos, to cross into Ecuador for safety.

And pressure on both groups is about to increase, as the US doubles the spray area in Colombia in 2002 to fumigate 90% of the coca crop, and in 2003 plans to fumigate 100%. But with the drift in Ecuador already eliminating a large segment of the population on the border, and with the added pressure of thousands of refugees cutting new fields from the jungle there, it shouldn't take long to have the entire region cleared of both people and rainforest.

At that point the oil fest can begin in earnest.

SIDEBAR

WHERE'S THE COCAINE COMING FROM?

Because the coca plant is very slow growing, the questions that come to mind when thinking about all the plants the US has paid to have eradicated in Colombia are: where do the new plants come from and when do they have time to mature?

According to US State Department documents, the Bolivian coca plant, the world standard for making cocaine until the mid-1990s, takes three years from seed to first harvest. Colombian coca, which supposedly replaced Bolivian coca as the world's standard in the late-1990s, grows considerably faster because it is planted from cuttings, not seed. A 2002 CIA bulletin titled "Coca Fact Sheet: A Primer" suggests that when planted from cuttings it can be harvested in as little as 6-8 months.

The same CIA Fact Sheet suggests there are between 14,000 and 45,000 plants per hectare (about 2.5 acres) of coca. If we average that out to 20,000 plants per hectare, there would be 8,000 plants per acre.

Last year, under the aegis of Plan Colombia, more than 250,000 acres of coca were destroyed in Colombia. This year that number will increase to nearly 400,000, or almost every acre of coca under cultivation in Colombia. At 8,000 plants per, that comes to 3,200,000,000 plants. That's three billion, two hundred million plants.

Where are the cuttings for next year's crop going to come from if we've wiped out their entire crop this year? Where did this year's three billion cuttings come from if we wiped out most of the crop last year?

Cuttings come from mother plants. If we assumed that a mother plant was capable of producing a startlingly high 1,000 cuttings per annum, there would still need to be 3,200,000 mother plants somewhere. Where are that many mother plants being kept? Has anyone bothered to look for such a large greenhouse?

Of course, even if there were such a greenhouse in Colombia, there would still be the question of distribution: How on earth would anyone distribute three billion cuttings without being noticed?

Those questions were posed to the State Department, which had no real answer. "I've never thought of that before," said Rebecca Brown-Thompson, spokesperson for Rand Beers, the Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. "Why don't you ask the Drug Enforcement Administration?"

A DEA spokesman responded with: "I get what you're getting at, the numbers don't add up. But Plan Colombia has nothing to do with the DEA. That's State Department all the way."

The reason there is no answer is that there are no cuttings. There might be some, of course, but not three billion, not three million. Colombian coca growing, on the scale it's grown to during the last decade, is now done like it is done in Bolivia and Peru, from seed. Which means it takes three years to grow. And since we've been wiping out more and more of the crop annually, there are fewer and fewer mature plants to harvest. Next year, if we're being told the truth, there won't be any. Which means there won't be a harvest in Colombia.

That should wipe out the world's coca supply for at least three years, at a minimum, by which time any stored cocaine will have hit the streets and been used up. The world ought to be coca-dry.

It won't be. The prices probably won't even fluctuate. And if they don't it will mean only one thing: that the elimination of coca from southern Colombia has no effect on world supply.

Which will suggest that it never did, that the coca that produces the world supply is grown elsewhere, maybe in unsprayed, protected valleys, or that Peru and Bolivia are still producing sufficient supplies, despite a reduction in their crops.

Of course, that would suggest that Plan Colombia is a sham. That the spraying of southern Colombia and the collateral damage it's causing—displacement of thousands of people, loss of legal crops and animals and rainforest defoliation—are being done for other ends.

What are those ends? Oil is an obvious answer. There may be others. We won't find out for a while, but keep your eyes on it. It'll become apparent soon enough.

—Peter Gorman

PLAN COLOMBIA: Cashing-In on the Drug War Failure

Documentary by Gerard Ungerman & Audrey Brohy
Narrated by Ed Asner



This video sheds light on the complex issues of drug-trafficking and civil struggle in Colombia and the impact of both the current chemical-spray program carried out by the U.S. Defense-contractor Dyncorp and the multi-billion-dollar aid package delivered to the brutal Colombian military. Additional insights are provided on the significant factor oil has become in the Colombian equation, a country with the same oil potential as Venezuela, today the second largest oil supplier to the U.S.

58 minute documentary

Crunching Numbers

A Sober Look at U.S. Energy and Economic Prospects as OPEC Backs the U.S. Into a Corner

We Have No Intention of Ever Leaving Iraq

Major Warning Shot Fired Across Bush's Bow

by Michael C. Ruppert

"This war, should it come, is intended to mark the official emergence of the United States as a full-fledged global empire, seizing the sole responsibility and authority as a planetary policeman. It would be the culmination of a plan 10 years or more in the making, carried out by those who believe the United States must seize the opportunity for global domination, even if it means becoming the 'American imperialists' that our enemies have always claimed we were.

Once that is understood, other mysteries solve themselves. For example, why does the administration seem unconcerned about an exit strategy once Saddam is toppled?

Because we won't be leaving..."

-- Jay Bookman

The Atlanta Journal Constitution

Sept. 29, 2002

April 16, 2003 1400 PDT, (FTW) - None of it looks good. As surreal media coverage trumpets victory and sounds a clarion call to arms for the next target - Syria, the real data on both Iraqi oil production and the economy may leave the Bush administration no option but to perpetuate and enlarge a massive global conflict. Its dreams of a 2004 re-election are now evaporating like water in the blazing Iraqi desert. Notwithstanding irrational reductions in the price of oil futures contracts and rises in the equity markets based upon hype and Centcom media manipulation, the hard numbers are ominous indeed.

OIL

Colin Campbell, previously a senior geologist for Texaco, Amoco and BP, and an executive and chairman at major oil companies before becoming a governmental and industry consultant, made some chilling observations to **FTW**. Two weeks after the start of the Iraqi war he observed, "Short term movements of oil price since the war began are completely irrational. They just reflect the patterns in the market by the hour. It may be that buyers have held off buying in anticipation of a fall in price in the mistaken belief that when Bush takes the place all he has to do is open a tap. I think, in fact, that you can expect quite a severe increase in price about 45 days from March 20th.

"Tankers have stayed away from Iraq because of war risk insurance costs and other risks. It takes 45 days for this interruption to flow through the system. It is impossible to look further ahead. It seems evident that these famous weapons, which the inspectors couldn't find, were not real or the Iraqis would have used them. Bush may yet fabricate them, along with much of the other evidence he has used so far. But it gets harder to con the people. So I suppose when that becomes ever more evident, people throughout the world will become even more upset, which I imagine would lead to increased acts of sabotage against oil installations in the Middle East."

Recent stories from major press organizations are confirming earlier **FTW** reports that the Iraqi infrastructure was too run down before the war even started to accommodate any rapid increase in production after victory. This belief, which the administration has quietly promoted as a "sure thing" after Saddam's defeat, has been fueling market speculation in both oil prices and stocks. When combined with the effects of widespread Iraqi looting and sabotage, along with rising anti-American sentiment in a populace that is correctly viewing itself as irrelevant to American interests, Campbell describes a reality which is becoming ever more apparent. "I think it will be years before Iraqi production gets back to pre-invasion levels, never mind an increase."

Like a bucket of cold water in the face of irrational financial markets, Agence France Presse reported from Nicosia, Cypress on April 12 that the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) had concluded that there won't be a drop of Iraqi oil on the markets until at least June. And those drops are a long way from 3.5 million barrels per day (Mbpd).

On April 11, the AP confirmed Campbell's dire assessment. "Political disputes, legal issues and the need for billions of dollars in investment are among the hurdles Iraq must pass before it can restore crude output even to 1990 levels - much less increase it beyond that..."

"... its pipelines, pumping stations and oil reservoirs have suffered for years from a dearth of funds and lack of maintenance."

Quoting an analyst at the Washington-based Petroleum Finance Co, the AP reported that an investment of \$3-6 billion and two years would be required to permit Iraqi production to reach 3 Mbd. That issue is further compounded by the fact that title to Iraqi oil is presently uncertain and the only way to resolve the issue might be through the recently roughed-up UN.

Just a day later, *CBS News' Market Watch* labeled post-war Iraqi oil as a "wild card", reaffirming evaluations of current Iraqi infrastructure and quoting oil industry expert Kevin Kerr as stating that it would take three years and \$7 billion in new investment to bring Iraqi oil production to the 1980 peak of 3.5 Mbd, \$20 billion to reach 5.5 Mbd, and more than 10 years to double production from current levels if "everything goes smoothly".

Everything is not going smoothly. Little noticed by the American press is the fact that saboteurs are ravaging northern Iraqi oil fields. An April 14 AP story quoted Shad, an electrical engineer who would not give his last name, as saying, "It's the worst destruction I have seen in my life. It will set Iraq back many years." Shad should know. He works for the Northern Oil Company, which administers all of the oil fields in northern Iraq.

There is no immediate promise or even a remote possibility that Iraqi production will increase rapidly. U.S. military, economic planners and experts in the financial markets know this. In his *FTW* interview Campbell stressed that even the loss of seismic charts or the hands-on expertise of people who know how to work each unique oil field could set reconstruction back years.

As Iraqi outrage over uncontrolled looting - in some cases reportedly encouraged by U.S. troops - continues to mount, it is apparent that something else is driving U.S. actions. The cavalier and glib assertions of Centcom that they did not expect looting, and their failure to recognize the value to all humanity of the antiquities stored in Iraq's museums, is the basest kind of cultural and ethnic insult. The failure to protect antiquities dating back to the time of Abraham, or even plan for it, does more to reaffirm global perceptions of Ugly Americans with a Big-Mac culture than any U.S. action thus far.

The Bush administration has obviously concluded either that it does not need a quick increase in Iraqi production, or has misplayed its hand entirely. If the former is true then where and how can the U.S. economy obtain other supplies of inexpensive oil, especially if OPEC proceeds with announced plans to cut production?

PEAK OIL CONFIRMED AGAIN

On April 7, the *Associated Press* reported that OPEC was planning an emergency meeting to discuss the pricing impacts of a possible oil glut. Saudi Arabia and all the OPEC nations know that Iraqi production is not a price threat for several years and they are very aware of the fact that planetary supplies are both running out and becoming more expensive to obtain. Yet a flurry of press stories following the apparent U.S. victory have indicated that OPEC is moving to cut production to avoid a sudden fall in prices as imaginary Iraqi oil hits the markets. Why?

Both OPEC and Saudi Arabia know that the United States has two objectives. The first, made ever more apparent by the actual conduct of the war, is simply to gain control of Iraq's 112 billion barrels (Gb) of oil; the second largest reserves on the planet. That Centcom purposely allowed the looting, the removal or destruction of vital records, and indirectly encouraged actions that have distracted attention from the oil fields conveys a powerful message. If the U.S. priority had been to do what was necessary to restore Iraqi production as quickly as possible, the human resources, seismic data, administrative infrastructure and other key assets would have been foremost on Centcom's military agenda, the same way that Nazi rocket scientists were on the U.S. agenda at the end of World War II.

Iraqi oil cannot be pumped, exported or sold without a governmental infrastructure to handle the paperwork, collect taxes, authorize shipments, control port entry by tankers and a thousand other details. Press reports tell us that Iraqi governmental buildings have been burned and that even if there were employees able to work, they would have no computers to work on, no telephones to talk on, and no chairs to sit at. Oil experts have decried the prospect that the U.S. might privatize Iraqi oil assets. That would be a replay of the nightmare scenario inflicted on Russia by Goldman Sachs, The Harvard Endowment and the U.S. Treasury in the 1990s. That media-hyped effort to show the Russian people how to be capitalists resulted in the looting of Russian wealth and a financial debacle which the Congressional Cox Committee characterized as "three times worse than the great depression" in terms of what it did to the Russian people.

What OPEC is afraid of is not an oil glut tomorrow, but in five to ten years as the rest of the world suffers the serious repercussions of Peak Oil. That glut from unused Iraqi fields would have a double impact, as the OPEC nations pass their production peaks at the start of the next decade and go into decline. Any immediate moves OPEC makes to cut production are intended to tighten an economic noose around the United States now, rather than later, while the U.S. economy is fragile and before it can benefit from Iraqi reserves. An April 15 AP story headlined "OPEC to discuss ways to stabilize oil prices" supported this theory. "OPEC members will discuss 'all scenarios' to keep oil prices stable, the president of the group said Tuesday, keeping the idea of production cuts alive despite warnings that such a move could be premature." AP reported that OPEC fears of a price crash had prompted an "emergency" OPEC meeting in Vienna next week.

The International Energy Agency has been cautioning that no glut is likely and affirming, as previously reported in *FTW*, that

current production capacity is near its limit. Therefore, OPEC's move toward production cuts must have other motives. Those motives are a response to what OPEC and Russia both fear most, a fall in prices below the \$22-28 per barrel range favored by OPEC. The U.S. cannot do that today, but with Iraq firmly in its control, it can do it five to ten years from now when the pains of Peak Oil are more acute. If that happened, the fall in oil revenues in the Middle East would evaporate domestic stability in OPEC nations and make Russian oil uncompetitive on world markets because of its higher (and rising) production costs.

THE FRAGILE ECONOMY

On April 8, *ABC News* reported that the U.S. economy was "On The Edge". Quoting David Rosenberg, chief North American economist for Merrill Lynch, the *ABC* story said, "Investors could be in for a rude awakening' once the war comes to an end, 'the economy is back on the precipice of recession.'" The *ABC* story cited confirming opinions from experts at Goldman Sachs and J.P. Morgan, which were based on a wide range of economic data. Aside from grim data on unemployment, consumer confidence, debt, manufacturing and retail sales, the picture got far worse as the Congressional Budget office revealed this week that the deficit has now exceeded \$3 trillion, making it the largest in history.

The *New York Post* added another wrinkle on April 13 when it observed that Iraqi instability, damage to infrastructure, new technologies and rising production by non-OPEC countries might actually curtail infrastructure investment in the short term. That might be what is intended, as the U.S. "banks" Iraqi reserves for use at a more appropriate moment. That is also the scenario that OPEC and Russia cannot afford to see play out and they may be trying to proactively forestall

A number of stories have recently confirmed *FTW's* prediction that a new "anti-American" alliance was forming between Russia, France, Germany and China. In our last major story - "The Perfect Storm" - we predicted that these nations, unable to oppose the U.S. militarily, would do whatever they could to give themselves an economic edge including quiet support for rebel movements around the world that would stress global production capacity.

Events confirming that possibility have recently taken place in Nigeria, the world's sixth largest oil producer. *BBC*, *AFP* and other major news organizations reported in late March that rebel insurgencies had caused oil giants ChevronTexaco and Shell to abandon facilities there, cutting production by some 800,000 barrels per day. Over the next two weeks, other stories reported that the U.S. government had rushed delivery on the first of seven new warships to the Nigerian government, and that the oil companies were returning to work. However, just days after the oil companies were announcing that things had settled down, both *AP* and *AFP* reported the April 6 bombing of Nigeria's main pipeline which had been seriously damaged and burning out of control.

SQUEEZING BUSH

Continuing evidence of the failure of the Bush Neocons to manage events in a manner pleasing to the world's financial elites surfaced in a rare and very stinging public rebuke from Henry Kissinger business partner and former Bush I Secretary of State, Lawrence Eagleburger. In a story published on April 14 by Britain's Independent-UK it was reported that Eagleburger told the *BBC*, "If George Bush [Jr.] decided he was going to turn the troops loose on Syria, and Iran after that, he would last in office for about 15 minutes. In fact, if President Bush were to try that now even I would think that he ought to be impeached. You can't get away with that sort of thing in this democracy."

Although not intended to reach the ears of the general American public the warning was meant to have an impact inside the administration. It did. In his Pentagon press briefing the next day, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld bluntly stated that the U.S. had no intentions of engaging in military conflicts in Syria or anywhere else in the region.

The rapidly coalescing New European Alliance, which Britain will ultimately be compelled to join due to energy demands, appears to be leaving the Bush administration few alternate approaches. The days of the Neocons may be numbered. Frankenstein's monster may be removed but the financial interests who created it remain busy in their laboratories.



(continued from page 1, What If?)

What Oltmans doesn't seem to grasp is the whole issue of Peak Oil and what it means for human civilization. Just days ago, the *BBC* took a chilling look at the issues of declining discoveries, increasing demand, decreasing supply, over-stretched production capacity, and economies and civilizations on the brink of collapse. I hope Oltmans stays for my presentation.

But where Oltmans and I agree completely is this:

What if Russia, which is still smarting from the looting of its economy by the U.S. in the 1990s, and France, which has lost most of its global economic clout over fifty years and still remembers the Nazi conquest of the last century, and Germany, which has been a virtual U.S. vassal since Hitler's defeat, and China, which has one of the world's strongest economies, had set up the U.S. to fail miserably in the Middle East?

What if they had lured the U.S. into a false sense of security about its military might? What if, over a period of eighteen months, they had diplomatically boxed the U.S. into a position where Bush's military bluster, lack of sophistication and neocon conceit had made him arrogantly commit to the 21st century equivalent of Napoleon's and Hitler's failed marches on Moscow?

I have previously observed that Vladimir Putin of Russia, where oil costs between \$14 and \$22 per barrel to produce, knew what would be in store for his nation if the U.S. achieved its now elusive quick victory. France, Germany and China also knew: Russian oil would be totally noncompetitive for maybe 5-10 years. In that time, Russia would cease to be any kind of a threat to anyone. If the U.S. controls Iraq and Saudi Arabia, it will dictate economically to the entire planet.

Now that the war has begun, Russia need only blink and intelligence information and supplies reach Iraq. China need only subtly touch its chin and Silkworm missiles and mines are funneled to Iraqi defenders. France and Germany need only look the other way and intelligence and strategy reach the Iraqi military. All of the non-aligned nations, reacting to an American unilateralism so reminiscent of Nazi Germany, can encourage a hundred things that demonstrate the abject vulnerability of the Empire:

A rebel insurrection that shuts down Nigerian oil production; a coup in the Central African Republic that might threaten the region; or an attack on CIA and military personnel in Colombia.

After only 11 days of war, one frequently sees the resurrected images of Vietnam on all of the non-American news channels and in the non-American newspapers: Vietnam, the quagmire; Vietnam, the debacle; Vietnam, the human catastrophe; Vietnam, the American defeat. Vietnam. Vietnam. Vietnam.

International TV broadcasters laughingly show pictures of the drug-running, weapons-smuggling Oliver North posing as a correspondent in the new Reichsministerium of Propaganda called FOX News. Everyone in Europe knows who and what Oliver North is. Very few in America do.

For the United States, the blunt truth is that the war will not be won until Iraqi oil production has reached 3 million barrels a day; the American economy will not regain strength until Iraqi oil production is at 5-8 million barrels a day. Putin can easily sustain Europe with his diminishing reserves while Americans (and Iraqis) now literally must bleed for every new barrel the U.S. economy obtains.

But the United States will not win this war. The Arab world is approaching full revolt. The neocons have become Dr. Strangeloves clinging to their bombs while more educated and sophisticated minds know that the war, as far as the U.S. is concerned, is already lost. Lost also, most likely, are the U.S. economy, the dollar, and U.S. imperial hegemony.

As the foundation is being laid in the United States for the discrediting and sacrificing of the Bush neocons, and as the biggest global realignment in more than a hundred and fifty years begins, I am forced to ask, "What if this is part of a larger plan?"

All I know is that all my life I had wanted to come to continental Europe in an atmosphere in which America was seen as a liberator and remembered for that and for all the things I grew up believing in. Instead, I have arrived in a continental Europe where I cannot help but feel that the people around me have their antennae out, just as they did 60 years ago when the Wehrmacht rumbled through these beautiful streets proclaiming itself to be the friend of the Dutch and offering them a better way of life.

What the United States gained in terms of European good will after World War II has been lost forever. And as the Euro continues to remain stronger than the dollar, there is little incentive anywhere for people here to remember.



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