

Bush's New Plan: More Troops, More Death, More - and Wider - War

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In the face of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi deaths, tens of thousands of U.S. military casualties, mounting difficulties in Iraq and the Middle East, deepening divisions in the ruling class, and growing anti-war opposition, last night Bush outlined his long-awaited "new plan." Escalation: more, potentially much more, of the same: more troops, more death, more crimes, and more war - possibly much more and much wider war involving Iran and Syria. It means escalating and intensifying the current, horrific dynamic between imperialist McWorld/McCrusade on one hand and Islamic fundamentalist jihad on the other. None of it is in the interests of the people - in Iraq, in the U.S., or in the world.

While making a show of admitting certain mistakes and failures, and appealing for bipartisan unity (on his terms) among the U.S. rulers, Bush threw down a gauntlet of more death and sacrifice to those who oppose the war: "The year ahead will demand more patience, sacrifice and resolve."

The New York Times (Jan 11) called it a huge presidential political gamble: "Not since Richard M. Nixon ordered American troops in Vietnam to invade Cambodia in 1970 has a president taken such a risk with an increasingly unpopular war." What makes Bush think he can get away with this? "Bush is taking a calculated gamble that no matter how much hue and cry his new strategy may provoke," another New York Times analysis noted, "in the end the American people will give him more time to turn around the war in Iraq and Congress will not have the political nerve to thwart him by cutting off money for the war."

So the question - and the challenge - is this: what are the people going to do now? Our answer - delivered by millions - must be like what millions did following the invasion of Cambodia: a resounding No! An outpouring demanding this war stop - now! And repudiating the whole Bush program and demanding this criminal regime be driven from power.

Much of Bush's actual plan was left intentionally - and ominously - vague. He said another 21,500 troops would be sent to Iraq to "stabilize" Baghdad and step up attacks on anti-occupation Sunnis in Anbar province. He claimed the Iraqi government would take steps with the U.S. to halt sectarian violence between Sunnis and Shias and achieve "benchmarks" of stability, rebuilding and economic development. He said this plan would succeed where previous plans had failed. And he also made new threats against Iran and Syria.

This whole plan promises more bloody escalation - in Iraq and beyond. With the torture of Abu Ghraib and the leveling of cities like Fallujah in mind, it was chilling to hear Bush complain there had been "too many restrictions" on the actions of U.S. forces in the past.

With images of thousands of Iraqis rounded up and detained, innocent civilians murdered at U.S. or Iraqi government checkpoints, and bodies murdered in sectarian violence littering Baghdad streets, often murdered by Iraqi death squads operating out of the police and military, it was chilling to hear Bush promise: "Iraqi forces will operate from local police stations; conducting patrols, setting up checkpoints, and going door- to-door to gain the trust of Baghdad residents." Bush's complaint about "restrictions" also implied a threat to go after the Mahdi Army militia of Shia cleric Moqtada Sadr, perhaps opening a second - Shia - front in the U.S.'s war on the Iraqi people.

Even more ominously, Bush threatened a wider war in the region, possibly direct attacks on Syria and Iran. After blaming them for "allowing terrorists and insurgents to use their territory to move in and out of Iraq" and "providing material support for attacks on American troops," Bush warned, "We will disrupt the attacks on our forces. We will interrupt the flow of support from Iran and Syria. And we will seek out and destroy the networks providing advanced weaponry and training to our enemies in Iraq." Would this mean attacks on Iranians in Iraq? On the border? In Iran itself? This was left intentionally vague. Bush also stated he had deployed another aircraft carrier strike group to the Persian Gulf and was stepping up military coordination with other pro-U.S. regimes in the region. MSNBC Commentator Keith Olbermann noted that Bush was expanding the "playing field" of the war, from Iraq to Iran. And the recent shake-up of Bush's war cabinet also points to a growing U.S. focus on Iran and growing danger of an expanded war.

Bush also promised to "increase the size of the active Army and Marine Corps, so that America has the armed forces we need for the 21st century." Bush couched all this as a great struggle between "those who believe in freedom and moderation" and "extremists who kill the innocent." As we've analyzed in these pages, the entire U.S. war on Iraq - and its "war on terror" have been based on lies, half-truths, and distortions in service of the needs of U.S. imperialism. Now Bush's pledge for an expanded military can only mean more wars, more death, and more destruction - over wider swaths of the globe, in an attempt to solidify and expand the U.S. empire against the needs and wishes of billions around the world.

Bush warned "in Iraq, the armed forces of the United States are engaged in a struggle that will determine the direction of the global war on terror." Indeed, what happens in Iraq and the Middle East are central - not to the hopes and needs of humanity - but to the U.S. rulers' drive for unchallenged and unchallengeable global dominance. The stakes are huge for them, and Bush's new escalation is a huge gamble - one commentator called it double-or-nothing - which carries with it enormous risks and no guarantee of success.

Bush's actions starkly illustrate the fact that U.S. democracy is actually a dictatorship of a capitalist-imperialist ruling class, overseen by not one, but two political parties representing the needs and interests of that system. In November, millions voted resoundingly against the war, yet last night that vote counted for nothing. Bush was making the decisions, he told us, based on his understanding of the needs of the system, regardless of what the people want. In fact, it has been reported that his "surge" of troops was underway even before his speech.

And finally, it was also clear that nothing good will come out of this situation unless millions of people take the responsibility to stop this criminal carnage. The opposition Democrats complained about Bush's speech and new plans - reflecting their real concerns as part of

the political establishment that the gambit might backfire, as well as their needs to contain the anger of millions whose faith in the political order is being shaken. Yet they were unwilling – or unable – to take a stand fully in opposition to the war, much less to put forward a plan for actually stopping it.

Anyone listening to Bush's speech, the Democrats' response and the subsequent discussion in the bourgeois media didn't hear anyone demanding this war stop, that it stop now, and the whole criminal cabal who launched it – and have committed many other crimes – be impeached and/or driven from power.

Most Democrats who commented on Bush's speech agreed with the basic terms he had laid out – even blaming Iraqis, not the U.S., for the growing catastrophe. Senator Dick Durbin, who gave the official Democratic Party response, complained that the Iraqis shouldn't be allowed to “call 911” for American support every time they need help – as if the Iraqis forced the U.S. to illegally invade their country, based on WMD lies, and wreak death and destruction.

Presidential candidate Barack Obama declared the U.S. had done everything imaginable for the Iraqi people, and he wasn't going to “re-litigate” the war. In other words, there would be no discussion of, let alone accountability for, the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the U.S. in launching and carrying out the war and occupation and that have shaped its very nature, objectives, and results. He agreed with Bush on “benchmarks” for the Iraqi government, and that there was nothing wrong with “making sure” that Iran and Syria weren't making “mischief” in Iraq. He promised the Democrats would not “strand” U.S. troops in Iraq, who would be assured of “all the resources necessary” for their safety and accomplish their missions. And he agreed with Bush that Iraq wasn't a Democratic or a Republican problem, it was an “American problem” and he wanted to be part of a “solution.”

Even those Democrats who may genuinely oppose the war as a catastrophe for U.S. power and influence, and want to see it ended, are lashed to the same strategic imperial necessities confronting Bush – including support for the U.S. military and the troops – and the fear that, as Bush stated, the consequences of failure are so enormous for the rulers they can't afford to lose.

Senator Ted Kennedy introduced legislation requiring Congressional approval before troop levels can be increased. Yet when asked if the Democrats would block funding for the “surge,” he acknowledged they wouldn't and the vote would be largely symbolic: “The horse will be out of the barn by the time we get there.” The request for money would come at the end of January or in early February and would take another two months for Congress to act. “By that time, the troops will already be there,” he said. “And then we'll be asked, are we going to deny the body armor to the young men and women over there?”

The Democrats have proven unwilling to fully unleash the one force that could stop this war – the millions who hate the war. Even Time magazine summed up that the Democrats were “more bark than bite” on Iraq. This amounts to fiddling while Bush burns down Iraq and the Middle East.

The time is now for millions to clearly confront what this escalation means and to act decisively. To confront the fact that “U.S. interests” is a euphemism for U.S. imperialist domination of the Middle East. To break with the notion that people in Iraq, the Middle East or in the U.S. should make common cause with these global marauders and death

merchants.

We've seen what this war is about and the carnage that results. An estimated 655,000 Iraqis have already paid for this U.S. invasion and occupation with their lives. How many more Iraqi, Iranian, Syrian, and U.S. lives will be spent in the U.S. rulers' imperial pursuit? Everyone must now do more, much more, to stop this war and this regime - to take responsibility for this great, historic effort; to sacrifice for it; and to put ourselves on the line for it. Not to do so now, after this war's horror and criminality have been made clearer and clearer, would amount to immoral complicity in the countless deaths and untold destruction that are coming.

And the opposite is also true. The Bush regime has never been more isolated from the people and more exposed. More and more are turning against the war with every new Bush lie, and every new Bush horror. Those feelings must now be turned into active, militant, determined and courageous opposition. That - and nothing short of that - could change everything - unleashing a new and liberating force in unimaginable ways - and stop this regime and end its unbounded, ongoing, and escalating war.

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