

U.S. increases Iran War Threats

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Danger of invasion greater than ever before

After weeks of promising to present “smoking gun” evidence against Iran, the Bush administration presented its case on Feb. 11, in Baghdad.

U.S. defense officials provided “evidence” that Iran was supplying a particularly sophisticated type of improvised explosive devices to Iraqi insurgents. They claimed that Iranian-supplied explosively formed projectiles had killed at least 170 U.S. and coalition soldiers since June 2004.

They also claimed that their evidence pointed to the “highest levels” of the Iranian government being involved and that the Al-Qods brigade of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard was providing Iraqis with the EFPs.

Purportedly due to the sensitive nature of the material presented, reporters were not allowed to record the Baghdad proceedings. According to Reuters, among objects displayed were fragments of an EFP, one grenade from a rocket-propelled grenade launcher, and fragments of mortar bombs. They also showed slides of other weapons and a mortar bomb with a visible serial number.

Reflecting internal divisions within the U.S. ruling class, statements made by members of Congress and even military commanders immediately contradicted the most significant part of the Baghdad report—that the highest officials in the Iranian government were involved.

In a Feb. 12 interview with the imperialist organ Voice of America, General Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated: “What I would not say is that the Iranian government, per se, knows about this. ... What it does say is that things made in Iran are being used in Iraq to kill coalition soldiers.”

Admiral William Fallon, the new head of U.S. Central Command, echoed Pace’s assessment: “I have no idea who may be actually with hands-on in this stuff.”

Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman, Mohammad Ali Hosseini reacted by saying, “Such accusations cannot be relied upon or be presented as evidence. The United States has a long history in fabricating evidence. Such charges are unacceptable.”

False claims

The claim that the evidence presented supports the accusation of direct involvement by the Iranian government is laughable.

To prove such a claim, military officials would have to show Iranian agents apprehended while engaged in such operations, weaponry seized, documents pointing to orders by Iranian officials, Iraqi and Iranian operatives involved in the cross-border exchanges, and things of that nature.

The best “proof” the U.S. military could come up with was serial numbers supposedly traced to weapons manufactured in Iran. Even if true, weapons manufactured in many countries are found in Iraq, as they are elsewhere in the world. American- and British-made weapons, for example, are readily available on the black market in an estimated 150 countries.

Iran has a 700-mile border with Iraq, much of it through mountainous terrain.

If it is so easy to control the border to the extent that the existence of Iranian weapons in Iraq points to government involvement, why hasn't the United States controlled the border from the Iraqi side?

Politically, the claim that Iraqi resistance is funded and supplied by Iran is even less plausible.

There are three major Shi'a political blocks active in Iraq today, the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, forces allied with Muqtada Al-Sadr, and the Da'wa Party—of which Maliki is a member.

The SCIRI has its militia, the Badr Brigade, as do the Sadr forces, the Mahdi Brigade. The Iranian government has close relations with all three political forces, in particular the SCIRI—founded in Iran during the Iran-Iraq war, whose leaders lived in Iran until after the U.S. invasion and overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime.

Politics in Iraqi puppet government

The United States has promoted ethnic conflicts in an attempt to erode the national identity of Iraqis.

The post-occupation constitution sets quotas for political representatives based on ethnicity, encouraging people to elect politicians based on ethnicity as opposed to political tendencies.

It also entitles each region, not the national government, to the bulk of oil revenues originating in its soil.

The U.S. government has actively promoted the propaganda that the Baath regime was a dictatorship of Sunnis over the Shi'a, not the nationalist entity that it actually was.

While not CIA agents and operatives the way that Chalabi and Allawi are, the leaders of the three major Shi'a political blocks have been enticed to cooperate with the occupation forces and form the Iraqi government to gain an advantage over those forces that have been engaged in active resistance to the occupation.

It is quite possible that the Iranian regime might provide assistance and advice to all three of these forces. Through the ascendance of these forces, Iran sees its influence in Iraq and the region greatly enhanced.

The problem with the U.S. propaganda line of blaming Iran for its casualties in Iraq is that, precisely because of their stakes in the Iraqi state, these are not the forces actively resisting the occupation.

The “democratic” government that the United States has installed in Iraq is comprised of these very political forces.

Danger of U.S. attack

The real significance of the presentation of evidence against Iran is not the credibility of the evidence but the political motivation behind it.

In the buildup to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Colin Powell went to the United Nations and provided satellite imagery of sites where weapons of mass destruction were supposedly being produced. Powell and the whole imperialist establishment knew then that their evidence was phony and that Iraq had no WMDs. Similarly, imperialists know today that their evidence against Iran is worthless.

But the accusations against Iran signal an escalation in aggression against the Iranian regime.

Since the 1979 revolution that broke Iran free from the reign of the Shah—the U.S. puppet installed by the CIA-sponsored coup in 1953—taking back the gains of the revolution and bringing Iran back into Washington’s orbit has been on the imperialists’ agenda.

The danger of a U.S. attack on Iran is greater now than ever before.

In one of his many statements on this issue, the new secretary of defense, Robert Gates, said: “I don’t know how many times the president, secretary Rice and I have had to repeat that we have no intention of attacking Iran.”

Given the two naval carrier groups in the region, and the possibility of a third being deployed shortly, as reported by the Feb. 19 issue of Newsweek, official denials are hardly reassuring.

Even less reassuring are statements by Senator Hillary Clinton and others in Congress calling for requiring congressional authorization prior to attacking Iran.

Congress has not formally declared war for any U.S. military campaign since World War II.

Imperialist wars of aggression are never announced as an intent or part of a preconceived plan. They are always presented as a defensive act against a mortal danger.

If the capitalist political establishment decides to attack Iran, finding a pretext will not be a particularly challenging problem for the Bush administration. All they will have to do is to utilize a crisis—or manufacture one—and then present the attack on Iran as a defensive measure for protecting U.S. troops in Iraq, and for “defending” the whole civilized world against the menace of Iran.

The mass media, an integral part of the capitalist state, will do the rest. Previous official denials will be trumped. Congress will not even be asked to rubber-stamp the decision.

The ultra-aggressive approach of the Bush administration could be part of a plan to prepare U.S. public opinion for an attack on Iran. It could also be a means of forcing Iran to back

down in the face of a threatened U.S. attack. Either way, congressional action will not be the determinant of the outcome.

For revolutionaries and progressive activists in the United States, the main task is to continue to build a broad-based, grassroots anti-war movement independent of the two capitalist parties. The March 17 March on the Pentagon sponsored by the ANSWER Coalition (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism) is the next step in this struggle.

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