

## **Rush to war with Iraq built on lies and deception**

Jim Fetzer

One of America's true military heroes, David Hackworth, the youngest Captain in Korea and the youngest Colonel in Vietnam, who frequently appears as an expert on military affairs, has summed up the situation in which we find ourselves. "I don't see a threat. They are not Nazi Germany. This is not the Wehrmacht. In no way does the situation in Iraq affect my nation's security. This is the bottom line of analyzing threats. 'Does this country threaten my nation's security?' In this case, absolutely not!"

In an interview with *Newsday* (24 January 2003), Hackworth observes that there are real threats to the nation's security that are not being treated. We should "focus on defending the American homeland, which is not adequately defended. 9/11 proved that. All of the machinations that have gone on since then are more lip-service and crowd-pleasing than real." He views international terrorism as the greatest threat facing the nation and regards North Korea as posing a far greater menace than Iraq.

If the war turns to house-to-house fighting in Baghdad, then US casualties could be significant, rising far above the 148 deaths and 460 wounded of the first Gulf War, not to mention the "160,000 disabled and almost 10,000 dead as a result of Gulf War illness. All of us who were there," Hackwork remarks, "look in the mirror and still wonder if something is going to happen to us" as a result of our participation.

Once we get in, he asks, how do we get out? "We're still in Japan, Korea and Germany 57 years after World War II", he said. "My guess is at least 60 years", he replied, at a cost of as much as \$2 to \$3 trillion. And the anti-American sentiment that will be

generated? There are one and a half billion Muslims who don't like us anyway, he reflected, for whom this war is going to create a fertile breeding for future terrorists.

Even though Hackworth reports that most veterans he has encountered during his travels around the country are strongly opposed to this war, perhaps their positions could be dismissed if there were solid evidence of a genuine threat from Iraq. But even high ranking officials of the CIA and the FBI complain that the administration has grossly exaggerated the evidence alleged to tie Saddam Hussein with al Qaeda.

According to *The New York Times* (2 February 2003), for example, investigators at the FBI "were baffled by the Bush administration's insistence on a solid link between Iraq and Osama bin Laden's network. 'We've been looking at this hard for more than a year and, you know what, we just don't think it's there", a government official said.

In his State of the Union address, for another, Bush declared that Iraq is protecting and assisting al Qaeda operatives, but, according to CIA and FBI officials, evidence supporting this claim is fragmentary and inconclusive. The *Times* reports there is acute disappointment among many officials that the intelligence agencies are being politicized, where the Pentagon and the National Security Council are exaggerating the situation to make the government's case.

Indeed, reliance upon false or exaggerated evidence to support the administration's rush to war with Iraq includes distorting what we know about the recent past. As *The New York Times* (31 January 2003) has also reported, one of the President's most visceral claims about Iraq during his address to the nation is that Saddam has gassed his own people: "The dictator who is assembling the world's most dangerous weapons has already used them on whole villages, leaving thousands of his own

citizens dead, blind or disfigured", which conveys the image of a savage despot.

But it turns out that the evidence is by no means clear cut and renders more likely the conclusion that the villagers in question--from the Kurdish town of Halabja in March of 1988, toward the conclusion of the eight-year long war between Iraq and Iran--were actually killed by Iranian gas. According to Stephen Pelletier, who was a senior CIA political analyst on Iraq, the dead Kurds had been killed with a blood agent of a kind that Iran was known to employ, not the mustard gas used by Iraq.

The administration has spent little time analyzing or explaining to the American people why 9/11 took place. We have learned from Osama bin Laden, however, that he was opposed to our unbalanced policies in the Arab/Israeli conflict, where Ariel Sharon appears to be destroying everything of value to Palestinians, using American weapons, and the presence of US military forces in Saudi Arabia, which is the home of Mecca and Medina, among the most holy sites of Islam. Attacking Iraq will do nothing to reduce these motives for terrorism. It will accent them.

We even appear to be abusing the system of inspections that we help to create in order to provide a phony pretext for war. In an interview on Wednesday, Hans Blix, the United Nations chief weapons inspector, disputed Secretary of State Colin Powell's claims that Iraqi officials have been moving and hiding materials for the construction of weapons of mass destruction (*Sidney Morning Herald*, 1 February 2003). Blix believes that the inspection process is working but needs more time.

Indeed, the administration has been shifting the burden of proof to Iraq, claiming that there is no "conclusive proof" that they do not have such weapons. But the

failure to find them after thousands of inspections offers strong evidence they do not exist. Conclusive proof would require unearthing every single square inch of Iraq. Maybe that's exactly what Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Rice have in mind.

Not only do the reasons the administration has advanced to justify this war appear to be a tissue of lies and deception, but its avowed mission "to bring peace to the world" strikes fear in the hearts of our allies. The unilateral, go-it-alone, "Damn the torpedoes, full-speed-ahead!" attitudes Bush exemplifies have magnified long standing concerns of leaders around the world that America is a rogue state, out of control, which has as the ultimate imperialistic objective of world domination. We should step back, take a deep breath, and reconsider where we are heading.

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