WHO PLANNED THE ACTIONS.

VIGILS AND "DIE-INS"

IMPELLING ATTACK ON IRAQ.

20,000 NEW YORKERS TO PROTEST THE LARGE NUMBERS OF AMERICANS (INCLUDING THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY, DRAWN AROUND THE COUNTRY, LARGELY ORGANIZED BY THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY, DREW LARGE NUMBERS OF AMERICANS (INCLUDING 20,000 NEW YORKERS) TO PROTEST THE IMPENDING ATTACK ON IRAQ.

A FLURRY OF TEACH-INS, SIT-INS, MARCHES, VIGILS AND "DIE-INS" HAVE FOLLOWED NOT ONLY IN MAJOR CITIES BUT ALSO IN UNLIKELY HOTBEDS OF DISSENT LIKE AUGUSTA, GA.; ELLENSDALE, WASH.; AND SANDPOINT, IDAHO. WITH THE ECONOMY TANKING AND THE MAJORITY OF AMERICANS OPPOSED TO A UNILATERAL ATTACK AGAINST IRAQ, A POTENTIALLY BROAD-BASED PEACE MOVEMENT HAS EMERGED A YEAR INTO THE "WAR ON TERROR."

CAN IT LAST?

ELEVEN YEARS AGO, PUBLIC OPINION WAS DEEPLY DIVIDED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY IN ADVANCE OF THE FIRST GULF WAR. A BURGEONING ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT SAW PROTESTS OF 30,000 IN WASHINGTON, D.C. AND AS MANY AS 100,000 PEOPLE IN SAN FRANCISCO. THE DAY AFTER THE BOMBING OF IRAQ BEGAN, THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE SHUT DOWN SAN FRANCISCO'S FEDERAL BUILDING AND THEN TOOK OVER THE BAY BRIDGE DURING RUSH HOUR.

A WAR THAT SOME THOUGHT WOULD LAST FOR YEARS (LIKE VIETNAM) ENDED IN 46 DAYS AND THE MOVEMENT QUICKLY COLLAPSED AFTER THE PENTAGON'S LIGHTNING-SMART VICTORY. THE MOVEMENT WAS ALSO PLAGUED BY IDEOLOGICAL DISPUTES BETWEEN THE COALITION TO STOP U.S. INTERVENTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, A FRONT GROUP OF THE WORKERS WORLD PARTY (WWP), AND THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, WHICH WAS COMPOSED OF MORE TRADITIONAL PEACE AND JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS.

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 5 FOR CONTINUED REPORT.

BY JOHN TARLETON

BY RAMZI KYSIA

BY SUZANNE KAHRS
Thousands of Portlanders Protest War on Iraq

Oct. 5 — 11,500 Portland residents gathered downtown today as part of the nationwide Not In Our Name campaign to demand No War in Iraq. Cloudy gray skies were offset by a multitude of colorful signs and banners, loud drums and chants, and an energetic spirit. The crowd assembled in the South Park blocks for speeches and music and then marched through downtown for more of the same. For over 40 minutes, people passed by in a seemingly endless stream.

www.nyc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article_id=33692

Bombspotting at U.S. Airbase in Belgium

Oct. 5 — As the United States is forcing new military inspections on Iraq, over 2,000 Belgian peace activists landed at the military base at Kleine Brogel today, in order to perform a “civil inspection.” They trespassed on and occupied the base, which is used to store illegal U.S. nuclear weapons. In spite of the massive military and police presence, lots of activists succeeded in getting on the base. According to the police, 1,034 people were arrested on and around the base.

www.dc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article_id=33945

Villagers Weather Setter Violence for a Successful Day of Olive Harvesting

BY KATE CRANE

Oct. 19 — Soon after the harvesters arrived, around 6:30 a.m. local time, a small band of settlers from the Tapuah settlement arrived and immediately began throwing stones and shooting at the Palestinians. Some internationals attempted to calm the violent settlers, while others filmed the scene with digital cameras. The entire group of harvesters then staged a sit-in in the groves, remaining quiet and peaceful as they waited for Israeli police to come. The settlers eventually left of their own volition, and the Palestinians were able to complete a day of harvesting.

The previous day, Wednesday, a smaller group of farmers and activists attempted to harvest, but were driven away by settlers from the Tapuah settlement. Soldiers then declared the groves a “closed military zone” and prevented anyone from returning. The District Coordinating Liaison of the Palestinian and Israeli communities then negotiated with the soldiers. The resulting agreement: soldiers would come on Thursday to protect the Palestinians as they picked olives.

After the successful harvesting, a soldier told the departing Palestinians, “Today, you’ve won.”

www.nyc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article_id=35480

Reasons By CHRISTOPHER DAY

Oct. 18 — There is a sector of the U.S. ruling class that can smell that this war is going to go bad and they don’t want to see a repeat of the mass radicalization that took place during the war on Vietnam. They realize that there is going to be an anti-war movement, so they want a nice docile anti-war movement that doesn’t call into question the system that makes war inevitable. Anti-capitalists and revolutionaries who have problems with the International Action Center or Revolutionary Communist Party should find ways to express those differences that don’t make common cause with liberals dedicated to the maintenance of this rotten system.

www.nyc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article_id=35417

The Laughing Tailor’s Bloc

BY FSN

Oct. 19 — His entire administration is filled with pompous asses like Rove, Cheney, Ashcroft, Rumsfeld and Rice. And let’s not forget the propaganda wing of the White House — Bill O’Reilly goes on speaking tours. So do local-yokels like Jeb, Trent Lott, and Tom Delay. They even let Ari Fleischer out for an occasional public-spewing engagement in order to grind the party organ. Because they are a disciplined lot and well-trained in the art of manipulating outrage for political advantage, they invariably respond to angry protesters by waxing poetic on the First Amendment. “This is a shining example of how great life is in a free country,” they gush. “God bless America.” (Of course, this is just before they have everyone carted off to jail.) But how, I wonder, would the Bushistas handle a snicker-in instead of a sit-in?

www.nyc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article_id=35534

Vietnam: The Soldier’s Revolt

BY JOEL GEIER

Oct. 19 — The most neglected aspect of the Vietnam War is the soldiers’ revolt — the mass upheaval from below that unraveled the American army. It is a great reality check in an era when the U.S. touts itself as an invincible nation. For this reason, the soldiers’ revolt has been written out of official history. Yet it was a crucial part of the massive antiwar movement whose activity helped the Vietnamese people in their struggle to free Vietnam from U.S. domination.

www.nyc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article_id=35538

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**FULL METAL CHICKEN**

REPUBLICANS BETTER AT STARTING WARS THAN FIGHTING ‘EM

**BY EMILY REINHARDT**

“Chickenhawk” sounds like a Frankenstein experiment gone awry. Actually, it refers to an administration that’s for the birds.

“Chickenhawks” include Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and many of the other familiar names in the Bush peanut gallery who pine for a war that others will have to fight, though they themselves remained safely out of harm’s way when they had a chance to see combat in their youth. This administration is lauded for its “military credibility” but it is a false premise, based on its jingoism and cowboy mentality. More than 13,000 stories have been written about Bill Clinton’s infamous “draft dodging,” while only 50 stories have been written about Bush’s lack of service.

(Source: Lexis Nesis)

**George W. Bush, Jr.**

**Job:** President, Commander-in-Chief  
**Year Born:** 1946  
**War Avoided:** Vietnam  
**Reason:** Deferment, Texas Air National Guard  
**Year Avoided:** 1968

Mr. Bush was equally impatient to avoid Vietnam. He leapfrogged over thousands of others in 1968 to join the Texas Air National Guard. With only 12 days left on his student deferment, Bush was sworn in the same day he applied. After repeated student deferments, Ashcroft graduated from law school in 1967. A family friend set up the teaching gig for him, somehow deemed “critical” when only 264,000 out of 35 million draftable men were granted such status.

**Donald Rumsfeld**

**Job:** Secretary of Defense  
**Year Born:** 1932  
**Year Avoided:** Korea  
**Reason:** Student Deferment

Rumsfeld holds the distinction of being both the youngest and the oldest Secretary of Defense, having held the position under both Presidents Ford (1975-77) and Bush Jr. (2001-?). However, he has never seen combat experience. Rumsfeld was an undergraduate at Princeton while the Korean War raged from 1950 to 1953. While “Rummy” pursued his studies inside Princeton’s ivy-covered walls, 5.7 million Americans served in Korea. A total of 36,516 were killed and another 103,284 were wounded in the conflict. Meanwhile, Rumsfeld received student deferments. He later served as a naval aviator from 1954 to 1957 before beginning his rise to power.

**Tom DeLay**

**Job:** Representative (R-Tex)  
**Year Born:** 1947  
**Year Avoided:** Vietnam  
**Reason:** Deferral

According to Tom DeLay, he and fellow chickenhawks like Dan Quayle desperately wanted to fight in Vietnam, but minorities had taken all the well-paying military gigs in order to escape the ghettos, depriving patriotic young men of their chance to serve. A relatively unknown DeLay said this in 1988 to a crowd of reporters, one of whom was then prompted to ask, “Who is this idiot?” Instead of fighting his patriotic war, DeLay was handling enemies more his mental size: termsites, cockroaches and fleas as an exterminator.

**Bill O’Reilly**

**Job:** Fox News commentator  
**Year Born:** 1949  
**War Avoided:** Vietnam  
**Reason:** Deferment

The devout Clinton-hater actually had a trajectory much like the object of his abhorrence. Both attended school in New England. O’Reilly was in London for his junior year of college, 1969-1970, one year after Bill Clinton was at Oxford. Though he lambasted Clinton for avoiding service, O’Reilly kept up his student deferments and, like so many of his right-wing colleagues, never saw action.

**GULF WAR 1: MEMORIES OF DEATH AND MAYHEM**

**BY JOHN TARLETON**

Charles Sheehan-Miles finished basic training for the U.S. Army in August of 1991. Two weeks later he was deployed to Saudi Arabia with the 24th Infantry Division. He was 18.

Raised in Atlanta, Sheehan-Miles comes from a long line of military men dating back to the Revolutionary War. He was eager to serve and protect his country, and spent eight months in the Persian Gulf theater, history’s most toxic battlefield.

Sheehan-Miles was exposed to smoke from hundreds of oil-well fires. Hundreds of thousands of other U.S. troops were exposed to depleted uranium from their own army’s munitions and to chemical warfare agents including sarin, cyclosarin and mustard gases when large stockpiles of Saddam Hussein’s biological and chemical weapons were destroyed. Thousands of soldiers were also injected with experimental anthrax vaccines. In the war’s final days, Sheehan-Miles machine-gunned fleeing Iraqi soldiers who had caught fire when one of their tanker trucks exploded near his unit. The experience haunted him and in December 1992 he was discharged from the Army as a conscientious objector.

“I had nightmares for years about the incident,” said Sheehan-Miles, who has since written an acclaimed novel about his Gulf War experiences, Prayet at Rumayla. “The human reaction to a situation like that is to grab a fire extinguisher or to throw a blanket on someone.”

One hundred and forty-eight U.S. soldiers — as well as 150,000 Iraqis — were killed in the first Gulf War. Some 7,758 more Gulf War vets have died since then, according to an April 2002 report by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sheehan-Miles suffered lung and ear infections for the first couple of years after he returned home. Many of his former comrades-in-arms suffered more debilitating Gulf War-related illnesses that the government took years to acknowledge. Of the 697,000 troops who served in the Gulf War, 156,000 (or 22.3 percent) currently receive assistance for service-related medical disabilities.

“It was a toxic battlefield and we were exposed to a lot of junk… There was not necessarily anything myste- rious about all this,” said Sheehan-Miles, who also founded the National Gulf War Resource Center (NWGR) in 1995. Now 31, he lives in Reston, Va., with his wife and two small children.

Sheehan-Miles has watched with increasing concern in recent months as the Bush administration calls for war. He and other vets are concerned that a new genera-
tion of U.S. soldiers will be exposed to similarly toxic battle conditions while safeguards remain inadequate.

“We’re hurtling headlong into a war with Iraq without adequately addressing the mistakes of the past,” says Steve Robinson, NGWRC executive director.

While the NGWRC doesn’t take an official position on the war, Sheehan-Miles and a couple of his buddies have started a web site (www.veteransforcommon-sense.org) that is meant to raise public awareness of the dangerous course U.S. leaders are charting.

“I think the military has become very remote to us. We now have a small, professional army that goes out and fights our wars for us,” Sheehan-Miles notes. “But the cost of going to war is far more than most people realize.”
protests mount as media look the other way

by Mike Burke

During the past month, scores of protests have been staged across the country and the globe against another Gulf War. Most have been largely ignored by mainstream press outlets such as the Washington Post, which recently acknowledged its failure to cover the anti-war movement adequately.

"Whatever one thinks about the wisdom of a new war, once it starts it is too late to argue arguments that should have been aired before," wrote Post ombudsman Michael Getler on Oct. 6. Below is an overview of some of the anti-war actions that you may not have heard about:

9/24: The city of Santa Cruz, Calif., passes a resolution opposing war in Iraq, becoming the first city in the country to do so. San Francisco; Oakland; Berkeley; Seattle; Kalamazoo, Mich.; Canboro, N.C.; and Ithaca, N.Y.; have since passed similar resolutions.

9/27: Anti-war protesters greet President Bush in Denver. Colo. Organizers expect a few hundred for the rally to show up.

9/27: Activists in Minnesota end a four-day sit-in at Sen. Paul Wellstone’s local office. Two weeks later, Wellstone joins 22 other senators opposing the Iraq resolution.

9/28: In London, up to 400,000 take part in Britain’s largest peace demonstration since the Vietnam War.

9/29: More than 3,000 antirwar protesters show up at Dick Cheney’s house in Washington, D.C.

10/5: In Italy, over 1.5 million participate in anti-war rallies across the country.

10/6: More than 100,000 protest across the United States at dozens of rallies organized by the Not In Our Name coalition. In New York, 20,000 fill the East Meadow of Central Park. At least 10,000 gather in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

10/7: At least 2,000 rally outside the Cincinnati Museum Center to protest President Bush’s primetime speech on Iraq. Organizers report that Cincinnati hadn’t seen such a large peace demonstration in decades.

10/8: Some 500 protest outside a $1,000-a-head Republican fundraiser featuring President Bush in Knoxville, Tennessee.

10/9: Up to 30,000 march in Seattle, marking the city’s second mass peace rally in recent days.

10/13: White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer is welcomed back to his alma mater, Middlebury College in Vermont, by nearly 900 protesters. Days earlier Fleischer called for, in violation of international law, the assassination of Saddam Hussein.

10/14: Two days after bombings in Bali killed nearly 200, including many Australians, over 45,000 march in Melbourne to protest Australia’s potential involvement in another Gulf War. Protest organizers cite the Bali bombings as a reason why we need a different approach to conflict other than violence and war.

10/15: A standing-room crowd of 700 gather in the rural Massachusetts town of Deerfield (pop. 4,750) to hear former U.N. weapons inspector Scott Ritter talk about Iraq. Ritter predicts 20,000 to 30,000 Americans will die if the U.S. invades Iraq.

10/26: Major anti-war protests are scheduled in Washington, D.C., and San Francisco. Organizers have predicted crowds up to 150,000.

spying

nypd seeks to free itself from handschu restraints

by Diana Wurn

In the midst of your fellow demonstrators’ shouts of “No Blood for Oil” at a future anti-war rally, you may notice something odd. It might be that your new activist friend looks a little out of place. Or it could be that once in a while he drops his head to his shirt collar and whispers something like: “Operation City Storm is clear. Send in the eagle.” He may be a cop.

The 1985 Handschu Agreement makes the New York Police Department (NYPD) the only police force in America that operates with clear limitations on how and when it can spy on political groups. But if the NYPD has its way, that could all change very soon.

Late last month, NYPD lawyers filed papers in federal district court arguing for a removal of all limitations from the Handschu Agreement and unfettered police authority to monitor political expression.

Currently, Handschu requires the NYPD to obtain advance permission from a special panel before infiltrating political groups. If police have evidence that a crime may take place, they have 48 hours to file a request with the Handschu Authority panel, which can approve an operation. Police must return for new authorization if they wish to continue surveillance beyond 30 days.

There are limitations with Handschu, though. The biggest one may be the composition of the panel. With two police officers and one civilian appointed by the mayor, odds are stacked in favor of approval for police surveillance. Even so, Handschu makes New Yorkers the only Americans currently protected from overzealous local police.

If the Handschu Agreement is rescinded to suit the NYPD’s desires, though, New Yorkers can expect increased political surveillance and photography at political events, says Nancy Chang, senior litigation attorney for the Center for Constitutional Rights.

“One problem with police monitoring of groups is that it has a chilling effect on freedom of expression,” Chang said.

The chilling effect could extend from participation in religious activities to speaking out against the impending war on Iraq.

Chang points out that people engage in self-censorship when they know they are being watched and their activities recorded.

Elimination of the Handschu decree would sacrifice the protections that now exist. “They are significant protections,” said Christopher Dunn of the New York Civil Liberties Union. It would also become more difficult to track police activity, Dunn said.

Handschu is more than a formality, argues City University of New York School of Law Professor Franklin Siegel. It “creates a paper trail. Over time, if a party believes an action has been unjust, they can look up who authorized it,” he said. If the decree is removed, that paper trail will be eliminated.

The initiative to repeal Handschu recalls Attorney General John Ashcroft’s wish to remove restrictions that have previously prevented FBI agents from gathering information by spying on law-abiding political and religious groups. Last year’s U.S.A. PATRIOT Act has also dampened dissent against government policies by significantly easing restrictions on surveillance and widening the scope of who can be monitored, particularly for alleged terrorism.

With their request to the court, New York police are now seeking similar freedom to conduct wide-ranging surveillance, with equally wide potential for abuses. It was activists in the 1970s who demanded a paper trail on police harassment of political groups that spawned the Handschu Agreement.

The Handschu Agreement grew from a lawsuit filed by civil rights groups in 1971. The complaint alleged that a branch of the Police Department called the Security and Investigation Section had violated the First, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Eighth, Ninth and Fourteenth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution through activities that monitored groups then critical of the government, including the Black Panthers.

The courts’ lawsuit outlined seven categories of violations, including use of informants, infiltration of groups, illegal interrogations, overt surveillance, summary punishment, intelligence gathering and electronic surveillance.

The court documents asserted that police spies secretly infiltrated groups and “provoked, solicited and induced members of lawful political and social groups to engage in unlawful activities.”

According to the complaint, officers not only urged participation in criminal activity, but funded it. Members of political groups were encouraged by undercover officers to participate in armed robbery and to plant the bombing of a government agency, the plaintiffs asserted.

In response, New York’s police commissioner at the time suggested that if those actions occurred, they were mere “aberrations.”

Now, 17 years after the lawsuit culminated in the Handschu Agreement, today’s Police Commissioner, Raymond Kelly, says Handschu has tied his department’s hands in its efforts to spy on terrorists. However, when confronted by Newday’s Leonard Levitt, Kelly was unable to site one actual example of how Handschu guidelines were hindering police in their fight against terrorism.

It could take months or even years before a decision is made on the police request that was presented to Judge Charles S. Haight, Jr. Police promise a public meeting to permit citizen comments on the matter, but no date has been announced yet.

“It will be long and contentious and very public,” said Siegel, who will work in opposition to the police as class counsel on the case. He cautioned that “inflammatory and urgent” language is used in the brief.

“You say terrorism and everyone gets weak in the knees,” Siegel asserted.

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There are many dissenting people of faith, however, who aren’t buying this war, and have been able to galvanize a burgeoning opposition to the administration’s plans. In fact, leaders of all the major religions have come out against the war on Iraq. Even Bush’s own United Methodist church has “launched a scathing attack on his plans for war” according to an Oct. 20 report in the London Observer. The Vatican, with the National and World Councils of Churches and leaders of 48 denominations, submitted a letter to Bush in early September denouncing pre-emptive strikes. Interfaith religious leaders have since lobbied intensely on Capitol Hill for U.S. cooperation with the international community on the issue.

Building on their work in non-violence training and international peace work, faith-based peace and justice organizations such as Pax Christi USA, American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and the Fellowship of Reconciliation have helped to organize educational campaigns and grassroots actions — teach-ins, rallies, peace vigils and Congressional phone and email campaigns.

Not that the U.S.’s predominantly religious population (with 81 percent of Americans identifying with a specific religion) would ever hear of this on CNN. In fact, leaders of all the major religions have come out against the war on Iraq, but the massive military buildup behind an administration’s bellicose demands.

The Vatican, with the National and World Councils of Churches and leaders of 48 denominations, submitted a letter to Bush in early September denouncing pre-emptive strikes. Interfaith religious leaders have since lobbied intensely on Capitol Hill for U.S. cooperation with the international community on the issue. Building on their work in non-violence training and international peace work, faith-based peace and justice organizations such as Pax Christi USA, American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and the Fellowship of Reconciliation have helped to organize educational campaigns and grassroots actions — teach-ins, rallies, peace vigils and Congressional phone and email campaigns. Not that the U.S.’s predominantly religious population (with 81 percent of Americans identifying with a specific religion) would ever hear of this on CNN.

Anti-war organizing is also accelerating in communities of color, which contribute a disproportionate percentage of the troops to the U.S. armed forces and have the most to lose from a war that would undermine spending on domestic social programs. One group, the Harlem Anti-War Coalition, formed following a Sept. 14 teach-in at St. Mary’s Church sponsored by the Harlem Tenant Council (HTC). Organizers are uncertain how predominate the AIDS leadership in the anti-war movement.

Organizers are uncertain how dominant the AIDS leadership in the anti-war movement.

Grassroots anti-war movements can expect little acknowledgement from the corporate media. In the five-month run-up to the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the three major network news shows provided 2,855 minutes of coverage, one percent of which was devoted to reporting grassroots dissent, according to Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR), a media watchdog group. And while web sites like commonplace.org, alternet.org, anti-war.com, iraqjournal.org and broadcast shows like Democracy Now! and Free Speech TV now offer a steady stream of critical reporting on the war, the media establishment still pursues a more limited discussion.

For instance, the Oct. 14 issue of Time magazine featured a “debate” between retired General Wesley Clark (“Let’s Wait to Attack”) and former Reagan Administration official Kenneth Adelman (“No, Let’s Not Waste Any Time”).

“It’s at times like these we see really skewed ideas, (that) news is what powerful people say it is,” says Rachel Corin, a media analyst for FAIR. In the rush to war, little has been said by either the mass media or politicians about how a military occupation of Iraq would put U.S.-based energy companies in control of several trillion dollars of proven oil reserves. Hayden suggests that the anti-war movement make common cause with the movement against corporate-led globalization that first burst into prominence in November 1999 in Seattle.

“It’s the same fight,” he says. For that fight to be sustainable, Mark Haim, another 60’s veteran and longtime community organizer in Columbia, Mo., says it is essential that activists create an outward-looking “culture of resistance” rooted in alternative institutions and networks of mutual support that weave together people of different communities and generations.

“I envision a resistance movement that will express itself in myriad ways beyond marching on Washington D.C.,” Haim said. “It would be for a whole different political-cultural paradigm. It would be a culture in which people are more overtly, politically active and see their daily actions through a political prism.

For ongoing coverage of grassroots anti-war organizing around the world, see www.indymedia.org.
LABOR'S OPPORTUNITY

BY IMC STAFF

With 13 million members, organized labor has the potential to become one of the most powerful voices for peace and justice.

On Oct. 7 AFL-CIO president John J. Sweeney issued a statement calling for dealing with the Hussein’s lawlessness in a manner that enforces international law and respects the United Nations. And, in contrast to the labor federation’s stance during the Vietnam War (see article below) it has allowed room for local and regional affiliates to take independent positions.

Most rank-and-file union members don’t think Bush has justified the need for an attack. Like most Americans, they are taking the middle road. While they may not like Saddam Hussein, many do not see enough reason to intervene in the affairs of a sovereign nation.

That very few unions have taken a stance in support of the Bush administration is also important. Even among those unions that have, there isn’t a vocal, pro-war section of organized labor, as there was during the Vietnam War.

Many union members are waiting to see how the next few months play out. But in an encouraging trend, some have come out against the war.

An example of a labor-led initiative to oppose war came from the Washington State Central Labor Council (CLC) AFL-CIO. The Washington State CLC, representing close to half a million trade unionists, held its convention Aug. 19-22, in Spokane, Wash.

At that convention it was resolved that the Washington State CLC “opposes the U.S. government’s open-ended ‘war on terrorism’ and its affiliates) to pressure Bush and Congress to stop the war, … assist laid-off workers, restore and expand services, and promote global justice by providing humanitarian and economic aid.”

The California Federation of Teachers (CFT) at a recent State Council meeting also passed a resolution against war on Iraq. The resolution said, “the CFT goes on record as strenuously opposing the Bush administration’s march toward war with Iraq, ….” The resolution also urged all affiliates to endorse the march and to do so at pressure.

The CFT, an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), represents more than 100,000 teachers and school employees and has a history of being involved in social, political and economic struggles.

In a phone interview, Margaret Shelleda, Assistant to the President of CFT, said, “Bush has shown no evidence that Iraq poses a threat to the U.S. And a war would only exacerbate the situation in the Middle East.” She added, “unilateral action is a violation of international standards.”

On the top of Shelleda’s priorities list were domestic issues. “Twenty five percent of California’s budget is in deficit,” she said. “Education isn’t getting enough money. Hardly any schools have nurses. And Bush is on the brink of committing billions of dollars and thousands of lives without attempting a diplomatic approach.”

Most recently on Oct. 1, the Executive Committee of AFL-CIO Pride at Work, a constituency group of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender union members, passed a resolution against “pre-emptive war strikes on Iraq or any other country.”

The list of official AFL-CIO bodies openly taking a stance against war is small now. But the list is growing.

Independent bodies made up of union officers and rank-and-file union members seeking official recognition from their local regional and national unions are forming much more quickly.

New York City Labor Against the War (NYCLAW) is a perfect example. The peace movement has found an important ally in NYCLAW, which formed weeks after the attacks of Sept. 11. According to Michel Letwin, President of the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys, UAW Local 2325, NYCLAW has been “both an anti-war pole within labor and a labor pole in the anti-war movement.

Detroit Labor for Peace and Justice (DLPJ) is another example. Originally formed in response to the bombing of Afghanistan, DLPJ issued a Labor Day statement in the Metro Detroit Labor News. It said, “We condemn the horrific terrorist attack on Sept. 11. Yet the war in Afghanistan has brought further suffering. … We therefore oppose the expansion of the War on Terror to include military action in Iraq … or any other country.”

In a phone interview Paul Felton of DLPJ said, “Bush’s foreign policy has little to do with helping the American people. It is designed to further corporate interests.”

Felton, a member of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) Area Local 480-481 for more than 22 years, suggested that the labor movement as a whole has been “cautious” and added, “This is the perfect opportunity for labor to break from the legacy of uncritically supporting U.S. foreign policy.” He continued, “Sometimes labor participation in the peace movement seems too small,” but the growing response many unions and union members have shown is “certainly a healthy beginning.”

LABOR ACTIVISTS joined with anti-globalization activists —will they add also their numbers to the anti-war movement?

AND ITS DUBIOUS PAST

BY IMC STAFF

Organized labor has been an important force in U.S. history. It secured the 40-hour work week, collective bargaining, workplace safety laws and social security. In foreign policy, however, as the history of the AFL-CIO shows, labor failed to pressure Bush and Congress to stop the war, assist the CVT “in advancing labor rights.” Perhaps it is a small step that the AFL-CIO has not endorsed Bush’s war on terrorism, it has again retreated to the sidelines and was a no-show at recent protests against the World Bank and IMF in Washington, D.C.

Moreover, it has never really stopped its Third World meddling. AIFLD has been replaced by the American Center for International Labor Solidarity, which is listed as one of the four “core institutes” of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

Historian Allen Weinstein, who headed the study that led to the creation of the NED, was candid about its purpose. “A lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA” he said.

This past Feb. 12, the AFL-CIO sponsored a closed forum with NED featuring members of the Confederation of Venezuelan Workers (CTV), which was involved in the brief coup two months later against President Hugo Chavez.

In the May 2002 issue of Labor Notes, Katherine Hoyt reported, “According to one union member who participated in the forum, the CTV’s representatives noted that they were here to discuss the chances for a coup in Venezuela.”

After the coup collapsed, The New York Times reported April 25 that NED gave $154,377 to the Solidarity Center to assist the CTV “in advancing labor rights.” Perhaps it is a small step that the AFL-CIO has not endorsed Bush’s war plans against Iraq. But it’s clearly not still above dirty tricks.
A GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT:
WAR ON IRAQ MAY SINK U.S. ECONOMY

BY IMC STAFF

Like a punch-drunk prizefighter, the U.S. economy is reeling. It has been dealt some grievous body blows over the past two years: rising unemployment, a collapsing stock market, increasing corporate bankruptcies, accounting scandals, declining business investment.

The worst may be yet to come: a haymaker in the form of an invasion of Iraq. The human toll of any war is expected to be high, especially to Iraqis. To Americans, who had grown cozy with the idea of bloodless wars, at least until Sept. 11, the economic impact may be most profound.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has offered the most detailed calculation of the cost of a war with Iraq. It estimates:

* Deploying forces to the Persian Gulf would cost between $9 billion and $13 billion.
* Fighting the war would cost $9 billion for the first month, and $8 billion for each succeeding month.
* The “costs to return U.S. forces to their home bases would range between $5 billion and $7 billion.”
* An occupation could cost up to $4 billion a month.

The CBO concurred with White House advisor Larry Lindsey that costs could easily be in the $100 billion to $200 billion range, about one to two percent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

U.S. allies such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Japan picked up the tab for the 1990-91 Gulf War (some observers even suspect the Pentagon made a profit).

This time, the U.S. alone will bear the costs. Ellen Frank, an associate professor of economics at Emmanuel College in Boston, says, “A war will affect the federal deficit dollar for dollar.” She states that the deficit, which already stands at almost $160 billion, would balloon from the cost of another war.

Frank says businesses would be affected by a widening budget deficit. It would create a “crowding out” of the credit markets, pitting government against businesses as both compete for a limited pool of bond buyers.

The Federal Reserve would likely raise interest rates if the budget gap keeps widening, raising the cost of borrowing and further constraining business activity.

Frank says businesses would be affected by a widening budget deficit. It would create a “crowding out” of the credit markets, pitting government against businesses as both compete for a limited pool of bond buyers.

Frank says the Fed is “disingenuous,” though, when it blames rising interest rates on the budget deficit. “The question is will [the Fed] interest rates go up if the government is running a deficit to pay for a war?” she asks. “The answer is yes.”

Oil prices have already been impacted by the war talk. Despite the worldwide economic malaise, resulting in an oversupply, crude is near $30 a barrel. Traders say the current “war premium” is about $4 to $6 a barrel. Frank says “fear” is driving up oil prices.

Testifying before Congress on Sept. 13, Miriam Pemberton of Foreign Policy in Focus pointed out that “ten months ago, the price was half that.” Pemberton contended that a $10 per barrel increase in oil prices would over a year’s time reduce GDP growth by about a half percent and add nearly one percent to inflation.

The attack on Oct. 6 by Islamic radicals on a French oil tanker near Yemen unsettled skittish markets, but it is unlikely that supplies would be significantly disrupted by a war.

Even during the “war of the tankers” between Iran and Iraq in the late 1980s, oil prices barely budged. And Saudi Arabia is already exceeding its production quota by an extra million barrels of oil a day to tamp down prices.

Overall, it is fear and uncertainty that may wreak the most economic damage. An invasion probably won’t happen until the New Year when U.S. troops will be in place, the environmental conditions optimal and the issue of inspectors dispensed with (or so Bush hopes).

This means months more of uncertainty that will keep consumers and businesses on edge, especially through the critical holiday spending season.

Consumer sentiment tanked during the first Gulf War. While Frank doesn’t think consumers have been affected by the war talk, they have by the recession. With weakening retail sales, the evidence is mounting that consumers, who had been largely carrying the economy for the last year, may be running out of steam.

“Business investment,” she notes, “ground to a halt over a year ago. The question is will it revive, and adding war talk to that mix will not make it more optimistic.”

George Bush is optimistic about one thing, namely that he can deliver a knockout blow to Saddam Hussein. But in the process he might also deliver one to the U.S. economy.

WHEN CNN BECOMES “AMERICA STRIKES BACK,” WHERE DO YOU TURN FOR NEWS?

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VOICES FROM IRAQ

“So what is happening is punishing a nation. Collective punishment of a nation. And this collective punishment comes as a result of a blackmailing being practiced and being done by late former President Bush. In 1992 officially President Bush on television told the Iraqi people ‘Change your government or the sanctions will continue.’ He told that to the Iraqi people and every Iraqi heard that.” —Dr. Abdul Razzaq, President of the Peace & Friendship Society of Iraq

“The lack of clean water is the single biggest killer of children, the sick, and the elderly. The majority of patients in Iraq's hospitals are stricken with amoebic dysentery, gastroenteritis and other waterborne diseases.” http://www.iraqwaterproject.com

... we are facing the tragedy daily because of the high figure of mortality. Just we can't offer our patients for example the advanced antibiotics for the real diseases they are suffering from like meningitis, which is really a disastrous disease. You can't recover without the right antibiotics at the right time for the right period and for the right dosages. You face a handicapped child. And this tragedy is still existing at this moment because of the political stances of the U.S. and British representatives in the 661 committee who cancel many of these medical contracts.” —Dr. Mkai, Al- Mansour Childrens Hospital, Baghdad

Within five minutes on February 13, 1991 U.S. bombers threw two bombs - especially designed to penetrate hardened targets - right in the middle of the Al-Amiriya shelter. The first bomb exploded at 4:30am and opened a hole in the shelter's roof. The second bomb was bigger and more powerful. It exploded a few minutes after the first one. The shelter is located in a residential area of Baghdad. It housed 500 triple-decked beds and was reportedly crowded that night. Nearly all of the estimated 1,500 people, mostly women and children, who came for protection against the massive bombing of Baghdad, were killed and only a handful could be saved heavily wounded. Most of the bodies could not be recovered because they were completely burned. Today the shelter is a memorial for those who died there.

NOTES FROM THE PHOTOGRAPHER

These pictures were taken during a trip to Iraq in October 2000 with a delegation of Veterans for Peace - Iraq Water Project (www.iraqwaterproject.com).

The Iraq Water Project is an effort to end the UN-sanctions against Iraq and stop the frequent violations of Iraqi sovereignty. The project continues to help rebuilding water treatment facilities to provide drinkable water to Iraqi people. In Baghdad and Basrah we had the opportunity to hear reports about the grim economic and health situation in Iraq. Hundreds of thousands of people in Iraq died during these years as a consequence of the combined effects of the destruction of essential infrastructure and the concerted effort of the UN to keep the country in stranglehold of now 12 years of sanctions, blockade and embargo. Additionally, Iraqi cities and villages are still being bombed frequently by the American and British aircraft and missiles. Since December 1998, more than 40,000 violations of the Iraqi airspace were reported with hundreds of bombing raids.

Stop the Bombing – Break the Sanctions – Respect the Sovereignty of Iraq

—Suzanne Kahrs, New York City 2002
America is planning to wage war, for the second time in little more than a decade, on a country of 24 million people, home to one of the world’s most ancient cultures.

Believed to be the location of the biblical Garden of Eden, the Mesopotamian Valley, where present-day Iraq is located, is the birthplace of a number of civili-
zations (Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian and Assyrian).

Innovations in human civilization that sprang up in the Mesopotamian Valley include commercial record keeping (accounting), banking, recording of literature (writing), land cultivation, calendars, code of law (Hammurabi), equal protection under the law, state law enforcement, division of the circle in 360 degrees, longitude and latitude, algebra (which Christian Europe thought was the work of Satan), the invention of zero, algorithms and calculus.

In addition to everyday items (like the number zero), ancient Mesopotamia produced a number of “wonders of the world.”

The Hanging Gardens of Babylon: Nebuchad-
zezzar’s wife (or concubine, depending on the legend) was homesick for her home terrain, the mountains. The gardens, completed around 600 B.C.E., were 25 yards off the ground and contained trees actually planted in the clay, not the ground. The Gardens are considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

The Tower of Babel: Some archaeologists believe the mythical tower actually existed in modern-day Iraq after finding what appears to be its 300-square-foot foundation. The tower was destroyed and rebuilt many times until it was the tallest in Mesopotamia. At its greatest height (roughly 580 B.C.E.), it stood 295 feet high.

Islam came to the Mesopotamian Valley in the sev-
enth century C.E. Fast-forward to the 20th century and the founding of modern Iraq in 1920, as a “British mandate.” Arab nationalism arose after World War I, when the League of Nations reneged on its promise of independence for Iraq. Iraq achieved independence in 1932.

Ethnic Population of Iraq: 75 percent Arabic; Kurds make up another 15 to 20 percent, while the rest of the population is Turkmen, Jews, Armenians and Assyrians.

Iraqi Delicacies: Liis-san el qua-th (eggplant-wrapped meat), which translates to “Tongue of the Judge”); ba ba beh tamar, Iraqi pastries stuffed with cheese, almonds or dates; katayef, a combination of filo dough, ricotta cheese and syrup; melfoof (filo, cheese, almonds or dates; katayef, a combination of wrapped meat), which translates to “Tongue of the teenage girls.

Prince of Love.” He is a singer with a large interna-
tional following of Iraqi expatriates, especially

Iraqi Pop Stars: Ilhaim Al Madfai: is a guitar play-

Iraqi Delicacies: Liis-san el qua-th (eggplant-wrapped meat), which translates to “Tongue of the Judge”); ba ba beh tamar, Iraqi pastries stuffed with cheese, almonds or dates; katayef, a combination of filo dough, ricotta cheese and syrup; melfoof (filo, cheese, almonds or dates; katayef, a combination of wrapped meat), which translates to “Tongue of the teenage girls.

When will Americans wake up? Our security cannot depend on the insecurity of everyone else.

Donald Rumsfeld angrily denounces Iraq for having an “insan-
tiable appetite” for weapons. This from a man whose budget for war is 10 times the size of Iraq’s entire economy. And Colin Powell criti-
izes the United Nations for forging an agreement to return weapons inspectors — four days after Bush demanded the United Nations do it or become “irrelevant.”

Some accuse us of being “fools” or “apologists” for the Iraqi government. Whenever we have the opportunity to speak with government officials we raise concerns about prisons, extraju-
dicial killings, and state-directed vio-
ence. Our status as Americans gives us this luxury, something the Iraqis themselves do not have.

According to Human Rights Watch, Iraq has roughly 3,000 extraju-
dicial killings per year. According to UNICEF, U.S. policy kills more than 50,000 Iraqi children every year. Both are terrible. But they aren’t equivalent. It strikes me as hypocritical to speak out against a foreign govern-
ment for killing innocents while remaining silent about our tax dollars facilitating the killing of many more by our own government.

If the only way to get anyone to pay attention to ordinary Iraqis is to be in Baghdad when the bombs fall, so be it. We’re here.

We are volunteering with NGOs already working in Iraq, and we’re doing regular reporting and writing. Some of that writing will be carried in alternative media and small-town papers, and, even after the United States destroys the electricity and phone lines, we will get reports out through the local press center on a satellite phone. We will not let folks back home forget the human conse-
quences of what they do here.

Milan Kundera once wrote, “The struggle of man against power is the struggle of man against forgetting.” We are here to be part of that struggle.

Mohammed Ghani Hekmat is per-
haps the most prominent artist in Iraq, and one of the kindest men I’ve ever met. His sculptures decorate the coun-
y. He’s proud to be the first Muslim artist ever commissioned by the Vatican. In 1991, he was working on a series of life-size reliefs of the Stations of the Cross when the Gulf War hap-
pended. The windows in his studio were blown out by the explosions. We asked him what he thought of the American people, and his voice filled with anger: “They’re innocent,” he said, “Innocent! Like children.”

Today, I know where the good Americans are. They’re in Iraq, and they’re in the streets of America — lay-
ing their lives on the line to prevent the mass destruction of human life.

We get what we pay for in this life. I don’t want to die. I’m scared for my life. But this storm is fast upon us. This is the moment when we all must ask — what are we willing to risk for peace?

Ramiy Kysia is a Muslim-American peace activist, working with the Education for Peace in Iraq Center (www.epic-usa.org). He is currently in Iraq with the Voices in the Wilderness (www.viw.org) Iraq Peace Team (www.iraqpeacesteam.org), a project to place American peace workers in Iraq prior to, during, and after any U.S. attack.
“A threat to peace...”

“While there are many dangers in the world, the threat from Iraq stands alone — because it gathers the most serious dangers of our age in one place. ... Iraq could decide on any given day to provide a biological or chemical weapon to a terrorist group or individual terrorists. ... Knowing these realities, America must not ignore the threat gathering against us... Understanding the threats of our time... we have every reason to assume the worst and we have an urgent duty to prevent the worst from occurring.” — Pres. George Bush speaking during his televised address from Cincinnati on October 7
Prospecting for Black Gold

By IMC Staff

U.S. policy towards the Middle East is based on the age-old human lust for gold. In this case, black gold. Just five countries in the Middle East sit atop nearly two-thirds of the proven oil reserves in the world. And of these five, only Iran and Iraq remain outside of the U.S. sphere of influence, possibly the real reason why President Bush designated them, along with North Korea, as the “axis of evil.”

The United States is increasingly dependent on foreign oil, having imported 56 percent of its supplies in 2000 (though most of that comes from its hemispheric neighbors, chiefly Canada, Mexico and Venezuela).

The petro-cabinet assembled by Bush has hopscotched the world — from Central Asia and equatorial Africa to the Andean region and Alaska — to secure more sources to feed the West’s addiction. Yet, oil discoveries peaked in the 1960s. Today, newly discovered reserves amount to only one-quarter of annual global consumption.

Since the first oil well began pumping in Titusville, Pa., on Aug. 27, 1859, some 900 billion barrels of oil have been sucked out of the earth. More than one trillion barrels in proven reserves exist around the world. Forecasting future discoveries is tricky at best, but perhaps another half-trillion barrels of oil remain hidden in undiscovered conventional reserves.

It is estimated that world production will peak between 2010 and 2020. Disciples of M. King Hubbert, who accurately predicted in 1956 that oil production would peak in the lower 48 states around 1970, contend that prices will rise sharply after 2010 as production peaks and reaches a point of diminishing returns.

Others dispute this, noting that contrary to expectations, two new “super-giant” fields have been discovered in Kazakhstan and Iran in the last decade. And as prices rise, it makes deep-ocean, marginal fields and Arctic exploration more economical. Ironically, as fossil-fuel-induced climate change warms the globe, oil companies are anticipating an oil rush in the largely unexplored and environmentally fragile polar regions.

Unconventional sources — tar sands in Western Canada, the heavy oil belt in Venezuela, and oil shale in the United States, Brazil, Zaire, India and many other countries — may become major producers of oil by the mid-21st century. According to a 1993 survey by the U.S. Geological Service, worldwide recoverable reserves of conventional oil amount to 2.1 to 2.8 trillion barrels.

In the case of unconventional sources, it is thought that another three trillion barrels can be extracted. Yet it will still take decades, if not longer, to develop the technology to efficiently extract petroleum from tar sands or oil shale.

Other analysts note that Third World regions are at the beginning of the discovery curve, likely resulting in increasing output in future decades.

This hasn’t escaped the notice of the Bush administration. After being heckled for defending America’s gluttonous lifestyle at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September, Colin Powell embarked on his real business: currying favor with oil-rich African nations like Gabon and Angola. Sub-Saharan Africa already provides the U.S. with 15 percent of its daily supply, which is expected to rise to 25 percent by 2015.

Walter Kansteiner, assistant secretary of state for Africa, is blunt about U.S. policy toward the forgotten continent. “African oil is of national strategic interest to us, and it will increase and become more important as we go forward … that’s really the primary focus of what our policy is.”

One of America’s newest friends is the tiny island nation of Sao Tome and Principe. Located off the West coast of Africa near the equator, it sits on some 4 billion barrels of oil. One reporter profiling the country asked, “Who needs Saudi Arabia when you’ve got Sao Tome?”

Well, we do. Four billion barrels is about what the United States imports in one year and is a mere puddle compared to the oceanic reserves in the Middle East.

The newly created African Oil Policy Initiative Group (AOPIG) is recommending oil-driven foreign policy objectives for Africa to the Bush administration. One objective is reported to be the construction of a U.S. naval base within the Sao Tome and Principe region. The base would provide a harbor for aircraft carriers, patrol boats and Marines.

The biggest undiscovered reserves are thought to exist in Iraq, which has been shut off from exploration since 1990. U.S., British, French and Russian oil companies are jockeying to be first in line when the prospecting begins. The looming invasion of Iraq is part of the White House’s plans to ensure cheap oil for consumers, as outlined in its national energy strategy last year.

That is also what the White House has displayed extreme prejudice toward alternative and renewable fuels. Cheap, relatively clean, abundant wind and tidal power are already within reach. But to the oil industry (and the Bush administration), they’re a danger to the status quo. The only alternative energy the administration has shown enthusiasm for — hydrogen fuel cells — is also one that is decades away from being feasible and which would still probably rely on fossil fuels for generating the hydrogen.

From today’s vantage point, it appears that oil dependence — and bitter, destructive oil wars — will dominate the landscape of the 21st century.

Power Means Pumping the Numbers

The estimation of reserves is fraught with politics and guesswork. The two annual industry benchmarks are compiled by World Oil and Oil and Gas Journal largely from data provided by individual countries. Both outfits have placed “proven” global reserves at about 1 trillion barrels for most of the last decade. In contrast, in 1995 PetroConsultants estimated “assessed” reserves at 746 billion barrels.

It’s suspected that many OPEC countries pump up their estimates because their production quotas are based on the size of the reserves. Indeed, in 1988 and 1990, many Middle Eastern countries revised their reserves dramatically upward despite no new major discoveries.

From 1986 to 1990, according to data from World Oil and Oil and Gas Journal, global reserves increased a staggering 39 percent from 708 billion barrels to 983 billion barrels.

Sources: Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi, www.eni.it/english

Top 10 Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Reserves (millions of barrels as of Jan. 1, 2003)</th>
<th>Production (millions of barrels per day)</th>
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December 1, 2002

December 1st marks the 50th year of operations for one of the world’s largest and most notorious animal testing facilities - Huntington Life Sciences (HLS). Since 1952 Huntington Animal County has waged an internecine and extremely successful campaign to close HLS. Join SHAC USA & Last Chance for Animals (LCA) for 3 days of disrupting the death of 500 animals a day inside HLS.

DEC. 11th, 11AM, COLONIAL PARK

Metuchen, NJ - East Millestone, NJ. Join activists at the lab where 9 million dogs, cats, primates, rabbits and others have died since 1952. Hear from speakers and prevent at HLS.

DEC. 14th, 11AM, NYC

89th and Central Park West (inside Central Park), New York, New York 10023

The Big Apple Action: Big Apple
THUGS-IN-WAITING:
U.S. PROPS UP INEPT IRAQI OPPOSITION

BY IMC STAFF

If the United States topples Saddam Hussein, who might replace him? The White House is reported to favor the installation of a U.S. military government modeled on Gen. Douglas MacArthur’s six-year rule over Japan following its defeat in World War II.

The United States needed legitimacy, however, and found it in Emperor Hirohito, who was allowed to stay on the Chrysanthemum Throne despite his complicity in war crimes. The United States may also turn to royalty in the case of Iraq. Pentagon mega-hawk Paul Wolfowitz is eagerly promoting the restoration of the Hashemite dynasty. It ruled Iraq for some 37 hapless — and bloody — years before military forces overthrew the monarchy in 1958 and beheaded 24-year-old King Faisal II.

Power would eventually be turned over to an Iraqi. Perhaps the United States will elevate a Westernized oil man, as in Afghanistan. Both President Hamid Karzai and U.S. special envoy Zalmay Khalizad (who some say is a “sacred duty.”

In their book, Andrew and Patrick Cockburn describe the anguish of one of the rebel leaders, a brigadier, who said he had “never asked for.” Saddam Hussein’s Republican Guard, who had been pointedly spared by Schwarzkopf, the American commander, he was told this “was not a warm reception.… The U.S. official went away for ten minutes and then returned with the curious claim that he was out of touch with his headquarters. [He] curtly suggested that they try and find the French forces, eighty miles to the West.”

In Nasiriyah, American troops prevented the rebels from taking guns and ammunition from the army barracks. “The Iraqis explained to the American commander who they were and why they were there,” wrote the Cockburns. “It was not a warm reception.… The U.S. officer went away for ten minutes and then returned with the curious claim that he was out of touch with his headquarters. [He] curtly suggested that they try and find the French forces, eighty miles to the West.”

The rebels eventually found a French colonel, who wanted to help; but when he tried to set up a meeting with General Schwarzkopf, he was told this was not possible. The revolt was doomed; crucial time had been lost. The first city to fall to Saddam Hussein was Basra. Tanks captured the main road and demolished the centers of resistance. “It was a bad time,” said a doctor at the hospital. “You could see dogs eating bodies in the streets.”

In the North, the Kurds, too, had risen up: the revolt John Major said he had “never asked for.” Saddam Hussein’s Republican Guards, who had been pointedly spared by Schwarzkopf, entered the Kurdish town of Sulaimaniya and extinguished the Kurdish resistance. Saddam Hussein had survived by a whisker; as his troops were celebrating their victory, their ammunition ran out. Five years later, when Saddam Hussein sent his tanks into another rebellious Kurdish town, Arbil, American aircraft circled the city for twenty minutes, then flew away. The CIA contingent among the CIA-funded Kurds ran out and executed the Kurds. Why? What the Americans fear is that the Kurds might establish their own state, perhaps even socialist and democratic, and that the Shia’s might forge an “Islamic Alliance” with Iran.… The American television journalist Peter Jennings put it this way: “The United States did not want Saddam Hussein to go, they just didn’t want the Iraqi people to take over.” Brent Scowcroft, President Bush Senior’s National Security Advisor, concurred. In 1997, he said: “We clearly would have preferred a coup. There’s no question about that.”

Ahmad al-Chalabi

The long-time face of the Iraqi opposition in Washington, Ahmad al-Chalabi took the reins of the Iraqi National Congress (INC), an umbrella organization created in 1992 with the assistance of the CIA. Although he was officially demoted in 1999 to be a member of the INC’s executive council rather than its leader, he is widely accepted as the first among equals and is spoken of by INC officials as the future president of Iraq. This despite the fact that the U.S. State Department recently found that about half of the $4 million it had given to the INC was not properly accounted for. They clearly expected better from a former maths professor and banker, and cut off funding. Chalabi, however, galvanised his U.S. supporters, and the Pentagon and the White House again started picking up the tab.

Chalabi is, if nothing else, an operator. One delegate at a New York meeting of the INC said of him: “He takes more than his share, much more than his share, and I get nothing. Just look at the way he dresses. They say Saddam has 300 suits; well, this guy has 400.”

For the full article go to: www.sundayherald.com/27877

GULF WAR BETRAYAL:
BUSH SR. SUSTAINED HUSSEIN IN HIS HOUR OF NEED

The following is excerpted from The New Rulers of the World (Verso Books, 2002) by John Pilger.

During the Gulf War, President George Bush Senior called on “the Iraqi military and the Iraqi people to take matters into their own hands and force Saddam Hussein to step aside.” In March 1991, the majority of Shia people in the South rallied to Bush’s call and rose up. So successful were they, that within two days Saddam Hussein’s rule had collapsed across southern Iraq and the popular uprising had spread to the country’s second city, Basra. A new start for the Iraqi people seemed close at hand. Then the tyrant’s old patron in Washington intervened just in time.

“The opposition,” Said Aburish told me, “found themselves confronted with the United States helping Saddam Hussein against them. The Americans actually stopped rebels from reaching arms depots. They denied them shelter. They gave Saddam Hussein’s Republican Guard safe passage through American lines in order to attack the rebels. They did everything except join the fight on his side.” In their book, Out of the Ashes: the Resurrection of Saddam Hussein, Andrew and Patrick Cockburn describe the anguish of one of the rebel leaders, a brigadier, who watched American helicopters circling overhead as Iraqi government helicopter crews poured kerosene on columns of fleeing refugees and set them alight with tracer fire. “I saw with my own eyes the American planes flying over the helicopters,” he said. “We were expecting them to help; now we could see them witnessing our demise.… They were taking pictures and they knew exactly what was happening.”

In Nasiriyah, American troops prevented the rebels from taking guns and ammunition from the army barracks. “The Iraqis explained to the American commander who they were and why they were there,” wrote the Cockburns. “It was not a warm reception.… The U.S. officer went away for ten minutes and then returned with the curious claim that he was out of touch with his headquarters. [He] curtly suggested that they try and find the French forces, eighty miles to the West.”

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John Pilger

THE NEW RULERS OF THE WORLD

NOVEMBER 2002
THE INDEPENDENT
PAGE 13
FEAR AND LOATHING IN THE MIDEAST

By AK Gupta

The war on terrorism is looking more like a war on Islam. Except it’s less a clash of civilizations than a clash of barbarisms.

It started with a regime change in Afghanistan a year ago. Then a demand that the Palestinians change their leader to one of our (and Israel’s) liking. Now, it’s Iraq’s turn.

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The Bush administration’s “caucus belli” is that Iraq is hoarding weapons of mass destruction. No evidence has been offered, but not to worry; we’re told: The coming invasion will not only remove the Butcher of Baghdad, but it will turn out to be a weapon of mass democracy.

Once Iraq is transformed into a Connecticut-style suburb, democracy will flower in the desert. Saudi Arabia will have no option but to reform its medieval autocracy. Iran’s Islamic revolution will wither away. Syria will be forced to sever its ties with the Israel-hating Hezbollah in Lebanon. And the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be solved for all.

When asked about the effect of an invasion on the Arab street, one administration official responded, “What Arab street?” Looking at recent developments, maybe they shouldn’t be so sanguine. The attack on an oil tanker near Yemen, the killing of a U.S. Marine in Kuwait, the bomb blast in Indonesia, the surprising show of strength by Islamic parties in Pakistan’s election reveal a polarization of opinion in the Muslim world.

Most ominous, Afghanistan is slowly destabilizing and anti-U.S. warlords have already launched a new jihad to rid the country of foreign forces.

The U.S. sees al Qaeda lurking in every shadow and behind every stone. The attacks appear to be the work of local militants whose ties to the extremist group appear to be mostly out of ideology and sympathy. Ironically, by claiming al Qaeda is behind every attack, the U.S. only strengthens its appeal and following.

The following is a look at some of the countries at the center of the war:

Afghanistan

This is where it all began and has yet to end. Almost a year after the Taliban were toppled, the country is still in disarray.

President Harmid Karzai’s regime is limited to Kabul with warlords controlling the countryside. A vice president and minister have been assassinated. No one is stepping up to provide troops for the international security force, least of all the Pentagon. The 9,000 U.S. troops in the country have their hands full with almost daily attacks against them and their bases.

Afghanistan has no army to speak of. Its coffers are bare. Reconstruction is on hold. Karzai’s security detail was so thoroughly infiltrated by his opponents that the U.S. now protects him—bolstering those who say he’s an American puppet.

The assassination attempt (by a recent Afghan army graduate) on Karzai on Sept. 5 and a deadly car bombing the same day in Kabul, were believed to be the calling card of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. He’s now organizing a “freedom struggle against foreign troops.”

His crusade is capitalizing on perceived injustices by the Americans against the numerically dominant Pashtuns, who were at the core of the Taliban and have been largely excluded from the new regime. Copies of a taped speech of his are circulating through the countryside in which he asks why Pashtuns are the only victims taped speech of his are circulating through the country.

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A U.S. war on Iraq will have repercussions in already volatile surrounding countries.

Saudi Arabia

One adviser to the Pentagon has suggested that the Saudi needs to be taken out of Saudi Arabia, meaning the ruling House of Saud. A former member of British Prime Minister Tony Blair’s cabinet states the real U.S. war aim is to “control the Saudi oil fields.”

Saudi Arabia has been pulling their money out of U.S. banks, fearing it may be seized down the road. Anti-U.S. sentiment is rising. Ironically, the high oil prices stemming from MidEast tensions have been a boon for Saudi Arabia. It has few other sources of foreign currency and must support a large welfare state (and 5,000 spoiled princes).

But if Iraq’s vast reserves are opened up, sending oil prices plummeting, it could spell disaster for Saudi Arabia’s economy and fuel violent opposition. Washington is trying to reduce its dependence on Saudi oil, but the kingdom controls almost a quarter of the world’s reserves, making it indispensable to the global economy.

So any U.S. victory in Iraq may be short-lived as the rest of the region becomes engulfed in turmoil.
CAIRO, EGYPT — The police had set up barricades across the street leading to the U.S. Embassy and were turning away passersby. A grim-faced police brigadier curtly informed everyone that he had strict orders not to let anyone through.

“It’s a new system,” he said, a system which apparently includes not being allowed to take photos of the dozens of women demonstrators trying to push their way through the cordon.

With the start of the school year and war drums beating in Washington, Egypt’s political activists are attempting to recapture the momentum of last April when the country was swept by a wave of protests and demonstrations not seen since the Gulf War more than 10 years before. Thousands rallied on university campuses and an invigorated umbrella movement of intellectuals from all political tendencies — socialist, Islamist and Nasserist — attempted to guide the movement.

The state responded cautiously at the time, allowing the demonstrations while being careful to seal them off from the rest of Cairo society and prevent them from spreading. Journalists were allowed free access, partly so that the rest of the world would know that the Arab street isn’t happy, said many observers.

The end of the school year, increased repression, and the beginning of summer ended the April “days of rage” as activists took to calling it, but the sense that the connections had been made so that activism would spring forth anew when the time was right.

Organizers planned to use the second anniversary of the Palestinian intifada on Sept. 28 to kick off the new activist season. The conditions seemed ripe. The oppression and killing of Palestinians was intensifying. Arafat was under siege again and the U.S. administration appeared ever more ready to invade Iraq. In addition, many Egyptians felt very uneasy about apparent U.S. plans to reorder the region.

The result was modest. Only around 1,000 people, accompanied by a like number of riot police, showed up in downtown Cairo for the rally. Organizers alleged that many participants were prevented from attending and that police only let a few through the cordon to join the rally in the highly visible but easily controlled downtown area.

“Activists were telephoned by security ahead of time and told not to come,” said Ashraf Al Bayyoumi, a leading figure in the Egyptian Popular Committee for Support of the Palestinian Intifada.

“In the beginning, the idea was for the demonstration to be held at Cairo University,” said a socialist activist who prefers to remain anonymous. “But the mood among the students is not yet as militant as in April.”

“The April demonstrations took them by surprise,” said Hisham Kassem, the president of the Egyptian Organization of Human Rights and a long-time observer of the political scene. “Now security knows how to deal with this.” He doubted that the demonstrations would be allowed to get any bigger than the small ones held so far.

That could all change, however, if the United States attacks Iraq.

“Egyptians feel that the United States wants to strike against many Islamic countries,” said Yasser Khalil, an Egyptian journalist who took part in the September rally. Another activist, Omar Kamel, emphasized that while no one particularly liked Saddam Hussein, “everyone’s against strikes on Iraq.” He pointed out that Israel was actually violating many more U.N. resolutions than Iraq and that the United States was turning a blind eye.

“Look, no one has any illusions about Saddam, even those people who chant for Baghdad — he is not the Arab Bismarck,” said the socialist activist. “But for us, Bush is the greater evil.”

At least publicly, the Egyptian government shares opposition to the war on Iraq, President Hosni Mubarak has warned against attacking Iraq. His autocratic 21-year rule has been propped up by nearly $1 billion a year in U.S. aid, however, making it highly unlikely that Mubarak would actually do anything to oppose Washington.

Public rallies remain something with which the regime is profoundly uncomfortable.

In the April demonstrations and again in September, the slogans about Palestine soon segued into ones about the regime. Many called on it to take a more active role (supply the Palestinians with arms, break off diplomatic ties with Israel); others proclaimed more general criticism (no War in Iraq). The mixture of rage against the West and support for the Arab cause was a usual phenomenon in Arab politics.

At the end of the Sept. 28 demonstration, one leader told the crowd to expect many more demonstrations. Since then there have been more such events, but security has quickly suppressed them unless they are held inside protected places like mosques and universities. That may change if the bombs start falling on Baghdad and the regime may feel it has to allow people on the streets.

“If you manage to get 100,000 people in the streets of Cairo, this means the end of the regime,” said the socialist activist, repeating an oft-cited maxim that some seem to feel it has to allow people on the streets.

One year ago, Berkeley was the first city council to call for an end to the bombing of Afghanistan. Now is this the first time that local governments have proven more active than their national counterparts. One year ago, Berkeley was the first city council to call for an end to the bombing of Afghanistan.

NYU TOTAL REQUEST: YO, NO WAR!

On Oct. 10, eight New York University students crashed the stage of MTVs Total Request Live to protest the war on Iraq. The students, posing as MTV fans, disrupted the show in two separate groups, removing their sweatshirts to reveal t-shirts stenciled with the words “No War in Iraq.” They shouted, “We have an urgent announcement. We have to tell Congress to stop the war. We’re standing with people around the world against the war,” before being whisked away by MTV security.

The second group did not make it on air but student Agatha Koprowski was heard saying “Not in our name will you kill more people in an unjust war.”

Reportedly, Limp Bizkit’s Fred Durst scolded at the students as they were removed from the set. Luís Múñoz-Maríquez, who was in the first group of students to get on screen, said, “We used creative spectacle and forced coverage of a message which is deliberately ignored by mainstream media and corporate television.”

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS GO IT ALONE

While President Bush and Congress have given their stamp of approval on a war in Iraq, local politics are providing an “official” voice of dissent. In early October, Ithaca’s Common Council (city council) voted unanimously on an anti-war statement urging Senators Hillary Clinton and Charles Schumer to vote against the war legislation in Congress (to no avail). According to the Ithaca IMC website (www.ithaca.indymedia.org), the Common Council was besieged by calls, emails and petitions by their constituents. Santa Cruz has also passed an anti-war resolution, with both the City Council and the Board of Supervisors weighing in.

WAR THIS WINTER, PLEASE COME

Seattle resident Matthew Baldwin knows what key element Bush is missing in his attempt to sell the war on Iraq: invitations.

Baldwin has created an online “e-vite” (http://www.defectiveyeti.com/iraqevite/) that’s addressed to all world leaders, inviting them to join the war and to RSVP ahead of time, so the U.S. knows how much pizza to order. The e-vite is signed “George” with a note to call “Dick” in his undisclosed secure location for directions to Iraq. (There’s even a link to a map of Iraq.)

So far, most “countries” have weighed in with a “no,” including Argentina (“Busy coming apart at the seams, maybe next year”). Currently, Great Britain is the only “yes.”
U.N. BESIEGED
WHY IS THE U.S. PUSHING FOR DEADLOCK ON IRAQ?

BY DONALD PANETH

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y. — The United Nations is a tense outpost this fall on the border between peace and war. An arc of contention extends from the Mediterranean to the south Pacific — Israel-Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan, Indonesia and the Philippines.

President George W. Bush has challenged the U.N. Security Council to enforce its resolutions against Iraq in relation to arms inspections and disarmament.

Bush has also demanded that the Council pass a strong new resolution — an ultimatum with deadlines that gives inspectors, accompanied by troops, far greater access to Iraq than previously allowed, and threatens military action if Iraq does not comply.

Igor S. Ivanov, Russia’s foreign minister, said that the proposed U.S. resolution “can’t be taken seriously.” Arab delegates said that it was “an attempt to make war rather than peace.”

Bush has been blunt. He warned as early as Sept. 7 that the United Nations risked becoming an “ineffective debating society” if the Council failed to act.

“It’s time for them to determine,” he said, “whether they’ll be the United Nations or the League of Nations,” a reference to the post-World War I international body which the United States never joined and which collapsed in non-response to a series of crises during the 1930s.

As the United Nations attempts to thread its way through the Iraqi crisis, the issue is complicated by the legacy of duplicity and strong-arm tactics in U.N. votes.

With the United States pushing for a resolution on Iraq, Arab nations point out the double standard on enforcing resolutions critical of Israel, which in many ways is more disdainful of U.N. authority than Iraq (see box). There is a growing sentiment that the United States seeks to act against Iraq but shield Israel.

Similar double dealing was displayed by the United States during the Iraq-Iran War of 1980-88. At that time, the United States supported Iraq, using it as a proxy to attack Iran. The United States is strongly opposed to their actions.

So I read.

This situation is keeping me awake nights. The U.S. ship of state sails on.

And I come back to the 1923 comic masterpiece, The Confessions of Zeno, by Italian novelist Italo Svevo. In the last paragraph of The Confessions, Svevo writes, “When all the poison gases are exhausted... There will be a tremendous explosion … and the earth will return to its original state and go wandering through the sky... free at last from parasites and disease.”

TALLY OF TERROR: IRAQ VS. ISRAEL

IRAQ

U.N. Resolutions violated, ignored: 16
Countries attacked, invaded, violated: Iran, Kuwait
Countries occupied for years: None
Countries currently occupying: None
Territory illegally annexed: None
Wars started: 1980, 1990
Possesses weapons of mass destruction: To be determined
Possesses nuclear weapons: No

Most notable atrocity against civilians: 5,000 Kurdish civilians killed with chemical weapons in the village of Halabja in March 1988, when American forces were torturing in front of their parents.
Currenty under a regime of U.N. sanctions: Yes

ISRAEL

U.N. Resolutions violated, ignored: 68
Countries attacked, invaded, violated: Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Tunisia, Palestine
Countries occupied for years: Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine
Countries currently occupying: Palestine
Territory illegally annexed: Golan Heights (Syria), East Jerusalem (Palestine)
Wars started: 1956, 1967, 1982
Possesses weapons of mass destruction: Yes
Possesses nuclear weapons: Yes (up to 200 warheads)
Most notable atrocity against civilians: 17,500 Lebanese civilians killed in 1982 invasion of Lebanon
Currenty under a regime of U.N. sanctions: No

FROM THE HOME OFFICE IN CRAWFORD, TEXAS...

TOP TEN REASONS

Bush & Company
Want To Invade Iraq


9) We all want war, don’t we? “Our country and our Congress are now united in purpose. America is speaking with one voice: Iraq must disarm and comply with all existing U.N. resolutions, or it will be forced to comply.” George W. Bush, Reuters Newswire, Oct. 12, 2002.

6) We did so well in Afghanistan, why not try another country? “The lives of Iraqi citizens would improve dramatically if Saddam Hussein were no longer in power, just as the lives of Afghanistan’s citizens improved after the Taliban.” Bush, Speech to the Nation, Oct. 7, 2002.

The U.S. ship of state sails on.

I think the U.S. is determined to attack Iraq, that nothing can stop it.

I don’t think that U.N. inspectors will ever return to Iraq. The United States is strongly opposed to their return, and off-stage, is working diplomatically against it.

This situation is keeping me awake nights.

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— Emily Reinhardt

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PAGE 16 THE INDEPENDENT NOVEMBER 2002
The war in Afghanistan has largely faded from the public eye. That is in part due to the Bush Administration and media’s obsession with Iraq. However, as well as the relative death of images from the conflict.

If the first Gulf War was defined by the image of a supersonic missile plunging into a building, the war in Afghanistan brought few comparable pictures. What happened during the actual war — how many civilians died, the question of war crimes by U.S. and Northern Alliance troops and even if the war ever really ended — is virtually absent in the mainstream media.

ON THE GROUND IN AFGHANISTAN

Regarding the number of dead civilians, The New York Times stated on Oct. 13, “Estimates by journalists put the figure at 400 to 1,500.”

Yet a comprehensive tally compiled by Marc Herold puts the minimum number of civilian deaths in Afghanistan at 3,215 — as opposed to 2,819 killed in the Sept. 11 attacks.

Herold, a professor of economics at the University of New Hampshire, is blunt: the thousands of Afghan dead stem from “the apparent willingness of U.S. military strategists to fire missiles … into heavily populated areas of Afghanistan.” He goes on to argue that “actions speak louder than words [and] cover up: the hollowness of pious pronouncements by Rumsfeld, Rice and the compliant corporate media about the great care to minimize collateral damage is clear for all to see.”

Sifting through “A Dossier on Civilian Victims of United States Aerial Bombing” it becomes clear that Herold is conservative both in his methodology and conclusions. Most of his sources come from the Western media, like the BBC, Reuters, AP, The Independent, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, New York Times, the regional press — mostly the Indian and Pakistani press, as these are the areas that are generally well regarded — and occasionally from the Taliban’s former press agency.

But Herold’s analysis is either ignored — hence the Times’ “estimates by journalists” — or his sources criticized.

Ian Murray, a researcher with Tech Central Station, www.techcentralstation.com, claims Herold’s study is the victim of Taliban propaganda, a reliance on “non-Western” media sources like Pakistani and Indian papers, double counting and simple inaccuracy.

A “review of [Herold’s] data,” argues Murray, “suggests that … only 1,100 civilians were killed.”

Herold states in response: “A weakness of the [original] study — since corrected — was some double counting due to confined site names. The database has been continually updated, corrected and now incorporates civilian deaths resulting from British and U.S. special forces attacks.”

And, contends Herold, solely relying on Western media outlets is a problem and it strengthens “a pernicious view in the United States that the truth can only come from a Euro-American lens.”

Unlike the other studies, by Reuters, AP, The New York Times and Global Exchange, Herold’s database includes raw data and does not rely on statistical sampling.

The question of war crimes committed by the United States and its proxy allies against enemy combatants has been largely ignored.

Most of the attacks, available in hundreds of pages of charts at cursor.org, don’t even list a casualty total. Of the ones that do list death tolls, many of the numbers are in brackets. Herold writes that the accounts may be suspect or the killed may have been military casualties, so he doesn’t include the brackets’ numbers in his total.

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WAR PROFITEERS
Who stands to profit from a war with Iraq? The Bush administration and its friends, of course. After the first Iraq war, Vice President Dick Cheney’s ex-employer, Halliburton, made almost $24 million rebuilding Iraqi oil fields. Having recently received a $9 million contract — which could be expanded to $300 million — from Cheney chum Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to build more prison cells at the Guantnamo Bay naval base, Halliburton is in the best position to clean up the mess left from military action in Iraq.

Not to be left out of the war spoils is the Carlyle Group, a Washington-based venture capital consortium stocked with government all-stars, including George Bush I. According to a Sept. 29th report in the U.K. Observer, the British government plans to sell its top weapons defense lab to the firm, now headed by Frank Carlucci, a Reagan-era defense secretary and CIA deputy director. The program, called GinetG, produces top-secret weapons hardware such as plastic tanks that can evade radar detection and low-cost mini spy satellites for use by the army and private companies.

NORTH KOREAN NUKE’S: BUSH SAYS NO BIG DEAL
The White House’s muted response to North Korea’s surprise announcement of an active nuclear weapons program has lead some to question the sincerity of the administration’s reasoning for rushing to war with Iraq. North Korea told U.S. diplomats on Oct. 4 that it has had a bomb program in operation since the early 1990s. A CIA report added that North Korea likely has enough plutonium to assemble two nuclear devices immediately, if it has not already done so. In Iraq, unverified allegations of weapons lead the list of reasons for war, perhaps within the next few months. However, with Korea, whose 1.7 million-man army and array of missiles and attack craft make it much stronger than Iraq, the White House is “avoiding a crisis atmosphere,” according to a senior U.S. official quoted in the New York Times.

Further questions were raised when it was revealed that Pakistan, a close U.S. ally in the war on terror, was the chief supplier of technology for the North Korean bomb program. A CIA report released last week revealed that Pakistan, a close U.S. ally in the war on terror, was the chief supplier of technology for the North Korean bomb program, even after Sept. 11.

INS EXPANDS FINGER-PRINTING OF MUSLIM IMMIGRANTS

The Justice Department recently expanded INS “registration” of Muslim men from age 16 to 45 to include fingerprinting. This new “axis of evil” includes Afghanistan, Cuba, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Malaysia, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen, plus Cuba and North Korea. Visitors from these countries are interviewed, photographed and fingerprinted on arrival to the United States. Anyone staying over a month is required to report any changes in his job, address or school. The INS warns that “registered” visitors who don’t report will be “subject to removal from the United States.”

The Saudi government is considering returning the favor. The U.S. embassy recently warned that Saudi Arabia may begin fingerprinting all U.S. visitors and shorten visas for U.S. tourists.

“I’VE BEEN TO BALI TOO”
AUSSIE REFLECTS ON TERRORIST ATTACK IN TROPICAL PARADISE
BY LISA FARRELL
There’s a well-known Redgum song in Australia titled “I’ve Been to Bali too.” “Wired home for money, short of cash: A dose of Bali belly and a tropical rash; Daddy came through — American express; Bali t-shirts magic mush-rooms Redgum bootlegs, I’ve been to Bali too” go the lyrics.

Bali has a special place in the hearts of many Australians. Two-week holidays are cheaper there for most Australians than traveling interstate — and the shopping! Well, those locals really know how to please us Aussies. Bali epitomises the global consumerist culture. A tiny island in the Indonesian archipelago, its entire social fabric has been altered by Western tourism. The handicraft sector is now completely tourist-oriented, as is about 80 percent of employment on the island.

How do I know all this? Because I’ve been to Bali too — three times in fact — the first time as a very naive, very white, middle-class, Australian 14-year-old.

Australia is shocked by the events of the last 24 hours. Why us? Our dear footbalthirsts! The horror of it!

We’re being plied with images of “our own” running down the streets, blood pouring down faces, skin peeling off bodies.

Yes, it’s horrid. But so was the drowning of 353 refugees off the coast of Australia one year ago, while our government sat by and watched. Not only watched, but blamed those trying to save their children for “throwing them overboard.”

This time, however, our government has jumped to the defence of innocents. Our Prime Minister, John- munchkin-Howard has promised “all of the resources of the Air Force will be available for this task,” of bringing the injured back to Australia for treatment.

How blatant is our government’s treatment of some lives as more important than others? Forbes Rugby Club President Mr. McKinnon explained today how important it was to get injured Australians home, because “he wouldn’t admit his dog to the hospital he was treated in.”

The most worrying thing about these events, though, is our government’s ability to use them to distort facts, and to justify its slavish support for the U.S.-led “war on terror.”

Already, Howard is talking of a national review of security measures against terrorism. There are constant reminders that this, or something like it, could happen to any of us, anywhere, any time. If only some of us could remember that this has been the most of the world’s population under imperialism for over a century.

In practice, this means the tightening of immigration border controls and even harsher treatment for refugees (who have become one of the Australian targets of the “war on terror”), a bolstering of the proposed terror laws in Australia, and most importantly, a huge push for the war in the Gulf.

As demonstrated by 40,000 on the streets of Melbourne today, however, not all Australians back this war. Amid the current hysteria, Indonesian national police chief General Da’i Bachtiar is even claiming that “this is the worst act of terror in Indonesia’s history.”

We have such short memories. It was only a few decades ago that the Indonesian government, enthusiastically cheered on by Australia, the U.S. and Western Europe, massacred up to a million people as part of the coup that installed the hated Suharto regime.

Sorry — not just cheered, but advised, armed and even directed. Because every Western corporation and government wanted a piece of the Indonesian pie — a large, poor population that could supply a plant working class for their global sweatshops.

Indonesian president Megawati Sukarnoputri said today that at least 182 people have been killed in the car bombing, and 132 others injured.

This is clearly a significant loss of life, but the Australian government and media will be turning this tragic event into a propaganda war — especially if any footballers lose their lives, because we Aussies “love our football.”

When I was last in Bali, just after the Asian economic crisis of 1997, the holiday island had changed significantly. The desperation of small handicraft sellers was apparent. Our dollar literally increased five-fold against theirs within months. The locals were prevented from accessing foreign exchange to prevent a run on rupiah. As a tourist, I didn’t even have to exchange my money, because an Australian dollar was worth more to them than any rupiah.

I remember talking to a 16-year-old Indonesian from Jakarta. He was one of the many traveling to and from Bali to find stores selling the wares of factories based elsewhere in the Archipelagos. We talked about the Sari Hotel and why it was that he wasn’t let into the club, even though age limits were not enforced on the island.

I explained that the doorman did not let in any locals, and that this appeared to be especially so after the economic crisis. He did not believe me, because it was beyond his comprehension that locals couldn’t mix with tourists. He could not understand why people could travel to another country and not want to know the “locals.” To be quite honest, neither could I. And it’s the last time I could stomach being a tourist in Bali.

The Sari nightclub was not simply a random target. It may be a hated symbol of Western imperialism for many. Every year, thousands travel to the island, stay in their Western Hotels, visit their Western nightclubs, flaunt their money and feel like royalty for two weeks, then travel home to a country which supports the repressive regimes of the world, like their very own in Indonesia.

As the Sex Pistols put it, it’s “a cheap holiday in other people’s misery.”

That’s not to say I support what happened last night. But let’s be clear. As long as our governments continue to wage war on the world’s poor and working class — whether through economic, diplomatic or military means — our government will develop enemies, enemies which unfortunately mistake us for our governments.
HOLLYWOOD: WAR IS FUN!

BY CHRIS FLEISHER

Francois Truffaut once suggested that anti-war movies do not exist. All war movies, he claimed, make combat look fun.

The limb-ripping frenzy that seems to thread through every war movie since Braveheart makes a strong opposition argument to Truffaut, but few of today’s directors could convincingly argue that they’ve done anything to tarnish the gleam of war.

When Black Hawk Down was released in mid-January, it opened to rave reviews. The movie depicted Americans losing a battle to Somalia, a Third World nation, and was described as “a triumph of pure filmmaking” (L.A. Times), “a war film of prodigious power” (Rolling Stone), and “truthful” (The New Yorker).

Anti-war film? Hardly. The Americans may have been the giant invading a foreign land but not for 143 minutes director Ridley Scott intended to take us into the horror of war and honor the Americans that engaged in it.

We watch an idealistic Josh Harnett “come of age,” a battered Tom Sizemore counsel the younger troops under duress, and a dead helicopter pilot paraded through the streets by Somali “savages.” We are expected to understand what’s happening here on every emotional level, walk away with respect for the soldiers without acknowledging why they were fighting.

We Were Soldiers is the most amnesiac of all. The movie depicts the most politically-charged war in American history, Vietnam. But again, Hollywood fears politics and welcomes the drama of the soldier’s story. “I wonder what Custer was thinking,” Lt. Col. Hal Moore (Mel Gibson) says, “when he realized he’d moved his men into slaughter.” Sgt. Major Plumey (Sam Elliot) replies, “Sir, Custer was a pussy. You’re no pussy.” Very insightful, Sgt. Major…now let’s wax those Commie bastards.

Of course, the Commie bastards are not actually waxed and, as we know, the Americans go on to lose the war. But Mel is still a hero, just as he was when he died in Braveheart. Also, like Tom Hanks in Saving Private Ryan, the Rangers in Black Hawk Down, Meg Ryan in Courage Under Fire, or even Russell Crowe in Gladiator, the hero doesn’t see the triumphal end.

Tragic heroes are very in-vogue. Given the critical success of movies such as Braveheart, Saving Private Ryan and Black Hawk Down, critics are not bothered by, and, in fact, seem to welcome the unflawed tragic hero. Out with ambiguity, we want to believe in somebody and honor them as martyrs.

Behind Enemy Lines, the first war movie to be released post-Sept. 11, evokes another formula we’re used to in Hollywood: winner-takes-all. Capitalizing on the patriotic fervor, Lines raked in $18.736 million on its first weekend, with its Top Gun-influenced reckless heroes and incompetent villains.

“What with its hip-hip-hooray tone and pumped-up patriotic volume,” wrote Kenneth Turan of the L.A. Times, “Behind Enemy Lines may prove particularly suited to these increasingly bellicose times.”

Though Turan criticized the movie’s jingoism (calling it “a film that might as well be called ‘Top Gun Goes to Bosnia’”) he and other critics seemed more annoyed with the film’s conventional story rather than the unchecked patriotic fervor.

“The movie recycles the old bowler,” Roger Ebert wrote of Behind Enemy Lines, “where hundreds of rounds of ammo miss the hero, but all he has to do is aim and fire, and — pow! another bad guy jerks back, dead.”

C’mon villains, nail him! Gone are the days when we declared a war on a political ideology. Today, we declare war on the emotional state of “terror,” decrying the violence that ensues while honoring the tragic heroes who emerge from the fire.

This is not to say that all recent war movies adhere to this formula. Three Kings is a notable exception, and is, perhaps, the only true anti-war film made in the last fifteen years. Though well received by critics, most preferred to concentrate on the film’s “frenetic visual style” (L.A. Times) and the “grainy, washed-out colour scheme that perfectly complements its milieu” (Urban Cinefile) rather than the political questions it raised. How could it have raised any questions? The heroes don’t endure halls of gunfire or drown gurgling their own blood.

Sylvester Stallone recently proposed a new Rambo project to begin shooting next year. Our 1980s antidote to Vietnam will once again throw himself into the fray for U.S. interests, but what will be his cause? Given Hollywood’s apolitical tendencies, cause is irrelevant, so long as the opposition doesn’t speak and our hero dies fighting for God and country.

FORWARD COMMAND

Playhouse

Barbie goes commando!

Shell-eaten walls, rounds of ammo, miniature rifles, semi-automatic weapons and bazookas… the dollhouse has gone through some major remodeling for this season. This toy, Forward Command Post, was available at JC Penny’s, KB Toys and E-Toys on-line catalogs, but has been removed from all three after press coverage questioned the tastefulness of the toy. The house is still available for purchase at $44.99, not assembled, for children 5 and up. Malibu Stacy’s Desert Foxhole is still on the drawing boards.

Here is what J.C. Penney’s says about this product:
Forward Command Post
Take command of your soldiers from this fully-outfitted battlezone. 75-piece set includes one 11½”-H figure in military combat gear, toy weapons, American flag, chairs and more. Assembled dimensions: 32x16x32”H. Plastic. 10 lbs. Ages 5 and up. $44.99
¡NO A LA GUERRA!

Alfredo Garzón

Mientras el gobierno de Estados Unidos se prepara para atacar Iraq, crece la oposición a los planes bélicos. El 6 de octubre se produjo en Central Park la mayor movilización contra la guerra. Participaron más de veinte mil personas, entre ellos latinos de Washington Heights, del Barrio, de Brooklyn. En Washington, aunque el Senado y el Congreso apoyaron los planes de Bush, los dos congresistas hispanos de Nueva York, Nydia Velázquez y José Serrano, votaron por el No. A sus oficinas, como a la de otros congresistas y senadores llegaron miles de cartas repudiando la guerra. En una encuesta del diario Hoy, el 62.7 por ciento de los participantes votaron en contra de la guerra. A quiénes favorece esta guerra? A la industria armamentista, a las grandes corporaciones, las petroleras en especial, y a sus representantes dentro de la administración Bush. Esta es una guerra planeada por hombres ricos, para llevarla a cabo con soldados de origen humilde, y que si se concoces, causará la muerte de muchos inocentes.

Bush cambió varias veces de canal cuando de Iraq se trata. Dijo que era preciso invadirlo por sus conexiones con Osama bin Laden, aunque la CIA reitera que no hay evidencias que lo prueben. En cambio, ha documentado los contactos con Al-Qaida de petroleros sauditas y servicios paquistaníes sin que a nadie en la Casa Blanca se le ocurriera bombardear Karachi o Riyadh. Y luego: que Bagdad posee armas químicas de destrucción masiva, aunque inspectores que integraron la misión de Naciones Unidas que abandonó Iraq en 1998 señalan una y otra vez que ese arsenal fue destruido casi por completo. O que Saddam está a punto de conseguir bombas nucleares, aunque el organismo de energía atómica de la ONU desechó tal posibilidad. El cambio de canal más importante, sin embargo, se produjo en menos de un año: Bush hijo le quitó a Bin Laden la antorcha de Enemigo Público Número Uno y se la pasó al autócrata iraquí.

Recuerda un viejo cartel del Oeste que decía ‘Buscado: vivo o muerto’. Se refería, claro, a Osama. Pero el milenario saudita no sólo ha desaparecido de Afganistán, sino de toda el área del Mediterráneo. Y en su lugar instalaremos a un dictador pro-occidental. Pronto nos lo sacaremos de encima. Y en su lugar instalaremos a un dictador pro-occidental, lo que será bueno para nosotros y para ustedes”, decía Ruslan Arbatov, secretario de Defensa de Rusia. Putin teme que la caída de Hussein provoque la anulación de contratos tan jugosos. Imagina -sin razón- que la voracidad estadounidense de energéticos marginará a Rusia en el control del oro negro iraquí.

Llama la atención que, en el plano político, la Casa Blanca no dé al parecer muestras de diseñar planes sucesorios. La semana pasada, el secretario de Defensa Donald Rumsfeld no vaciló en responder al periodista que le preguntaba si podía garantizar que el próximo gobierno de Iraq sería mejor que el de Hussein: “No hay muchas garantías en la vida”. Pero Tom Lantos, representante demócrata de California, confió a Colette Avital, del Partido Laborista de Israel, que visitaba el Capitolio: “Ustedes (los israelíes) no tendrán ningún problema con Saddam. Pronto nos lo sacaremos de encima. Y en su lugar instalaremos a un dictador pro-occidental, lo que será bueno para nosotros y para ustedes”; registra el diario israelí Haaretz en su edición del 1º de octubre. Avital preguntó a Lantos cómo se podría hablar de entronizar a un dictador en Iraq y al mismo tiempo exigir “reformas democráticas” en los territorios palestinos como condición previa a la reanudación del proceso de paz. Se puede, se puede.

Zapping

Juan Gelman

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