

EIR Feature

The terrible cost of George Bush's Persian Gulf war

by Webster G. Tarpley

As a result of the policies of Margaret Thatcher, George Bush, and Ariel Sharon, the world is now on the verge of war in the Persian Gulf. This war could now come at any time through an Anglo-American and/or Israeli attack against Iraq. Minimally, reliable U.S. military sources say, the U.S. forces will suffer 60-70,000 casualties, of which about 25% will die; while Iraq's casualties, civilian and military, would reach at least 300-500,000. The war in question would affect the populations of the Arab world, the Indian subcontinent, Africa, and Ibero-America, where the indirect death toll could be in the hundreds of millions as the result of a new oil crisis. In the advanced sector, the war would bring an economic depression far more devastating than that of the 1930s.

Such a war could rapidly expand to become World War III, understood as a series of three to four regional conflicts, each of which will be equal to, or greater than, the European or Pacific theaters of World War II, even without considering the nuclear weapons that may be used in each case. Waiting at the end of such worldwide escalation is a full thermonuclear confrontation between the Anglo-American coalition and the Soviet Union.

In terms of economic effects, the Gulf war will lead to the destruction of 20-25% of the world's total oil production, and will bring the price of oil to \$100 a barrel at the minimum. The Third World's oil will be cut. This will generate an utter breakdown of the world economy and a vertical collapse of remaining world trade. The Gulf war will represent the end of world civilization as we have known it over the last four decades.

The following facts about the human and material costs of such a war have been compiled by an *EIR* research team from a variety of expert military and other sources. While we cannot assert the definitive accuracy of each detail, the overall picture so devastatingly refutes the lies and illusions of the warmongers, that we offer this fact sheet in the hope of galvanizing opposition in the form of a movement for peace, national sovereignty, and world economic development.



Soldiers of the U.S. 101st Airborne Division load ammunition on an AH-64 Apache helicopter in Saudi Arabia. The Apache, which would be a centerpiece of U.S. attacks on Iraqi armor, must fly close to the ground in order to be effective. Because of desert sandstorms, some military experts say these helicopters require 24 hours of maintenance for every hour of flying—even before combat begins.

U.S. Army

A world war

The Gulf war begins with an attacking coalition composed of the military assault and support forces of the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, France, Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and other countries up to a theoretical total of 26. The target of this coalition is Iraq. In the early stages of war, an Israeli attack on Jordan will bring that country into the war on the side of Iraq. Slightly later, Iran is very likely to enter the war on the side of Iraq, either as a full belligerent or as a friendly neutral sending in volunteers (as Red China claimed to be in the Korean conflict). An Iran-Iraq alliance was predicted by the Red Army commander Marshal Mikhail Moiseyev; Edward Luttwak has told the U.S. Congress of special units of Iranian Revolutionary Guards who are training to attack Anglo-American forces if the latter approach the "Yalu River" of the Iran-Iraq border.

Anglo-American violations of Iranian airspace and territorial waters under war conditions make such Iranian entry into the war more likely. Destruction by the Anglo-Americans of the Karabala shrine in Iraq, the premier holy place for Shi'ite Muslims, would lead to a *jihād* by all Shi'ites against the Anglo-Americans, in which Iran would necessarily assume the leading role.

It is plausible that the Gulf war will begin through an Israeli preemptive attack on Jordan and Iraq, perhaps not respecting the Jan. 15 United Nations timetable. This Israeli action would be a part of the Sharon Plan, of Israeli Housing

Minister Gen. Ariel Sharon, which foresees the forcible expulsion and deportation of 1.6 million Arabs resident in Israel and the occupied territories, and their dumping onto the territory of Jordan. A high percentage of the Palestinian Arabs would be killed in this process.

In the event of an Anglo-American attack on Iraq, an Iraqi retaliatory attack on Israel would become a political as well as military necessity. The entry of Israel into the war, in addition to the Anglo-American or Israeli first use of nuclear weapons, would guarantee that the Anglo-American coalition would break apart, including through the effects of internal political upheavals, coups d'état and revolutions among the Arab and Islamic coalition members. This will lead to possible multiple shifting alliances: A pan-Arab military coup against the Alawite regime of Syrian President Hafez al-Assad would take Syria out of the Anglo-American coalition and into pro-Iraqi neutrality, or perhaps into war with Israel in order to regain the Syrian Golan Heights. Revolutions in Egypt and Turkey could rapidly follow. The vast majority of the 200 million Arabs in today's world, and the majority of 1 billion Muslims, would support Iraq against Anglo-American nuclear aggression, with the obvious implications for governments in these nations.

The irrevocable commitment of the bulk of Anglo-American and NATO forces to war in the Gulf will make their employment on the Indian subcontinent, the Balkans, and the Far East no longer possible. The removal of these forces from the regional equations centering on Pakistan, Yugosla-

via, and Korea-Taiwan will have the following impact:

- *An Indo-Pakistani war could break out, involving nuclear weapons.* India and Pakistan have been on the verge of war for most of 1990, and have exchanged threats of nuclear attack. The Afghan Mujaheddin are allied with the Pakistani regime, and the Afghan government with India. The Anglo-Americans and China will side with Pakistan, while the Soviets will be unable to ignore India, perhaps their last foreign ally. A war on the Indian subcontinent means that almost 1 billion people will be at war.

- *A Balkan war would carry the potential to become a general war in Europe.* The commitment of Anglo-American-NATO forces, including those of Italy, to the Gulf will be seen as a golden opportunity for Serbia to reassert domination over the other component republics of the Yugoslav Federation. Albania will side with Kosovo, while Bulgaria will assert its claim to Macedonia. Croatia and Slovenia will seek to secede. Hungary and other contiguous states could easily be drawn into such a conflagration.

- *In the Far East, the weakening of U.S. support for the Republic of Korea and the Republic of China makes these states into possible objects of attack by North Korea and mainland China, respectively.* The 30,000 U.S. troops in South Korea could only be defended by the massive use of nuclear weapons. P.R.C. strongman Deng Xiaoping has announced an acceleration of his timetable for the conquest of Taiwan.

Ultimately, each of these regional conflicts—the Persian Gulf, the Indian subcontinent, the Balkans, and the Far East—leads toward a U.S.-U.K. thermonuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union. Since the imposition of the economic blockade against Iraq, the Anglo-Americans have also imposed on the Soviet Union a virtually total grain embargo. President Mikhail Gorbachov has warned outside powers against intervening on the side of component union republics of the Soviet Union. Although weakened in land offensive capabilities, the Soviets have continued to expand their absolute ICBM superiority with SS-24, SS-25, and modernized SS-18 missiles, and submarine-launched ballistic missiles and submarines. Soviet support for U.N. Security Council Resolution 678 for military action against Iraq appears motivated in part by willingness to let the Anglo-Americans be decimated through their offensive operations in the Gulf, weakening them for any subsequent conflict with the Red Army.

The potential for strategic miscalculation in all phases of the looming conflict is magnified by the psychological instability of President Bush and the Anglo-American leadership. Bush is gripped by a war psychosis related to his personal psychological disintegration under the pressure of economic breakdown crisis and military confrontation. Because of this mental impairment, Bush now fulfills the classification of inability to discharge the powers and duties of his office under the terms of the 25th Amendment to the U.S. Constitu-

tion. Under the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reform Act, Bush's only professional military advice has come from Gen. Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, an ideologue and political careerist.

A nuclear war?

Discussion by *EIR* researchers with several retired U.S. military officers has turned upon the following startling hypothesis: that a Gulf war may rapidly go nuclear.

The war plan under which Operation Desert Shield is being conducted, these sources contend, goes back to the Carter Doctrine of 1979 and was designed to counter a Soviet thrust into the Persian Gulf through reliance on neutron bombs. Neutron bombs would have been effective against Soviet tank columns in motion, but may be far less effective against Iraqi fortified positions, since a meter of earth or sand greatly reduces the impact of neutron radiation. Therefore, under the logic of this original plan, the Anglo-Americans would have to rely from the opening of hostilities on tactical nuclear weapons in the 1 kiloton range and up, including nuclear shells for 110 millimeter howitzers. Despite the obvious destructive power of these battlefield nuclear weapons, their impact should not be exaggerated. Since nuclear detonations do not generate overpressure outside of ground zero, a simple covered trench in the sand provides substantial protection against everything except a direct hit. In addition, sand does not transmit shock waves as well as the loam or clay

LaRouche: Why we must support Iraq

Lyndon LaRouche issued the following commentary on Dec. 2, in response to an influential figure in Europe who favors military action against Iraq.

To put the matter as briefly as possible, we ought to consider ourselves engaged in a war against Bertrand Russell and his kind for the soul of humanity as a whole. That means that we must combat the New Age current, which desires to establish a modern global version of a paganist *Pax Romana*, whether that be Anglo-American, Muscovite, or other.

To conduct this war successfully, we must define war in the way I have defined it in comments upon Prof. F.A. von der Heydte's *Modern Irregular Warfare*, and in other relevant locations, as essentially cultural warfare. From that standpoint, because Iraq—and precisely because Iraq—is at present adopted as a chief impeded

soils of the temperate zone.

Another reason for the temptation to resort to nuclear weapons, these military analysis assert, is that the Iraqi military represents a powerful defensive force of well-organized, well-equipped, and battle-seasoned troops. Iraq now has approximately 450,000 soldiers in Kuwait and southern Iraq, including a first line of fortifications manned by the Iraqi Army and, behind them, a mobile reserve of the elite Republican Guard. In mid-November, it was announced that an additional 250,000 reservists would be called up and sent into this area. Further reserve call-ups could bring the total Iraqi land forces on all fronts to 700,000 to 1 million troops, many of them combat veterans.

The Iraqi Army fought an eight-year war with Iran and suffered some 800,000 casualties. In the opinion of professional military observers, the Iraqi forces have a limited capacity to conduct deep offensive operations (although their seizure of Kuwait was highly efficient), but are masters of the tactical defensive, and did not break or panic at critical moments in that war. Iraqi line units are battle-hardened, experienced in desert fighting, and familiar with all the climatic and environmental stresses of the region. The Iraqi soldier will be fighting to defend his own country, his family, and his property against an imperialist aggressor from the other side of the world. He will be highly motivated, and any battle plan premised on an Iraqi rout will probably prove to be illusory. Roughly 60% of the Iraqi people are Shi'ite

Muslims. Whereas during the Iran-Iraq War this fact created problems of political motivation which had to be overcome, in any contest against non-Muslim forces, and especially the "Great Satan" United States, it will stiffen resistance.

Iraqi forces possess an array of heavy equipment, with a total of 5,800 tanks, 1,500 armored fighting vehicles, 5,000 armored personnel carriers, 150 attack planes, 150 attack helicopters, and two dozen modern Soviet SU-24 bombers equipped with Exocet missiles of the type that destroyed the U.S.S. *Stark* in the Gulf in 1987.

While the U.S. will possess overall air superiority, the Iraqi forces will retain advantages in certain areas.

The Iraqi main battle tank is the T-72, which has numerous points of superiority over the newer U.S. Army Abrams M-1 when it comes to desert warfare, according to retired military officers consulted by *EIR*'s research team. In tank duels, the standard model T-72 fires a shell which will crack the Abrams turret. By contrast, the frontal armor of the T-72 is impervious to the standard M-1 Abrams shell, although this is being redressed through the arrival of M-1A1 tanks from Europe, which are equipped with a 120 mm cannon which does have the capability to destroy the T-72 head on. Otherwise, U.S. Army anti-tank weapons, such as the LAW, the Dragon, the AT-4, and the TOW, will not pierce the frontal armor of the T-72.

Iraq possesses the German-made Roland anti-aircraft system, which is more than the equal of the U.S. Hawk

iment to the establishment of Mr. Bush's Hitlerite, paganist, neo-Roman World Order, it is most undesirable that Iraq be significantly injured in any way.

There is more at stake in this than simply sympathy for the enemy of one's most mortal adversary. It is a *cultural* principle. The virtue of Iraq—and it has many "down" sides—is that Iraq, unlike that miserable collection of oiligarchs, principally oiligarchs of the South, is committed to the idea of transforming the Arab population, and others, but especially the Arab population, by aid of scientific and technological progress.

Such a commitment is not only the enemy of our Bertrand Russellite and kindred adversary, but it is a damned good idea. So therefore, why do we wish to destroy someone who may be an erring fellow, but who is agreed upon a principle which we adopt, to work to the advantage of an absolute lunatic who wishes to set up upon this planet a utopia which the planet and the human race alike would probably not survive?

That must be our overriding consideration.

I realize that under the press of political circumstances, narrower considerations—playing-field types of considerations, such as "how to play the game" as handed

to us—seem to override our perceptions of larger realities. We are so concerned with making a principle of the proper way of playing the game, that we degrade politics to a mere game, and then wonder sometimes why, after winning many battles, we seem to have lost the war. We played the battles each according to the rules of the game, but lost the war. And we did so, because there was a fallacy inherent in playing history according to the childish conception of an infantile game.

What we ought to be concerned about, is *to ruin* that which is about to ruin this planet, i.e., the establishment of some neo-paganist order which destroys the means by which the nuclear family is maintained, for the sake of playing the game according to our self-image, the self-image that we would like to put upon ourselves, from the standpoint of playing according to the rules of the perceived game.

It is not the defeat of an enemy, or the advantage of the enemy of our adversary that concerns us; it is the defeat of that adversary by making sure that we take no steps, if we could do otherwise, which might weaken the standpoint of our practice and strengthen the standpoint of the adversary's practice.



Paratroopers from the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division in Saudi Arabia. The all-volunteer forces of the post-Vietnam era include a large proportion of blacks and Hispanics—not the children of the elites. The fact that recruitment has declined since the Gulf crisis began, says something about the combat motivation of previous recruits.

U.S. Army

system. The Iraqis may in the meantime have succeeded in activating the U.S.-made Hawk batteries they captured when they entered Kuwait. Iraq possesses a formidable array of heavy self-propelled artillery pieces which are probably superior to their U.S. equivalents.

Along the coast of Kuwait and stretching westward along the Iraq-Saudi border, Iraqi military engineers have over recent months constructed an extensive system of fortifications. These fortifications are composed of trenches, bunkers, dugouts, and pillboxes, with dug-in tanks and fortified artillery pieces protected by anti-aircraft and missile batteries. Although they lack steel and concrete underground structures, these works are roughly comparable to the French Maginot Line, or to Finland's Mannerheim Line, which held off the Red Army during the winter of 1939-40. They are constructed in echelons to a depth of about 25 kilometers, and are, in particular, defended by minefields, booby traps, and prepared fields of fire. These fortifications are reported to be well stocked with food, water, ammunition, and other supplies, so that they are able to withstand prolonged siege. These works are vulnerable to nuclear weapons, although a relatively large number of nuclear rounds, bombs, or warheads would have to be expended in order to achieve a breakthrough. Otherwise, military professionals are in agreement that any frontal assault on these fortifications would generate casualty rates similar to those faced by attacking forces on such World War I battlefields as the Chemin des Dames in 1917, where the French suffered 120,000 casualties in two

days. The only alternative is to outflank these fortified lines with a vast turning movement through the desert of western Iraq.

Any amphibious assault against the coast of Kuwait could face the same odds as the British at Gallipoli in World War I, where superior forces supported by gas attacks failed to dislodge a Turkish force entrenched along the Dardanelles. Such an assault could also be compared to Omaha Beach in Normandy, which cost the majority of Eisenhower's 28,366 casualties suffered during the battle, or to the Marine Corps Pacific attacks on fortified Japanese positions at Tarawa, Iwo Jima (about 26,000 casualties), or Okinawa (65,631 casualties).

Rainy season and sandstorms

The Iraqi defensive operations are facilitated by climate and weather, which act as countervailing factors against a U.S. technological superiority that was intended for use in Western Europe. Between December and February, there are frequent rains, occasionally punctuated by sandstorms, which will make movements of massed armor difficult. Military officers with experience in the area say that the January-February period usually contains a couple of days of intense rains which turn everything to mud, with flash floods that will mire any and all equipment. There is also snow mixed in with the very fine desert sand and dust, which coats everything with a frozen mud.

In February and March, this gives way to a period of

sandstorms called in Arabic the "sifter." During this entire period, the sandstorms grind the lenses of optical equipment into a milk-white powder, making them wholly inoperable. The dust sometimes blows 20,000 feet high, and can interfere with planes even at these altitudes. Sandstorms play havoc with electronics, lubrication, etc.

U.S. tank training for the Middle East has been conducted largely in Egypt, where the sand is coarser, and there is less dust. The Arabian Peninsula and Iraq, by contrast, have a fine and dusty sand which readily blows around and permeates everything. In addition to destroying optics and the much-vaunted infrared night vision equipment, the dust can clog filters and can suffocate troops wearing atomic-biological-chemical warfare (ABC) suits. The fiasco of the provocative "Imminent Thunder" exercise, in which an amphibious landing using hovercraft had to be canceled because of high winds and 10-foot waves, is indicative of a lack of competent weather forecasting on the part of the U.S. forces. Many of the Saudi military leaders are also unfamiliar with the weather in the area south of Kuwait, since most of them come from an area several hundred miles to the south.

The Abrams tank gas turbines are reported to require many hours of additional servicing as a result of the dust and sand. The Apache anti-tank helicopter, which would be a centerpiece of U.S. attacks on Iraqi armor, did not perform well during the U.S. invasion of Panama. In order to be effective, this helicopter must fly close to the ground. With desert sandstorms in the offing, the Apache's windshield and gunsight lenses will be subjected to a sand-blasting effect that can seriously reduce effectiveness. Partly because of the sands, these helicopters are now estimated to require 24 hours of maintenance for 1 hour of flying, even before combat begins. Problems related to the sand are thought to have caused a majority of the crashes of U.S. fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters since August.

A hollow army

The U.S. has arrayed approximately nine divisions, 2,000 tanks, six aircraft carrier battle groups, a battleship, and hundreds of combat aircraft in the Persian Gulf. They are joined by some 30,000 Britons, 2,000 Frenchmen, 15,000 Egyptians, 3,000 Syrians, and 65,000 Saudis, plus several smaller contingents, all subject to reinforcement over the coming weeks. At first sight, the advantages in aviation, missiles, nuclear weapons, electronics, and technology of this coalition force would appear to make it invincible. But the effectiveness of this force is also undermined by important disadvantages, which may make the outcome of hostilities less predictable.

At the heart of the matter is the political motivation and outlook of the individual American combat soldier, who is disproportionately likely to be black or Hispanic, with Asian-Americans, and Southern and Appalachian poor whites also heavily represented. The all-volunteer forces of the post-

Vietnam era have recruited to a significant degree by stressing technical training, scholarships, and future job opportunities. For many recruits, military service has appeared as the sole alternative to certain unemployment or marginal dead-end jobs. Before the Gulf crisis, the U.S. Army was able to graduate 700 recruits per week from its basic training program. The fact that recruitment has declined dramatically since the Gulf crisis began says something about the combat motivation of previous recruits.

U.S. troops and staffs are green. The typical soldier has no combat experience and what experience there is pertains to warfare in the jungle, not in the desert. Why should such forces risk their lives to restore the slaveholding Emir of Kuwait to his throne, when the Kuwaiti army ran away on the first day of the invasion, and no serious Kuwaiti forces have materialized since then?

Despite popular myths about a defense buildup during the Reagan years, the U.S. military has been gutted in its logistical depth. To maintain an army in the Arabian Desert on the other side of the world is a logistical nightmare. If the U.S. turned out to be physically unable to defeat Iraq with conventional means, the only way the U.S. could hope to prevail would be to conduct the war with nuclear weapons from the very beginning. The intention of nuclear first use may be one important reason for Bush's fulminating about Iraqi nuclear weapons. Dangerous weaknesses have become evident in the following areas:

Munitions: The U.S. is unable to produce sufficient quantities of artillery shells of the type needed for a desert campaign. Domestic production of many kinds of ammunition no longer exists, and these munitions must be imported from Germany, South Korea, and other countries. Arsenals have been closed for reasons of budget austerity. Domestic production is now concentrated almost exclusively in small arms ammunition, and there is no surge capacity to begin mass production of the types of munitions that would be expended in a protracted war with Iraq. U.S. forces are therefore reduced to cannibalizing the European 90-day munitions reserve and the South Korean 120-day stocks.

More sophisticated munitions such as the laser-guided smart bombs are expensive, so they have been produced in minuscule quantities. Gen. William Odom, the former chief of the Defense Intelligence Agency, asked the Senate Armed Services Committee: "Do we have adequate stocks of bombs for a long and intensive air support campaign? Some observers have advocated a long bombing campaign before initiating ground action. I would like to know if our bomb and air-launched munitions stocks are sufficient for such a campaign. If they are not, such an air offensive could leave the Army ground forces without adequate close air support when they take the offensive. Our assumed advantage in air power could prove illusory." Former Secretary of the Navy James Webb warned the same committee to demand a Pentagon briefing on the "status of ammunition accounts measured against their

probable rates of use.”

Ammunition stocks appear to be so low in the Gulf that many units have been unable to take part in live-fire exercises. Some military planners are approaching panic, and are looking for a quick fix. Such a quick fix does not exist, because the factories and qualified personnel to reinstate such production have been shut down and dispersed. In the meantime, the 1991 Defense Department budget has eliminated all training exercises using live ammunition. In Odom's words, “Our new tanks, artillery, and infantry fighting vehicles will require vast tonnages of daily supplies. It seems to me doubtful that a sufficient buildup of the logistics base can be accomplished in a couple of months. Not only will the standard tonnages have to be increased, but the availability of supplies in the U.S. and Europe may be short.”

Airlift and sealift: The lack of sufficient quantities of freighters and transport aircraft has extended the length of time needed to accomplish the current buildup far beyond the timetables contained in the original war plans. As Odom told Senate Armed Services Committee chairman Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), “The air- and sealift required to put an invasion force in Saudi Arabia is enormous. Yet our lift capacity is embarrassingly small. Throughout August and September, the shortfall meant that our forces were vulnerable to an Iraqi offensive. We can only thank the Iraqis for giving us time to build up. We could have faced a Dunkirk as late as the end of September.” Former Secretary Webb showed concern about capabilities for the evacuation of wounded and the delivery of replacements.

Water: One of the greatest vulnerabilities of the U.S. invasion force is the lack of a secure supply of potable water. U.S. and other forces are said to depend on a desalination plant located at Jubail, a plant built by the Saudis to provide water for a city of 300,000, which is under construction. The plant is a sitting duck, unfortified, with high water towers visible from a great distance. If this plant were to be destroyed, the entire water lifeline for the U.S. forces in the desert could be cut off. Four other smaller desalination plants in the area have no surplus capacity, since their water is needed by the local Saudi civilian population. In addition, delivery of water to the front lines now depends on large water tanks carried by large Chinook helicopters, which must travel relatively slowly while they are carrying out this mission. This water supply line will make an inviting target in case of war.

Clothing: During the winter, temperatures in the Saudi desert can approach the freezing mark, and wind chill factors can bring this down to -20°F . But Pentagon planners do not possess winter coats of the required type for about 200,000 troops. The Pentagon is attempting to have 100,000 sand-colored winter coats manufactured, but the two factories that produce them say that they are unable to procure the fiber materials needed for production. Troops are also forced to wear olive drab clothing, which stands out in the desert.

Medical care: There is great doubt concerning the viability of in-theater medical assets to care for the wounded. A recent ABC News “Nightline” exposé revealed that field hospitals are still using primitive X-ray equipment, manufactured in 1949.

Trained manpower: Even at current levels, the Gulf buildup cannot be sustained in terms of qualified and trained personnel. In Odom's opinion, “replacement personnel for battle casualties are likely to be a problem. Reserves for this campaign will be in short supply. . . . The cuts the Congress plans this year for the Army's end strength can only serve to exacerbate this problem.” According to Webb, over the past 15 years, the Army Individual Ready Reserve and Standby Reserve have fallen from 1.5 million to 280,000, and “about 45% of those present members are unreliable assets.”

Political motivation, leadership, ammunition, supply, water, airlift and sealift, clothing, medical care, and force structure are thus all in doubt.

If the U.S. forces do not wish to court World War I casualty levels with a frontal assault on the prepared Iraqi positions, the only alternative will be an attempt to sweep around the Iraqi left flank far to the west of Kuwait. Doing so will highlight the logistics difficulties of equipment which was designed for the smaller distances and less aversive environment of Western Europe. Supply lines, including water supply lines, will be extended, and their vulnerability will increase. As military observers point out, such an attempted turning movement would encounter stiff resistance from the Iraqi Republican Guard, the mobile reserves positioned behind the lines of fortifications. The result is likely to be the greatest tank battle of world history, exceeding even the Battle of the Kursk salient, in which 2,500 German tanks were opposed by some 3,000 Soviet tanks. The Arab-Israeli wars of 1956, 1967, and 1973 will pale by comparison. A battle on the colossal scale of the Kursk salient would be bigger than the Battle of the Bulge, incomparably bigger than any of Eisenhower and Patton's tank battles on the western front of World War II. U.S. forces have simply never faced a campaign of these dimensions.

Are present-day U.S. staffs competent to execute an operation of this type? Odom suggests that they may not be: “Moving a division or a corps a couple of hundred miles, fighting much of the way, requires experienced staffs and commanders. In this case, most of them will be learning as they go,” because exercises on the required scale have been ruled out by “budget constraints.”

The ‘Bull Run’ factor

The factors summarized so far may be the harbingers of a debacle in the making. The danger of such a debacle will be at its greatest in the initial phases of the war which Bush is committed to unleashing. The Battle of Bull Run in 1861 evokes a syndrome of U.S. military history which has returned many times in many wars: The first attack is apt to

break down with loss. In the Civil War, and in other wars, U.S. troops have been able to recover from such early reverses because of political motivation and morale factors. What are they to fall back on if they find themselves using nuclear weapons in a campaign to restore the degenerate, slave-holding Emir of Kuwait to his feudal throne? Under such circumstances, the cohesion of U.S. forces simply cannot be guaranteed.

A hecatomb

On Sept. 16, then-Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Michael J. Dugan summarized U.S. strategy in an interview with the *New York Times*. He indicated that the centerpiece of U.S. utopian air power strategy will be the massive bombardment of Iraqi civilian population centers and cultural assets. Until two weeks earlier, Dugan stated, U.S. planners were eyeing a list of targets including Iraqi air defenses, airfields, warplanes, missile sites, and related military assets. "That's a nice list of targets," said Dugan, "and I might be able to accept those. But that's not enough." Dugan said that the "cutting edge would be downtown Baghdad. This bombing would not be nibbling at the edges. If I want to hurt you, it would be at home, not out in the woods someplace." Dugan said he had been asking academic consultants about "what is unique about Iraqi culture that they put a very high value on. What is it that would make an impact on the population?" He said that his goal was to identify "centers of gravity where air power could make a difference early on." Dugan was fired not because of his intentions, but because he had made them too public. If the Karabala shrine fulfills the criteria for a cultural asset of great importance, then warfare or irregular warfare on the part of all Shi'ite Muslim populations against the U.S. will be the result.

In the light of these facts, estimated Iraqi casualties among civilians and military personnel start at 500,000 killed and wounded. Nuclear bombardment of civilian population centers would increase these losses astronomically.

For U.S. forces, casualty estimates start at about 70,000 killed, wounded, and missing for a month-long war. Some estimates for the duration of hostilities in a ground assault go from six months to eighteen months.

These estimates can be compared to the following historical bench marks:

- In October 1942, a 200,000-man British and American army under Field Marshal Montgomery engaged and defeated the 100,000 men of the Afrika Korps of Gen. Erwin Rommel. This battle lasted for 12 days, with 31,500 German and 13,500 British and American casualties.

- In the October 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Israeli Army, which had the twin advantages of fortifications at the outset (the Bar-Lev Line) and air superiority, suffered 20,000 casualties. As General Odom points out, "Iraqi forces are larger, possessing more modern equipment . . . and have been battle tested in eight years of war with Iran."

Coalition against Gulf war forms in France

A cross-party anti-war coalition has formed in France against President François Mitterrand's alliance with Anglo-American policy in the Gulf. A group of 30 prominent individuals, ranging from the Communists to the extreme right and including Gaullist and Socialist influentials, signed their names to an advertisement appearing in the press on Dec. 6, demanding "the withdrawal of French troops that were sent to the Gulf," and calling for "the immediate opening, under the aegis of the United Nations, of international negotiations for the global settlement of the problems of the Middle East."

Signers include former Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson, Socialist Party European Parliament member Max Gallo, former presidential adviser Régis Debray, former Foreign Minister Michel Jobert, Communist Party bigwig Charles Fiterman, and New Right ideologue Alain de Benoist.

The fact that the statement was signed by two high Socialist Party figures, Cheysson and Gallo, has created an uproar in France's ruling party. They have been ordered by the Socialist Party to withdraw their signatures or leave the party.

Alain de Benoist, one of the signers, wrote a commentary in *Le Monde* on Dec. 6, denouncing the "hypocrisy of the West." He cites the silence of the West when the United States "massacred the civilian population of Panama" under the phony pretext of a "war on drugs." He also stresses that Iraq's occupation of Kuwait is not the only illegal occupation today: Even aside from Lebanon, what about the British in Northern Ireland, Gibraltar, and the Malvinas?

One key purpose being served in the Gulf, he argues, is to seek a remedy for U.S. economic problems, through war. The Bush administration wants to transform the U.N. into "the embryo of a world government, and at the same time a new source of international legality, and to install a world order which would marginalize the countries of the South, placing the political under the juridical."

But, warns De Benoist in conclusion, "the West will win all the wars, except the last. And if we see one day a third world war, it will see the United States and continental Europe on opposing sides."

According to the London *Times* of Nov. 30, Brig. Gen. Patrick Cordingley of the British Desert Rats expects 15% casualties for his unit in case of a frontal assault on the Iraqi fortifications. The same report puts losses in U.S. combat units as high as 8% per day, which one military expert compared to the losses of Field Marshal Haig's attacking forces on the Somme in World War I.

Thus, the butcher's bill for a Gulf war would start at about 600,000 killed and wounded, and rapidly escalates from there depending on the pattern of events. This refers to Iraq and the United States alone, and the losses of the other belligerents would have to be added to this.

In addition to these losses, it is necessary to recall that 800,000 refugees, the majority of Asian origin, have fled from Iraq and Kuwait. Another 400,000 foreign nationals are displaced persons inside Kuwait and Iraq. In case of war, this figure will be increased by hundreds of thousands of Egyptian workers who have stayed in Iraq. Hundreds of thousands of Yemenis have been expelled from Saudi Arabia in retaliation for Yemen's support of Iraq. To these must be added a large part of the 1.6 million Palestinians whom Sharon intends to deport from Israel and the occupied territories as soon as war begins. If this happens, large parts of the population of Jordan will also be displaced by Israeli military action.

The destruction of the Saudi oil fields

Saudi Arabia's oil fields and pipelines are concentrated in large part in a corridor along the Gulf coast between Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. The refinery at Rastanura produces about 1 million barrels of oil per day. Rastanura and the other refineries represent the jugular of Saudi oil production, and they have accordingly been fortified and are defended from air attack by the Patriot system, the most modern air defense in the U.S. arsenal. U.S. think tanks are now developing absurd scholastic arguments to prove that it is impossible for these oil facilities to be destroyed in war. In reality, it is inevitable that a large portion of Persian Gulf oil production will be destroyed in case of war. Gulf oil wells, pipelines, refineries, and tanker terminals will be destroyed or interdicted in the following ways:

Direct Iraqi military action: In case of war, Iraq will have every reason to attack Saudi, U.A.E., Qatar, Bahrain, and other oil assets with all means at its disposal. This includes highly accurate Soviet SS-11 medium-range ballistic missiles. The Scud ballistic missile is far less accurate, but could still cause extensive damage in a large target such as the Rastanura refinery. It might be enough to hit the large Aramco storage dump for demolition explosives on the hill above the refinery, to get something on the order of magnitude of a low-yield nuclear explosion. Iraqi bombers armed with Exocet missiles represent another capability for destroying oil assets. Such bombers will not necessarily be wiped out during the first days of an all-out U.S. air attack, since

they have already been dispersed and placed in camouflaged bunkers.

The oil Intifada: If the Anglo-American leaders insist on attacking Iraq, and especially if they do so with nuclear weapons, they must reckon with spontaneous and state-sponsored irregular warfare on a vast scale. This will receive added impetus in the event of an Israeli attack on Iraq, and further impetus as a result of the planned Israeli genocide against Palestinian Arabs. Such irregular warfare will be carried out not just by Iraqis and Palestinians, but by large numbers of Arabs from all countries and indeed by many Muslims around the world. The targets of such irregular warfare will be the assets of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Israel, and other members of the attacking coalition. In addition, a preeminent target will be the oil assets of Saudi Arabia, the U.A.E., Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and other Arab governments allied with the attacking coalition. This will include sabotage of all imaginable types.

An Arab oil embargo: Under conditions of Anglo-American-Israeli nuclear aggression and genocide against Iraq, immense political pressure will be brought to bear by the Arab masses on such oil-exporting states as Algeria, Libya, Egypt, and others to immediately declare an oil embargo against all members and allies of the attacking coalition. This might extend to such Muslim oil producers as Indonesia, and to oil producers with large Islamic population components, such as Nigeria. The Anglo-Americans will then be obliged to invade these states if they wish to commandeer their oil, opening up new war fronts and creating new tensions for the attacking coalition.

No oil for two-thirds of the world

The result of these three factors will be the annihilation or interdiction of between one-fourth and one-fifth of the entire world production of oil. During the first half of 1990, daily world crude oil production by region and by nation can be broken down as follows:

Oil-producer	Millions bbl/day
World	60.929
OPEC	24.167
Arab OPEC	15.496
Saudi Arabia	5.661
Kuwait	1.971
Iraq	2.992
U.A.E.	2.067
Persian Gulf	16.095
Iran	2.983
Mexico	2.497
Venezuela	2.047
Nigeria	1.767
U.S.S.R.	11.070
United Kingdom	1.896
United States	7.341

As can be seen from this table, the Persian Gulf, the immediate theater of war, accounts for slightly over 25% of all world oil production today. Given the announced intentions of the Bush regime, it is clear that, in the event of war, the oil production of Iraq and Kuwait, amounting to about 8% of world production, will be immediately destroyed. This will be followed by attacks on large portions of Saudi Arabian production, which in the meantime substantially exceeds the 9-10% of world production indicated above. The 3-4% of world production represented by the U.A.E. will come under Iraqi or irregular warfare attack. In the likely event that Iran becomes embroiled in hostilities, Iran's 5% of world production may also be decimated. If the effects of an Arab oil boycott are factored in, it is easy to see how the current world oil supply available on the world market could be cut by between 20 and 25%.

There is no historical precedent for such a violent contraction of world oil supply.

Who stands to be deprived of oil when Gulf production is destroyed in the coming war? One-fourth to one-fifth of world production corresponds roughly to the one-fourth to one-fifth of world consumption that is represented by the developing-sector countries. Since the developing sector—the countries outside of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the former East bloc Comecon—represents about two-thirds of the world's population, this means that for two-thirds of humankind, no more oil will be available.

Given the racist and colonialist mentality of the Anglo-American ruling elite, it is clear that the production destroyed in the Gulf and the rest of the Middle East will be deducted insofar as possible from the consumption of the Third World. The Anglo-American and NATO out-of-area deployments stand ready to seize the oil resources of Venezuela, Mexico, Nigeria, Indonesia, and other Third World oil producers in order to assign this oil according to the political priorities of London and Washington. The overall effect of these colossal dislocations meshes precisely with the strategic commitment of the Anglo-American elite to use North-South neocolonial warfare to destroy independent Third World states and exterminate Third World and non-white populations.

Hundreds of millions of deaths

Withdrawing the Third World's oil supply will lead to the greatest genocidal holocaust of all world history. The deaths generated thereby will be counted in the *hundreds of millions*, and they will be concentrated in the developing sector among persons with black, brown, and yellow skin.

In order to estimate the impact of these shocks on the world economy, we may take a retrospective look at the original Kissinger-Rockefeller-Rothschild oil crisis of 1973-74. In that year, the Yom Kippur War, involving Israel, Egypt, and Syria (plus a border crisis between Iraq and Kuwait) was followed by an Arab oil embargo against the West.

During the late summer of 1973, a barrel of oil could be purchased for \$1.99. By the end of 1974, the price of a barrel of oil had risen to over \$10. This amounts to a price increase of over 500%.

By simple linear extrapolation of the same price dynamic, we should expect to go from an oil price in the neighborhood of \$20 per barrel during June and July of 1990, toward a 500% price increase, leaving us with a price of \$100 per barrel. It is worth emphasizing that this figure almost certainly underestimates the reality that will face the world after the outbreak of a Gulf war. During the oil shocks of 1973-74 and 1979, there was no significant destruction of oil production capacity. Any constriction of supply was simply the result of political decisions to cut production, and these decisions could be and were readily reversed. At no time during the 1970s was there ever a true supply crisis. There was merely a drastic price increase, with virtually unlimited quantities of oil available at the higher price. As Fiat's Gianni Agnelli stated at the end of 1973, "We will be able to find crude. But the important thing will be the price."

This time the world will be faced by a true contraction of supply, with no oil available at any price for vast sectors of the globe.

The contraction in world oil supplies will devastate agriculture and transportation, especially in the Third World. It will cause an abrupt decline in world grain production because of increased costs and diminished availability of truck and tractor fuel and petroleum feedstocks for fertilizer. This fall-off in grain production will affect vast undernourished sectors of the world population who are presently existing on the ragged edge of famine. These populations will be pushed off the brink into the abyss of death by starvation.

Price tag: \$1 trillion

The House Committee on Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs was told by John Wheeler, of the Center for the Vietnam Generation, on Nov. 27 that the cost of a ground war in the Gulf would be likely to exceed \$1 trillion in current dollars. This would compare with Wheeler's estimate of a total cost of \$300 billion 1984 dollars for the Vietnam War, although this latter figure does not reflect certain veterans' benefits over the long term. Wheeler indicates the possibility of a ground engagement lasting up to 12 months. The addition of an extra \$1,000 billion to the U.S. national debt would take the country far beyond mere bankruptcy or mere hyperinflation, into an economic holocaust of which only the vaguest outlines can be discerned.

At the very minimum, this \$1 trillion figure would need to be increased to reflect the destruction of yet another entire generation, in the way that the Vietnam War destroyed a generation with a combination of battle deaths, Operation Phoenix and Lt. William Calley at My Lai, narcotics, demoralization, and apathy. The cost to the nation of wasting an entire generation is incalculable.