

The winds of Al-Sumoom: a curse or a blessing for Iraq?

by Hussein Al-Nadeem

Overshadowed by the war in Kosova, which coincided with the *Hadj* pilgrimage season for Muslims, the Iraqi crisis has become covered by a layer of ash left from the past three months of American-British aerial bombardment. In mid-April, after 2.5 million Muslims from all corners of the world will have left Saudi Arabia, having made their holy pilgrimage to Mecca, the dreadful Al-Sumoom wind will be gathering momentum from the heart of the Arabian Desert, blowing eastward to buffet Iraq, eastern Arabia, and the Persian Gulf. Whether this wind is going to blow away the ashes and fan a new fire in Iraq, or is going to put off the stupidity of meaningless war against Iraq, will be determined by the overall international and regional strategic developments, especially the war drive in Kosova. As Lyndon LaRouche has repeatedly stated, the Iraqi crisis is not what determines the international developments, but is a result of what is happening on the international geopolitical scene. The Iraqi crisis has very little, if anything, to do with what the Iraqi leadership does or does not do.

Shift in the 'Arab atmosphere'

The policy of bombing without any clear, strategic objective, has given rise to Arab leaders' concern that the operation to overthrow Saddam Hussein is not at all a quick fix, as they had believed. Last November, Arab countries which signed onto the Damascus Declaration (Egypt, Syria, and the six Gulf states) gave a clear signal that they would not oppose a major operation against Iraq, saying that whatever happens to Iraq is the responsibility of Saddam Hussein. The bombing did not take place in November, but in December, in Operation Desert Fox. In January, after the holy month of Ramadan, a new and prolonged wave of air strikes was started against Iraqi defense installations in the U.S.-U.K.-imposed "no-fly zones" in north and south Iraq. This bombardment has had no clear objectives or timeline. Syria and Egypt, ahead of the other Arab states, realized that they were obliged to reverse the horrible mistake of November and try to take a reconciliatory approach toward the Iraqi leadership.

Egypt and Syria's efforts led to the Arab League's Council of Foreign Ministers meeting, which ended on March 18

with a statement in favor of Iraq's demand to condemn the Anglo-American operation. Without naming the United States or Britain, the final statement stated: "The Council stresses its commitment to Iraq's unity and its regional safety and the security and safety of [Iraq's] neighbors, and demands a halt to the actions targetting Iraq outside the framework of the relevant Security Council's resolutions, and also demands that all parties, including Iraq, implement all Security Council resolutions in form and practice, and that the Secretary General [of the Arab League] will be assigned to follow up this issue."

A similar meeting failed on Jan. 24, when the Iraqi Foreign Minister walked out, accusing his counterparts of plotting with the United States and Britain against Iraq. The recent statement was reached after prolonged negotiations, because Kuwait and Saudi Arabi opposed the mentioning of military attacks on Iraq in the Arab League's agenda. Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak and Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al-Sharaa intervened to convince the Saudi Foreign Minister to accept a pro-Iraqi statement.

The opening meeting was delayed a few hours on March 17, due to the meeting between Mubarak and Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al-Faisal. The meeting was again postponed because of a dispute between Iraq and Kuwait and Saudi Arabia concerning the issue of those "missing" in the Gulf War. Iraq says that it has no prisoners from Kuwait or Saudi Arabia. The issue was excluded from the discussion, since it was decided that the Secretary General of the Arab League, Dr. Ismat Abdul Magid, will establish a special committee to explore the two sides' claims, in cooperation with the International Red Cross.

One day after the meeting, President Mubarak visited Kuwait in order to discuss with the Kuwaiti Emir the prospects of a reconciliation with Iraq. Mubarak said, after returning to Cairo, that "the Arab atmosphere is much better now." A few days before the meeting, President Mubarak, Foreign Minister Amr Moussa, and Presidential Adviser Osama El-Baz made statements regarding Egypt's rejection of the current policy of daily bombing of Iraq by the United States and Great Britain. President Mubarak met with U.S. Ambassador to Cairo Daniel Kertzer on March 15. According to the Arabic

daily *Al-Hayat*, Mubarak stressed “the necessity of stopping the raids on Iraq.” Amr Moussa had stated a week earlier that “the Arab states do not support the military strikes against Iraq” and “are for a political and diplomatic solution and non-intervention in the internal affairs of Iraq, the interests of its people, its unity, and lifting the embargo imposed on it.”

Meanwhile, El-Baz said that “U.S. policy on Iraq threatens the Middle East’s regional stability.” El-Baz added that “the situation in Iraq threatens to destabilize the region as the U.S. is pursuing a policy of confrontation in the crisis.” He stressed that Egypt’s concern is that “this policy of daily bombing might become a routine which the region will have to get used to.”

On March 14, U.S. Undersecretary of State for Near East Affairs Martin Indyk was informed by Syrian President Hafez al-Assad that Syria no longer approves the current U.S. policy against Iraq.

Most interesting was the reaction from U.S. ally Saudi Arabia. Saudi officials were quoted in the *International Herald Tribune* saying that “whatever has to do with going out and hitting targets in Iraq will not have the support of the kingdom.”

U.S. split over Iraq policy

In the same week, Gen. Anthony Zinni, commander of the U.S. Central Command, was on tour in the Gulf. Zinni reiterated his objections to supporting the Iraqi opposition’s effort to overthrow the Baghdad government, through an invasion (see *EIR*, Feb. 12, 1999). Speaking in Kuwait, at the same place where ten days earlier Defense Secretary William Cohen had told U.S. Marines to “be prepared to go to war against Saddam,” General Zinni said: “We are not preparing to carry out a military operation” against Iraq. He added that “the strikes will stop as soon as the Iraqi regime stops targeting our airplanes.” While in Abu Dhabi the day before, Zinni stressed that “there must be a transition to a new government in Iraq, but in a way that does not destabilize the region.” He added that “there is no military coordination with the Iraqi opposition.”

The factional dispute in the United States and Britain concerns the reliability of the Iraqi opposition in any attempt to change the government in Iraq (see “Profile of Iraqi Opposition Groups,” *EIR*, Jan. 29, 1999). However, the real underlying issues are the “feasibility” of the Iraq Liberation Act, which was shoved down the throat of President Bill Clinton in 1998, and of U.S. policy toward Iraq in general.

The fault line runs between those enemies of Clinton in Congress, and even in his own administration, who want to follow the policy of “go in and kill ’em all” by invading Iraq, and those allegedly representing the President’s and the State Department’s line favoring a military coup from within the Iraqi military establishment, without risking a regional or civil war.

‘By their fruits ye shall know them’

On March 10, former CIA Director James Woolsey testified before the U.S. House Armed Services Committee on policy toward Iraq. Woolsey started by stating that over a year ago he had told Congress that “it was urgent to move toward a strategy—an overt, not a covert one—to replace the Baath regime in Iraq.” This effort resulted in the administration’s endorsement of the Iraq Liberation Act in October 1998. These words, and the strategy outlined below, were also the exact words of the British-controlled chairman of the Iraqi National Congress, Ahmad Al-Chalabi. It is not clear yet who copied what from whom (see *EIR*, Feb. 12).

Woolsey’s strategy consists of six points:

1. Maintain the existing no-fly zone in the north and south for all Iraqi aircraft, including helicopters, and expand the zone’s restrictions to create “no-drive” zones for Iraqi military vehicles.

2. Recognize an Iraqi government-in-exile, probably centered in the Iraqi National Congress (INC), and furnish it with light arms, including anti-armor weapons.

3. When areas in the north and the south of Iraq are adequately protected from encroachments by Iraqi ground forces, by a combination of indigenous (including defecting) forces and air power, permit those areas to be free of the trade restrictions imposed on Iraq, such as letting these regions pump and sell oil.

4. Bring charges against Saddam in international tribunals and do everything possible to hinder his use of offshore assets.

5. Broadcast into Iraq, in the manner of Radio Free Europe.

6. Utilize any excuse to conduct air strikes, such as Saddam’s current efforts to attack U.S. aircraft maintaining the no-fly zones, to damage as severely as possible the instruments whereby Saddam maintains power: the Special Republican Guard, the Special Security Organization, Iraqi Intelligence, etc.

Under Woolsey’s term as CIA director (1993-95), a CIA operation took off which had been put in place in northern Iraq by the Bush administration in 1992. The operation involved using the INC to run an invasion from the Kurdish region in northern Iraq. Woolsey is possibly responsible for one of the biggest fiascoes since the Bay of Pigs. On Aug. 31, 1996, Iraqi army tanks, with the help of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (PDK), took over the city of Arbil in northern Iraq from the rival Kurdish Patriotic Union (PUK). The Iraqi forces arrested 200 Iraqi INC members who were working with the CIA, and a huge amount of documentation was confiscated. The INC agents were later executed. The irony here is that the PDK (one of the seven groups included in the U.S. Iraq Liberation Act) collaborated with the Iraqi army in this operation, and still maintains relations with the government in Baghdad.

As a result of this fiasco, in September 1996, some 8,000 Iraqis had to be evacuated from northern Iraq to Turkey and then to Guam, in what was called Operation Pacific Haven. Later the refugees were given political asylum in the United States. Only 450 of these were INC members. In the United States, six refugees were later arrested by the FBI and detained for two years. According to the FBI, they constituted "a threat to national security," and the Immigration and Naturalization Service ordered that they be deported back to Iraq.

Woolsey volunteered to defend the six Iraqis and launched a campaign to stop the deportation. The FBI was forced by Congress to declassify the investigation proceedings. The charges against the six were made public, that they were "Iraqi spies." Nothing is known about the truth of the charges, and no thorough investigation of the whole operation has been conducted. In the same month, September 1996, the U.S. administration decided to close off all channels with the Iraqi opposition and the INC. Already in 1995, when Woolsey was being replaced as Director of Central Intelligence by John Deutch, the Iraqi opposition claimed that there was a shift in the emphasis from the INC to the Iraqi National Accord (INA), which was established the same year by the British foreign intelligence organization MI6. The MI6 involvement was revealed by Scott Ritter, the British-Israeli spy who was part of the United Nations weapon inspection team, UNSCOM, in Iraq. The London- and Amman-based INA includes Iraqi army officer defectors and former Baath Party and government officials. The INA is allegedly the group which could run a military coup, while the INC could conduct an insurgency in Iraq. These two groups are called in Iraq the "five-star-hotel opposition," while the real military force, the Kurds, have channels into the Iraqi government and oppose the Iraq Liberation Act.

The Iraqi opposition, which is being tossed between London and Washington, has developed from a joke to a bad joke, and finally to a rotten fruit. A frustrated London-based representative for the Iraqi Shia opposition group the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), stated recently that "the only thing the Iraq Liberation Act has achieved, is to discredit the Iraqi opposition by showing them as if they were pure American agents. The Iraqi opposition have received no money, no arms, and no political assistance, which was supposed to arrive soon."

Despite that, the INC has been invited to organize a conference in Washington in late April. The conference has been endorsed by members of Congress such as Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.) and Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.). The conference could be planned to coincide with a major operation against Iraq, depending on developments in Kosovo. The timing is crucial, because ground operations have to be concluded before the extremely hot summer, and the onset of the winds of Al-Sumoom.

President Clinton does not seem to be prepared to go either with a military coup against Saddam or an invasion. However, his policy is to continue to "contain" the Iraqi government, through the oil sanctions and other political measures. This policy can no longer be accepted in the region, for both moral and strategic reasons.

Only a policy consistent with that called for by Schiller Institute President Helga Zepp-LaRouche, to lift the sanctions and integrate Iraq's human and natural potentials into the Eurasian Land-Bridge project, can guarantee justice and freedom for the Iraqi nation and the world.

Otherwise, policies being set into motion by London, the U.S. Congress, and by Al Gore's Principals Committee, can only lead to mass death and destruction.

Ye, shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.—Matthew 7:16-20

For previews and
information on
LaRouche publications:

Visit EIR's Internet Website!

- Highlights of current issues of EIR
- Pieces by Lyndon LaRouche
- Every week: transcript and audio of the latest **EIR Talks** radio interview.

<http://www.larouchepub.com>

e-mail: larouche@larouchepub.com