

Bush's Tragic Southwest Asian 'Peloponnesian War'

by Jeffrey Steinberg

As of this writing on Jan. 6, President George W. Bush, goaded on by Vice President Dick Cheney, is plunging headlong into an even deeper strategic fiasco in Southwest Asia. By all accounts, Bush will soon announce his latest folly: a “surge” of anywhere between 10,000 and 50,000 additional U.S. combat troops into Iraq. At the same time, the President is preparing the way for yet another Cheney-induced strategic blunder: a military strike against purported “secret nuclear weapons sites” inside Iran. While the latter scheme has not been publicly advertised by Administration officials, U.S. military and intelligence specialists tracking events in the Persian Gulf remain convinced that a “Global Strike” plan for bomber and missile strikes against select targets inside the Islamic Republic is on the table at the White House and would be launched without prior consultation with Congress or the United Nations Security Council.

The latest twist on the “bomb Iran” scheme, as reported by well-placed Washington sources, is that the rationale for preventive war against Iran is that the United States and/or Israel must strike Iran *before* the first bomb-grade nuclear material has been enriched and stockpiled in some unknowable locations. Given that even Israeli Mossad analysts have concluded that Iran is incapable of obtaining a nuclear bomb before 2009—under the most wildly optimistic of circumstances—and American analysts believe that the earliest date is well past 2010, the Bush White House has been forced to resort to the most outlandish form of sophistry, to make a case for preventive war sometime between Spring of this year and when they leave office in January 2009.

As Lyndon LaRouche noted in discussions with colleagues on Jan. 5, it was this same kind of sophistry practiced by the Greek ruler Pericles that drew Athens into the self-destruction known as the Peloponnesian Wars. Bush, LaRouche warned, is falling into the identical trap that de-

stroyed the once-great republic of Athens, and the consequences for the United States—if Bush and Cheney are allowed to get away with this latest insanity—may spell the doom of the United States.

These are the times we are living through.

Generals and Senators Revolt

In response to the accelerating madness coming out of the White House, an intensified revolt has been triggered, involving active-duty flag-grade officers, U.S. Senators, and others.

Sources in Baghdad report that when newly installed Secretary of Defense Robert Gates travelled to Iraq several weeks ago, to confer with the top American generals, he was given a very blunt assessment. Gen. John Abizaid, the Commander-in-Chief of the Central Command, and his top ground commander in Iraq, Gen. George Casey, reportedly told Gates that the situation on the ground was a disaster, and that a “surge” of 30-50,000 troops would do nothing to change the picture—especially if the troops were sent in without a clear mission-objective and an exit strategy. Gates returned to the United States, and immediately went to Camp David to brief the President.

A week later, Gates was again with the President, and all of the members of the National Security Council at Crawford, Texas. Reportedly, Gates was informed by the President that there would be a boost in U.S. forces in Iraq, and that he would have to come up with a scheme to meet the President's specifications. Just prior to being named to replace Donald Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defense in early November 2006, Gates had been a member of the Baker-Hamilton Iraq Study Group (ISG), and had, in fact, been the chief author of the group's draft policy recommendations. The Bush-Cheney White House decision not to engage in diplomatic dialogue

with Iran or Syria—a pivotal Baker-Hamilton recommendation—placed Gates, fresh on the job, in the unhappy position of having to come up with recommendations for a troop “surge” that he personally opposes as worse than useless, according to sources familiar with his role in the ISG deliberations.

While further details of the Camp David and Crawford meetings are not known at this time, other events surrounding those meetings suggest where the White House is headed. General Abizaid, as reported last week in *EIR*, abruptly went public with his plans to resign from the military in March. Military sources linked his resignation to his conviction that the Bush-Cheney White House is intent on “regime change” in Iran by military action, and he wants nothing to do with it. And on Jan. 5, reports surfaced in the media that General Casey will also be bounced from the command of ground forces in Iraq—apparently because of his own rejection of the “surge” fantasy. News reports today suggest that Casey will be kicked upstairs to the post of Army Chief of Staff, a post that was nearly impossible to fill with an active duty officer before Donald Rumsfeld’s departure.

The views of the generals and the ISG were reflected in a letter to President Bush from Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) on Jan. 5. Using the most diplomatic language, the two Democratic Congressional leaders urged the President to drop his “surge” schemes and work towards a diplomatic solution to the Iraq imbroglio.

Reid and Pelosi began their letter to the President by referencing the Nov. 7, 2006 vote: “The American people demonstrated in the November elections, that they do not believe your current Iraq policy will lead to success and that we need a change in direction for the sake of our troops and the Iraqi people.”

They quickly got to the essentials: “Surging forces is a strategy that you have already tried and that has already failed. Like many current and former military leaders, we believe that trying again would be a serious mistake. They, like us, believe there is no purely military solution in Iraq. There is only a political solution. Adding more combat troops will only endanger more Americans and stretch our military to the breaking point for no strategic gain. And it would undermine our efforts to get the Iraqis to take responsibility for their own future. We are well past the point of more troops for Iraq.”

Other Senate and House Democrats have made it clear that they will make the President’s “new” Iraq strategy a top priority of Congressional deliberation. And there is good reason to believe that the inquest will be bipartisan. On Jan. 1, syndicated columnist Robert Novak reported that a solid majority of Senate Republicans *oppose* any increase in American troops in Iraq, unless and until the White House lays out a strategy that would justify it. Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.), a decorated Vietnam War veteran, called Bush and Cheney’s surge schemes “Alice in Wonderland.” And the new Senate

Minority Leader, Trent Lott (R-Miss.), expressed serious doubts that he could back the White House.

There is very good reason to believe that the President will offer no fresh “strategy for victory.” As exclusively reported in *EIR*, the boost in American combat troops in Iraq is aimed at quelling any Shi’ite uprising, in response to American attacks on Iran.

De Borchgrave and Clark Worry

On Jan. 2, UPI Editor at Large Arnaud de Borchgrave warned that the radical right wing in Israel, led by former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, is waging a propaganda war, accusing the current Israeli government of “appeasement,” in the face of Iran’s alleged quest for a nuclear bomb to wipe Israel off the face of the Earth. As de Borchgrave put it: “The ‘neocons’ who work closely with Netanyahu on what could be the next phase of a nascent regional war in the Middle East, say Bush has the authority to take out Iran’s nuclear threat. Because it has only one purpose—to take out Israel. One Hiroshima-type nuclear weapons and Israel ceases to exist.”

One retired general and former Presidential candidate, Wesley Clark, was deeply disturbed by de Borchgrave’s warning. Arianna Huffington, writing on Jan. 5 on the *Huffington Post* website, reported on an encounter with General Clark just after the UPI piece appeared. She wrote that Clark was furious about the idea of a U.S. preventive strike on Iran: “How can you talk about bombing a country when you won’t even talk to them? I’m worried about the surge,” Clark told her, “but I’m worried about this even more.” Asked why he was convinced that de Borchgrave was correct in his assessment of an imminent strike against Iran, Clark replied, “You just have to read what’s in the Israeli press. The Jewish community is divided, but there is so much pressure being channeled from the New York money people to the office seekers.” Unusually blunt language from a retired flag officer contemplating another run for the Presidency.

Even more blunt language came on Dec. 31, 2006 from *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof, who offered President Bush an elegant way out of his Peloponnesian War on the Tigris. Offering ten recommendations on how Bush could salvage his Presidential legacy, Kristof, echoing Lyndon LaRouche, wrote: “Fourth, encourage Dick Cheney to look pale in public. Then he can resign on health grounds, and you can appoint Condi Rice or Bob Gates to take his place. Mr. Cheney has been the single worst influence on your foreign policy, as well as the most polarizing figure in your administration. There’s no better move you could make to signal a new beginning than to accept Mr. Cheney’s resignation.”

Later, Kristof added, “Seventh, put aside those thoughts of a military strike on Iranian nuclear sites, and make it clear to Israel that we oppose it conducting such an attack. A strike would set back Iran’s nuclear programs by only five years or so, but it would consolidate hard-line rule there for at least 25 years.”