

# Bush's Perpetual War Doctrine Scares Even the Reaganites

by Michele Steinberg

President George W. Bush is making less sense every day, in his speeches about the “war against terrorism” and a need for “pre-emptive warfare.” Bush says the global enemy—terrorism—operates in the “shadows,” which supposedly explains why his speeches flail in every direction, one day against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, another day warning of more al-Qaeda threats, and on June 24, against the Palestinian Authority and its beleaguered President, Yasser Arafat. When he is in a “take the offensive” mode, Bush announces “victory” in the war on terrorism, unable to then answer why al-Qaeda forces are still launching successful operations against U.S. and allied combatants in Afghanistan, as occurred on June 26 when al-Qaeda killed ten Pakistani soldiers.

Most leading U.S. figures have been afraid of being called “un-patriotic,” if they criticize Bush’s war-whooping. But in recent weeks, the “war on terror doctrine” itself has been challenged internationally as a fraud. In some cases the criticism has come from unexpected quarters, ranging from the neo-conservative American Enterprise Institute (AEI) to the Russian military’s newspaper *Red Star*.

On June 21, in the London *Financial Times*, Reagan-era U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Jeane Kirkpatrick, who is now with AEI, delivered a “dutch uncle” admonition against “pre-emptive action” to Bush, who loves to cloak himself in the policies of Ronald Reagan.

That wasn’t Reagan’s policy, according to the *Financial Times*, which writes that “when the last pre-emptive military strike was launched to destroy Iraq’s nuclear ambitions, the U.S. had no hesitation in condemning the Israelis for bombing the Osirak reactor in 1981. Jeane Kirkpatrick, then U.S. representative to the United Nations, said, ‘I don’t think anybody in the whole cabinet believes in the use of pre-emptive force and that is why we condemned Israel.’ ”

Kirkpatrick says that a pre-emptive hit on Iraq today “involves a real shift of course for American military strategy and tactics, and I do have some questions about whether it is a prudent shift of tactics. The question is whether the consequences would be to win recruits for the most radical Islamists, and create more problems for Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, or Jordan’s King Abdullah. Iraq has been a secular government, and I think we don’t want to participate in driving those secular governments into something more violent and Is-

lamist.”

U.S. Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche commented that Bush’s anti-terrorism policy amounts to “Fire! Aim! Load!,” and others are also warning Bush not to “shoot first and ask questions later.”

On June 17, former U.S. Ambassador Edward Peck, who served as U.S. Chief of Mission to Iraq (1977-80), told National Public Radio that the Presidential order to remove Saddam Hussein, exposed in the June 16 *Washington Post* by Bob Woodward, would unleash a flood of opposition throughout the Middle East. Peck denounced the idea that the CIA could be used for this purpose, and warned that such an action by the United States would “create an implosion” inside Iraq, and do the most damage to the Iraqi people, who have borne the brunt of 11 years of sanctions. “Who gave the U.S.A. the right to determine who governs Iraq?” asked Peck, pointing out that the decade of targetting Saddam Hussein, with military and economic warfare, has actually made him stronger. Peck says that the United States has absolutely no concern, and no strategy, for what happens in Iraq “the day after.”

## Russians Give Warning

On June 11, a few days after the downing of a U.S. C-130 plane in which three more U.S. soldiers were killed, Russia’s military newspaper *Red Star* asked pointed questions about the war in Afghanistan. After more than half a year of large-scale U.S. military operations, can we say it was a success? Were the al-Qaeda really defeated? it asked. Its answer: No. In fact, there may very probably be a new civil war.

Up to January 2002, the United States made 25,000 flights, dropped 18,000 bombs, including 10,000 armed with high-precision warheads, reports *Red Star*. In Tora Bora, the high-power bombs BLU-82 were also used, and Special Forces were deployed. But today, despite such huge operations, experts agree that the operation was by no means so successful as originally thought: There was no success in destroying the Taliban and al-Qaeda forces.

One reason for that failure, says *Red Star*, is that the Pentagon failed to close the border with Pakistan in time. As a result, the majority of the Taliban/al-Qaeda fighters escaped, fleeing across the border or being safehoused by the local population. For political reasons, a U.S. operation to pursue them into Pakistan was ruled out.

But, *Red Star* adds, experts consider the chief reason for the failure of the operation to be the poor preparation by the Pentagon itself. As U.S. experts admit, there was inadequate preparation for operations in the mountains at high altitudes. U.S. forces suffered headaches, weakness, fainting, and were not prepared for the tactics of the mountain fighters. Another failure was the lack of understanding of the Afghan culture and habits, lack of comprehension of the mentality of the population. The propaganda war, including mass distribution of leaflets from the air, was a fiasco. Events such as the bombing of an Afghan religious school, and repeated incidents in

which American forces mistakenly fired upon friendly Afghan forces, led to intense hatred among the population. While it is not mentioned in this article, other experts, including in the United States, despair that the Bush Administration ideologues refuse to recognize the Soviet quagmire in Afghanistan as a lesson to be heeded.

## The Worst Is Yet To Come

As of June 24, with his speech on the Middle East, Bush went further toward disaster, adopting Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s path against the Palestinians, one which has led to more terror and destruction. Ironically, it was exactly this alliance against which Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, who recently returned from meetings with Bush in Washington, warned on June 20. In a speech to the annual conference of United Malays National Organization, the government party, Mahathir lashed out at Sharon, and the United States, for their failures in stopping terrorism, linking it to policy failure on the global financial front.

“Faced with this unprecedented threat [Sept. 11],” said Mahathir, “the big powers appear to have panicked and lost their direction. Unused to handling attacks by terrorists, they resorted to conventional warfare. Although the Sept. 11 terrorists were not Afghans, but [since] Afghanistan had been used as a base by the al-Qaeda . . . this country was attacked with weapons which recognize no one. Many innocent people—civilians, old and young women, children, the sick—were killed or wounded and millions of the people of this unfortunate country fled to neighboring countries where they live in miserable conditions, without adequate shelter, without food or medical facilities. . . .

“But terrorism has not been stopped. . . . Defeating Afghanistan has not given any effect in the fight against terrorism. Actually the possibility of terror attacks has increased because Israel, which oppresses Palestine, used the war against terrorism to upgrade its terror attacks against the Palestinians. Ariel Sharon . . . believes that terror can be stopped by more terror against those whom he claims are sponsors of terrorists. . . . But the Israeli action not only fails to reduce terror attacks, it actually causes much greater anger among Muslims, which can cause even more terrorism. . . . Until when does it expect to counter terror with more terror? Even if the Israelis kill all the 6 million Palestinians there is no guarantee that other Muslims and Arabs from the surrounding countries will not terrorize like the Palestinian suicide bombers. . . . Israel should understand the futility of its methods.

“The only thing that will stop their terrorism is the removal of the cause. . . . The truth is that the economic recession in these countries were caused by the rogue currency traders dumping so much of the currencies of these countries and the stock market players short-selling their shares. Although it is clear that this caused the economic disaster, the relevant authorities still refuse to change the international financial regime.”