

Is Gulf War rigged against Saddam Hussein?

by Scott Thompson

On both sides of the Atlantic, there is now a debate over the latest Iranian offensive against Basra, the second-largest Iraqi city. Is this the "Fall of Saigon," that European commentators predict? If Basra falls, will the United States draw a "red line" to defend the oil-producing Gulf states, as *Der Spiegel* of Germany suggests, based upon a reported briefing on contingency plans from high-level Pentagon sources? Must the West now learn "to tolerate" a "Shi'ite belt," encompassing both Iran and Iraq as its nucleus, as editorials in the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*, based upon State Department sources, call for it to do?

All these questions miss the one central issue in the seven-year-old Persian Gulf War. The Khomeini regime, a "Dark Age regime" that has shown itself the enemy of all Western civilization, must disappear. This must happen as soon as the task can be accomplished. Far more than Gulf oil is at stake, important as that is as a strategic raw material.

Despite the Basra offensive, the Iran-Iraq war has not changed. Iraq, possessing overwhelming superiority in every category of military equipment, has fought a defensive, no-win war. Iran, possessing superiority only in warm bodies to be martyred—from children to old men of the Basij who are marched to the front at gunpoint, or Pasdaran fanatics—has continued to fill the gaps and conduct a "war of attrition" that increasingly probes for weak spots in Iraqi lines.

Almost everyone agrees that Iraq will not and cannot win the war, unless there are two changes in the overall strategic situation. First, Iraq must undertake a sweeping policy revision, adopting a strategy of aggressive counterattacks and offensives.

Second, Western politicians and diplomats must drop those assessments that have led them to seek some sort of "deal" that merely adjusts to a morally insupportable "Carterite-Khomeinism." There can be no surer way to lose the

entire Middle East to the Soviet Union, than further acceptance of that policy—epitomized by that master of "academic," "geo-strategic strategy," Zbigniew Brzezinski in his Senate Intelligence Committee testimony: accommodation with Islamic fundamentalism.

Anything short of this is the Emperor Nero's fiddling.

Iraq: a concept of victory

Perhaps the simplest of these changes to accomplish is that Iraq drop the "siege mentality" that has become dominant. Iraq has the benefit of overwhelming technical superiority, including artillery of all kinds and relatively unrestricted supplies, as well as a preponderance of more highly trained, combat-seasoned troops under a unified command. It will be found by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and his military advisers that over the long-run, Iraqi casualties will actually decrease when Iraq once again adopts a strategy of aggressive counterattack and offense.

While Pentagon sources point to Iraq's increasing reliance upon its overwhelming air superiority for tactical support and precision bombing as a step in the right direction, this will prove insufficient without the overall revision in strategy.

The Malvinas War, where Argentine generals failed to use similar advantages arising from lines of supply, remains both a political and military object lesson for Iraq. Unless such a revision occurs shortly, the most immediate danger is that those battalion-level commanders, who have been kept from counterattacking, while waging a defensive war at the points of Faw and Basra to keep Iran from cutting southern Iraq off from the capital, will become thoroughly demoralized from "fighting to the last trench."

Public plans for the earliest possible occupation of Tehran are a feature of any Iraqi strategy based upon a concept

of victory. If those Iranian patriots with whom it would be possible to negotiate peace take advantage of such a changed war to overthrow Khomeini and establish a constitutional government, it would be a joyful outcome applauded by all sane Western forces.

Weinberger takes a stand

Of all the kings' horses and all the kings' men, only Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger has publicly proclaimed an Iranian victory a fiasco. Speaking to a group of *Washington Post* editors on Jan. 16, Secretary Weinberger said, "It would be very disastrous for everyone." While a Pentagon official has stated that battles with casualties reminiscent of Verdun, Somme, and so forth are now being waged in the Gulf, Secretary Weinberger confirmed that since the latest "Karbala" series of Iranian tactical offensives begun Dec. 24, and that on Basra, some 40,000 Iranian troops, many as young as 14, have been killed in human-wave attacks.

The Pentagon chief further cautioned that a victorious Iran, tied to the Soviet Union, could provide the Soviets with a warm water port and access to Gulf oil. Noting that Iranian forces have recently made "some small advances," Weinberger said, "There isn't at this point anything like a breakthrough." The Secretary added: "I wish the Iraqis would use their air force more effectively, because they have complete superiority."

Secretary Weinberger has thus become the only U.S. government official on record who has begun to roll-back an immoral U.S./Israeli policy, fostered when the Carter administration gave support to fundamentalists seeking to topple the Shah of Iran. Since then, U.S. public policy has, at best, been to encourage a protracted "war of attrition" in the Gulf, if not support an ultimate Iranian victory by covert means.

Diplomats appease

While the secretary of defense began to take steps toward condemnation of Iran, other leading U.S. officials continued to defend the President's indefensible support for "Carterite-Khomeinism." Speaking before an "International Conference on Terrorism," held at the Sheraton Hotel on Jan. 20, Vice-President George Bush, whose entire future political career is at stake, denied that the U.S. government had negotiated with terrorists, while stating that the United States must "go the extra mile" for hostages who are being tortured, like the late CIA Beirut station chief, William Buckley.

An *EIR* correspondent present said that, in this apologia, the vice-president waffled on whether U.S. contacts with "moderates" were for the "strategic reasons" first announced by President Reagan at "Irangate's" start—or were a quest for hostages' release.

On the same evening as Bush's speech, former Reagan National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane appeared on ABC's "Nightline" to state that he did then and does now

support negotiations with Iranian "moderates."

In his Dec. 8 testimony to the Senate Intelligence Committee, Secretary of State George Shultz, who showed he was a "team player" by saying it was the Israelis who had continually pushed a policy of dealing with Iranian "moderates," then himself gave wholehearted support to that policy. Secretary Shultz was left quibbling over whether back-channel negotiations with Iranian "moderates" had given away too much, too soon. Finally, on Jan. 23, a spokesman for Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs Richard Murphy, dropped the "moderate" formula altogether. He stated that future State Department diplomacy with Iran would be based upon an assessment that: "Even in the context of Revolutionary Iran, there are those who wish to improve relations with the West."

Drawing a red line?

While few U.S. military spokesmen believe Iran will occupy Basra in the near future, talk of various contingency plans in the Mideast has begun to surface. The question is: Does the surfacing of these plans deal only with the threatened cut-off of Gulf oil following an Iranian victory at Basra, or is there a fundamental shift in policy under way now that the Israeli "special relationship" to the National Security Council is over.

On Jan. 20, the White House asked Congress to approve the sale of 16 F-16s to Bahrain and 200 armored personnel carriers to Saudi Arabia for inclusion in the Gulf Coordination Council's 15,000 man force, which would employ the most advanced tactical weapons in defense against any Iranian incursion from bases in southern Iraq.

On Jan. 23, President Reagan announced: "We share the concern of our friends in the Gulf that the war could spill over and threaten their security. We would regard any such expansion as a major threat to our interests as well as those of our friends in the region. . . ."

In an earlier background talk with *Der Spiegel*, which blew it way out of proportion, the new Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Trost, said that should Basra fall and other Gulf States be threatened, the United States has prepared a contingency force structure that can draw upon up to 400,000 men and deploy more than one battle aircraft-carrier task force.

A Pentagon spokesman confirmed on Jan. 23 that, barring a total breakdown in Iraqi morale or a future Iranian crossing of the Shatt-al-Arab in force, Basra could not be taken. But, should Basra fall now or in the future, other Arab leaders will demand that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein be replaced, while the United States will consider activating contingency plans.

While it appears some administration officials have finally dropped the Carterite "Khomeini card," there is so far no clear shift in policy that would keep the entire Mideast from falling very shortly into Soviet hands.