

# Chicken-Hawks Now Prepare War on Syria

by William Jones

The drumbeat against Syria, begun by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on April 9 in the immediate aftermath of the Iraq War, and taken up by President Bush on April 13 (although Bush, under heavy domestic and international pressure, retreated considerably on April 20), was no spontaneous eruption of “anger” at alleged Syrian harboring of members of the Saddam Hussein regime or of Iraqi “weapons of mass destruction.” Rather it was the next step in the chicken-hawks’ plan in their broader program of “regime change” in the Middle East. The momentum of the “quick victory” in Iraq these hardy armchair warriors felt, could be used to pursue the next target, Syria, as if it were simply a continuation of the attack on Baghdad.

The war drums could already be heard when the Hudson Institute, a hotbed of the neo-conservative war-mongers, announced a forum back on March 7 with the title, “After Iraq: Can Lebanese Democracy be Revived?” The meeting was chaired by Meyrav Wurmser, the head of Hudson’s Middle East program. Wurmser, together with former Israeli military intelligence officer Yigal Carmon, co-founded the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), which went to work translating the most violent anti-Semitic diatribes they could find in the Arab press, and “marketing” these to gullible U.S. Congressman and other government officials as the expression of the Arab media. Wurmser’s primary aim was to discredit the fragile Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Wurmser’s husband David, formerly the director of Middle East Studies at the front-rank neo-conservative think-tank, the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), is now special assistant to neo-con honcho John Bolton. A great favorite of Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), Bolton held court at the AEI until joining the Bush State Department as Undersecretary for Arms Control and International Security. David Wurmser was also a member of the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, which issued the famous “Clean Break” report in 1996, laying out the agenda for “serial warfare” in the Middle East, overthrowing both the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq and the Ba’ath regime in Syria, and scrapping the entire “land for peace” formula for Israeli-Palestinian peace.

The “Clean Break” report, composed for incoming Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, emphasized that the way to move against Syria was to challenge its role in Lebanon, where, since the early 1980s civil war triggered by Henry

Kissinger’s machinations, Syria has had a dominating military presence.

## ‘If You Don’t, Israel Will’

The topic of Lebanon at the March 7 forum was largely window-dressing for the real issue: overthrowing the Ba’ath Party regime in Syria. The Lebanon angle could, however, play on the strong sympathies for the Lebanese people in the United States, while at the same time bringing in more “neutral” Lebanese figures to speak against Syria.

Although Wurmser and company did succeed in luring a number of prominent Lebanese to the forum to speak, including former Prime Minister Michel Aoun, the real target was Syria. Already in the 1996 “Clean Break” paper, these neo-cons had recommended to Netanyahu that he move to isolate Syria, a tactic in which getting rid of Saddam Hussein would play a part. Ziad Abdelnour, the president of the U.S. Committee for Free Lebanon, explained to his listeners that there will be “no Lebanese democracy unless the United States takes action against Syria,” putting pressure on Saudi Arabia and dissolving the Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon. Abdelnour also claimed that Syria was providing military equipment to Iraq, an accusation which has been used by the neo-cons to pressure Bush to move quickly against Syria with the forces deployed in Iraq. “If the United States and Europe don’t bring Hezbollah down through pressure on Syria, the Israelis will,” Abdelnour said.

Also speaking at the Hudson event was Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), one of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee’s (AIPAC) favorite Congressmen. Engel had already introduced the “Syria Accountability Act of 2002,” which called for a U.S. embargo on Syrian exports, restricting U.S. exports to Syria, an embargo on loans, credits, or financial assistance to firms with respect to withdrawing their investments from Syria, and restriction of the activities of Syrian diplomats in the United States. Such restrictions, the legislation states, would be lifted only when the President can assert that Syria has ended support for Hezbollah, withdrawn from Lebanon, and destroyed its alleged weapons of mass destruction. The Engel bill is sponsored in the Senate by Rick Santorum (R-Pa.).

It is the height of irony that the Zionist neo-cons are using Lebanon as the ploy for their attacks on Syria. When Christian Lebanese like General Aoun were trying to fend off Syria, they were also forced to fight Israel and Israeli-controlled fascist Falangist forces, who, in 1982, were given the green light by Israel’s Ariel Sharon to slaughter Palestinian civilians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. As *EIR* warned the Lebanese representatives during the question-and-answer period of the meeting: As much as they may desire to reestablish national unity in Lebanon, serving as Israeli dupes in this new attempt to launch an offensive against another Arab regime, would sacrifice the hopes of Lebanon on the bloody altar of the neo-cons’ imperial crusade against Islam.