

The OSP, Cheney's Own 'Plumbers Unit,' Is Exposed

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Within days of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, the neo-conservative "cabal" inside the Bush Administration launched their drive for a war against Iraq. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, whose obsession with the overthrow of Saddam Hussein dated back more than a decade, made a now-infamous pitch for an invasion of Iraq, in retaliation for 9/11, at a Camp David Cabinet session, days after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. President Bush rejected the Wolfowitz war pitch, but issued a Presidential Finding shortly afterwards, which opened the door for accelerated intelligence-gathering and covert actions against Iraq.

Within days of the Camp David session, Richard Perle convened the Defense Policy Board, which he chaired at the time, to peddle the Iraq war. The two "experts" who addressed the Pentagon session were Dr. Bernard Lewis, the British intelligence Arab Bureau spook, who coined the term "Clash of Civilizations," and served as the intellectual guru of Perle and the entire gaggle of Likudnik zealots at the American Enterprise Institute, the Washington Office on Near East Policy, and the American Israel Public Affairs Council; and Dr. Ahmed Chalabi, the swindler-turned-"freedom fighter" who headed the London-based Iraqi National Congress.

Perle had, along with Deputy Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith, and others, penned the July 1996 *Clean Break* memo to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, calling for the trashing of the Oslo Accords, and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein—to be followed in rapid succession by wars against Syria, Iran, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. The *Clean Break* blueprint for perpetual wars in the Mideast cockpit has been the agenda of the chicken-hawk apparatus inside the Bush Administration from day one.

Soon after the two September 2001 events—the Camp David Cabinet session and the Defense Policy Board meeting—Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld gave Wolfowitz

and Feith the green light to create a special intelligence unit inside the Office of the Secretary of Defense, to, in effect, wage "information warfare" against opponents of the Iraq war in the Administration and intelligence community.

The so-called Office of Special Plans (OSP) grew rapidly, from what was billed as a small analysis unit, established to take a "fresh look" at the mountains of U.S. intelligence on Iraq, into a "900-pound gorilla" engaged in covert operations, disinformation, and dirty tricks, according to a number of current and retired military and intelligence officials and Congressional staffers, interviewed for this article.

By the start of the Iraq war in March of this year, OSP had swelled. By several accounts, as many as 100 "personal contractors" were working for the unit. They were hardly all engaged in second-guessing analysis of CIA, State Department, and DIA raw intelligence material.

Who's Who at the OSP

A partial list of OSP "contractors," drawn from interviews with military and intelligence sources, includes a virtual rogues gallery of Iran-Contra criminals and fellow travellers, all drawn from the same pool of neo-con and Likudnik think-tanks and front groups. Among the leading OSP staff and contractors:

- Former CIA Director James Woolsey;
- Iran-Contra operative and self-described "universal fascist" Michael Ledeen;
- Roy Godson, mentor to OSP head Abram Shulsky;
- Laurie Milroye, author of several widely discredited books, blaming Saddam Hussein for the 1993 and 2001 World Trade Center attacks;
- John Carbaugh, former staffer to Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.);
- Reuel Marc Gerecht, former CIA officer and AEI Middle East "expert";



The drive to make Vice President Cheney resign, for which Presidential candidate LaRouche's movement has mobilized millions of leaflets and pamphlets, followed the Vice President to a Salt Lake City fundraiser on Aug. 4. The Pentagon's Office of Special Plans, which falsified crucial intelligence, is shown to be a Cheney operation.

- Michael Pillsbury, a leading member of the China-bashing "blue team";
- Chris Straub, an author of the 1998 Iraq Liberation Act;
- Michael Rubin, another self-described AEI "Mideast expert";
- David Schenker of WINEP, the research and propaganda arm of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC);
- Chris Lehman, brother of former Navy Secretary and Perle business partner John Lehman, who was liaison to Angolan rebels Jonas Savimbi and UNITA during the Iran-Contra days; and
- Col. William Bruner, a one-time military aide to Newt Gingrich, who was brought into the OSP by William Luti, the Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Special Plans and Near East and South Asia Affairs.

Luti was dispatched to the Pentagon from the Office of Vice President Dick Cheney, as part of the launching of the OSP. Shulsky, the nominal OSP chief, was a Leo Strauss student at the University of Chicago, a dishonor he shares with Wolfowitz. According to eyewitness accounts, in a total breach of the traditional Defense Department chain of command, the Shulsky-run OSP shop reported not only up the Pentagon civilian chain to Feith, Wolfowitz, and Rumsfeld; Vice President Cheney and his chief of staff and chief national security advisor, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, directly tasked OSP, and in turn, directly received the poison fruit generated out of the unit.

Early this year, OSP staffer Michael Maloof, a longtime Perle ally, had his security clearances stripped, after a Leba-

nese "businessman" involved in gun-running in the Middle East and Africa, Imad El-Hage, was arrested at Dulles International Airport, carrying a U.S. government-issued .45 pistol. The weapon, according to Pentagon sources, had been issued to Maloof.

Sources in both the U.S.A. and Israel have additionally confirmed that a parallel Office of Special Plans was quietly established in the Office of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, to coordinate with the Pentagon "secret team."

Two published reports offer some leads on the genesis of the Sharon unit.

Lt. Col. Karen Kwiatkowsky (USAF-ret.), who worked in the Near East and South Asia Affairs office under Luti from May 2002 through February 2003, recounted an incident to reporter Jim Lobe, in which she was asked to escort a half-dozen Israelis, including two generals, from the Pentagon reception area to Feith's office. "We just followed them, because they knew exactly where they were going and moving fast," Kwiatkowsky told Lobe. When they reached Feith's office, they were waved in without signing the guest

book, a violation of Pentagon regulations established after 9/11.

On June 29, 2002, the *Washington Times* front page announced, "U.S., Israel Discuss Joint Anti-Terror Office." The article reported on a June 27 series of secret meetings in which two senior Israeli officials, Brig. Gen. David Tzur and Interior Minister Uzi Landau, conferred with Bush Administration officials about creating a joint U.S.-Israeli counter-terror office in Washington. *Washington Times* reporter Sean Salai wrote, "A Defense Department official confirmed that there had been a closed-door meeting on June 27 with the two Israeli officials, and that the meeting was attended by Deputy Undersecretary Douglas Feith." The *Times* also reported that Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Tex.) had been a leading proponent of the U.S.-Israel interface.

A 'Global Plumbers Unit'

According to U.S. and Israeli sources, Israeli collusion with OSP was already under way, informally, by the beginning of 2002. They cite the Jan. 3, 2002 Israeli seizure of the *Karine-A*, a ship carrying weapons, purportedly destined for the Palestinian Authority, as an Israeli "sting" operation, aimed at wrecking U.S. retired Marine Corps Gen. Anthony Zinni's peace mission to the Mideast, and which, the sources say, the OSP exploited to undercut Secretary of State Colin Powell.

More recently, OSP consultant Ledeen revived Iran/Contra-era contacts with Iranian wheeler-dealer Manusher Ghorbanifar, in what sources describe as, at minimum, an effort to block State Department back-channel talks with the

Iranian regime. The OSP is peddling a destabilization of the Iran regime, using the Iraq-based Mujahideen e-Khalq, a group on the State Department list of International Terrorist Organizations. One U.S. intelligence source noted that the weapons seized aboard the *Karine-A* had originated in Iran, and mooted that the Ledeem-OSP-Ghorbanifar collusion may have been a factor in the affair.

OSP staffers and “contractors,” along with other members of the neo-con cabal—including Office of Net Assessments “Islam expert” Harold Rhode, and Vice President Cheney’s chief of staff “Scooter” Libby—fed a steady stream of disinformation into Shulsky, from Sharon’s office and from Chalabi’s INC gang in London, in the run-up to the Iraq war. These off-channel, unvetted intelligence reports, according to several sources, found their way into the hands of both Vice President Cheney and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, and were used to bludgeon CIA and State Department opposition to the Iraq war.

One U.S. intelligence official labeled the neo-con cabal inside the Bush Administration “The Enterprise II,” after the Oliver North-centered Iran-Contra secret team inside the Reagan-Bush Administration. As Lt. Col. Kwiatkowski wrote in a series of articles following her resignation from the Pentagon, the OSP dealt almost exclusively with other points of the neo-con cabal inside the Bush Administration, and withheld their input from such “hostile” elements as the CIA and the State Department’s INR. At the State Department, they dealt with former AEI Vice President John Bolton, the chief arms control negotiator, and his special assistant David Wurmser, another co-author of *Clean Break* and the spouse of the Hudson Institute’s Mideast project director, Meyrav Wurmser.

The same source described the OSP and the Defense Policy Board as virtually one seamless network. Kenneth Adelman, a DPB member and close ally of Wolfowitz and Perle, was singled out as a crucial behind-the-scenes coordinator of the entire cabal.

A Ruse by Any Other Name . . .

On Aug. 12, Knut Royce reported in *Newsday* that the OSP has gone through cosmetic surgery, and is now reverting back to its original name, the Northern Gulf Affairs Office. “The name change reflects the office’s broader mission of dealing with northern Persian Gulf states now that the major combat operations in Iraq are over, senior Defense Department officials said yesterday.” With Ledeem, Rhode, and others running around with the likes of Ghorbanifar, it would appear that the OSP team is now setting its sights on Tehran, even as the situation on the ground inside Iraq deteriorates by the hour.

So far, efforts to launch a probe into the sordid OSP saga, by Congressional Democrats, have been blocked by the Republican majority under the whip of DeLay. An effort by Rep. David Obey (D-Wisc.) to audit OSP’s financial and personnel records was blocked last month.