

No End to Iraqi Resistance Without End to Occupation

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

If the continuing attacks against forces of the U.S. occupation in the bombed-out city of Fallujah have become the symbol of intransigent Iraqi resistance, the suicide bombing attack in an American mess hall in Mosul, shortly before Christmas, has documented the alarming level of insurgent infiltration into U.S. ranks. Mitch Mitchell, an analyst at the Institute for National Strategic Studies, at the U.S.'s National Defense University, called it an "incredible occurrence, that someone could have come in undetected with some kind of bomb. It blows my mind that force protection on the base is that poor."

But it is not so much a question of poor force protection, as the fact that the United States is facing a kind of organized resistance which admits of no protection. Informed sources have reported to *EIR*, that up to 50% of those Iraqi forces, both political and military, which are considered allied to the occupiers, are in fact infiltrators. In a report issued on the heels of the Mosul disaster, Anthony Cordesmann of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), stressed that sympathizers with the insurgency, within the Iraqi interim government and Iraqi forces, as well as Iraqis working for U.S.-led forces, media, and non-governmental organizations, "often provided excellent human intelligence [about U.S.-led operations] without violently taking part in the insurgency." Cordesmann said U.S. attempts to vet these Iraqis cannot solve the problem, because "it seems likely that family, clan, and ethnic loyalties have made many supposedly loyal Iraqis become at least part-time sources."

Less than a week after the Mosul bombing, which killed 22 Americans, another attack was mounted by the resistance, which was calculated to display further sophistication. Again, in Mosul, a car bomb exploded near a U.S. base and, as soon as reinforcements arrived, a second blast occurred, followed by an assault by about 50 Iraqis against the U.S. troops. The U.S. leaders had to call in warplanes to bomb the insurgents.

On Jan. 3, insurgents launched a highly professional attack, from different directions, on the armored convoy of Baghdad province governor Ali al-Haidri, which killed him and six bodyguards. The same day, five U.S. troops were killed in three separate incidents, and a car bomb exploded near the highly protected Green Zone in the capital, killing 10 and injuring 50.

Such events, according to Jürgen Hübschen, a former military attaché at the German Embassy in Baghdad, show that "the resistance fighters can apparently attack in a targeted fashion, wherever they want." This raises the question, of who is actually coordinating this highly sophisticated, increasingly flexible force. Although the official line from Washington has been that they are "foreign terrorists" belonging to the al-Qaeda network, and led inside Iraq by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, evidence points to a more uncomfortable reality: that of a highly organized, well-equipped, coordinated indigenous Iraq force, composed of former intelligence and security officials of the Saddam Hussein regime, as well as large numbers of former officers and soldiers who had been thrown onto the street, when U.S. administrator Paul Bremer dismantled the old Ba'ath party apparatus in the military, security, and civil service.

Hübschen points out that one should re-examine the list of the 50 "most wanted" persons, issued by the U.S. Administration shortly after the official fall of Baghdad; that list most probably contains a number of professionals currently leading the resistance. Specifically, he points to the fact that many leaders come from areas where the resistance has been gaining strength. Among the "key players" in the former Ba'ath Party, are figures like Lt. Gen. Sayf al-Din Fulayyih Hassan Taha al-Rawi, former Republican Guard commander, who could readily recruit former soldiers, and who has excellent information about weapons and munitions. Furthermore, there are the leaders of the former secret services, with their networks and financial means, and—most probably—significant infiltrators into the ranks of the occupation forces.

Resistance 'Bigger Than U.S. Forces'

The most explosive report on the nature and strength of the resistance came from an unexpected quarter, on Jan. 3, when Gen. Muhammad Abd Allah Shahwani, interim Iraqi Director of Intelligence Services, announced in a press conference that he believed that the forces of the resistance outnumbered those of the U.S. military. He said he believed there were 40,000 full-time fighters, and about 200,000 Iraqis involved part-time. The latter, he said, were deployed to provide intelligence, logistics, and shelter.

"I think the resistance is bigger than the U.S. military in Iraq. I think the resistance is more than 200,000 people," he added. This estimate is orders of magnitude greater than official figures presented by the United States, which have estimated the resistance forces at anywhere from a couple of thousand to 20,000.

Shahwani said "the resistance" enjoys wide backing in the provinces of Baghdad, Babil, Salah al-Din, Diyala, Nineveh, and Tamim. He pointed out that the resistance had drawn on the former Army of 400,000, and was benefitting from strong tribal ties. He also noted the socio-economic disaster as contributing to recruitment. "People are fed up after two years without improvement. People are fed up with no secu-

city, no electricity, people feel they have to do something,” he said. “The Army was hundreds of thousands. You would expect some veterans would join with their relatives; each one has sons and brothers.”

In Shahwani’s view, there are numerous city neighborhoods and small towns around central Iraq which have become no-man’s-lands, despite U.S. military operations in Samarra and Fallujah. The battle of Fallujah in his view was no victory for the U.S.-led forces: “What we have now is an empty city, almost destroyed, and most of the insurgents are free. They have gone either to Mosul or to Baghdad or other areas.” He also named areas in Baghdad where various groups had become virtually untouchable.

Although he did not say that the resistance was winning, he stated, “I would say they aren’t losing.”

The startling statements by this interim intelligence director, who is working with and under U.S. occupation forces, were considered serious by two U.S. experts, Bruce Hoffman, former advisor to the U.S. occupation in Iraq and now with the Rand Corporation, and Anthony Cordesmann. Hoffman said he believed the estimate was plausible, though it was impossible to know for sure. Cordesmann said, “The Iraqi figures do recognize the reality that the insurgency in Iraq has broad support in Sunni areas, while the U.S. figures downplay this to the point of denial.”

Former UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter added an important hypothesis, to fill out this picture of the nature of the Iraqi resistance. In an op-ed published in *Al-Jazeera* on Dec. 14, Ritter said that, based on recent discussions with former members of Saddam Hussein’s Mukhabarat (intelligence service), he believed that the “myth” of Jordanian-born al-Qaeda-linked terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, was deliberately created, and played by the Mukhabarat.

Scapegoating Syria and Iran

The response to the escalating resistance, and expanding U.S. casualties, on the part of the Bush Administration’s neocons, has been to accuse Syria and Iran of supporting, or even orchestrating the resistance. Inside Iraq, it has been interim Defense Minister Hazem Shalaan, a man with a long history of collaboration with British and U.S. intelligence services, who has been most vocal in pointing the finger at Damascus and Tehran; interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi (also a long-term Anglo-American intelligence asset) has repeated the charges, and demanded that Syria hand over “wanted elements and those accused of planning and executing attacks,” to the authorities in Baghdad. That numerous Iraqi exiles have sought refuge in Syria—as well as in Jordan, where Allawi himself has travelled to meet with them—is no secret; but that they are the string-pullers behind the armed insurgency, is not credible, from a military standpoint. Nor is the accusation, made by the U.S. and Iraqi governments, that Syrian fighters are crossing the border in droves to join the conflict; not only have Syrian authorities taken journalists to observe their

heavily fortified border, but U.S. forces have been engaged in joint patrols there as well.

The accusations against Iran are of a slightly different nature: that Iran is infiltrating the country with its own nationals, to stack the voter lists for the planned January elections, and de facto take over the country. That Iran has influence in Iraq is no secret, nor is it new. Many high-level Iraqi Shi’ite clerics and political figures, who had been oppressed or expelled by Saddam Hussein—like the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI)—found refuge in Iran, especially after Operation Desert Storm in 1991. Following the 2003 U.S. war and invasion, these groups, who are Iraqi Arab Shi’ites, not Iranians, returned.

What the anti-Iranian hysteria points to, is the fear in Washington, shared by some regional groups in Jordan and Saudi Arabia, that an overwhelming electoral victory for the main Shi’ite electoral list, led by the SCIRI’s Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, and backed by Ayatollah Ali Hussein al-Sistani, could usher in close ties between a new Iraqi government and Iran, a country still officially classified as part of Bush’s “axis of evil.” The geostrategic and political stature of Iran, which is already a regional power, would be significantly enhanced.

Scenarios for Partition

In this light, geopolitical scenarios are being tossed around. How would Washington respond to an electoral victory of the predominantly Shi’ite forces? If they were to reject it, informed sources say that the Shi’ites would join the resistance, and the war would enter an entirely new phase.

Henry Kissinger has openly called for partition of the country, in the event of a Shi’ite victory. Speaking to CNN in December, Kissinger said he thought there was a growing possibility that “a Shia government which is not going to be a genuine democracy” would win the elections. “And if it reaches this point, then we really have no interest in keeping Iraq united. Then we might just as well let each of these competing ethnic groups create their own self-government, rather than imposing a theocracy on, or cooperate with creating a theocracy for all of Iraq.”

In recent interviews, Lyndon LaRouche stressed that the chaos now convulsing Iraq is not the result of mistaken policies or poor planning, but a deliberate policy. The breakup of the country into different regions—the Kurds in the north, the Shi’ites in the south, and a Sunni no-man’s-land in the center—would cohere with this intention. Current operations to establish permanent U.S. military bases in each of the main regions of the country, also cohere with the perspective of partition.

The Way Out

The planned Jan. 30 elections may not take place at all, or, if they do, may be rendered irrelevant by the chaos engulfing the country. Powerful forces in Iraq are demanding that elections be postponed, until they could be held under

secure conditions. Among these are the Association of Muslim Scholars, the largest and most prestigious Sunni organization which is boycotting the elections; the Iraqi Islamic Party, another Sunni group which had an electoral slate, but withdrew it on Dec. 27, because of the authorities' refusal to delay elections until all parts of Iraq could vote. A party leader said that 6 out of 18 provinces would not be able to hold credible elections in the current circumstances. Senior Sunni political figure Adnan Pachachi, though a candidate on another list, also called for postponement, on the same grounds. The armed resistance is, obviously, also opposing elections, and targetting electoral officials and offices as the prospective date nears.

Proposals have been floated by U.S. officials, who are frantically committed to the January date, in hopes of legitimizing the occupation with an "elected" government. Secretary of State Colin Powell endorsed a proposal floated in the *New York Times* on Dec. 26, whereby a number of Sunni candidates would be "placed" in the new National Assembly, in order to ensure ethnic and sectarian representation, a kind of affirmative action ploy. This proposal, which is tantamount to the occupying powers' handpicking a few puppets with Sunni credentials to serve in the parliament, has been rejected by Sunni and Shi'ite forces alike, as an unacceptable interference into the elections. Any Iraqi endorsing such an approach would discredit himself thoroughly.

The thinking behind such a proposal is faulty at the core. Its premise is that an Iraqi government can only be legitimate if it reflects the ethnic, religious composition of the country. The absurdity of such a notion is readily exposed, when one considers what it would mean in the United States, to follow such thinking: Should a U.S. government only then be legitimate if it has certain quotas of African-Americans, Anglo-Saxon Protestants, Asian-Americans, Italian-Americans, Polish-Americans, and so on?

It should be kept in mind, that the "ethnicization" of Iraq was a deliberate creation of the occupation, from the outset. And as a result of this, the national identity of many Iraqis has been undermined, and replaced by an ethnic or sectarian identity. This has only fuelled the civil strife.

The solution to the Iraq crisis lies not in "balancing" the ethnic-sectarian composition of a government, but in ending the occupation, so that a real process of self-determination might take place. As specified in the LaRouche Doctrine of April 2004, the security, territorial integrity, and national sovereignty of Iraq can only be achieved through an end to the occupation. What is required is a statement of U.S. intent to end the occupation, within a specified time-frame; the rehabilitation, under a nationalist, professional military leadership, of the military and security apparatuses; reversal of the de-Ba'athification of the civil service which was unlawfully disbanded; and the creation of a regional security arrangement, bolstered by regional economic cooperation agreements for developing the entire region. Nothing short of that will work.