

Blood Money

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"In the counsels of Government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the Military Industrial Complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists, and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes." - President Dwight Eisenhower, January 1961.

George W. Bush gave a speech Wednesday night before the Godfather of conservative Washington think tanks, the American Enterprise Institute. In his speech, Bush quantified his coming war with Iraq as part of a larger struggle to bring pro-western governments into power in the Middle East. Couched in hopeful language describing peace and freedom for all, the speech was in fact the closest articulation of the actual plan for Iraq that has yet been heard from the administration.

In a previous article from February 21, the ideological connections between an extremist right-wing Washington think tank and the foreign policy aspirations of the Bush administration were detailed.

The Project for a New American Century, or PNAC, is a group founded in 1997 that has been agitating since its inception for a war with Iraq. PNAC was the driving force behind the drafting and passage of the Iraqi Liberation Act, a bill that painted a veneer of legality over the ultimate designs behind such a conflict. The names of every prominent PNAC member were on a letter delivered to President Clinton in 1998 which castigated him for not implementing the Act by driving troops into Baghdad.

PNAC has funneled millions of taxpayer dollars to a Hussein opposition group called the Iraqi National Congress, and to Iraq's heir-apparent, Ahmed Chalabi, despite the fact that Chalabi was sentenced in absentia by a Jordanian court to 22 years in prison on 31 counts of bank fraud. Chalabi and the INC have, over the years, gathered support for their cause by promising oil contracts to anyone that would help to put them in

power in Iraq.

Most recently, PNAC created a new group called The Committee for the Liberation of Iraq. Staffed entirely by PNAC members, The Committee has set out to "educate" Americans via cable news connections about the need for war in Iraq. This group met recently with National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice regarding the ways and means of this education.

Who is PNAC? Its members include:

- * Vice President Dick Cheney, one of the PNAC founders, who served as Secretary of Defense for Bush Sr.;
- * I. Lewis Libby, Cheney's top national security assistant;
- * Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, also a founding member, along with four of his chief aides including;
- * Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, arguably the ideological father of the group;
- * Eliot Abrams, prominent member of Bush's National Security Council, who was pardoned by Bush Sr. in the Iran/Contra scandal;
- * John Bolton, who serves as Undersecretary for Arms Control and International Security in the Bush administration;
- * Richard Perle, former Reagan administration official and present chairman of the powerful Defense Policy Board;
- * Randy Scheunemann, President of the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq, who was Trent Lott's national security aide and who served as an advisor to Rumsfeld on Iraq in 2001;
- * Bruce Jackson, Chairman of PNAC, a position he took after serving for years as vice president of weapons manufacturer Lockheed-Martin, and who also headed the Republican Party Platform subcommittee for National Security and Foreign Policy during the 2000 campaign. His section of the 2000 GOP Platform explicitly called for the removal of Saddam Hussein;

* William Kristol, noted conservative writer for the Weekly Standard, a magazine owned along with the Fox News Network by conservative media mogul Rupert Murdoch.

The Project for the New American Century seeks to establish what they call 'Pax Americana' across the globe. Essentially, their goal is to transform America, the sole remaining superpower, into a planetary empire by force of arms. A report released by PNAC in September of 2000 entitled 'Rebuilding America's Defenses' codifies this plan, which requires a massive increase in defense spending and the fighting of several major theater wars in order to establish American dominance. The first has been achieved in Bush's new budget plan, which calls for the exact dollar amount to be spent on defense that was requested by PNAC in 2000. Arrangements are underway for the fighting of the wars.

The men from PNAC are in a perfect position to see their foreign policy schemes, hatched in 1997, brought into reality. They control the White House, the Pentagon and Defense Department, by way of this the armed forces and intelligence communities, and have at their feet a Republican-dominated Congress that will rubber-stamp virtually everything on their wish list.

The first step towards the establishment of this Pax Americana is, and has always been, the removal of Saddam Hussein and the establishment of an American protectorate in Iraq. The purpose of this is threefold: 1) To acquire control of the oilheads so as to fund the entire enterprise; 2) To fire a warning shot across the bows of every leader in the Middle East; 3) To establish in Iraq a military staging area for the eventual invasion and overthrow of several Middle Eastern regimes, including some that are allies of the United States.

Another PNAC signatory, author Norman Podhoretz, quantified this aspect of the grand plan in the September 2002 issue of his journal, 'Commentary'. In it, Podhoretz notes that the regimes, "that richly deserve to be overthrown and replaced, are not confined to the three singled-out members of the axis of evil. At a minimum, the axis should extend to Syria and Lebanon and Libya, as well as 'friends' of America like the Saudi royal family and Egypt's Hosni Mubarak, along with the Palestinian Authority, whether headed by Arafat or one of his henchmen." At bottom, for Podhoretz, this action is about "the long-overdue internal reform and modernization of Islam."

This casts Bush's speech to AEI on Wednesday in a completely different light.

Weapons of mass destruction are a smokescreen. Paeans to the idea of Iraqi liberation and democratization are cynical in their inception. At the end of the day, this is not even about oil. The drive behind this war is ideological in nature, a crusade to 'reform' the religion of Islam as it exists in both government and society within the Middle East. Once this is accomplished, the road to empire will be open, ten lanes wide and steppin' out over the line.

At the end of the day, however, ideology is only good for bull sessions in the board room and the bar. Something has to grease the skids, to make the whole thing worthwhile to those involved, and entice those outside the loop to get into the game.

Thus, the payout.

It is well known by now that Dick Cheney, before becoming Vice President, served as chairman and chief executive of the Dallas-based petroleum corporation Halliburton. During his tenure, according to oil industry executives and United Nations records, Halliburton did a brisk \$73 million in business with Saddam Hussein's Iraq. While working face-to-face with Hussein, Cheney and Halliburton were also moving into position to capitalize upon Hussein's removal from power. In October of 1995, the same month Cheney was made CEO of Halliburton, that company announced a deal that would put it first in line should war break out in Iraq. Their job: To take control of burning oil wells, put out the fires, and prepare them for service.

Another corporation that stands to do well by a war in Iraq is Brown & Root, a subsidiary of Halliburton. Ostensibly, Brown & Root is in the construction business, and thus has won a share of the \$900 million government contract for the rebuilding of post-war Iraqi bridges, roads and other basic infrastructure. This is but the tip of the financial iceberg, as the oil wells will also have to be repaired after parent-company Halliburton puts out the fires.

More ominously is Brown & Root's stock in trade: the building of permanent American military bases. There are twelve permanent U.S. bases in Kosovo today, all built and maintained by Brown & Root for a multi-billion dollar profit. If anyone should wonder why the

administration has not offered an exit strategy to the Iraq war plans, the presence of Brown & Root should answer them succinctly. We do not plan on exiting. In all likelihood, Brown & Root is in Iraq to build permanent bases there, from which attacks upon other Middle Eastern nations can be staged and managed.

Again, this casts Bush's speech on Wednesday in a new light.

Being at the center of the action is nothing new for Halliburton and Brown & Root. The two companies have worked closely with governments in Algeria, Angola, Bosnia, Burma, Croatia, Haiti, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Somalia during the worst chapters in those nation's histories. Many environmental and human rights groups claim that Cheney, Halliburton and Brown & Root were, in fact, centrally involved in these fiascos. More recently, Brown & Root was contracted by the Defense Department to build cells for detainees in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The bill for that one project came to \$300 million.

Cheney became involved with PNAC officially in 1997, while still profiting from deals between Halliburton and Hussein. One year later, Cheney and PNAC began actively and publicly agitating for war on Iraq. They have not stopped to this very day.

Another company with a vested interest in both war on Iraq and massively increased defense spending is the Carlyle Group. Carlyle, a private global investment firm with more than \$12.5 billion in capital under management, was formed in 1987. Its interests are spread across 164 companies, including telecommunications firms and defense contractors. It is staffed at the highest levels by former members of the Reagan and Bush Sr. administrations. Former President George H. W. Bush is himself employed by Carlyle as a senior advisor, as is long-time Bush family advisor and former Secretary of State James Baker III.

One company acquired by Carlyle is United Defense, a weapons manufacturer based in Arlington, VA. United Defense provides the Defense Department with combat vehicle systems, fire support, combat support vehicle systems, weapons delivery systems, amphibious assault vehicles, combat support services and naval armaments. Specifically, United Defense manufactures the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, the M113 armored personnel carrier, the M88A2 Recovery Vehicle, the Grizzly, the M9 ACE, the Composite Armored Vehicle, the M6 Linebacker, the M7 BFIST, the Armored Gun System, the M4 Command and Control

Vehicle, the Battle Command Vehicle, the Paladin, the Crusader, and Electric Gun/Pulse Power weapons technology.

In other words, everything a growing Defense Department, a war in Iraq, and a burgeoning American military empire needs.

Ironically, one group that won't profit from Carlyle's involvement in American military buildup is the family of Osama bin Laden. The bin Laden family fortune was amassed by Mohammed bin Laden, father of Osama, who built a multi-billion dollar construction empire through contracts with the Saudi government. The Saudi BinLaden Group, as this company is called, was heavily invested in Carlyle for years. Specifically, they were invested in Carlyle's Partners II Fund, which includes in that portfolio United Defense and other weapons manufacturers.

This relationship was described in a September 27, 2001 article in the Wall Street Journal entitled 'Bin Laden Family Could Profit From Jump in Defense Spending Due to Ties to US Bank.' The 'bank' in question was the Carlyle Group. A follow-up article published by the Journal on September 28 entitled ' Bin Laden Family Has Intricate Ties With Washington - Saudi Clan Has Had Access To Influential Republicans ' further describes the relationship. In October of 2001, Saudi BinLaden and Carlyle severed their relationship by mutual agreement. The timing is auspicious.

There are a number of depths to be plumbed in all of this. The Bush administration has claimed all along that this war with Iraq is about Saddam Hussein's connections to terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, though through it all they have roundly failed to establish any basis for either accusation. On Wednesday, Bush went further to claim that the war is about liberating the Iraqi people and bringing democracy to the Middle East. This ignores cultural realities on the ground in Iraq and throughout the region that, salted with decades of deep mistrust for American motives, make such a democracy movement brought at the point of the sword utterly impossible to achieve.

This movement, cloaked in democracy, is in fact a PNAC-inspired push for an American global empire. It behooves Americans to understand that there is a great difference between being the citizen of a constitutional democracy and being a citizen of an empire. The establishment of an empire requires some significant sacrifices.

Essential social, medical, educational and retirement services will have to be gutted so that those funds can be directed towards a necessary military buildup. Actions taken abroad to establish the preeminence of American power, most specifically in the Middle East, will bring a torrent of terrorist attacks to the home front. Such attacks will bring about the final suspension of constitutional rights and the rule of habeas corpus, as we will find ourselves under martial law. In the end, however, this may be inevitable. An empire cannot function with the slow, cumbersome machine of a constitutional democracy on its back. Empires must be ruled with speed and ruthlessness, in a manner utterly antithetical to the way in which America has been governed for 227 years.

And yes, of course, a great many people will die.

It would be one thing if all of this was based purely on the ideology of our leaders. It is another thing altogether to consider the incredible profit motive behind it all. The President, his father, the Vice President, a whole host of powerful government officials, along with stockholders and executives from Halliburton and Carlyle, stand to make a mint off this war. Long-time corporate sponsors from the defense, construction and petroleum industries will likewise profit enormously.

Critics of the Bush administration like to bandy about the word "fascist" when speaking of George. The image that word conjures is of Nazi stormtroopers marching in unison towards Hitler's Final Solution. This does not at all fit. It is better, in this matter, to view the Bush administration through the eyes of Benito Mussolini. Mussolini, dubbed 'the father of Fascism,' defined the word in a far more pertinent fashion. "Fascism," said Mussolini, "should more properly be called corporatism, since it is the merger of state and corporate power."

Boycott the French, the Germans, and the other 114 nations who stand against this Iraq war all you wish. France and Germany do not oppose Bush because they are cowards, or because they enjoy the existence of Saddam Hussein. France and Germany stand against the Bush administration because they intend to stop this Pax Americana in its tracks if they can. They have seen militant fascism up close and personal before, and wish never to see it again.

Would that we Americans could be so wise.

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