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## Regime Change In Iran? One Man's Secret Plan.

*Iran's Chalabi? Manucher Ghorbanifar says he talked secretly with Pentagon officials about plans for regime change in Iran*

By Mark Hosenball

What was international man of mystery Manucher Ghorbanifar up to when he met with top Pentagon experts on Iran? In a NEWSWEEK interview in Paris last month, Ghorbanifar, a former Iranian spy who helped launch the Iran-contra affair, says one of the things he discussed with Defense officials Harold Rhode and Larry Franklin at meetings in Rome in December 2001 (and in Paris last June with only Rhode) was regime change in Iran. Ghorbanifar says there are Iranians capable of organizing a peaceful revolution against the ruling theocracy. He says his contacts know where Saddam Hussein hid \$340 million in cash. With American help, he says, this money could be retrieved and half used to overthrow the ayatollahs. (The other half would be turned over to the United States.) Ghorbanifar says he told his U.S. interlocutors that ousting the mullahs would be a breakthrough in the war on terror because top Qaeda leaders, including Osama bin Laden, are in Iran. ("You won't be surprised if you find that Saddam Hussein is on one of the Iranian islands.") Among other intel Ghorbanifar says he and associates gave the Pentagon: a warning that terrorists in Iraq would attack hotels. He also says he had advance info about Iranian nukes and a terrorist plot in Canada. Financial gain was never his objective, he says: "We wanted to give them the money, not to take the money."

The Pentagon cut off contact with Ghorbanifar, whom the CIA years ago labeled as a fabricator, after news about the talks broke last summer. But controversy about the Iranian still reverberates in Washington. Administration sources say that when White House officials OK'd what they believed was a Pentagon effort to gather info about Iranian terrorist activity in Afghanistan, they didn't know Ghorbanifar was involved. When senior officials learned in 2002 about Ghorbanifar—and that regime change was on his agenda—they decided further contacts were "not worth pursuing." But Ghorbanifar says he continued to communicate with Rhode, and sometimes Franklin, by phone and fax five or six times a week until shortly after the Paris meeting last summer. (The Pentagon says any such contacts were sporadic and not authorized by top officials.) In Congress, investigations into the Ghorbanifar story have sparked partisan tensions. Democrats want to know if the Ghorbanifar contacts are evidence of "rogue" espionage by a secretive Pentagon unit that allegedly dealt with controversial Iraqi exile Ahmad Chalabi; Republicans want to know whether the CIA refused to meet with potential informants merely because the middleman—Ghorbanifar—was someone the agency distrusted. A Defense official says any discussion that Ghorbanifar had with Pentagon experts about regime change was a "one-way conversation."

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## U.S. Intelligence in Iraq

**CONNIE BROD:** Robert Dreyfuss is a contributing editor for Mother Jones and the January-February edition of Mother Jones has the hit cover story by him called, "The Lie Factory." What is the lie factory?

**ROBERT DREYFUSS [Contributing Editor, Mother Jones]:** Well, I called the lie factory. It's kind of broader than that. There was lies, but also distortions and exaggerations. I'm referring to the unit inside the Pentagon that prepared intelligence reports and talking papers for senior U.S. officials in the period going up to the war with Iraq.

Now, that the war is over and we know that we found exactly zero evidence of ties between Iraq and al Qaeda and zero evidence of ties between Iraq and weapons of mass destruction, it's way past time that we went back and looked at how did they get this so wrong? The administration is already trying to change the subject, as you know, they're saying, well, it wasn't about weapons of mass destruction, Saddam was a bad guy and the world is safer now. I guess I'm amazed that he's been able to get away with that so far, the President.

**BROD:** You went all the way back to the day after the President took office to begin this story about this office. What happened that day?

**DREYFUSS:** Well, one day after the President was sworn in they had a meeting of their national security team. And one of the top items on the agenda of that meeting -- this was nine months before 9/11 was regime change in Iraq. And of course there's a reason for that, many of the senior officials who took up places in the Bush administration have long been on record, some of them for as long as a decade going back to the first Gulf War that the United States had a responsibility to go in militarily and get rid of Saddam Hussein.

So there had been a drumbeat from a fairly small but well organized group of former U.S. officials, many of them intelligence people, and, of course, the Iraqi exile groups that they were associated with to bring about regime change. And that meeting that you referred to

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really was the first of many efforts to start to focus this administration on Iraq. And they started to putting into place the people in various parts of the Pentagon, especially who would undertake that. And of course it wasn't until after 9/11 that the political will suddenly materialized and they realized that they could sell this policy, first of all to the President and then second of all to the American people.

BROD: Some of the figures who you talk about in here are very well known -- Newt Gingrich, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, but you also concentrate a lot on a gentleman who may not be as well known, Douglas Feith. Who is he? And what was his role in this office -- secret office set up?

DREYFUSS: Well, Doug Feith works directly under Paul Wolfowitz as the person at the Pentagon in charge of policy. He's a senior official at the Pentagon, a civilian, not a military person. And he and Wolfowitz both have long roots in the neo-conservative movement. Doug Feith's law firm, Feith and Zell, which had been around for the years before the administration took power, has a big Israeli office and a lot of ties to the right wing Israeli government, the settler movement in Israel, and so forth. And Feith was a leading advocate in the 1990s for going to war in Iraq long before the Bush administration took office.

So he was kind of an ideologue and it was his job to put together the team that would undertake the actual war planning inside the Pentagon and not just war planning in a technical sense, but also the policy and propaganda aspects of how to justify that war.

BROD: Now, you talk -- this office, was it physically an office? Could people go there?

DREYFUSS: Well, it was physically an office. What happened was under Doug Feith there is a second office which is sort of the regional planning components of the Pentagon, there's one for each part of the world, and the Near East and South Asian affairs office, which is called NESAs, was headed up by a man named Bill Lookey, who is a former Newt Gingrich aide who is also a longtime neoconservative and a U.S. Navy captain, former captain. And Bill Lookey headed up the office called NESAs. And that was because Iraq is located in Near East, or Middle East. That was the office that Feith used to build up and create as the Office of Special Plans. They gave that name to it in 2002 because they didn't want to tip their hand that they were definitely planning a war, so they gave it a meaningless name, special plans. But it was really the office for Iraq plans.

BROD: And how did the office work?

DREYFUSS: Well, it started out actually as an intelligence group of just two or three people and it expanded to four or five people, but it started out right after 9/11 in 2001 when Doug Feith and a man named Harold Rhode, who is another Pentagon official and a neoconservative Middle East expert who speaks many languages from the region. And some others started putting together a team to try to link Iraq to what happened on 9/11. As we all know now, there was no connection between Iraq and 9/11. But they brought in a man named David Wormser who was at the time the head of Middle East Policy at the American Enterprise Institute.

Now, AEI, American Enterprise Institute is where people like Newt Gingrich and Richard Perle and many other neoconservatives and other conservatives sort of hang out and use as their exile foreign policy shop. Wormser was brought in along with a guy named Mike Maloof and they were the first two people who set up this little intelligence unit in the Pentagon that eventually grew and expanded and started churning out all of the misleading and distorted and exaggerated efforts -- pieces of information that were then handed to the various U.S. officials to run the propaganda to justify the war.

They wanted to go into Iraq for grand strategic reasons, but they couldn't just say that and get the public behind them and certainly not Congress behind them. So they had to create the idea that Iraq was an imminent threat and the only way to do that was to say that Iraq was tied to terrorists who were planning to strike us and that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction that could strike us.

So Wormser and Maloof and then some of the other people who were brought into this job under Bill Lookey, under a guy named Abe Shulsky who was later brought in to run the Office of Special Plans, not only started picking and choosing among all the intelligence that's available, you know, there are tens of thousands of bits of intelligence that go into a conclusion. Well, they discarded the ones they didn't like and they seized on the ones that justified the cause that they were trying to pursue. And they would write up talking points in papers and so forth, which were not real intelligence, in fact, none of these people were intelligence professionals; they were ideologists, they were people who had a mission. And there's no disputing this, in other words, you can dispute whether the war was a good thing or a bad thing and you can dispute whether Bush is kind of a dunce or a genius. But you can't dispute the fact that this office was made of people who were first of all not intelligence professionals and who purged -- fired, transferred a number of people who were intelligence professionals because they disagreed with the conclusions that these ideologists were coming to.

They brought into this office as it expanded into probably a couple of dozen people with maybe 50 or 100 people who would pass in and out of it as contractors and helpers and supporters, they brought into people who were committed ideologically to the cause and who would come up with the conclusion they wanted. So all of the information that we later heard from people like Vice President Cheney and even the President about the aluminum tubes, about the uranium from Niger, about the unmanned aerial vehicles that could strike the United States, about thousands of tons of terrible gasses and chemicals that were stored in Iraq, about its reconstituted nuclear program, about biological mobile labs, none of this existed. It was all a complete mythology.

BROD: This is a complicated story and you have laid out the kind of the flow chart for this office in your piece and if our camera could just go down you'll see some of the names of the people that you have talked about. Our phone lines are also open. You can start dialing now if you're interested in talking with Mr. Dreyfuss.

My question to you is: Who are your sources for this?

DREYFUSS: Well, many of the people we talked to, we talked to on the record and they are quoted in there. I think the most courageous person of all is Lieutenant Colonel Karen Ketkowsky who is now retired, but she served in the Office of NESAs, the Near East and South Asian affairs office for about a year and saw this up close. And she described to me in detail sitting on a wood porch in her farm now, she lives out in western Virginia. She described to me in detail how people she knew were purged and forced into retirement in this office and how people were encouraged to come up with the kind of conclusions that the President and the Vice President seemed to want. She talked about how Vice President Cheney had his staff working directly with this Pentagon office, which is highly unusual. In other words, this office was four levels down in the Pentagon. Normally its work would go to Bill Lookey, and then to Doug Feith, and then to Paul Wolfowitz, and then to Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld. But, in fact, you had people like Newt Gingrich coming in constantly, people like Richard Perle and people like Vice President Cheney and his office, who were tasking this unit, saying what about this and what about that? And getting reports from them. I mean it's highly unusual for the Vice President's office, which is not part of the Pentagon, as we know to have a direct working relationship with an office in the bowels of the Pentagon's civilian bureaucracy.

BROD: Let's get to some phone calls for you, first off, Westwood, New Jersey, Republican. Good morning.

CALLER: Connie, happy New Year to you and Robert.

DREYFUSS: Thank you.

CALLER: I'm very, very interested in your flow chart and I'm a veteran of World War II. My parents taught me never to lie. And so lies are very important to me. The big lie at the present time, I think, is that judges have the right to make laws and I think you should be more interested in that because that has more far-reaching effects on everything, including what you're talking about. The big lie is that, for example, in Roe v. Wade.

BROD: Caller, I'm sorry, but this is really way off the subject of what we're talking about this morning. We're going to let you go and try to stay on topic this morning. Burlington, Massachusetts, Democrat.

CALLER: Hi, good morning, Robert Dreyfuss.

DREYFUSS: Good morning.

CALLER: Fantastic subject this morning. Very similar to really an awesome chapter in the Al Franken book about lies and how that was -- when that administration came in it seemed like they were really trying to warn them about terrorist activities and they were trying to ignore it and ignore it and put their own thing into place and I'm sorry I don't have the book in front of me, but it's a fantastic chapter right next to which you're talking about and I think everybody should read it.

BROD: Have you read it, Mr. Dreyfuss?

DREYFUSS: I haven't read Al's book yet, but it's on my list of New Year's reading.

BROD: Greenville, South Carolina. Republican.

CALLER: Good morning, how are you?

BROD: Great.

CALLER: I think that his whole premise is a joke. And I think that you're just trying to grasp with straws to put down President Bush who is doing a great job by the way I might add.

BROD: Grasping at straws, Mr. Dreyfuss?

DREYFUSS: That's a silly comment. The President may be doing a great job or not doing a great job. This is a story about whether there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, which was the main rationale for mobilizing our entire nation to go to war. And the things weren't there and I think we're going to ask why and what happened and why was the President so wrong? I mean Senator Bill Nelson from Florida said the other day that he was told in a closed briefing that Iraq had unmanned aerial vehicles that can carry chemical weapons and biological weapons to the East Coast of the United States. Things like this are simply not true. When we finally got there we found these rickety old Wright brothers looking planes that couldn't have gotten out of Baghdad airport, which were not really military by the way at all.

So the kinds of exaggerations and distortions that got into the President's speeches, he said that in Cincinnati in a modified way about these vehicles that could attack the United States are ludicrous. And I'm just stunned at the fact that even supporters of the President and Republicans in Congress just dismissed this and say, well, Iraq is better off, so why are we bothering even to talk about these weapons when that was hammered and hammered and hammered for months that Iraq was an urgent threat to the United States.

BROD: Besides writing for Mother Jones as a contributing editor, Mr. Dreyfuss is also a contributing editor for The Nation magazine and a contributing writer for The American Prospect and a frequent contributor to Rolling Stone.

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## The Lie Factory

*Only weeks after 9/11, the Bush administration set up a secret Pentagon unit to create the case for invading Iraq. Here is the inside story for how they pushed disinformation and bogus intelligence and led the nation to war.*

By Robert Dreyfuss and Jason Vest

It's a crisp fall day in western Virginia, a hundred miles from Washington, D.C., and a breeze is rustling the red and gold leaves of the Shenandoah hills. On the weather-beaten wood porch of a ramshackle 90-year-old farmhouse, at the end of a winding dirt-and-gravel road, Lt. Colonel Karen Kwiatkowski is perched on a plastic chair, wearing shorts, a purple sweatshirt, and muddy sneakers. Two scrawny dogs and a lone cat are on the prowl, and the air is filled with swarms

So far, she says, no investigators have come knocking. Not from the Central Intelligence Agency, which conducted an internal inquiry into intelligence on Iraq, not from the congressional intelligence committees, not from the president's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. All of those bodies are ostensibly looking into the Bush administration's prewar Iraq intelligence, amid charges that the White House and the Pentagon exaggerated, distorted, or just plain lied about Iraq's links to Al Qaeda terrorists and its possession of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. In her hands, Kwiatkowski holds several pieces of the puzzle. Yet she, along with a score of other career officers recently retired or shuffled off to other jobs, has not been approached by anyone.

Kwiatkowski, 43, a now-retired Air Force officer who served in the Pentagon's Near East and South Asia (NESA) unit in the year before the invasion of Iraq, observed how the Pentagon's Iraq war-planning unit manufactured scare stories about Iraq's weapons and ties to terrorists. "It wasn't intelligence-it was propaganda," she says. "They'd take a little bit of intelligence, cherry-pick it, make it sound much more exciting, usually by taking it out of context, often by juxtaposition of two pieces of information that don't belong together." It was by turning such bogus intelligence into talking points for U.S. officials-including ominous lines in speeches by President Bush and Vice President Cheney, along with Secretary of State Colin Powell's testimony at the U.N. Security Council last February-that the administration pushed American public opinion into supporting an unnecessary war.

Until now, the story of how the Bush administration produced its wildly exaggerated estimates of the threat posed by Iraq has never been revealed in full. But, for the first time, a detailed investigation by Mother Jones, based on dozens of interviews-some on the record, some with officials who insisted on anonymity-exposes the workings of a secret Pentagon intelligence unit and of the Defense Department's war-planning task force, the Office of Special Plans. It's the story of a close-knit team of ideologues who spent a decade or more hammering out plans for an attack on Iraq and who used the events of September 11, 2001, to set it into motion.

SIX MONTHS AFTER THE END of major combat in Iraq, the United States had spent \$300 million



trying to find banned weapons in Iraq, and President Bush was seeking \$600 million more to extend the search. Not found were Iraq's Scuds and other long-range missiles, thousands of barrels and tons of anthrax and botulism stock, sarin and VX nerve agents, mustard gas, biological and chemical munitions, mobile labs for producing biological weapons, and any and all evidence of a reconstituted nuclear-arms program, all of which had been repeatedly cited as justification for the war. Also missing was evidence of Iraqi collaboration with Al Qaeda.

The reports, virtually all false, of Iraqi weapons and terrorism ties emanated from an apparatus that began to gestate almost as soon as the Bush administration took power. In the very first meeting of the Bush national-security team, one day after President Bush took the oath of office in January 2001, the issue of invading Iraq was raised, according to one of the participants in the meeting-and officials all the way down the line started to get the message, long before 9/11. Indeed, the Bush team at the Pentagon hadn't even been formally installed before Paul Wolfowitz, the deputy secretary of Defense, and Douglas J. Feith, undersecretary of Defense for policy, began putting together what would become the vanguard for regime change in Iraq.

Both Wolfowitz and Feith have deep roots in the neoconservative movement. One of the most influential Washington neoconservatives in the foreign-policy establishment during the Republicans' wilderness years of the 1990s, Wolfowitz has long held that not taking Baghdad in 1991 was a grievous mistake. He and others now prominent in the administration said so repeatedly over the past decade in a slew of letters and policy papers from neoconservative groups like the Project for the New American Century and the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq. Feith, a former aide to Richard Perle at the Pentagon in the 1980s and an activist in far-right Zionist circles, held the view that there was no difference between U.S. and Israeli security policy and that the best way to secure both countries' future was to solve the Israeli-Palestinian problem not by serving as a broker, but with the United States as a force for "regime change" in the region.

Called in to help organize the Iraq war-planning team was a longtime Pentagon official, Harold Rhode, a specialist on Islam who speaks Hebrew, Arabic, Turkish, and Farsi. Though Feith would not be officially confirmed until July 2001, career military and civilian officials in NESA began to watch his office with concern after Rhode set up shop in Feith's office in early January. Rhode, seen by many veteran staffers as an ideological gadfly, was officially assigned to the Pentagon's Office of Net Assessment, an in-house Pentagon think tank headed by fellow neocon Andrew Marshall. Rhode helped Feith lay down the law about the department's new anti-Iraq, and broadly anti-Arab, orientation. In one telling incident, Rhode accosted and harangued a visiting senior Arab diplomat, telling him that there would be no "bartering in the bazaar anymore.... You're going to have to sit up and pay attention when we say so."

Rhode refused to be interviewed for this story, saying cryptically, "Those who speak, pay."

According to insiders, Rhode worked with Feith to purge career Defense officials who weren't sufficiently enthusiastic about the muscular anti-Iraq crusade that Wolfowitz and Feith wanted. Rhode appeared to be "pulling people out of nooks and crannies of the Defense Intelligence Agency and other places to replace us with," says a former analyst. "They wanted nothing to do with the professional staff. And they wanted us the fuck out of there."

The unofficial, off-site recruitment office for Feith and Rhode was the American Enterprise Institute, a right-wing think tank whose 12th-floor conference room in Washington is named for the dean of neoconservative defense strategists, the late Albert Wohlstetter, an influential RAND analyst and University of Chicago mathematician. Headquartered at AEI is Richard Perle, Wohlstetter's prize protege, the godfather of the AEI-Defense Department nexus of neoconservatives who was chairman of

the Pentagon's influential Defense Policy Board. Rhode, along with Michael Rubin, a former AEI staffer who is also now at the Pentagon, was a ubiquitous presence at AEI conferences on Iraq over the past two years, and the two Pentagon officials seemed almost to be serving as stage managers for the AEI events, often sitting in the front row and speaking in stage whispers to panelists and AEI officials. Just after September 11, 2001, Feith and Rhode recruited David Wurmser, the director of Middle East studies for AEI, to serve as a Pentagon consultant.

Wurmser would be the founding participant of the unnamed, secret intelligence unit at the Pentagon, set up in Feith's office, which would be the nucleus of the Defense Department's Iraq disinformation campaign that was established within weeks of the attacks in New York and Washington. While the CIA and other intelligence agencies concentrated on Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda as the culprit in the 9/11 attacks, Wolfowitz and Feith obsessively focused on Iraq. It was a theory that was discredited, even ridiculed, among intelligence professionals. Daniel Benjamin, co-author of *The Age of Sacred Terror*, was director of counterterrorism at the National Security Council in the late 1990s. "In 1998, we went through every piece of intelligence we could find to see if there was a link between Al Qaeda and Iraq," he says. "We came to the conclusion that our intelligence agencies had it right: There was no noteworthy relationship between Al Qaeda and Iraq. I know that for a fact." Indeed, that was the consensus among virtually all anti-terrorism specialists.

In short, Wurmser, backed by Feith and Rhode, set out to prove what didn't exist.

IN AN ADMINISTRATION devoted to the notion of "Feith-based intelligence," Wurmser was ideal. For years, he'd been a shrill ideologue, part of the minority crusade during the 1990s that was beating the drums for war against Iraq. Along with Perle and Feith, in 1996 Wurmser and his wife, Meyrav, wrote a provocative strategy paper for Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu called "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm." It called on Israel to work with Jordan and Turkey to "contain, destabilize and roll back" various states in the region, overthrow Saddam Hussein in Iraq, press Jordan to restore a scion of the Hashemite dynasty to the Iraqi throne, and, above all, launch military assaults against Lebanon and Syria as a "prelude to a redrawing of the map of the Middle East which would threaten Syria's territorial integrity."

In 1997, Wurmser wrote a column in the *Wall Street Journal* called "Iraq Needs a Revolution" and the next year co-signed a letter with Perle calling for all-out U.S. support of the Iraqi National Congress (INC), an exile group led by Ahmad Chalabi, in promoting an insurgency in Iraq. At AEI, Wurmser wrote *Tyranny's Ally: America's Failure to Defeat Saddam Hussein*, essentially a book-length version of "A Clean Break" that proposed an alliance between Jordan and the INC to redraw the map of the Middle East. Among the mentors cited by Wurmser in the book: Chalabi, Perle, and Feith.

The purpose of the unnamed intelligence unit, often described as a Pentagon "cell," was to scour reports from the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and other agencies to find nuggets of information linking Iraq, Al Qaeda, terrorism, and the existence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In a controversial press briefing in October 2002, a year after Wurmser's unit was established, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld acknowledged that a primary purpose of the unit was to cull factoids, which were then used to disparage, undermine, and contradict the CIA's reporting, which was far more cautious and nuanced than Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and Feith wanted. Rumsfeld particularly enjoyed harassing the CIA staffer who briefed him every morning, using the type of data produced by the intelligence unit. "What I could do is say, 'Gee, what about this?'" Rumsfeld noted. "Or what about that? Has somebody thought of this?" Last June, when Feith was questioned on the same topic at a briefing, he acknowledged that the secret unit in fact looked at the connection between Iraq and terrorism, saying, "You can't rely on deterrence to deal with the problem of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of

state sponsors of terrorism because [of] the possibility that those state sponsors might employ chemical weapons or biological weapons by means of a terrorist organization proxy...."

Though Feith, in that briefing, described Wurmser's unit as an innocent project, "a global exercise" that was not meant to put pressure on other intelligence agencies or create skewed intelligence to fit preconceived policy notions, many other sources assert that it did exactly that. That the White House and the Pentagon put enormous pressure on the CIA to go along with its version of events has been widely reported, highlighted by visits to CIA headquarters by Vice President Cheney and Lewis Libby, his chief of staff. Led by Perle, the neocons seethed with contempt for the CIA. The CIA'S analysis, said Perle, "isn't worth the paper it's printed on." Standing in a crowded hallway during an AEI event, Perle added, "The CIA is status quo oriented. They don't want to take risks."

That became the mantra of the shadow agency within an agency..

Putting Wurmser in charge of the unit meant that it was being run by a pro-Iraq-war ideologue who'd spent years calling for a pre-emptive invasion of Baghdad and who was clearly predisposed to find what he wanted to see. Adding another layer of dubious quality to the endeavor was the man partnered with Wurmser, F. Michael Maloof. Maloof, a former aide to Perle in the 1980s Pentagon, was twice stripped of his high-level security clearances-once in late 2001 and again last spring, for various infractions. Maloof was also reportedly involved in a bizarre scheme to broker contacts between Iraqi officials and the Pentagon, channeled through Perle, in what one report called a "rogue [intelligence] operation" outside official CIA and Defense Intelligence Agency channels.

As the momentum for war began to build in early 2002, Wolfowitz and Feith beefed up the intelligence unit and created an Iraq war-planning unit in the Pentagon's Near East and South Asia Affairs section, run by Deputy Undersecretary of Defense William Luti, under the rubric "Office of Special Plans," or OSP; the new unit's director was Abram N. Shulsky. By then, Wurmser had moved on to a post as senior adviser to Undersecretary of State John Bolton, yet another neocon, who was in charge of the State Department's disarmament, proliferation, and WMD office and was promoting the Iraq war strategy there. Shulsky's OSP, which incorporated the secret intelligence unit, took control, banishing veteran experts-including Joseph McMillan, James Russell, Larry Hanauer, and Marybeth McDevitt-who, despite years of service to NESAs, either were shuffled off to other positions or retired. For the next year, Luti and Shulsky not only would oversee war plans but would act aggressively to shape the intelligence product received by the White House.

Both Luti and Shulsky were neoconservatives who were ideological soulmates of Wolfowitz and Feith. But Luti was more than that. He'd come to the Pentagon directly from the office of Vice President Cheney. That gave Luti, a recently retired, decorated Navy captain whose career ran from combat aviation to command of a helicopter assault ship, extra clout. Along with his colleague Colonel William Bruner, Luti had done a stint as an aide to Newt Gingrich in 1996 and, like Perle and Wolfowitz, was an acolyte of Wohlstetter's. "He makes Ollie North look like a moderate," says a NESAs veteran.

Shulsky had been on the Washington scene since the mid-1970s. As a Senate intelligence committee staffer for Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, he began to work with early neoconservatives like Perle, who was then an aide to Senator Henry Jackson. Later, in the Reagan years, Shulsky followed Perle to the Pentagon as Perle's arms-control adviser. In the '90s, Shulsky co-authored a book on intelligence called *Silent Warfare*, with Gary Schmitt. Shulsky had served with Schmitt on Moynihan's staff and they had remained friends. Asked about the Pentagon's Iraq intelligence "cell," Schmitt-who is currently the executive director of the Project for the New American Century-says that he can't say much about it "because one of my best friends is running it."

According to Lt. Colonel Kwiatkowski, Luti and Shulsky ran NESA and the Office of Special Plans with brutal efficiency, purging people they disagreed with and enforcing the party line. "It was organized like a machine," she says. "The people working on the neocon agenda had a narrow, well-defined political agenda. They had a sense of mission." At NESA, Shulsky, she says, began "hot-desking," or taking an office wherever he could find one, working with Feith and Luti, before formally taking the reins of the newly created OSP. Together, she says, Luti and Shulsky turned cherry-picked pieces of uncorroborated, anti-Iraq intelligence into talking points, on issues like Iraq's WMD and its links to Al Qaeda. Shulsky constantly updated these papers, drawing on the intelligence unit, and circulated them to Pentagon officials, including Rumsfeld, and to Vice President Cheney. "Of course, we never thought they'd go directly to the White House," she adds.

Kwiatkowski recalls one meeting in which Luti, pressed to finish a report, told the staff, "I've got to get this over to 'Scooter' right away." She later found out that "Scooter" was none other than Lewis "Scooter" Libby, Vice President Cheney's chief of staff. According to Kwiatkowski, Cheney had direct ties through Luti into NESA/OSP, a connection that was highly unorthodox.

"Never, ever, ever would a deputy undersecretary of Defense work directly on a project for the vice president," she says. "It was a little clue that we had an informal network into Vice President Cheney's office."

Although Feith insists that the OSP did not seek to gather its own intelligence, Kwiatkowski and others sharply disagree. Staff working for Luti and Shulsky in NESA/OSP churned out propaganda-style intelligence, she says. As an example, she cited the work of a U.S. intelligence officer and Arabic specialist, Navy Lt. Commander Youssef Aboul-Enein, who was a special assistant to Luti. "His job was to peruse the Arabic-language media to find articles that would incriminate Saddam Hussein about terrorism, and he translated these." Such raw intelligence is usually subject to a thorough vetting process, tracked, verified, and checked by intelligence professionals. But not at OSP—the material that it produced found its way directly into speeches by Bush, Cheney, and other officials.

According to Melvin Goodman, a former CIA official and an intelligence specialist at the National War College, the OSP officials routinely pushed lower-ranking staff around on intelligence matters. "People were being pulled aside [and being told], 'We saw your last piece and it's not what we're looking for,'" he says. "It was pretty blatant." Two State Department intelligence officials, Greg Thielmann and Christian Westermann, have both charged that pressure was being put on them to shape intelligence to fit policy, in particular from Bolton's office. "The Al Qaeda connection and nuclear weapons issue were the only two ways that you could link Iraq to an imminent security threat to the U.S.," Thielmann told the New York Times. "And the administration was grossly distorting the intelligence on both things."

BESIDES CHENEY, key members of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board, including Perle and ex-House Speaker Newt Gingrich, all Iraq hawks, had direct input into NESA/OSP. The offices of NESA were located on the Pentagon's fourth floor, seventh corridor of D Ring, and the Policy Board's offices were directly below, on the third floor. During the run-up to the Iraq war, Gingrich often came up for closed-door meetings with Luti, who in 1996 had served as a congressional fellow in Speaker of the House Gingrich's office.

As OSP got rolling, Luti brought in Colonel Bruner, a former military aide to Gingrich, and, together, Luti and Bruner opened the door to a vast flow of bogus intelligence fed to the Pentagon by Iraqi defectors associated with Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress group of exiles. Chalabi founded the Iraqi National Congress in 1992, with the help of a shadowy CIA-connected public-relations firm called the

Rendon Group, one of whose former employees, Francis Brooke, has been a top aide to Chalabi ever since. A scion of an aristocratic Iraqi family, Chalabi fled Baghdad at the age of 13, in 1958, when the corrupt Iraqi Hashemite monarchy was overthrown by a coalition of communists and the Iraqi military. In the late 1960s, Chalabi studied mathematics at the University of Chicago with Wohlstetter, who introduced him to Richard Perle more than a decade later. Long associated with the heart of the neoconservative movement, Chalabi founded Petra Bank in Jordan, which grew to be Jordan's third-largest bank by the 1980s. But Chalabi was accused of bank fraud, embezzlement, and currency manipulation, and he barely escaped before Jordanian authorities could arrest him; in 1992, he was convicted and sentenced in absentia to more than 20 years of hard labor. After founding the INC, Chalabi's bungling, unreliability, and penchant for mismanaging funds caused the CIA to sour on him, but he never lost the support of Perle, Feith, Gingrich, and their allies; once, soon after 9/11, Perle invited Chalabi to address the Defense Policy Board.

According to multiple sources, Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress sent a steady stream of misleading and often faked intelligence reports into U.S. intelligence channels. That information would flow sometimes into NESA/OSP directly, sometimes through Defense Intelligence Agency debriefings of Iraqi defectors via the Defense Human Intelligence Service, and sometimes through the INC's own U.S.-funded Intelligence Collection Program, which was overseen by the Pentagon. The INC's intelligence "isn't reliable at all," according to Vincent Cannistraro, a former CIA chief of counterterrorism.

"Much of it is propaganda. Much of it is telling the Defense Department what they want to hear, using alleged informants and defectors who say what Chalabi wants them to say, [creating] cooked information that goes right into presidential and vice presidential speeches."

Bruner, the aide to Luti and Gingrich's former staffer, "was Chalabi's handler," says Kwiatkowski. "He would arrange meetings with Chalabi and Chalabi's folks," she says, adding that the INC leader often brought people into the NESA/OSP offices for debriefings. Chalabi claims to have introduced only three actual defectors to the Pentagon, a figure Thielmann considers "awfully low." However, according to an investigation by the Los Angeles Times, the three defectors provided by Chalabi turned up exactly zero useful intelligence. The first, an Iraqi engineer, claimed to have specific information about biological weapons, but his information didn't pan out; the second claimed to know about mobile labs, but that information, too, was worthless; and the third, who claimed to have data about Iraq's nuclear program, proved to be a fraud. Chalabi also claimed to have given the Pentagon information about Iraqi support for Al Qaeda. "We gave the names of people who were doing the links," he told an interviewer from PBS's Frontline. Those links, of course, have not been discovered. Thielmann told the same Frontline interviewer that the Office of Special Plans didn't apply strict intelligence-verification standards to "some of the information coming out of Chalabi and the INC that OSP and the Pentagon ran with."

In the war's aftermath, the Defense Intelligence Agency—which is not beholden to the neoconservative civilians at the Pentagon—leaked a report it prepared, concluding that few, if any, of the INC's informants provided worthwhile intelligence.

SO FAR, DESPITE ALL of the investigations underway, there is little sign that any of them are going to delve into the operations of the Luti-Shulsky Office of Special Plans and its secret intelligence unit. Because it operates in the Pentagon's policy shop, it is not officially part of the intelligence community, and so it is seemingly immune to congressional oversight.

With each passing day, it is becoming excruciatingly clearer just how wrong U.S. intelligence was in regard to Iraqi weapons and support for terrorism. The American teams of inspectors in the Iraq Survey Group, which has employed up to 1,400 people to scour the country and analyze the findings, have not

been able to find a shred of evidence of anything other than dusty old plans and records of weapons apparently destroyed more than a decade ago. Countless examples of fruitless searches have been reported in the media. To cite one example: U.S. soldiers followed an intelligence report claiming that a complex built for Uday Hussein, Saddam's son, hid a weapons warehouse with poison-gas storage tanks. "Well," U.S. Army Major Ronald Hann Jr. told the Los Angeles Times, "the warehouse was a carport. It still had two cars inside. And the tanks had propane for the kitchen."

Countless other errors and exaggerations have become evident. The thousands of aluminum tubes supposedly imported by Iraq for uranium enrichment were fairly conclusively found to be designed to build noncontroversial rockets. The long-range unmanned aerial vehicles, allegedly built to deliver bioweapons, were small, rickety, experimental planes with wood frames. The mobile bioweapon labs turned out to have had other, civilian purposes. And the granddaddy of all falsehoods, the charge that Iraq sought uranium in the West African country of Niger, was based on forged documents-documents that the CIA, the State Department, and other agencies knew were fake nearly a year before President Bush highlighted the issue in his State of the Union address in January 2003.

"Either the system broke down," former Ambassador Joseph Wilson, who was sent by the CIA to visit Niger and whose findings helped show that the documents were forged, told Mother Jones, "or there was selective use of bits of information to justify a decision to go to war that had already been taken."

Edward Luttwak, a neoconservative scholar and author, says flatly that the Bush administration lied about the intelligence it had because it was afraid to go to the American people and say that the war was simply about getting rid of Saddam Hussein. Instead, says Luttwak, the White House was groping for a rationale to satisfy the United Nations' criteria for war. "Cheney was forced into this fake posture of worrying about weapons of mass destruction," he says. "The ties to Al Qaeda? That's complete nonsense."

In the Senate, Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) is pressing for the Intelligence Committee to extend its investigation to look into the specific role of the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans, but there is strong Republican resistance to the idea.

In the House, Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) has introduced legislation calling for a commission to investigate the intelligence mess and has collected more than a hundred Democrats-but no Republicans-in support of it. "I think they need to be looked at pretty carefully," Waxman told Mother Jones when asked about the Office of Special Plans. "I'd like to know whether the political people pushed the intelligence people to slant their conclusions."

Congressman Waxman, meet Lt. Colonel Kwiatkowski.

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## The United States and Shi'ite Religious Factions in Post-Ba'thist Iraq

Juan Cole

*In post-Saddam Husayn Iraq, Shi'ite militias rapidly established their authority in East Baghdad and other urban neighborhoods of the south. Among the various groups which emerged, the Sadr Movement stands out as militant and cohesive. The sectarian, anti-American Sadrists wish to impose a puritanical, Khomeinist vision on Iraq. Their political influence is potentially much greater than their numbers. Incorporating them into a democratic Iraq while ensuring that they do not come to dominate it poses a severe challenge to the US Administration.*

In planning the war on Iraq, the American Defense Department and intelligence organizations appear to have been unaware that millions of Iraqi Shi'ites had joined a militant and puritanical movement dedicated to the establishment of an Iran-style Islamic Republic in Iraq, even though these developments had been detailed in many Arabic-language books and articles. On February 18, 2003, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz gave an interview on National Public Radio in which he maintained that "The Iraqis are . . . by and large quite secular. They are overwhelmingly Shi'a which is different from the Wahabis of the peninsula, and they don't bring the sensitivity of having the holy cities of Islam being on their territory."<sup>1</sup> Even more disturbingly, this quote shows that Wolfowitz did not realize that religious Iraqi Shi'ites are extremely sensitive about foreigners in their shrine cities such as Najaf and Karbala, or that these cities are religious power centers of great symbolic potency.

US Defense Department leaders such as Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his deputies, Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith, mistakenly thought that the middle and lower strata of the Ba'th bureaucracy, police, and army would survive the war, and that they could simply hand it over to secular expatriate figure Ahmad Chalabi and his Iraqi National Congress. Although from a Shi'ite background, Chalabi was largely unknown in Iraq and was wanted in Jordan on embezzlement charges. The CIA and the State Department broke with Chalabi late in 2002 when he proved unable

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Juan Cole is Professor of Modern Middle Eastern and South Asian History at the University of Michigan. He is editor of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, and author of numerous books and articles. His recent works include *Modernity and the Millennium* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) and *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi'ite Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002).

1. "Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz Interview with National Public Radio," February 19, 2003 at <http://www.washingtonfile.net/2003/Feb/Feb21/EUR509.HTM>.  
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to account for about \$2 million of the \$4 million they had given his Iraqi National Congress. The major religious Shi'ite groups with which the Americans were negotiating were part of Chalabi's group and included the Tehran-based Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the London branch of the al-Da'wa Party, and the Khoei Foundation, of which only al-Da'wa had much popularity on the ground in Iraq. The US was ignorant of the Sadr Movement, the main indigenous Shi'ite force. This ignorance was to cost the US great political capital in the first months of the occupation.

When the Ba'th fell on April 9, 2003, Shi'ite militias seemed suddenly to emerge and take control of many urban areas in the south of the country, as well as in the desperately poor slums of East Baghdad. The moral authority of Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani and his more quietist colleagues in Najaf had been known to the US, but it transpired that other ayatollahs and leaders had more political clout. The rank and file of Iraqi Shi'ites in the urban areas was far more radicalized by the last decade of Ba'th rule than anyone on the outside had realized. These developments alarmed Washington, given that some 60% to 65% of Iraqis are Shi'ites, and this group would therefore predominate in a democratic Iraq. The religious groups constitute only one section of the Shi'ite population, perhaps a third or more, but they are well organized and armed.

My thesis here is that the Sadr Movement is at the moment the most important tendency among religious Shi'ites in post-Ba'thist Iraq, and that it is best seen as a sectarian phenomenon in the "sociology of religions" sense. It is primarily a youth movement and its rank and file tend to be poor. It is highly puritanical and xenophobic, and it is characterized by an exclusivism unusual in Iraqi Shi'ism. To any extent that it emerges as a leading social force in Iraq, it will prove polarizing and destabilizing. In spring and summer of 2003 its leadership had decided not to challenge actively the coalition military. In contemporary theories of the sociology of religion, a "sect" is characterized by a high degree of tension with mainstream society, employing a rhetoric of difference, antagonism, and separation.<sup>2</sup> The "high-tension" model of the sect predicts that it will attempt strongly to demarcate itself off from the mainstream of society. It will also cast out those members who are perceived to be too accommodating of non-sectarian norms. That is, it demands high levels of loyalty and obedience in the pursuit of exclusivism.

### *IRAQI SHI'ISM IN HISTORY*

Under the Ottomans, a Sunni political elite flourished in what is now Iraq, with political ties to Istanbul. Shi'ism remained vigorous, however. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many tribespeople of the south converted to the Shi'ite branch of Islam, under the influence of missionaries sent out from the shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala, where Shi'ite holy figures Imam 'Ali and Imam Husayn were interred.

2. Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 19-34, 135.



'Ali was the son-in-law and cousin of the Prophet Muhammad, and Husayn was the prophet's grandson. This tribal conversion movement appears to have been a protest of the weak, a way of using religion to resist the power of the Sunni Ottoman bureaucracy. Over time, it created a Shi'ite majority in what was to become Iraq. This region also witnessed the victory among Shi'ites in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries of the Usuli school of jurisprudence, which held that all lay believers must follow or "emulate" a learned Shi'ite jurist with seminary training. They are to implement the rulings of this "object of emulation" (*marja' al-taqlid*) with regard to disputed points of Islamic law. They can only follow a living jurist or *mujtahid*, however, with regard to any new issues that arise after the old one's death. The Usuli school gave to Shi'ite clerics a leadership position much more powerful and central than typically was bestowed by Sunni Muslims on their clerics.<sup>3</sup>

The British conquered Mesopotamia during World War I, and created out of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra provinces (Arabic *wilayat*) a colonial state they called Iraq, which became formally independent in 1932. They cobbled together a big Kurdish community in the north, some Turkmen tribespeople, Sunni townspeople of the center, and the Shi'ite tribes and settled urban and rural groups of the south, into a new state. The Shi'ite majority probably grew larger in the course of the 20th century, but Sunnis remained in control politically and economically, under the monarchy, then the officers-ruled republic of 1958-1968, and then the Ba'th (Arab nationalist) regime of 1968-2003. The Ba'th massively persecuted the religious Shi'ites of the south. It especially feared the al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya Party, founded around 1958, which aimed at establishing a Shi'ite-dominated Islamic state.<sup>4</sup> The rise of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1978-79 frightened the Ba'th, which launched a war against the Khomeinist state there, and simultaneously, cracked down hard on the radical Shi'ite clerics in Iraq such as Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr (d. 1980), who theorized an Islamic state. Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, "Sadr I," was executed along with many

3. For the historical background of modern Iraqi Shi'ism, see Pierre-Jean Luizard, *La formation de l'Irak contemporain [The Formation of Contemporary Iraq]* (Paris: Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1991); Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Meir Litvak, *Shi'ite Scholars of Nineteenth Century Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Juan Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture, and History of Shi'ite Islam* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), and Faleh Abdul-Jabar, ed., *Ayatollahs, Sufis and Ideologues* (London: Saqi Books, 2002).

4. Salah al-Khursan, *Hizb al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya: Haqa'iq wa watha'iq [The Islamic Da'wa Party: Facts and Documents]* (Damascus: al-Mu'assassa al-'Arabiyya li'l-Dirasat wa'l-Buhuth al-Istratijiyya, 1999); Ruhaimi, "The Da'wa Islamic Party," in Abdul-Jabar, *Ayatollahs*, pp. 149-161; Keiko Sakai, "Modernity and tradition in the Islamic movements in Iraq," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Winter 2001), pp. 37-52; Mahan Abedin, "Dossier: Hezb al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya: Islamic Call Party," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, Vol. 5, No. 6 (June 2003) at: [http://www.meib.org/articles/0306\\_iraq.htm](http://www.meib.org/articles/0306_iraq.htm); Hanna Batawi, "Shi'ite Organizations in Iraq: Al-Da'wah al-Islamiyah and al-Mujahidin," in Juan R. I. Cole and Nikki R. Keddie, eds., *Shi'ism and Social Protest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 179-200; Joyce N. Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'ites* (Boulder, Co.: Lynne Rienner, 1992).

other activists.<sup>5</sup> The al-Da'wa Party gave birth to splinter groups like the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (founded by expatriates in Tehran in 1982) and the Sadr Movement, while remaining a separate party in its own right. In contrast, the mainstream Najaf clerical tradition in Iraq, exemplified by Abu al-Qasim al-Khu'i (d. 1992), tended to be quietist and to reject Khomeini's theory that the clergy should rule (*vilayat-e faqih*).<sup>6</sup> But unbeknownst to the outside world, many Iraqi Shi'ites, inspired by al-Sadr and his successors, were being radicalized by the example of Iran and by the brutality of the Ba'th persecution.

### THE POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF IRAQI SHI'ISM

The Iraqi Shi'ites come from a number of distinct social niches. Over two million dwell in the poor neighborhoods of East Baghdad, constituting some 8% of the total Iraqi population (est. at 24 million in 2003) and 13% of the Shi'ites. This quarter was called al-Thawra ("Revolution") Township when it was founded by military dictator 'Abd al-Karim al-Qasim in the early 1960s, and was renamed Saddam City by the Ba'th. It was settled by Shi'ite villagers who emigrated from the hardscrabble farms of the South, often retaining their tribal identities, customs, rituals and ties in their new environment. Some young people there even go back to their villages to consult with their tribal chieftains from time to time.<sup>7</sup> The new generation quickly became in important senses urban in outlook. As soon as the Ba'th fell in spring of 2003, its inhabitants renamed it Sadr City, a reference to Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr ("Sadr II"), who had been assassinated by Saddam's agents in 1999. The residents of East Baghdad live under appalling social and economic conditions, with little access to basic necessities such as sewerage, clean water, and decent housing. Unemployment is high. The quarter suffered dreadfully from Ba'th party repression, with many killed in uprisings in 1977, 1991 and 1999. East Baghdad is thus a fertile ground for Shi'ite radicalism and populism, and its residents seem largely to favor the Sadr II Movement.

Shi'ites predominate in Basra, Iraq's second largest city, which has a population of about 1.3 million. Basra is often said to be more cosmopolitan and secular than other Shi'ite areas, and its mayor under the British administration in the post-Ba'th period, Wa'il 'Abd al-Latif, is a secular court judge. Still, religious factions are organizing there, and eyewitness accounts suggest that by summer of 2003 even Christian women felt forced to veil when they went out of the house because of pressure from hard line Shi'ites.<sup>8</sup> Basra has been a center of a breakaway faction of the al-Da'wa Party, Tanzim al-Da'wa, which rejected Khomeini's theory of clerical rule. It also has

5. Talib Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr," in Abdul-Jabar, pp. 231-244; Chibli Mallat, *The Renewal of Islamic Law: Muhammad Baqer al-Sadr, Najaf, and the Shi'i International* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

6. Yusuf Al-Kho'i, "Grand Ayatollah Abu al-Qasim al-Kho'i," in Abdul-Jabar, pp. 224-230; Jawdat al-Qazwini, "The School of Najaf," in Abdul-Jabar, pp. 243-264.

7. Hazim al-Amin, "*Baghdad allati lam taf'al bi 'asha'iriha ma taf'aluhu al-mudun bi'l-'asha'ir*" ["Baghdad which Has Not Dealt with its Tribes as Other Cities Do"], *Al-Hayat*, July 10, 2003.

8. "Christians Under More Pressure in Postwar Iraq: Interview with Marie Angel Siebrecht of Aid to the Church in Need," Zenit News Agency, July 4, 2003 at <http://www.zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=38309>.

substantial numbers of followers of the Sadr Movement, and of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, about which more below.

A little over a fifth of Iraqi Shi'ites therefore live in the big cities. Another important stratum lives in important towns in the south. These towns average populations between 100,000 and about 600,000 persons. They include al-Zubayr (174,000), Samawah (128,000), Nasiriyya (560,000), 'Amara (351,000), Kut (400,000), Diwaniyya (443,000), Hillah (548,000), Kufa (119,000), Najaf (585,000), Karbala (572,000), and Baquba (295,000). Samarra' (207,000), a northern town with a Shi'ite quarter, can also be listed here.<sup>9</sup> These substantial towns accounted for nearly 4.5 million residents in 2003, largely Shi'ites, and therefore for about a third of the Iraqi Shi'ite population. Many Shi'ites living in them are merchants and shopkeepers, insofar as government employment was often denied to them or seen as undesirable by them under the Ba'th.<sup>10</sup> The towns differ among themselves in character. Najaf, Karbala and Samarra stand out in being shrine cities, where Imams are buried that Shi'ites consider rightful heirs and successors to the prophet Muhammad. They also have seminary establishments, training clerics. The clerics of Najaf in particular enjoy great prestige in Iraq and throughout the Shi'ite world, and in the twentieth century outside Iran the convention has been that the most senior grand ayatollah in Najaf is the chief legal and religious authority for lay Shi'ites.

Each town has a different religious and political orientation. The al-Da'wa Party seems particularly strong in Nasiriyya. Baquba and Kut, in the east near Iran, are under the influence of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI).<sup>11</sup> This group had its origins in the al-Da'wa Party but became a separate organization in 1982. In 1984, Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim came to head it, and he remained at the helm thereafter, until his assassination in the car bombing outside the Shrine of 'Ali in Najaf on August 29, 2003.<sup>12</sup> SCIRI was based in Tehran for two decades. Kufa, like East Baghdad, is a stronghold of the Sadr Movement. Some other substantial towns are more tied to the tribes and the rural areas, and have seen recent large influxes of marsh Arabs and other political refugees from the countryside. These relatively newly settled townspeople are used to being armed, and so for them, the Anglo-American troops' attempts to confiscate their rifles have produced a great deal of tension.

Another large proportion of Shi'ites lives in small towns and villages in the countryside. The rural Shi'ites are now a minority. They tend to be organized by tribe though few are any longer pastoral nomads, and to practice a folk Shi'ism at variance

9. Population statistics are from Stefan Helder, "World Gazetteer," at [http://www.world-gazetteer.com/fr/fr\\_iq.htm](http://www.world-gazetteer.com/fr/fr_iq.htm); an important recent overview of Shi'ite currents in Samarra' is Hazim al-Amin, "Samarra' wa Ikhwatuha," ["Samarra' and its Sisters"] *Al-Hayat*, 15 July 2003.

10. Ma'd Fayyad, "Shahid 'ala Rihlat al-Khu'i ila al-'Iraq," [Witness to the Journey of al-Khu'i to Iraq], *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, April 28, 2003.

11. Juan Cole, "Mariage mal assorti entre les radicaux chiites irakiens et les Etats-Unis," ["Mismatched Marriage Between Radical Shi'ites and the US"], *Le Monde Diplomatique* (July 2003).

12. Mukhtar al-Asadi, *Al-Taqsir al-Kabir bayna al-Salah wa al-Islah [Mere Passive Goodness Falls Far Short of Active Reform]* (Beirut: Dar al-Furat, 2001).

with the more scholastic and bookish Shi'ism of the seminary cities. They invest their tribal shaykhs with great authority, and often with some religious charisma, as well (the shaykhs often claim to be Sayyids or Sharifs, i.e., descendants of the prophet.) On July 8, a convention was held by Iraqi tribal leaders, representing the rural Shi'ite tribes of the center and south of Iraq called "The Bloc of Democratic Iraqi tribes." They aimed at ensuring they have a voice in the governance of Iraq. The convention chair, Ghalib al-Rikabi, insisted that Iraqis themselves draft the new constitution and demanded early elections for an Iraqi government.<sup>13</sup>

A subset of the rural Shi'ites is the so-called marsh Arabs, said to be about 500,000 strong. They once dwelled in the swamps of southern Iraq, working as fishermen, hunters, farmers and smugglers. In the 1990s, the swamps were used by Iran-based paramilitary organizations of Iraqi expatriates to infiltrate into Iraq and strike at Ba'th targets, and the marsh Arabs themselves often resisted Ba'th rule. They were organized politically and militarily by the Iraqi Hizbu'llah, a radical group that fought a guerrilla war against the Iraqi state. The Ba'th found it difficult to operate in the marshes and therefore drained them. The marsh Arabs were forced to settle in poor southern towns such as Majar al-Kabir, or to go to small cities like Amara, where they largely subsisted in poverty, having lost their livelihoods.

In the aftermath of the second Gulf War, 'Abd al-Karim Mahmud al-Muhammadawi, a marsh Arab who had fought guerrilla actions against the Ba'th under the nom de guerre of Abu Hatim, emerged as an important civic leader in Amara. He provided security with the help of his tribal militia (presumably Hizbullah). Although an observant Shi'ite, he decries "religious fanaticism" and urges toleration. In early July 2003, he was also insisting on the quick formation of an indigenous Iraqi government and an early end to what he called American occupation.<sup>14</sup> The tragic clash between British troops and residents of Majar al-Kabir on June 23 and 24, in which six British troops were killed, came about in large part because the British insisted on disarming the population. Arab tribesmen originally from the marshes saw this step as a way of dishonoring them and rendering them defenseless. For people who had lost everything, being without arms to protect their families was a frightening prospect.<sup>15</sup> Muhammadawi himself played an important role in calming tensions after the clash.<sup>16</sup>

Of all these groups, the urban religious Shi'ites are the most highly networked for political and crowd action. Najaf, the chief shrine city, provides much of the leadership and organization, whereas the slum dwellers of East Baghdad can easily be bused as foot soldiers to the center of Baghdad for rallies. Other urban populations

13. *Al-Hayat*, July 8, 2003.

14. Patrice Claude, "Dans le sud de l'Irak, le 'Seigneur des marais', héros de la résistance contre Saddam, aspire à la paix," ["In southern Iraq, the 'Lord of the Marshes', Hero of the Resistance against Saddam, Hopes for Peace"], *Le Monde*, July 3, 2003.

15. Patrick Cockburn in Majar al-Kabir, "Marsh Arabs threaten to resist 'Army of Occupation,'" *The Independent* (London), June 27, 2003, at [http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle\\_east/story.jsp?story=419367](http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle_east/story.jsp?story=419367).

16. Michael Howard and Jamie Wilson, "British forces try to mend fences in town where six soldiers died," *The Guardian*, June 28, 2003.

have also demonstrated a potential for crowd action. Some 10,000 demonstrated in Basra against the US occupation in June. As many as 20,000 demonstrated in Nasiriyya in late April, and there have also been demonstrations in Baquba.

### *THE AFTERMATH OF THE 1991 UPRISING*

The religious movements of contemporary Iraqi Shi'ites today have important roots in the failed rebellion against the Ba'th of spring, 1991.<sup>17</sup> During the first Gulf War, President George H. W. Bush called upon the Iraqis to rise up and overthrow Saddam Husayn. When Saddam was forced to withdraw from Kuwait and seemed weakened, the people did just that. It is alleged that 17 of 19 provinces were lost to the Ba'th government in the popular uprisings of March and April, 1991. In major Shi'ite population centers such as Basra, Nasiriyya, and Najaf, local Shi'ite religious figures emerged as popular political leaders supplanting Ba'th authority. The leaders were aware that the uprising could succeed only if it received US support. But the request for assistance by Grand Ayatollah Khu'i on March 11 was rejected by the US. The Ba'th military, seeing that the US had decided to remain neutral, massacred tens of thousands. It also rounded up the prominent clerics of Najaf and Karbala, seen as ringleaders of the southern revolt, and over 200 were executed or made to disappear. Others escaped into exile in Tehran or London. The property of many clerics was also expropriated by the regime. The major scholars who remained lived under virtual house arrest, their movements and statements closely watched by the Ba'th secret police. How many persons were killed and buried in mass graves may never be known, but it certainly ran into the tens of thousands. Iraqi Shi'ites have for the most part never forgiven the US for its callous policy of standing by during these massacres.

Najaf's seminary establishment was gutted and its student body shrank precipitously. The preeminent Grand Ayatollah in Najaf in the 1970s through his death in 1992 at the age of 93 was Iranian-born quietist Abu al-Qasim al-Khu'i. After his death, one of his sons, Taqi, garnered respect as an ayatollah in Najaf, but died under suspicious circumstances in an automobile accident in 1994. His remaining son, 'Abd al-Majid al-Khu'i, had relocated to London, where Khu'i senior had in 1989 established the Khoei Foundation (that is how the family spells the name in English). 'Abd al-Majid, then only 40, was too young to become the object of emulation for Iraqi Shi'ites, but he did become involved with Iraqi expatriates aiming for the overthrow of Saddam Husayn.

The repression of the Shi'ite establishment was so severe in the aftermath of the crushed uprising that Najaf became a shadow of its former self, and its twentieth century position as a center of Shi'ite leadership and learning was threatened with oblivion. In 1900, Nakash estimates that there had been 8,000 seminary students in Najaf, but the shrine cities declined under the British Mandate and the Sunni monar-

17. Keiko Sakai, "The 1991 Intifadah in Iraq: Seen through Analyses of the Discourses of Iraqi Intellectuals," in Keiko Sakai, ed., *Social Protests and Nation-Building in the Middle East and Central Asia* (Chiba, Japan: Institute of Developing Economies, 2003), pp. 156-172.

chy, so that by 1957 there were only about 2,000 students there. There may have been a slight rebound during the "golden age" of intellectual activities in the shrine cities during the 1960s and 1970s. But after the Ba'th crushed the movement of the late 1970s and began deporting Iraqis of Iranian heritage, Najaf's student body shrank once again, to only a few hundred.<sup>18</sup> In the 1990s the decline became even more steep. Clerics pulled back from teaching anything but the most basic classes in Shi'ite law and practice, lest their teachings be viewed by the secret police as seditious. Friday prayers were for the most part banned, and clerics often declined to hold them in public.<sup>19</sup> Qom, in Iran, emerged as the intellectual center of Shi'ism, as Najaf's campuses became a virtual ghost town. Najaf the city continued to flourish, as a provincial capital, growing to over 500,000 residents in the late 1990s from 134,000 in 1965. Reversing the historical situation that had obtained for two or three centuries, "town" thus became substantially more important than "gown."

Even in the tense and repressed circumstances of the 1990s, religious leadership did emerge in the shrine cities. Grand Ayatollahs 'Ali Sistani, 'Ali al-Gharawi, and Shaykh 'Ali Muhammad Burujirdi were among the more prominent, though Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr also began to become respected for his small symbolic acts of defiance against the regime. Sistani, who was born around 1930 in Mashhad, had come to Najaf in 1952. He came to have the largest reputation outside Iraq, gradually succeeding to the position al-Khu'i had enjoyed, of chief legal and religious authority for many Shi'ites in Lebanon and elsewhere outside Iran and Iraq. He also garnered support from the older generation of Iraqi Shi'ites that had followed al-Khu'i. His growing reputation worried the Ba'th regime, which in 1996 launched an unsuccessful assassination attempt against him, in which two employees of his office were killed and two others wounded.<sup>20</sup> He was not the only target, or the only post-uprising leader to enjoy new prominence. In April of 1998, Grand Ayatollah Murtada Burujirdi was shot down by an unknown assailant, who escaped. In June of the same year, gunmen sprayed Kalashnikov fire at the car of Grand Ayatollah Ali Gharawi, killing him and three others in the car. The regime attempted to imply that the deaths were the result of internecine fighting within the clerical establishment, and executed several minor Shi'ite clerics whom it accused of the assassinations.<sup>21</sup> No one inside the Shi'ite community doubted that these were the actions of Ba'th Party death squads.

### THE SADR MOVEMENT IN THE 1990s

An up-and-coming figure in the 1990s was Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr. His rival, Sistani, enjoyed the greatest reputation as a scholar and a jurist, especially outside

18. Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, pp.256, 259; he gives only 150 as the number of Najaf seminarians in the 1980s; this seems low for that period; see a higher number cited in Footnote 19.

19. Mukhtar Asadi, *Al-Sadr al-Thani: al-shahid wa'l-shahid, al-zahira wa-rudud al-fi'l* [Sadr II: *The Witness and the Martyr; the Phenomenon and the Reaction*], ([Iran]: Mu'assasat al-A'raf, 1999), pp. 53-54; he says in the 1980s the number of students fell to 700. See the preceding footnote for another estimate.

20. *Al-Hayat*, Dec. 3, 1996, via BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Dec. 4, 1996.

21. *Al-Thawra*, March 14, 1999, via BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, March 17, 1999.

Iraq. Sistani's cautiousness about getting involved in politics, however, appears to have made many local Iraqis impatient with him. The more militant younger generation of Iraqi Shi'ites turned to Muhammad Sadiq, a cousin of the martyred revolutionary Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, who was executed in 1980. Muhammad Sadiq was born March 23, 1943, into a prominent clerical family. He married the daughter of his paternal uncle, who bore to him four sons, Mustafa, Muqtada, Mu'ammal, and Murtada. The first three of these married daughters of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr. He also had two daughters. Educated in the seminary founded by Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, he received his certificates of independent legal reasoning (*ijazat al-ijihad*) in 1977, when he was only 34. The diplomas were granted by Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr and Abu al-Qasim al-Khu'i. He studied law with Ruhullah Khomeini (who labored in exile in Najaf 1964-1988). Muhammad Sadiq had a wide-ranging intellect. He not only excelled in the Islamic branches of knowledge, but also learned fluent English, and studied psychology and history. Al-Asadi says that his history tutor, Dr. Fadil Husayn, considered him his best student and presented him with a rare copy of *The Paris Commune* (presumably the one authored by Karl Marx).<sup>22</sup> This anecdote suggests the way in which leftist and Marxist influences circulated even in clerical circles in the shrine cities, a phenomenon that went back at least to the 1950s. Muhammad Sadiq wrote a Shi'ite commentary on the 1789 "Rights of Man" issued by the French revolutionaries.

Muhammad Sadiq was briefly imprisoned by the Ba'th in 1972 and again (with over two dozen others) in 1974. The second time, he was tortured, though he escaped the fate of five of his colleagues who were secretly executed.<sup>23</sup> On his release in 1975, he turned to Shi'ite mysticism (*al-'irfan*), and engaged in ascetic practices. His self-denial went to the extent that Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr advised him to be more moderate. *'Irfan* is a Shi'ite form of individualistic Sufism, and although some clerics have been attracted by it, it is unusual for someone so centrally located in the seminaries to pursue it (though Khomeini also had a keen interest in the works of medieval Sufis). Muhammad Sadiq studied the subject with a common wage-earner in Najaf, provoking astonishment. When pressed on the issue, he explained that closeness to God does not depend on knowledge, but rather on the goodness of the self, and he cited the prophetic saying, "God has hidden his saints among his servants."<sup>24</sup> He remained a mystic all his life, and the egalitarian ethical and spiritual outlook it fostered appears to have made him especially beloved by the poor and the common people.

Under the influence of Khomeini and of Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, Muhammad Sadiq came to believe in the necessity to establish an Islamic state. Indeed, he main-

22. Al-Asadi, *Al-Sadr al-Thani*, pp. 28-29.

23. 'Adil Ra'uf, *Muhammad Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr: marja'iyat al-maydan: mashru'a al-thaghayyiri wa-waqa'i' al-ighthiyal* [Muhammad Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr: *The Religious Leadership of the Arena: His Transformational Plan and the Facts of the Assassination.*] (Damascus: Markaz al-'Iraqi li'l-'Ilam wa-al-Dirasat, 1999), p. 92; Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq* (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1985), p. 237.

24. Al-Asadi, *al-Sadr al-Thani*, pp. 29-30.

tained that Islamic law could not be fully implemented without such a state. In 1984, four years after the execution of his cousin, "Sadr I" (Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr), he began functioning as an object of emulation for lay Shi'ites. He was imprisoned for a third time after the 1991 uprising, for having issued a strong statement in its support.<sup>25</sup> On his release, he threw himself into organizing the Shi'ite community, especially in populous East Baghdad. He established informal Shi'ite courts that would adjudicate issues among Shi'ites outside the secular Ba'thist legal system. He also gained wide influence among the settled tribes. Unlike most clerics, he worked with tribal leaders to find ways of addressing clan customs and law in the framework of Shi'ite jurisprudence.<sup>26</sup>

He took increasingly controversial stances as the 1990s progressed, forbidding membership in the ruling Ba'th Party and forbidding Iraqis to hold Friday prayers in the name of the secular authority, "The Leader-President" (i.e. Saddam Husayn). He forbade cooperation with the Mujahidin-e Khalq, an anti-Khomeinist Iranian guerrilla group that was given bases in Iraq by the Ba'th. He accepted Khomeini's theory of the guardianship of the jurispudent, which required ultimate clerical control of society, and called upon his students and congregations to establish a state like it in Iraq. He condemned women for coming in public unveiled, saying that for even one hair of her head to show is religiously prohibited.<sup>27</sup> He is also said to have ruled that even Christian women living in Muslim societies must veil.

He took hard line stances against Israel and the United States, maintaining that if only the Shi'ite clerics would unite; they could easily defeat Israel. A recording of his Friday sermon for December 25, 1998, reveals his congregants chanting, "No, no to falsehood; No, no to America; No, no to Israel; No, no to imperialism; No, no to arrogance; No, no to Satan!" He made war against the influence of American popular culture, and discouraged his followers from wearing clothing with American labels. He scolded one couple who had put their toddler in American clothes, saying words to the effect that "Why do you imitate the West, when they try to subject you to their monopoly! Think! Analyze!"<sup>28</sup>

Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr criticized Grand Ayatollah Sistani for locking the outer door of his office, thus barring casual visitors, after the assassinations of Gharawi and Burujirdi. He said that if this were done as a sign of mourning and as a protest, it was understandable, but if it was done out of fear, there was nothing to fear. He also developed a theory of the "silent jurispudent" and the "speaking jurispudent," saying that quietist Shi'ite leaders implicitly upheld the oppressive status quo, and insisting that the only ethical course for an object of emulation was to speak out against tyranny. This harsh condemnation of Sistani and other quietist clerics in Najaf provoked a severe split in the Shi'ite population. He appointed as his successor Sayyid Kazim al-Ha'iri. An Iraqi cleric resident in Qom, Iran, and associated with the al-

25. Ra'uf, *Sadiq al-Sadr*, p. 92.

26. Ra'uf, pp. 113 ff.

27. Al-Asadi, *Al-Sadr al-Thani*, p. 64

28. Ra'uf, *Sadiq al-Sadr*, pp. 207, 217.



Da'wa Party, al-Ha'iri had also embraced Khomeini's theory of *vilayat-e faqih* or the rule of the clerical jurist and had attempted to subordinate the Iranian branch of al-Da'wa to the authority of the Supreme Jurist (Khomeini and then Khamenei) in Iran.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the Ba'th prohibition on the holding of Friday prayers, Muhammad Sadiq insisted on trying to revive them, giving moving and defiant sermons at his mosque in Kufa on social issues that thrilled his congregations. He sent representatives (*wukala'*) to mosques throughout Iraq, but especially in East Baghdad, who opened the mosques on Fridays and preached to crowds as large as 2,000, despite Ba'th opposition. His representatives were tightly networked and had the reputation of being young, upright and highly competent. Unlike those of other Objects of Emulation, his representatives were forbidden to represent anyone but him, an exclusivism that clashed with pluralistic Najaf tradition.<sup>30</sup> He considered holding Friday prayers to be an unambiguous duty, even though this was a minority position in Shi'ite legal thought, because they were a symbol of Islam at a time and place where it was under attack. Crowds began chanting slogans at the prayers such as "Our Prophet is Muhammad, our leader is Muhammad, our messiah is Muhammad," and "Our first is Muhammad, our middle is Muhammad, and our end is Muhammad." The middle term, their leader, was of course Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr himself. This adulation seems to have gone well beyond the typical veneration for an "object of emulation." In one of his last sermons, he compared Saddam Husayn to the medieval Umayyad Caliph al-Mutawakkil, who is vilified by Shi'ites for his persecution of them.<sup>31</sup> The Ba'th regime was extremely disturbed by these sentiments, and by Muhammad Sadiq's defiance in holding the Friday prayers and in establishing a dense network of activist mosques. One of his fatwas is said to have stipulated that it was not wrong to kill a Ba'thist persecutor, and he met with some members of the paramilitary Badr Corps, based in Iran, which snuck across the border to strike at Ba'thist targets in Iraq.<sup>32</sup>

*Al-Hayat* newspaper reported that Ba'th internal security warned Muhammad Sadiq about his defiance in early 1999, but was rebuffed.<sup>33</sup> On February 18, 1999, he was gunned down in his car with sons Mustafa and Mu'ammal as he was driving home from his office on the outskirts of Najaf. Southern Iraq erupted in demonstrations and riots, which were brutally put down. Over 100 were killed in Najaf, and 54 more in East Baghdad, while demonstrations spread to provincial cities. The total death toll was put at 200.

After Muhammad Sadiq's death, Iraqis were divided on to whom to pledge their religious allegiance. Some followed Sistani, while others turned to Muhammad Sadiq's appointed successor, Sayyid Kazim al-Ha'iri.<sup>34</sup> The latter, however, had the disadvan-

29. Al-Asadi, *Al-Sadr al-Thani*, pp. 11 ff., 94, 99-100, 109, 221-222; Khursan, *Hizb al-Da'wa*, pp. 411-420.

30. Ra'uf, *Sadiq al-Sadr*, pp. 142 ff., pp. 160-161.

31. Al-Asadi, *Al-Sadr al-Thani*, 57-63.

32. Ra'uf, *Sadiq al-Sadr*, pp. 216-217.

33. *Al-Hayat*, February 22, 1999 (Arabic text).

34. *Al-Hayat*, March 9, 1999, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, March 11, 1999.

tage of residing in Qom and of being somewhat distant from the daily realities in Iraq. The young Muqtada al-Sadr (born in the early to mid-1970s), one of Muhammad Sadiq's surviving sons, now went underground, using his father's networks to establish a tight, clandestine organization among the poor and repressed Shi'ites of Kufa and East Baghdad. He had not finished his studies and so was not a legitimate Object of Emulation for the laity in his own right. But he won their hearts as a leader. He retained the loyalty of many of his father's devotees and agents, and, unbeknownst to the outside world, established the most effective religious opposition movement in Iraq. His followers became known as al-Sadriyyun, or the Sadrists, and their organization was Jama'at al-Sadr al-Thani, the Sadr II Movement. They were characterized by a Puritanism, militancy and intolerance that was very different from the genteel Najaf tradition. They held that only the legal rulings of Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr could be followed, rejecting any other religious authority. They insisted that the leadership of Iraqi Shi'ites be invested in Iraqis, a slam at Iranian-born Sistani. The strict code of moral conduct to which they aspired, their opposition to movie theaters, the serving of alcohol, and the appearance of women unveiled in public, on the other hand, simply reflected the social and religious milieu of Najaf itself.<sup>35</sup> For the moment, they constituted a proscribed and clandestine movement, but political events would soon allow them to make claims on local power.

#### *THE SADR MOVEMENT AFTER THE FALL OF THE BA'TH*

Muqtada al-Sadr, underground in Najaf, saw the fall of the Ba'th coming in the spring of 2003, and arranged for the extensive mosque network of the Sadr Movement to be reactivated as soon as the government collapsed under the weight of the Anglo-American invasion. He was aided in this endeavor by the quietism of his rivals, who had acquiesced in the Ba'th prohibition on Friday prayers, and so had not been running mosques. Even before the Saddam regime fell on April 9, Sadr Movement militias rose against the Ba'th and expelled its police and soldiers from al-Thawra (Saddam City), which they promptly renamed Sadr City. (Accounts differ as to whether this uprising began on April 7 or April 8.) The mosques were immediately reopened, at least for organizational purposes, by Sadr Movement preachers such as Shaykhs Muhammad al-Fartusi and 'Ala' al-Mas'udi. On April 8, Sayyid Kazim al-Ha'iri, the appointee of Sadr II living in Qom, Iran, issued a fatwa calling on Iraq's Shi'ites to ignore the Americans and simply take control of Iraq themselves, fighting against the cultural corruption the US would bring with it. He also made Muqtada his representative in Iraq, more or less giving him authority to do as he pleased in al-Ha'iri's name. Muqtada sent money around, made appointments of followers to take over public institutions, and signed numerous decrees posted on walls throughout Iraq.<sup>36</sup>

35. Fayyad, "Shahid.," April 28, 2003.

36. Craig Smith, "Shiite Clerics Make Bid for Power," *New York Times*, April 26, 2003.

The mosques and their Sadr Movement preachers became centers of power. They organized private militias of young men to go out and take control of the major hospitals in East Baghdad.<sup>37</sup> They organized neighborhood patrols to reestablish security with the disappearance of the Ba'th police. The Sadr Movement militias raided old Ba'th weapons depots and came away with stockpiles of Kalashnikov machine guns and rocket propelled grenade launchers, along with massive quantities of ammunition. They stored these arms in mosques and safe houses.

#### *THE BATTLE FOR NAJAF AND THE DEATH OF AL-KHU'I*

Muqtada faced three challengers for authority in the post-Ba'th environment. One was Grand Ayatollah Sistani and his colleagues at the Najaf seminaries, with their quietist political tradition and their rejection of clerical rule. Another was the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), which had been based in Tehran since 1982, and the members of which began returning to Iraq even before the Ba'th had fallen. SCIRI maintained a paramilitary wing, the Badr Corps, of about 10,000 trained men, and these began infiltrating back into Iraq. A third was a new force, 'Abd al-Majid al-Khu'i (or al-Khoei), mentioned earlier in this article. He was flown to Kuwait by the Anglo-American Coalition that had invaded Iraq, and then given resources to go to Najaf around April 3. It has been alleged that al-Khu'i had been given \$13 million by the CIA, and began spreading money around Najaf in order to line up clients and begin taking over the city politically.<sup>38</sup> It has also been said that he was accompanied by a CIA field officer and some Iraqi-American aides detailed to him, and sometimes by Coalition troops.<sup>39</sup> His family and admirers dispute the CIA connection, but even his companions admit that he came to Najaf with American help. Now 50, and the son of the former Object of Emulation who had dominated Najaf for two decades until his death in 1992, al-Khu'i had the credentials to make a serious bid to become the chief religious and political authority among the Shi'ites.

Muqtada's rougher followers in Najaf viewed al-Khu'i's activities with extreme suspicion and anger. He was everything they stood against. They rejected the religious authority of anyone but Sadr II and his successors. They rejected clerics from Iranian lineages as leaders of Iraqi Shi'ites (conveniently ignoring the Iranian antecedents of the al-Sadrs themselves). They rejected Western influence, and saw al-Khu'i as little more than an American puppet. Al-Khu'i was attempting to get control of the shrine of Imam 'Ali, among the holiest sites in Iraq. Saddam's Fida'iyun had established themselves in the shrine and stockpiled grenades and ammunition there, firing at US

37. Lara Marlowe, "Islamic Radicals Ready to Reach for Power," *Irish Times*, April 17, 2003; Juan Cole, "Shiite Religious Parties Fill Vacuum in Southern Iraq," *Middle East Report Online*, April 22, 2003, at <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero042203.html>.

38. Knut Royce with Muhammad Bazzi, "Cleric's Killing a Setback to US: CIA Lost an Ally and \$13 Million," *Newsday*, May 3, 2003.

39. David Ignatius, "Omens of Trouble in Iraq," *Washington Post*, April 29, 2003.

troops from it in hopes of tricking them into harming the shrine and enraging the Shi'ite public. The US military declined to fall for the trick. Eventually Saddam's forces became so exposed that they departed the shrine. The Sadr Movement militia immediately replaced them and claimed the weapons stockpile there.<sup>40</sup>

One of al-Khu'i's companions, Ma'd Fayyad, an Iraqi journalist, described what happened next in an eyewitness account.<sup>41</sup> His account is largely corroborated by the narrative of Jabar Khani Ja'far, the deputy keeper of Imam 'Ali's shrine.<sup>42</sup> Al-Khu'i decided that the easiest way to assert control over the shrine, wresting it from the Sadr Movement, was to rehabilitate the shrine keeper, Haydar Rafi'i Kalidar. The Kalidars had overseen the shrine for generations, and so al-Khu'i seems to have believed they would have legitimacy. But Kalidar had allowed himself to be co-opted by the Ba'th department of religious affairs, and had gained the reputation among many Najaf Shi'ites as a collaborator with Saddam Husayn as a result. The Sadr Movement, which mourned the martyrdom of Sadr II at the hands of Ba'th assassins, was particularly bitter about prominent Shi'ites who they felt had secured their lives by collaborating. On April 9, al-Khu'i told Kalidar to start coming back to his office at the shrine, an attempt to install him there. Kalidar was there on April 10 when al-Khu'i and his companions performed the rites of "visitation" or pilgrimage to the shrine.

Fayyad says that an angry crowd gathered in the square outside the shrine, chanting slogans in favor of Muqtada al-Sadr. Determined to prevent Kalidar from becoming established at the shrine, they demanded that he be surrendered to them. They were also enraged that al-Khu'i was accompanied by Mahir al-Yasiri, an Iraqi Shi'ite settled in Dearborn, Michigan, who was part of an expatriate group helping the US forces and who was wearing a US flack jacket. The encounter became a firefight when someone in al-Khu'i's party, perhaps al-Khu'i himself, fired a pistol over the heads of the Sadr Movement mob. They replied with gunfire, and killing al-Yasiri. Eyewitness Ma'd Fayyad says that after an hour-long standoff, al-Khu'i and his party surrendered. He then maintains that al-Khu'i and others were bound and taken to Muqtada al-Sadr's house, but that the latter declined to admit them and that the word came back out that they should be killed in the square. Fayyad admits, however, that he had loosened his ropes and escaped before this point, so that he may have had this story second hand. Other accounts suggest a more spontaneous mob action, in which the crowd closed on al-Khu'i and Kalidar and stabbed them to death. If the Anglo-American Coalition had in fact entertained hope that al-Khu'i could exercise a moderating influence in Najaf, the attempt died with him. There seems little doubt that al-Khu'i fell to angry members of the Sadr Movement.

40. Fayyad, "*Shahid 'ala Rihlat al-Khu'i ila al-'Iraq*," ["Witness to the Journey of al-Khu'i to Iraq"], *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, April 30, 2003. (Second Part of a two-part story previously cited.)

41. Ma'd Fayyad, "*Ighthiyal al-Za'im al-Shi'i 'Abd al-Majid al-Khu'i fi Najaf*," [Assassination of the Shi'ite Leader 'Abd al-Majid al-Khu'i in Najaf], *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, April 11, 2003.

42. Meg Laughlin and Soraya Sarhaddi Nelson, "Shiite Killing Described," Knight Ridder News Service, April 27, 2003.

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Crowds from the Jama'at al-Sadr al-Thani, including 50 armed men, now surrounded the houses of Grand Ayatollah 'Ali Sistani and his colleague Ayatollah Muhammad Sa'id al-Hakim, both of whom had been rivals of Sadr II and both of whom he had criticized by name. They gave the two 48 hours to leave Najaf, demanding that the Iraqi Shi'ite leadership be solely in the hands of Iraqis.<sup>43</sup> Sistani had, however, already left his home and gone into hiding, which was one reason al-Khu'i had never been able to meet him. The mobs made a similar demand of other major clerics, including the Afghan ayatollah, Ishaq al-Fayyad. The crisis lasted until Monday, April 14, when city elders brought armed tribal elements loyal to them into the town to restore order. The Sadr Movement crowds were dispersed and a modicum of security was regained.<sup>44</sup> The US military forces were, throughout, careful not to intervene directly, because of the sensitivities of Shi'ites to the presence of foreigners at the shrine. Since the CIA had long cultivated the Iraqi tribes, and had spent millions to encourage them to rise against Saddam during the war, it is not impossible that the tribal take-over of the city was in part the Agency's doing. In the aftermath, the US forces appointed a Sunni ex-Ba'th officer who claimed to have turned against Saddam during the war as the mayor of Najaf, and he kept order with his supporters until he was finally dismissed two months later for corruption and kidnapping.

The battle for Najaf was inconclusive, though it is likely that Sistani retained his position mainly among the older inhabitants, while many of the youth gravitated to Muqtada. When for the first time Muqtada came out into the open and led Friday prayers at his father's old mosque in Kufa, on April 18, thousands attended. Sistani and his senior colleagues remained much more circumspect about coming into public, for which Muqtada derided them. At his first Friday prayers sermon after the war, on April 18 in Kufa, Muqtada thanked God rather than the US "for religious freedom and for liberating us from dictatorship." Thousands had flocked to hear him from among local laborers and farmers, suggesting the class base of his movement. He complained about the lack of electricity and water, and implied that the US was deliberately withholding services. He also criticized then-SCIRI leader Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, saying, "Religious people who went into exile should not have left. The country needed them." Since Muqtada's father died for his insistence on remaining, one can understand his bitterness. The slam at al-Hakim was more than rhetorical. Shaykh 'Ali al-Maliki, the leader of the paramilitary branch of the Sadr Movement, told journalist Lara Marlowe that his forces had driven Badr Corps fighters out of East Baghdad on April 17. She concluded that the rumors that Shi'ite militias were fighting off "Ba'thists" and "Wahhabis" were a cover for internecine battles among Shi'ite forces themselves.<sup>45</sup>

43. "Jama'at Muqtada al-Sadr tuhasir Manzil al-Sistani," ["The Muqtada al-Sadr Movement Besieges the House of Al-Sistani,"] *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, April 14, 2003.

44. "Tadakhkhul Shuyukh Qaba'il al-Furat," ["Intervention of the Shaykhs of the Euphrates Tribes"], *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, April 15, 2003.

45. Lara Marlowe, report from Najaf, *The Scotsman*, April 19, 2003.

*AL-THAWRA TOWNSHIP OR "SADR CITY"*

The more important political action took place in the poor quarters of East Baghdad or al-Thawra, now informally known as Sadr City, where the Sadr Movement became a "youth movement" *par excellence*.<sup>46</sup> Journalist Muhammad Husni reported firsthand on April 17 that Sadr Movement militias had filled the power vacuum created by the fall of the Ba'th Party, establishing patrols and engaging in firefights with infiltrators. They had also organized the return of looted goods, and were providing food aid from the mosques. He reported strong anti-American sentiments among the Friday prayers leaders at the Sadr mosques, who insisted that the US leave as soon as possible. The movement leaders told Husni that the enemy infiltrators were "Arab volunteers," with the implication that they were al-Qaeda or Sunni Arab nationalists.<sup>47</sup> We have already seen that Marlowe concluded they were actually fighting the Badr Corps.

The following day, on Friday, April 18, the Sadr movement helped staged one of the largest demonstrations yet seen in post-war Iraq, with an estimated 20,000 Baghdadis coming out for it. Sadr Movement supporter Shaykh Muhammad al-Fartusi and self-styled "head of security" gave a rousing sermon at the al-Hikmah mosque in al-Thawra, saying that the Shi'ites would not accept a brand of democracy "that allows Iraqis to say what they want but gives them no say in their destiny," adding, "this form of government would be worse than that of Saddam Husayn." He urged believers to follow the decrees of the Najaf religious establishment (by which he meant Muqtada al-Sadr), and listed a four-point code of conduct, stressing that music, imitation of Westerners, women going unveiled, and preferring tribal custom to Islamic law are all forbidden. After Friday prayers (where the congregants received their instructions), crowds poured into the streets, demanding that the US depart from Iraq and insisting on an Islamic state. Placards read, "Get out Now," and "No to Bush, no to Saddam, Yes to Islam!" The largely Shi'ite crowds were joined by Sunni Islamists. A supporting large demonstration was held the same day in the holy shrine city of Karbala, spurred on by the sermon of Sadr Movement preacher Kazim al-'Ibadi al-Nasiri at the mosque attached to the shrine of Imam Husayn, also demanding an immediate departure of US troops, saying "We reject this foreign occupation, which is a new imperialism."<sup>48</sup>

The religious rites of commemorative pilgrimage carried out by Shi'ites to Karbala that began over the weekend of April 19 and 20 did not, as some radicals had

46. A good overview is al-Amin, "*Baghdad allati lam taf'al*," and by the same author, "*Madina rahkumuha shabakat masjid al-Hawza al-Natiqa*," ["City Governed by the Networks of the Mosques of the Speaking Religious Authority," *Al-Hayat*, July 12, 2003, both parts of a 6-part series on Muqtada and Iraqi Shi'ism.

47. Muhammad Husni, "*Rijal al-Din al-Shi'a yandafi'una li mil' al-Firagh al-Siyasi fi al-'Iraq*," [Shi'ite Clerics Rush in to Fill the Political Void in Iraq"], *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, April 18, 2003.

48. Hasan Hafiz, "*Muzaharat Hashida*," ["Mass Demonstrations"], *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, April 19, 2003; Mohamed Hasni, "Iraq's Friday Prayers Issue Warnings to US," Agence France-Presse, April 19, 2003; "The Search Continues," *Monday Morning* (Beirut), April 28, 2003.

hoped, turn into an anti-American political protest. The large crowds, in their hundreds of thousands, remained peaceful and apparently more interested in the pilgrimage itself than politics, though a small group occasionally chanted against the US occupation. Many followers of Sadr II stopped off at his tomb in Najaf to pay their respects.<sup>49</sup> Shaykh Fartusi visited Najaf over that weekend to get instructions from Muqtada, and returned to Baghdad late Sunday, after the curfew. He was stopped by Marines at a checkpoint, and they found a pistol in his car. They arrested him, apparently unaware of his importance. The next day, Monday April 21, the Sadr Movement mobilized and bused 5,000 protesters to the center of Baghdad, who chanted for the release of Fartusi. The rallies of the previous Friday had been much less visible, because they took place in neighborhoods. This demonstration was the largest yet staged at the center of the city. It was repeated on Tuesday, but then the Marines, finally aware of their mistake, released Fartusi. He maintained that he had been beaten and mistreated, saying that the US was "worse than Saddam."<sup>50</sup> The Sadr Movement continued to express strong anti-Western feelings, with gangs threatening and closing down liquor stores and cinemas, and enforcing the veil on women. Some Sadr Movement clerics nevertheless cooperated thereafter with US military community development efforts, and they continued to have great sway in East Baghdad, supplying food and other aid paid for by Iranian sources.<sup>51</sup>

Muqtada has taken a rejectionist but non-violent stance toward the US presence and its efforts to establish a new Iraqi government. He was invited by Jay Garner, the first US civil administrator of the country, to participate in a leadership conference held at Nasiriyya on April 28, but refused.<sup>52</sup> He said, "I don't want the chair of the government because it will be controlled by the US and I don't want to be controlled by the US" Eyewitness journalist Nir Rosen reports that, "When asked if that meant he would want to attack the Americans, he snorted and replied with the colloquial Arabic equivalent of 'Why would I want to f\*\*k myself?'"<sup>53</sup> The al-Da'wa Party also opposed that meeting, because it was being held by a former US General under Pentagon auspices. SCIRI sent a low-level delegation. Later, when Garner was replaced by civilian L. Paul Bremer III, both SCIRI and al-Da'wa proved ultimately willing to join the new Governing Council that declared itself on July 13 after negotiations with the US. Muqtada, however, refused, denouncing the plan at his June 14 Friday sermon at Kufa.<sup>54</sup> He later expressed severe reservations that the Americans could establish a just government in Iraq, since they were opposed to a Shi'ite state.

Muqtada called on May 2 for strict Islamic law to be applied to Iraq's Christians, as well, including the prohibition on bars and on allowing women to appear

49. Richard Lloyd Parry, "Pilgrimage represents Rebirth of Shia Faith," *The Times*, April 21, 2003 (reporting from Najaf).

50. Nadiya Mahdid, "Al-Quwwat al-Amrikiyya tufrij 'an Rajul Din," ["American Forces Release Cleric"], *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, April 23 2003; same author, "Al-Fartusi," *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 24 April 2003; Craig S. Smith, "Shiite Clerics make Bid for Power," *New York Times*, April 26, 2003.

51. Anthony Shadid, "Troops Test Cooperation With Clerics," *Washington Post*, May 23, 2003.

52. Nadim Ladki, "Garner to Meet Prominent Iraqis," *Reuters*, April 27, 2003 (via Lexis Nexis).

53. Nir Rosen, "Shiite Contender Eyes Iraq's Big Prize," *Time Magazine Online*, May 3, 2003.

54. *Al-Zaman*, June 16, 2003.

unveiled.<sup>55</sup> This ruling appears to be a restatement of one of his father's fatwas, but this time the al-Sadr family had the authority to make it stick in some parts of Iraq. In contrast, Grand Ayatollah Sistani issued a statement saying that the Najaf establishment had not called for forcible veiling. Muqtada also forbade Iraqi merchants to deal with Kuwaitis, and his mentor Ayatollah Kazim al-Ha'iri forbade Iraqis to sell land to Jews, calling for such Jewish buyers to be killed.<sup>56</sup> The Sadr Movement stranglehold on power in al-Thawra continued to be strengthened in May, June, and July. Sadrists established informal Shi'ite courts in mosques to deal with local disputes, including over burglary and murder. Sadr II had run such courts clandestinely, but now they were the de facto tribunals of justice in many neighborhoods.

The al-Muhsin Mosque was a key Sadr Movement institution in East Baghdad. Shaykh Kazim 'Ibadi al-Nasiri called in his sermon on May 9 there for vigilante reprisal killings of Ba'thists, referring to a fatwa of Ayatollah Kazim al-Ha'iri.<sup>57</sup> In his sermon from the same mosque on May 16, Shaykh Muhammad Fartusi thundered, "The cinemas in Al-Saadun Street show indecent films. I warn them: if in a week they do not change, we will act differently with them. We warn women and the go-betweens who take them to the Americans: If in a week from now they do not change their attitude, the murder of these women is sanctioned (by Islam). This warning also goes out to sellers of alcohol, radios and televisions. The torching of cinemas would be permitted," he said, if cinemas did not change their ways.<sup>58</sup> In fact, many liquor shops, cinemas, and cosmetic shops were closed by threats or in some instances fire bombings.

#### DEMONSTRATIONS

The Sadr Movement attempted to provoke numerous demonstrations in Baghdad and Basra, calling for a withdrawal of Anglo-American troops, as a way of showing its popular influence. On May 14, hundreds of Shi'ites demonstrated in downtown Baghdad for an Islamic government, saying that it should be Shi'ite because they had suffered most under Saddam. On May 15, Shaykh al-'Ibadi al-Nasiri preached a thunderous sermon to 30,000 congregants at the Imam Sadr Mosque in East Baghdad, accusing US troops of using night vision goggles to see through women's clothes and of passing out pornography to children in the form of candy wrappers. He all but called for terror attacks on US forces. Ironically, the US forces had provided special security to the mosque. His sermon appears to have alarmed Muqtada al-Sadr back in Najaf, and it was announced that it had not been approved and that henceforth the

55. Mohamed Hasni, "Sadr Calls for Iraqi Christians to Follow Islamic Law," *Middle East Online*, May 2, 2003.

56. "Iraqi Fatwa Bans Trading with Kuwaitis," *Arab Times* (Kuwait), July 12, 2003; "Cleric Calls for Killing of Jews who Buy Land," Reuter, June 28, 2003.

57. James Drummond and Nicholas Pelham, "Shia Clerics Urge Faithful to Attack Returning Ba'athists," *Financial Times*, May 10, 2003.

58. "Shiite Leader in Baghdad Warns Women, Alcohol Sellers, Cinemas," Agence France Presse, May 16, 2003 (via Lexis Nexis).



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Najaf religious establishment (i.e. Muqtada) would have to pre-approve such sermons. Muqtada has steadfastly refused to sanction violence against Americans. That weekend, Shi'ite clerics like Shaykh Fartusi began calling for a million man march on Monday, May 19, the Shi'ite commemoration of the death of the Prophet Muhammad, which they had been forbidden by the Ba'th to mark on a day different from the one honored by the Sunnis. On May 19, Shi'ites conducted the commemorative procession to a mosque, and about 10,000 Sadrists turned the occasion into an anti-American rally, demanding an Iraqi government overseen by the Najaf ayatollahs and the departure of the Americans.<sup>59</sup> Given the difference between Fartusi's predictions and the actual turnout, and given that even it depended on the holy day procession, this outcome can only be seen as a setback for the Sadr Movement. Most Iraqi Shi'ites clearly were still willing to give the US time.

On Thursday, May 29, hundreds of Shi'ites, including 50 clerics, gathered in downtown Baghdad to chant against the US for using troops to make arrests of armed clerics in Najaf. They also chanted against Israel, and called the US "the number one source of terrorism."<sup>60</sup> The same day, a Baghdad cinema near the demonstration was rocked by a grenade attack, after defying demands from the Sadr movement "punishment committee" to close down. On June 3, hundreds of Sadr Movement Shi'ites demonstrated against the US in downtown Baghdad, protesting the brief detention of Shaykh Jasim Sa'adi on weapons charges. Among those protesting were members of the breakaway Fadilah Party, a faction of the Sadr Movement headed by Shaykh Muhammad Ya'qubi.<sup>61</sup> On Saturday, June 21, 2,500 Shi'ites demonstrated in downtown Baghdad at the behest of Sadr Movement preachers, demanding that the Najaf religious authorities establish and supervise the new Iraqi government, and denouncing the Americans as occupiers. This protest came at a time when US civil administrator L. Paul Bremer seemed determined to relegate Iraqi leaders to a merely advisory role. During his Friday Prayers sermon, Shaykh Kazim 'Ibadi al-Nasiri had told his 10,000 congregants that they were engaged in a "clash of civilizations," and urged them to gather downtown during his Friday prayers sermon. They were joined by worshippers from Kazimiyya and Shuala.<sup>62</sup>

June saw three big demonstrations against the British authorities in Basra, on June 1 (5,000), June 7 (2,000), and June 15 (10,000). The BBC online reported of the June 7 rally, "They were said to have rallied on the instructions of an organisation named after Ayatollah Mohammed Sadeq al-Sadr . . ."<sup>63</sup> Although Shi'ite unrest in

59. "Shiites call for Iraqi government free of foreign influences," Deutsche Press Agentur, 15 May 2003; Warren Richey, "Reverberations from an Iraq Prayer Meeting," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 19, 2003; "Shiites openly mark Mohammed's birthday in Iraq as lawlessness still reigns," AFP, May 19, 2003.

60. "Hundreds of Shiites hold anti-US rally in Baghdad," Agence France Presse, May 29, 2003.

61. "Iraqis protest at arrest of Shiite dignitary," Agence France Presse, June 3, 2003.

62. Patrick Tyler, "2,000 at Rally Demand Islamic Supervision of Elections," *New York Times*, June 22, 2003; Anthony Shadid, "Iraqi Shiite Leader Uneasy With U.S. Role," *Washington Post*, June 23, 2003.

63. "Basra protest against British presence," BBC News Online, June 7, 2003 at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>  
*Continued on Next Page*

Basra is often blamed on al-Hakim's Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the Sadr Movement is a considerable force in the city in its own right.<sup>64</sup> Still, the demands of the protesters were remarkably local, having to do with discontents about the way the British were running the city and with their appointees to the governing council.

### *FACTIONALISM*

Muqtada al-Sadr made a trip to Iran for a week beginning June 7, meeting with high Iranian authorities and with his mentor, Ayatollah Kazim al-Ha'iri. Given the subsequent tension that developed between the two, this meeting may not have gone well. The Iranians had supplied food and other aid to Sadr Movement clerics in East Baghdad, allowing them to gain popularity by providing services to the people. Muqtada may have been seeking further such aid. If so, the Iranians wanted a quid pro quo. They wanted the exclusivist and sectarian Sadr Movement to avoid any further internal Shi'ite clashes such as had broken out over al-Khu'i's arrival in Najaf in early April. Former Iranian president and head of the Expediency Council, 'Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, said "All Iraqi Shiite groups and fighters, especially those of the Supreme Assembly for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, should keep their unity and work for Iraq's interests by combatting internal and external conspiracies."<sup>65</sup>

Rafsanjani's pleading was not entirely successful. By late June, Muqtada was telling journalist Hazim al-Amin that there was no coordination between him and the other Shi'ite leaders in Najaf, and that it was the fault of Grand Ayatollah Sistani and his colleagues, who were apolitical because they were not Iraqis. (This is a reference to his father's theory of the "al-Hawza al-Natiqa" or the "Speaking Religious Authority," the mantle of which Muqtada now claims). Al-Amin also reported that Sistani and Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim of SCIRI had grown closer, in hopes of uniting against the threat of the exclusivist and powerful Sadr Movement. Muqtada told him that he believes in the Khomeinist theory of the rule of the jurispudent, but

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#### *Continued from Previous Page*

1/hi/world/middle\_east/2972308.stm ; "Iraqis protest against new British ruler in Basra," Agence France Presse, June 1, 2003; "Iraqis protest against British rule in Basra," Agence France Presse, June 15, 2003.

64. Andrzej Rybak, "Irak-Tagebücher: Basra holt Schwung für den Neubeginn," ["Iraq Diary: Basra gets Momentum for a New Beginning," *Financial Times Deutschland*, April 5, 2003 at <http://www.ftd.de/pw/in/1050940024444.html?nv=tn-rs>. He says, "Viele unterstützen den jungen Religionsgelehrten Muqtada al-Sadr aus Nadschaf, der gegen die Präsenz der USA in Irak... eintritt." [Many Support the Young Religious Scholar Muqtada al-Sadr of Najaf, who Stands against the US Presence in Iraq.]

65. "Iran's Rafsanjani Appeals for Unity Among Rival Iraqi Shiite Groups," Agence France-Presse, June 8, 2003. See also "Muqtada al-Sadr yabhath fi Qumm 'awdat al-Ha'iri ila al-Najaf," ["Muqtada al-Sadr discusses in Qom the Return of al-Ha'iri to Najaf"], *Al-Zaman*, June 6, 2003.

that the supreme jurisprudent of Iraq would be a different person than the supreme jurisprudent of Iran (among believers in the theory, a big debate has raged for over a decade over whether Iranian Supreme Jurisprudent 'Ali Khamenei's authority extends to all Shi'ites or is country-bound). Muqtada reaffirmed that he refused to cooperate with the American administration, but also declined to oppose it.<sup>66</sup>

June and July witnessed an outbreak of fierce rivalry in Karbala between the Sadr Movement and followers of Grand Ayatollah Sistani over the right to preach in the mosque attached to the shrine of Imam Husayn, among the more prestigious venues in the Shi'ite world. An agreement was initially reached to alternate each Friday, but then in early July Muqtada issued a typically exclusivist decree that only Sadrist clerics had the right to lead prayers. On July 4, the two factions came to blows inside the shrine of the Imam, leaving the city polarized and tense.<sup>67</sup> In July, as well, the Sadr Movement and SCIRI quarreled over the shrine of Imam 'Ali in Najaf.

In early July, Muqtada, who is said to be on the brink of being an independent jurisprudent (*mujtahid*) and Object of Emulation himself, also began being critical of his supposed mentor, Ayatollah Kazim al-Ha'iri, for refusing to come back to Najaf from Qom, and suggesting that he did not after all recognize him as a superior.<sup>68</sup> For his part, according to the Iranian newspaper *Baztab*, al-Ha'iri began backing off his support for Muqtada, saying that offices dedicated to the memory of Sadr II should be closed except in Najaf, and that the activities of the Muslims should henceforth be conducted under the shadow of the Guardian (*Wali*) of the Muslims (i.e. al-Ha'iri himself).<sup>69</sup> If *Baztab* is to be believed, Al-Ha'iri was positioning himself to succeed to Sadr II and sideline Muqtada. He received some help, inadvertent or not, when on July 16 Shaykh Muhammad Ya'qubi finally declared himself an Object of Emulation, making formal the split of his al-Fadila group from the Muqtada loyalists. His followers demonstrated against threats to him in Najaf, though the Muqtada group maintained that he had no local support and just brought in some armed tribesmen to stage the demonstration. Ayatollah Kazim al-Ha'iri is said to have blessed Ya'qubi's schism, saying he had the prerequisites for being an Object of Emulation.<sup>70</sup>

The movement of Muqtada al-Sadr seems likely to survive this minor schism, and it continued to show great popular strength through late summer. Sadrists appear to have been involved in riots against Marine patrols in Karbala in late July, resulting

66. Hazim al-Amin, "Arwiqat al-Hawzah fi al-Najaf tadijj bi inqisamat," [The Halls of the Hawza in Najaf are Riven with Divisions] *Al-Hayat*, June 27, 2003.

67. Hamza Hendawi, "Once Showcased as Example of Peace, Holy Shiite City now Moving in Opposite Direction," Associated Press, July 15, 2003.

68. Al-Amin, "Madina tahkumuha shabakat."

69. "Awj-giri-yi Tanish miyan-i Sadri-ha va Majlis-i A'la," ["Tensions Peak Between the Sadrists and SCIRI"] *Baztab*, July 13, 2003/22 Tir 1384 at <http://www.baztab.com/index.asp?ID=9120&Subject=News>

70. "Inshi'ab dar Sadriha," ["Split Among the Sadris"] *Baztab*, July 16, 2003/25 Tir 1384 at: <http://www.baztab.com/index.asp?ID=9299&Subject=News>; the Ya'qubi schism, which began last spring, is also reported by al-Amin, "Madina," and journalist Nir Rosen in Najaf kindly sent me an unpublished report he had done on al-Fadila. I am also grateful to Trudy Rubin of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* for sharing insights from her 3-week trip to Najaf and other Shiite sites in May-June, 2003.

in one dead and nine wounded when the Marines replied to gunfire and shot into the crowd. In a Friday sermon in early August, Muqtada called on the Marines to be tried for murder in accordance with the sharia. Sadrists were definitely involved in major riots in Basra the weekend of August 9-10. Followers of Muqtada have significant power in Basra, and are said to hold a third of the seats on the current city council. On August 15, Shi'ites in East Baghdad rioted against the United States because a military helicopter had blown a Shi'ite banner off a telecom tower. The banner invoked the promised one of Shi'ite Islam, the Imam Mahdi, and appears to have been placed on the tower by Sadrists who believe he is about to come back. Muqtada had announced that he would begin recruiting a militia called the "Mahdi Army," though he pledged it would be non-violent. Some 10,000 young men are said to have joined, and the banners put up in East Baghdad may have been in part celebrating the militia's formation. Muqtada continued to call for an immediate withdrawal from Iraq of American and British troops.

When Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim was killed along with nearly 100 others in a huge truck bomb in Najaf on August 29, SCIRI leaders began demanding an immediate US military withdrawal, as well. Because of religious sensitivities about close Marines patrols in Najaf, after the bombing the US civil administrator Paul Bremer winked at the emergence of armed paramilitaries in Najaf, including Badr Corps fighters trained by the Revolutionary Guards in Iran and members of Muqtada's Army of the Mahdi. The US military had been dead set against such paramilitaries appearing in public with arms, and indicated that it would not be tolerated for long. The bombing brought SCIRI and the Sadrists closer in their position on the Coalition military forces. It also removed an important rival to Muqtada, though Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim never had the young al-Sadr's widespread popularity, in any case. Muqtada's enemies among the Sunnis accused him of blaming them for the bombing and of provoking Shiites to expropriate their religious sites. The Sadr movement remains significant in Iraqi street politics despite its exclusion from the American-appointed Interim Governing Council and the new cabinet appointed in early September.<sup>71</sup>

Observers on the ground report that the Sadr Movement controls the major mosques, Shi'ite community centers, hospitals and soup kitchens in East Baghdad, Kufa and Samarra', and has a strong presence in Najaf, Karbala and Basra, as well. It is highly networked, and its preachers have taken a strong rhetorical line against what they view as an Anglo-American occupation. It is sectarian both in its demographic base (poor, urban and young) and its dedication to the themes of difference, antagonism and separation. Politically, it must be seen as a movement of the populist Right, seeking to impose religious authority on the public, to institute corporate techniques of control, to reduce women to second class citizens, to exclude foreign influence, and to subordinate the minority Sunnis to Shi'ite religious leadership.

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71. A continuing chronicle of Shi'ite movements in contemporary Iraq, with citations, may be found at <http://www.juancole.com>; for these points, see the August and September 2003 archives.)

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Sadr Movement adherents differentiate themselves from middle class and wealthier, more secular Iraqis of the sort who controlled Iraq politically for most of the twentieth century. They decry the wearing of Western-made clothes, patronizing movie theaters that show Western films, drinking alcohol, and the appearance in public of unveiled women. They insist on the necessity of holding and attending Friday prayers at mosques. They also represent themselves as more socially conscious and caring than is the Westernized and individualistic Iraqi middle class. Their militias provided security to millions of Shi'ites in the spring and summer of 2003, at a time when the Iraqi police force had collapsed and the Anglo-American forces were too small to provide security. Sadrist clergymen fought looting and insisted on the return of looted merchandise. Adherents also specialize in providing food and medical aid to poor neighborhoods, seeking thereby to build a political base when elections come. They appear to have gained some Iranian patronage for these efforts.

Sadrists are antagonistic to other social forces and often attempt to keep themselves separate from them. They denounce the Anglo-American presence in Iraq as a form of imperialism, insist that the occupiers leave immediately, and say that the US treatment of the Sadr Movement leaders they have occasionally arrested and released has been "worse than Saddam's." They accuse Western troops of using night vision goggles to see through women's clothes, and of distributing pornography to children in the form of candy wrappers. Some have called for the assassination of any Iraqi woman who forms a liaison with a Western soldier. Muqtada says that since the US is opposed to the erection of a Shi'ite state, he expects nothing good of its state-building efforts in Iraq. They attack the supposed influence of Jews and of Israel. The repertoires of social action to which they have resorted include large rallies in neighborhoods or downtown Baghdad, Najaf and Basra, orchestrated by the Friday prayers leaders at mosques. They also engage in social displays of power, as with their armed militia patrols, though the US is attempting to outlaw the carrying of weapons in public.

Their antagonism to the secular middle class values of the Iraqi political and economic elite is often extreme, and has sometimes been expressed in the form of firebombing cinema houses and liquor shops, or at least threatening owners in an effort to make them close. Not only is the Sadr movement antagonistic to the Coalition and to secularist Iraqis, but it is hostile to other Shi'ite religious forces. The Sadrists insist that no Object of Emulation is acceptable who does not stand in the shadow of Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr. They thus break with the mainstream tradition of Usuli Shi'ism, which recognizes plural authorities and leaves it up to the individual believer to choose his or her Object of Emulation. They reject the leadership of Grand Ayatollah Sistani and the Najaf establishment, on the grounds that it is foreign and politically timid. They insist on having an Iraqi Object of Emulation, and one who speaks out rather than one who keeps silent, and some of them tried to force Sistani out of Najaf altogether. They have brought into question his right to appoint prayer leaders in other cities. The Sadr Movement attempted to exclude the Badr Brigade from East Baghdad, and is locked in a struggle with SCIRI for control of the shrine of Imam 'Ali in Najaf. In Karbala, they are battling supporters of Sistani for control of

the mosque attached to the shrine of Imam Husayn. They have separated their congregation from the one led by Sistani's appointee. Their antagonism to these other groups is in part rooted in their attempt to monopolize sacred space in Iraq.

Can the Sadrists maintain their political momentum? If the Defense Department scenario comes to fruition, and Iraq holds relatively free and fair elections in late 2004 or early 2005, the Sadr Movement's political power may be diluted in a new Iraqi parliament that they cannot hope to dominate. Assuming they agree to field candidates, they could only hope to play in it the sort of role that the Lebanese Hizbullah does in the Lebanese parliament, where the radical party is often forced to cooperate with the Maronite Christians and other forces. If, on the other hand, Iraq begins to collapse into insecurity and angry urban crowds seek an early exit of Coalition forces, the Sadr Movement networks and militias will stand them in good stead in asserting power in East Baghdad and the south. It seems clear that the future of Iraq is intimately wrought up with the fortunes of the Sadr Movement.

## 42. The Iranian Hand

Michael Ledeen, Wall Street Journal, 16 April 2004, Page A14

Much is being made about the irony of an Iranian envoy arriving in Iraq to help negotiate a solution to the U.S. standoff with radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. How could we allow a charter member of President Bush's "Axis of Evil" to negotiate a "peace" with the thuggish Sadr and his band of fanatical militants?

Indeed, the irony is as thick as Sadr's own beard. But the fact that Iran holds sway over him and other Shiite militants in Iraq should surprise no one. Despite repeated denials by the State Department, it is an open secret throughout the Middle East that Sadr has been receiving support -- if not precise orders -- from the mullahs in Iran for some time now.

That the war being waged by Shiite militants throughout Iraq is not just a domestic "insurgency" has been documented by the Italian Military Intelligence Service (Sismi). In a report prepared before the current wave of violence, Sismi predicted "a simultaneous attack by Saddam loyalists" all over the country, along with a series of Shiite revolts.

The Italians knew that these actions were not just part of an Iraqi civil war, nor a response to recent actions taken by the Coalition Provisional Authority against the forces of Sadr. According to Italian intelligence, the actions were used as a pretext by local leaders of the factions tied to an Iran-based ayatollah, Kazem al-Haeri, who was "guided in his political and strategic choices by ultraconservative Iranian ayatollahs in order to unleash a long planned general revolt." The strategic goal of this revolt, says Sismi, was "the establishment of an Islamic government of Khomeinist inspiration." The Italian intelligence agency noted that "the presence of Iranian agents of influence and military instructors has been reported for some time." Our own government will not say as much publicly, but Donald Rumsfeld and Gen. John Abizaid, the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, have recently spoken of "unhelpful actions" by Iran (and Syria).

The London-based Al-Hayat reported on April 6 that the Iraqi Governing Council was actively discussing "the major Iranian role in the events that took place in the Iraqi Shiite cities," noting that the Iranians were the predominant financiers of Sadr. Another London newspaper, Al Sharq Al-Awsat, quoted a recent Iranian intelligence defector that Iranian infiltration of Iraq started well before Operation Iraqi Freedom. Hundreds of intelligence agents were sent into Iraq through the north. After the fall of Saddam, greater numbers came across the uncontrolled border, masquerading as students, clerics and journalists -- and as religious pilgrims to the now-accessible holy cities of Najaf and Karbala.



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The editor of the Kuwaiti newspaper Al Seyassah recently wrote a front-page editorial saying that Hezbollah and Hamas were working with Sadr, "backed by the ruling religious fundamentalists in Tehran and the nationalist Baathists in Damascus." No classified information was required for that claim, since Sadr himself has publicly proclaimed that his militia is the fighting arm of both Hezbollah and Hamas. Nonetheless, the State Department still doesn't believe -- or won't admit publicly -- that there's a connection between Sadr's uprising and Iran's mullahs. Just last week, State's deputy spokesman, Adam Ereli, told reporters that "We've seen reports of Iranian involvement, collusion, provocation, coordination, etc., etc. But I think there's a dearth of hard facts to back these things up."

One wonders what Foggy Bottom's analysts make of Sadr's recent visit to Iran, when he met with Hashem Rafsanjani (the number two power in the regime), Murtadha Radha'i (head of intelligence for the Revolutionary Guards) and Brigadier General Qassim Suleimani (the al-Quds Army commander in charge of Iraqi affairs). And what might they say about the fact that much of Sadr's funding comes straight from Ayatollah al-Haeri, one of the closest allies of the Iranian supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei?

Americans must understand that the war in Iraq is in reality a regional war which unites religious fanatics like the Iranians and radical secularists like the Syrians and Saddam's Iraqi supporters. The terrorists include Shiites like Sadr and murderous Sunnis like al Qaeda leader Abu Musab Zarqawi (who, despite his celebrated contempt for Shiites, has openly proclaimed common cause with Sadr).

Iraq cannot be peaceful and secure so long as Tehran sends its terrorist cadres across the border. Naturally, our troops will engage -- and kill -- any infiltrators they encounter. But we can be sure that there will be others to take their place. The only way to end Tehran's continual sponsorship of terror is to bring about the demise of the present Iranian regime. And as it happens, we have an excellent opportunity to achieve this objective, without the direct use of military power against Iran. There is a critical mass of pro-democracy citizens there, who would like nothing more than to rid themselves of their oppressors. They need help, but they neither need nor desire to be liberated by force of arms.

Above all, they want to hear our leaders state clearly and repeatedly -- as Ronald Reagan did with the "Evil Empire" -- that regime change in Iran is the goal of American policy. Thus far, they have heard conflicting statements and mealy-mouthed half truths of the sort presented by Mr. Ereli, along with astonishing proclamations, such as the one by Deputy Secretary of State Richard



Armitage, in which he averred that Iran is "a democracy." (One wonders whether he will liken Muqtada al-Sadr to Patrick Henry.)

Mr. Armitage notwithstanding, we can reach the Iranian people by providing support to the several Farsi-language radio and TV stations in this country, all currently scrambling for funds to broadcast a couple of hours a day. We can encourage private foundations and individuals to support the Iranian democracy movement. The current leadership of the AFL-CIO has regrettably abandoned that organization's traditional role of supporting free trade unions inside tyrannical countries, but there are some individual unions that could do it.

This sort of political campaign aimed at toppling the Iranian regime -- allied to firm punitive action within Iraq against terrorists of all stripes -- will make our task in Iraq manifestly less dangerous. Ultimately, security in Iraq will come in large measure from freedom and reform in Iran (as well as in Syria and Saudi Arabia). This is a truth that we should not hide from, nor be fearful to take on.

Mr. Ledeen, resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, is the author of "The War Against the Terror Masters" (St Martin's, 2003).

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PNG Post-Courier

April 19, 2004 Monday

**SECTION:** FLARE UP IN IRAQ; Pg. 15

**LENGTH:** 237 words

**HEADLINE:** US policies to blame

**BODY:**

**TEHRAN:** Iran yesterday said America's iron-fisted policies and the lack of security undermined Iranian efforts to bring calm to Iraq.

And that it would no longer co-operate with Washington in such efforts.

Iran had sent a diplomatic delegation to Iraq in an effort to improve security but Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said the team did not make the contacts it had hoped, and blamed the Americans.

The latest setback to Iranian efforts came after an Iranian diplomat was killed in Baghdad on Thursday, causing Iran to distance itself from mediation efforts to end a standoff between Iraqi militias loyal to anti-US cleric Moqtada al-Sadr and US forces.

From the very beginning of the crisis, Iran tried to help ease tension but Washington's employment of an iron-fist policy further complicated the situation, Mr Asefi said.

He was referring to the increasing use of force by the US military, which laid siege to Fallujah last week after the killing and mutilation of four US civilians.

Mr Asefi also said America's policies caused the failure of the mission of an Iranian diplomatic delegation to Iraq last week.

He said Hossein Sadeghi, a top Iranian Foreign Ministry official, failed to meet with al-Sadr and Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani, Iraq's most powerful Shi'ite cleric.

We couldn't meet Sadr or Ayatollah Sistani because of lack of security, Mr Asefi said.

**LOAD-DATE:** April 19, 2004

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# LIABLE SOURCE

TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 2004 C3

By Richard Leiby

## Speak, Memoer



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**T**heir corruption is our corruption," declares a remarkably candid insider's assessment of alleged kickbacks, patronage and other woes plaguing the U.S.-selected provisional government in Iraq. The leaked memo has foreign policy wonks playing a guessing game: Who is the important Iraqi official described as a "happy drunk"? Who is the Kurdish politician who seems to be acting out a part in "The Godfather"?

Penned by a Pentagon adviser attached to the Coalition Provisional Authority, the chatty March memo offers a series of observations and suggestions after several months in Iraq as the author heads into non-government life. "Despite the progress evident in the streets of Baghdad, much of which happens despite us rather than because of us, Baghdadis have an uneasy sense that they are heading toward civil war," the memo reports. People are stockpiling guns, the author says, and "CPA is ironically driving the weapons market: Iraqi police sell their 'lost' U.S.-supplied weapons on the black market; they are promptly re-supplied."

The memo was the subject of a story distributed last week by the Association of Alternative-Newsweeklies (aan.org). While the names of certain Iraqi figures and the memo's recipient were redacted, the missing name that prompted the most speculation was that of the author. Three sources tell us the critique was written by Michael Rubin, a thirty-something neocon intellectual who promptly became a scholar at the hawkish American Enterprise Institute after returning to



BY NABIL AL-KURANI—ASSOCIATED PRESS



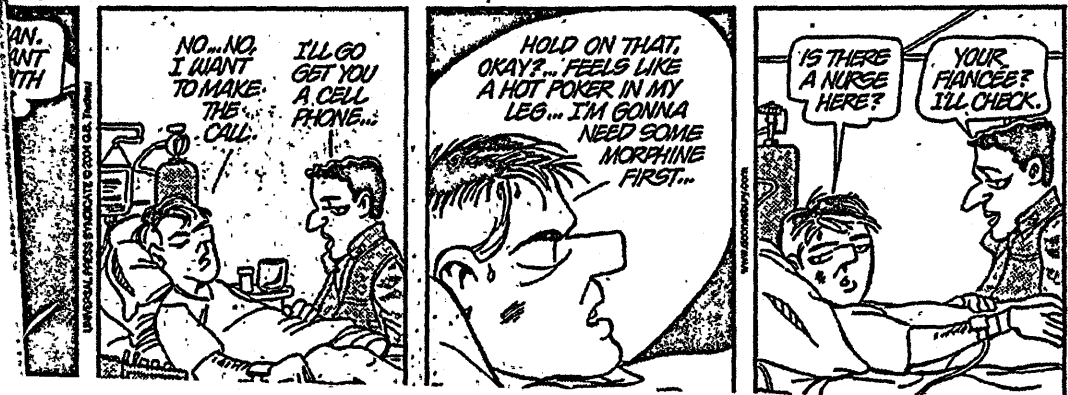
Did Michael Rubin, left, write the warning about conditions in Baghdad? He isn't saying.

Washington. "The sky is not falling" in Iraq; he wrote early this month for National Review Online.

In his articles and biography, Rubin says he served as a CPA political officer for nine months and previously worked on Iraq and Iran issues while on Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's staff. National Review Online describes Rubin as the only CPA political officer in Baghdad "who lived outside the American security bubble." The memo, which mentions continuing electrical outages and "frequent explosions, many of which are not reported in the mainstream media," faults U.S. officials for their isolation from ordinary Iraqis.

Rubin wouldn't confirm or deny that he wrote the memo. Last week he told an AEI spokeswoman he didn't want to talk about it, and he didn't return our call yesterday.

By GARRY TRUDEAU



**ONLINE FOCUS**



# BACK TO IRAQ?

May 4, 1998

*The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer Transcript*

*After bringing them to America, the U.S. government has decided that six Iraqis pose a security risk and must return home. However, the government won't say how they present a risk to national security; that information is classified.*

**JEFFREY KAYE:** Imprisoned in a federal detention center south of Los Angeles, six men from Iraq face deportation. Although the United States brought them here, the government now considers them national security risks. The case has attracted attention because its reliance on classified evidence has prevented the six from rebutting accusations against them. That, according to Rabih Aridi of the human rights group Amnesty International, violates basic standards of justice.



**RABIH ARIDI:** We believe they have been denied due process because they were not allowed to examine the evidence that was used against them. Nor were their lawyers. We are talking about a right that is clearly stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and that is the right to a fair trial.

**JEFFREY KAYE:** The INS, the Immigration & Naturalization Service, maintains the men are not entitled to classified information. Paul Virtue is INS general counsel.

## A Constitutional question: has due process been provided or denied to these men?



**PAUL VIRTUE, INS:** We believe that full due process has been provided to the extent we're required to do so under the Constitution.

**JEFFREY KAYE:** The men say they belonged to U.S.-backed Iraqi opposition groups formed after the 1991 Gulf War. In 1996, opposition members and thousands of other refugees fled to the border with Turkey after the Iraqi army attacked rebel strongholds in Northern Iraq. The U.S. flew 6,500 Iraqi refugees to the U.S. Island of Guam in the Pacific. The evacuees included some 600 opposition

**real** A RealAudio version of this segment is available.

### NEWSHOUR LINKS:

April 28, 1998  
**Amb. Butler** discusses efforts to verify the destruction of Iraqi weapons.

April 27, 1998  
**Iraqi exiles** search for an alternative to Saddam Hussein.

March 13, 1998  
A panel of experts debate whether it is time to lift sanctions on Iraq.

Online Forum  
**Noam Chomsky and James Woolsey** debate U.S. foreign policy.

March 4, 1998  
An interview with U.N. Secretary General **Kofi Annan**.

March 2, 1998  
An interview with Iraq's Ambassador to the U.N. **Nizar Hamdoon**.

members and their families. The government felt a moral obligation to provide a haven, says former Defense Department Official Zalmay Khilzad, now with the policy research institute, Rand.



**ZALMAY KHLILZAD:** They had worked with us closely. They had put their lives at risk. And also it's possible that they would have been killed or jailed, and if they had gone all over the Middle East, I don't know who would have been able to provide them a safe haven, since the Turks were unwilling.

**"They had worked with us closely. They had put their lives at risk."**

**JEFFREY KAYE:** Evacuees stayed on Guam for five months while INS and FBI agents investigated their applications for political asylum. The vast majority of refugees were settled in America, but government investigators concluded that 25 didn't qualify for asylum.

**PAUL VIRTUE:** The U.S. Government has had some concerns that because we had to evacuate people fairly quickly, without an opportunity to vet them overseas, as we mentioned, that people within the evacuee group might, in fact, have also been involved with the Iraq government and working on behalf of the Iraqi government.

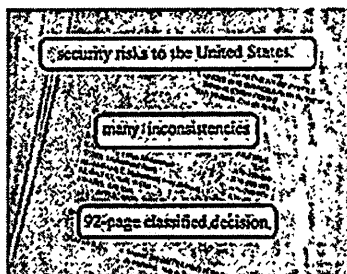
**JEFFREY KAYE:** The 25 refugees were flown to California and placed in detention. After hearings, some eventually received asylum. Of the six still detained in LA as security risks, two are doctors; three deserted the Iraqi military to join the opposition; and one former soldier, Safa Batat, says he was shot and bombed by Saddam Hussein's troops, and poisoned by one of his agents.



**SAFA AL-BATAT:** (speaking through interpreter) I've been fighting the Iraqi government since 1991. And the evidence of that is apparent in my body--evidence, not words--traces of the bullets and shrapnel. And even now I suffer from the effect of Thallium, which is still present in my body.



**Frustration from having classified evidence presented behind closed doors.**



**JEFFREY KAYE:** In immigration court hearings held behind closed doors, the INS presented classified evidence and secret witnesses. In March, the judge ruled the men "pose security risks to the United States." Her public report cited inconsistencies in the men's stories. A separate, 92-page classified decision relied mostly on secret evidence. The men testified, but the fact they couldn't respond to the classified evidence against

**February 27, 1998**  
**Congressional views of the U.N. deal with Iraq.**

**February 24, 1998**  
**James Baker and William Perry discuss the deal's impact on U.S. foreign policy.**

**February 20, 1998**  
**A panel of experts examine the crisis from the Iraqi perspective.**

**February 19, 1998**  
**An exploration of public support for the use of force in Iraq as compared to past conflicts.**

**February 9, 1998**  
**Regional commentators give local perspectives on the growing crisis with Iraq.**

**January 14, 1998**  
**Iraq's U.N. Ambassador, Nizar Hamdoon, defends his country's actions.**

**January 13, 1998**  
**Amb. Butler discusses the latest disagreement with Iraq.**

**Online Forum:**  
**What's the best way to deal with Iraq?**

**November 13, 1997**  
**Newsmaker interview with Deputy PM Aziz who defends his country's expulsion of U.N. weapons inspectors.**

**November 12, 1997**  
**UN Ambassador Bill Richardson discusses the Security Council's vote to impose stricter sanctions on Iraq.**

**November 10, 1997**  
**Defense Sec. Cohen discusses the situation with Iraq.**

**Browse the NewsHour's coverage of the Middle**

them frustrated their lawyer, Neils Frenzen.

NEILS-FRENZEN: If someone told us we suspect Mr. X of being a foreign intelligence officer, or we suspect Mr. Y of being a foreign intelligence agent, we could respond to that perhaps by guessing. But nothing has been ruled out. We have simply had these vague generalities of national security that have been directed in our direction, with no idea of what the evidence is. And so our case has been one of guesswork. The use of secret evidence in a situation where one's life depends on it, and where one's life depends on being able to respond to that secret evidence, there's no place for it in the American legal system.



East and the United Nations.

OUTSIDE LINKS:

The United Nations.

Iraq-ArabNet.



PAUL VIRTUE: I think we have to put this in context. I think the use of classified information in immigration court proceedings is very rare. We've used it a couple of dozen times in the last two years, during which immigration courts considered about four hundred thousand cases, so we're talking a very minuscule percentage.

JEFFREY KAYE: To get the classified evidence in this case, the legal team brought in R. James Woolsey, the man on the left. As a former head of the CIA, Woolsey was privy to the nation's top secrets. He still holds a security clearance. In March, he came from Washington to meet with the Iraqis and to criticize the government he once served.

**R. James Woolsey: "This case at this point stands as really, I think a stain on the honor of the United States."**

R. JAMES WOOLSEY: This case at this point stands as really, I think a stain on the honor of the United States.

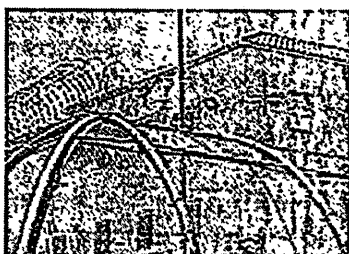
JEFFREY KAYE: Woolsey signed on as the Iraqis' co-counsel, and filed a motion to obtain the classified evidence.

R. JAMES WOOLSEY: I believe whether it's me or someone else, that an attorney with security clearances, in order for fairness to be done, ought to be able to review this material on behalf of these men. If the government doesn't want to share the classified information with counsel who are cleared, it would be my very strong suspicion it's because the government has made some serious mistakes and has something to hide.



JEFFREY KAYE: Virtue says the INS has no intention of providing Woolsey with a classified document because his clients have no legal standing in this country.

PAUL VIRTUE: These are people who are seeking admission to the United States. Essentially they're knocking at the door, asking for the United States to protect them as refugees. The due process requirements are different for someone who has not been lawfully admitted to the United States.



R. JAMES WOOLSEY: They were brought to Guam, a territorial possession of the United States, by the U.S. Government, and they were taken from Guam to California by the U.S. Government. And the INS is maintaining this legal position that they have not been admitted to the United States, so it won't have to grant them any procedural rights of the sort that an individual does have if he's been admitted but then is in risk of being deported.

**JEFFREY KAYE:** The detainees say they are victims of misunderstandings by INS investigators, as well as the factional in-fighting among Iraqis. Dr. Adil Hadi Awadh, who joined the opposition in 1996, after deserting from a military hospital, says Saddam Hussein fostered a culture of suspicion in order to undermine his foes.

**DR. ADIL HADI AWADH:** We've been living among these accusations since a long time in Iraq. So it's a very expected thing to be regarded as a traitor in Iraq simply because of just the revenge purposes.



**JEFFREY KAYE:** The detainees say on Guam rivals unjustly fingered them. The refugees included men once ousted from the opposition who denounced the detainees, according to Mohammed Tuma, a deserter from the Iraqi army.

**MOHAMMED TUMA:** (speaking through interpreter) No doubt, they were trying to get back at those who expelled them from the opposition. And the responsible parties in Guam listened to them and didn't listen to us. And I don't know why.

**PAUL VIRTUE:** I don't believe that simply a disagreement or some problems between the factions would have led to this--would have led to people continuing to be detained in this circumstance.

**JEFFREY KAYE:** The decision was based on more substantive information?

**PAUL VIRTUE:** I believe so, yes.



**JEFFREY KAYE:** But Virtue said he could not disclose that information. However, one man with intimate knowledge of the Iraqi opposition says at least two of the detainees are who they claim to be. Warren Marik is a retired CIA case officer. In 1994 and '95, he and other U.S. agents worked out of this house in the city of Irbil in Northern Iraq. Guarded by rebel militia, the CIA team assisted the opposition movement. Marik says he worked with two of the detainees. One was Safa Batat whom Marik says arranged for the Americans to debrief Iraqi army defectors. In London, Batat publicly denounced Saddam Hussein for trying to poison him.

**WARREN MARIK:** I don't believe that Safa Batat is an Iraqi agent because of his activities in London.

**JEFFREY KAYE:** How do you know Dr. Ali?

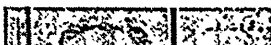
**WARREN MARIK:** Dr. Ali treated me and members of my team in Northern Iraq. I had a terrible case of bronchitis. And he gave me medicine. He treated a couple people in my teams and--and they didn't die. That's-that's--(laughs)--rule number one. And rule number two was, you know, they--they were cured.



**JEFFREY KAYE:** So the fact that he didn't kill these people demonstrates to you that he could not be an agent of Saddam?

**WARREN MARIK:** Partially. You get into a good question.

**JEFFREY KAYE:** Marik says that while Saddam's agents did infiltrate the opposition, he knows of no evidence that implicates the detainees. The U.S. Government did not make Marik available to testify in the Iraqis' case. One man who did testify on their behalf is Ahmed Chalabi, the head of the Iraqi National Congress, or INC, a main opposition group.



**AHMED CHALABI:** I have no evidence and can see no way that these people are

agents of Saddam Hussein. They are not agents of Saddam Hussein.

JEFFREY KAYE: Does that mean you can personally vouch for them?

AHMED CHALABI: I know three of them personally. The three people who belong to the INC, I know them personally.

**A bleak future if the men are forced to return to Iraq.**

JEFFREY KAYE: The detainees say if forced back to Iraq, they will be killed.

MOHAMMED AL-AMMARY: (speaking through interpreter) The verdict of the judge is a death sentence. All that is left is for the verdict to be executed in Baghdad. That's all that's left.



JEFFREY KAYE: The INS says if the men are eventually deported, they could try to find refuge in another country, besides Iraq. But in any event, both the government and the Iraqis' lawyers expect a protracted legal battle over the use of classified evidence.

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The Nation  
April 12, 2004  
Pg. 16

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## Still Dreaming Of Tehran

By Robert Dreyfuss and Laura Rozen

The Bush Administration's hawks and their neoconservative allies at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and *The Weekly Standard* are engaged in a high-risk and high-stakes effort to restore their fading power in Washington by pressing for a confrontation with Iran. It's no secret that the neocons' star has fallen since the war with Iraq. The intelligence scandal plaguing the White House and the ongoing crisis in Iraq itself can both be laid at their doorstep, and it's widely believed that President Bush's re-election team would dearly like to extricate the President from the Iraqi tar baby.

But the neocons aren't giving up, and they are trying to pull the White House in even deeper. Not only are they undeterred by the chaos in Iraq, but they are pressing ahead to advance their regional strategy, one that calls for regime change in Iran, then Syria and Saudi Arabia. Says Chas Freeman, who served as US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia during the first Gulf War and a leading foe of the neocons, "It shows that they possess a level of fanaticism, or depth of conviction, that is truly awesome. There is no cognitive dissonance there."

What makes the neocon strategy on Iran especially risky is that with Iraq teetering on the brink of civil war, neighboring Iran has significant clout inside Iraq, including ties to various Iraqi Shiite factions and a growing paramilitary and intelligence presence. If Iran chooses, it can help ease the daunting task that the United States faces in trying to put together a sovereign Iraqi government. But if it seeks confrontation, it can help spark an anti-US revolt in southern Iraq, home to most of Iraq's Shiite majority. In that case, nearly all analysts agree, the American occupation could be overwhelmed.

Leading the charge against Iran is AEI's Michael Ledeen, perhaps best known for setting in motion the US-Israeli arms deal with Iran in the mid-1980s that became known as Iran/*contra*. Supporting Ledeen's position are two other AEI fellows: Richard Perle, the ringleader of the neocons and a former member of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board, and David Frum, a *Weekly Standard* contributing editor and the former White House speechwriter who coined the phrase "axis of evil." In their new book, *An End to Evil*, Perle and Frum call for a covert operation to "overthrow the terrorist mullahs of Iran." Speaking to retired US intelligence officers in McLean, Virginia, in January, Ledeen called Iran the "throbbing heart of terrorism" and urged the Bush Administration to support revolutionary change. "Tehran," he said, "is a city just waiting for us."

Ledeen is viewed skeptically by many experts, including at the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency. "Ledeen doesn't know anything about Iran," says Juan Cole, a professor at the University of Michigan who is an expert on the Shiites of Iran and Iraq. "He doesn't speak Persian, and I believe he has never been there." But Ledeen does have connections in the Iranian exile community. For the past two years, he has maintained a relationship with Manucher Ghorbanifar, the Iranian wheeler-dealer who worked closely with him in Iran/*contra*. Ledeen introduced Ghorbanifar to a key neoconservative official, Harold Rhode, a longtime Pentagon staffer who speaks Arabic, Farsi, Turkish

BMK

and Hebrew and who until recently served in Iraq as a liaison between the Defense Department and Ahmad Chalabi. Rhode and another Pentagon official, Larry Franklin, have been talking to Ghorbanifar about options for regime change in Tehran. "They were looking at getting introduced to alleged sources inside Iran, who could give them some inside information on the struggles in Iran," said Vince Cannistraro, a former CIA counterterrorism chief. Ghorbanifar, he said, was spinning tall tales about alleged (but unsubstantiated) transfers of Iraqi uranium to Iran's nuclear weapons program.

Rhode and Franklin were critical players in the campaign for war against Iraq. In 2002 they helped organize the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans, the Iraq war-planning unit whose intelligence staffers are now under investigation by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence for allegedly manipulating evidence about Iraq's nonexistent weapons of mass destruction and ties to terrorism. Both the OSP and the Rhode-Franklin effort on Iran were run out of the office of Douglas Feith, the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and a key neocon ally. Their initiative on Iran reportedly drew a sharp protest from the State Department. *Newsday* quoted a US official who said that the entire effort was designed to "antagonize Iran so that they get frustrated and then by their reactions harden US policy against them."

There is widespread disagreement about both Iran's intentions in Iraq and the extent of its capability to cause mischief there. But there is a consensus that Iran can exercise significant power. It has close ties to the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, whose Badr Brigade paramilitary force of about 10,000 was trained by Iran's Revolutionary Guard, and to the forces of Muqtada al-Sadr, a 30-year-old Shiite firebrand. "There are thousands of Iranian intelligence agents and operational agents inside Iraq today, and the border is completely open," says Amatzia Baram, an Israeli expert on Iraq.

So far, analysts say, Iran has chosen to play a waiting game. Ken Katzman of the Congressional Research Service says that Iran "views its interest to play it low-key, to keep a low profile and continue to promote a cohesive Shiite bloc in Iraq in order to be in a position to become dominant once the United States leaves."

The "realists" inside the Bush Administration, led by Secretary of State Colin Powell and Coalition Provisional Authority head Paul Bremer in Iraq, are well aware that Iran could deal a fatal blow to the already faltering US efforts. Partly as a result, they've engaged in a quiet dialogue with Tehran. According to the *Financial Times*, last May Iran offered a "road map" for normalizing US-Iranian relations. Since then, Powell and his allies have sent assistance after the devastating earthquake in southeast Iran, and offered to send a delegation led by Senator Elizabeth Dole. They've also supported efforts by Germany, France and Britain to work a deal with Iran over its nuclear weapons program. (Germany's intelligence service also brokered a prisoner exchange between Israel and Hezbollah, which is close to Iran.) But of late, some of those conciliatory efforts have stalled. A planned Congressional staff delegation to Tehran, the first since the rise of Ayatollah Khomeini's regime in 1979, was canceled by the Iranians, according to the office of Senator Arlen Specter, whose staff was to participate. And after the initial harmony, signs are emerging of a serious split between Washington and Europe over Iran's nuclear program, with echoes of the US-Europe split over Iraqi WMD.

How the differing approaches--the neocons' war cries and the realists' more conciliatory strategy--are viewed by Iran's leadership is anybody's guess. But there are at least several factors that might push the Iranian ruling elite in the direction of the confrontation the neocons want. First, the hard-line clergy are in the midst of a crisis with the so-called reformists. In the past, the mullahs have used anti-US rhetoric, and even militant actions, to trump liberal and reformist rivals. Second, while Iran welcomes the rise of Shiite power in Iraq, it is at the same time uneasy about losing influence to the mullahs in Najaf and Karbala. According to several experts on Shiism, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani is now the leading Shiite cleric in the world, which could make him a rival to Iran's less prestigious clerics. Though Sistani

has foiled US policy in Iraq by insisting on direct elections, he has refused to denounce the US occupation and may cooperate with a UN-brokered compromise for creating an Iraqi government. "Sistani is a double-edged sword for Iran," says Juan Cole. And third, there is the Bush factor. Some neoconservative strategists argue that Iran will act decisively in order to prevent Bush from being re-elected. Raymond Tanter, a scholar at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a pro-Israel think tank, predicts, "They are going to launch a political-military campaign in an effort to defeat President Bush, because they believe that if Bush is re-elected, he will do to them what he did to Iraq."

It's unclear that Iran would risk a confrontation with the United States in Iraq even if the mullahs do believe that they are next on Bush's invasion list. But the mullahs are famous for misunderstanding US politics, just as Americans have failed repeatedly to understand Iran's.

In a way, the neocons' Iran project is very similar to the early phase of their Iraq one. It includes a steady drumbeat of threats and warnings, Washington lobbying, a media offensive and support for exile groups--in Iran's case a mishmash that combines supporters of Khomeini's grandson; Reza Pahlavi, the son of the fallen Shah, and the Iranian monarchists; and the Mujaheddin e-Khalq (MEK), a 3,800-strong exile force based in Iraq. In one of the strangest events ever to occur at a Washington think tank, last September Khomeini's grandson--dressed in rough-hewn black and brown robes and crowned by a turban, with dark brooding eyes like his grandfather's--took the podium at AEI, introduced by Michael Ledeen, to call for US assistance to overthrow the Iranian government. He even welcomed an alliance with the Pahlavi monarchists.

Many analysts view the prospects of a Pahlavi-Khomeini-MEK alliance with exceeding skepticism. And they note that the neocons, having bungled Iraq, don't have a lot of credibility left on Middle East policy. But it would be wrong to count them out. A former CIA officer who took part in the debate over Iraq policy in the 1990s recalls how the neocons ultimately prevailed. "The neocons had this idea of working with the Iraqi opposition to arm and train them and to overthrow Saddam Hussein, and people like me said, 'That is really stupid,'" he says. "But you get people to think about it, you get the President engaged, then options expand and then when opportunities come along, you seize them. That's what they did. They got people to buy in. Before September 11, people told them, 'It's never going to happen.' Come September 12, the rules changed." An explosion in Iraq, and some Iranian mischief there, and the rules could change again.

*Robert Dreyfuss is a contributing editor of The Nation. Laura Rozen is a journalist who covers national security issues from Washington.*