



Nebraska Report

There is no Peace without Justice

MAY/JUNE 2005

VOLUME 33, NUMBER 5

S O S 2005

SPEAK OUT AT STRATCOM

by Cary Vigneri, Omaha NFP Coordinator

To spotlight the growing menace posed by StratCom's nuclear and conventional missions, this coming August we are again urging activists from the Midwest to send an international SOS and "Speak Out at StratCom." This year's SOS—the third we've sent so far—will occur Saturday August 6 on the 60th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan from 10:00 a.m. to noon at Kinney Gate on Offutt Air Force Base.

SOS 2005 is being coordinated in conjunction with Frank Cordaro and the Des Moines Catholic Workers, who have led protests at the StratCom gate on Hiroshima Day for two decades. Veteran peace activist Medea Benjamin of "Code Pink: Women for Peace" and "Global Exchange" (an international human rights organization dedicated to promoting environmental, political and social justice) will address the rally at the gate. And Loring Wirbel, author of *Star Wars: U.S. Tools of Space Supremacy*, will talk specifically about the global threat presented by StratCom's Space Command. In light of the Bush Administration's unilateralist foreign policy and barefaced bid for unchallenged military dominance, it is critical that the international community understands the central role that the "New StratCom" is playing in this offensive strategy.

Speak Out at StratCom began in early 2003, when a staff person in the NFP State Office happened across information on the internet that a high-profile

planning group was to meet at StratCom headquarters the following August to discuss expanding the use of nuclear weapons. An exclusive group of Pentagon officials, scientists and nuclear industry representatives was planning to secretly meet on the 58th anniversary of the world's first use of atomic weapons to plot the development of a new generation of "cross-over" nuclear weapons (the so-called "bunker busters") for use in conventional military conflicts. That they had chosen to convene on the occasion of the first atomic attacks smacked of the highest kind of cynicism. But it was the nature and secrecy of the meeting (members of Congress were even barred from attending) that compelled us to organize the first SOS.

SOS 2004 continued the effort begun by Nebraskans for Peace, various citizens' groups and the Des Moines Catholic Workers to highlight StratCom's rapidly evolving and ever more ominous mission. While the Strategic Command continues to retain its historic responsibility for the nation's nuclear arsenal, in the wake of 9/11, a slew of new assignments has come its way. In addition to assuming control of the U.S. Space Command, StratCom's been assigned four additional tasks: global strike, information operations, strategic missile defense and global C4ISR (which translates as command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance). This aggregated command is unprecedented in modern times. It is fast becoming true that never have so few

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Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 310
Lincoln, NE

Nebraska Report

The *Nebraska Report* is published nine times annually by Nebraskans for Peace. Opinions stated do not necessarily reflect the views of the directors or staff of Nebraskans for Peace.

Newspaper Committee: Tim Rinne, Editor

Mark Vasina, Christy Hargesheimer, Bud Narveson, Marsha Fangmeyer

Typesetting and Layout: marketing assistants plus!

Printing: Fremont Tribune Circulation: 6,500

Letters, articles, photographs and graphics are welcomed. Deadline is the first of the month for publication in the following month's issue. Submit to: *Nebraska Report*, c/o Nebraskans for Peace, 941 'O' Street, Suite 1026, Lincoln, NE 68508.

Nebraskans for Peace

Nebraskans for Peace is a statewide grassroots advocacy organization working nonviolently for peace with justice through community-building, education and political action.

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Latin America Briefs

compiled by Christy Hargesheimer



Bush Administration Campaigns Against "Chávez-ism"

The past several "Latin America Briefs" have provided background on the situation in Venezuela. Tensions continue to mount. In late March, Donald Rumsfeld toured Latin America, denouncing Chávez's government, followed a month later by Condoleezza Rice, who unsuccessfully tried to drum up support among other Latin American nations against Chávez. The principles of nonintervention and sovereignty are paramount in Latin America, where collective memory of past U.S. interference is strong and bitter.

Rice has decided to tone down the rhetoric and try diplomacy. In choosing a new head for the Organization of American States, South American nations rallied around a Chilean candidate and opposed a U.S.-backed Mexican. Rice accepted the defeat, but won a commitment from the victor to hold governments accountable at the OAS if they fail to govern democratically—a move her aides said was aimed at Venezuela.

Now, the Bush Administration's tactic is to funnel more money to foundations and business and political groups opposed to Chávez's government. It has effectively imposed sanctions on Venezuela by blocking World Bank loans, using multinational forums to attack Chávez instead of a more frontal attack.

Why is our government, which has been too preoccupied with Iraq, Afghanistan, and the war on terror to pay attention to South America, showing such interest in Venezuela? The answer, pure and simple, is oil. Venezuela is one of four top providers of foreign oil to the United States, selling us 15 percent of our supply.

Bolstered by the solidarity of other nations, Chávez appears to be taking the offensive. In late April, a U.S. Navy officer was caught photographing an army base north of Caracas, and Chávez accused four American military instructors of inciting unrest against him in Venezuelan barracks. Consequently, Chávez cut military ties with Washington, ending 35 years of regular joint military exercises and exchange of soldiers for training.

Chávez and Fidel Castro recently collaborated in a multinational meeting in Havana to promote ALBA, the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas, to counter the U.S.-backed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Other parallel endeavors Chávez has initiated are the creation of a Latino TV channel, *Telesur*, an alternative to the U.S.-based *CNN en español*, and *Petrosur*, a proposed Latin America-wide petroleum company. Both have the support of several other South American nations.

Finally, on May 22, Chávez threatened to end diplomatic relations with the U.S. if this country does not extradite Luis Posada Carriles to Venezuela. Posada was accused of killing 73 people in the blowing up of a Cuban plane in 1976. After spending nine years in a Venezuelan jail, Posada escaped, and recently entered the U.S. illegally. He was caught in Miami, and the only charge against him has been illegal entry.

Neither the U.S. nor Venezuela are likely to cut economic ties, because of the oil. But the support that Chávez is receiving at home and abroad means the U.S. will be less able to force its will on Latin America.

F.I.R.S.T. Project News

The F.I.R.S.T. Project (For Immigrants and Refugees Surviving Torture) in Lincoln offers a variety of services, including therapy, assessments, education and training, to individuals and families that have experienced trauma and/or torture under the color of law. Mainly funded by a grant under the Torture Victims Relief Act (TVRA), it is important that this funding be continued.

The TVRA calls upon Congress and President Bush to take action to ensure that the horrific acts committed in Abu Ghraib, Guantánamo, and elsewhere, are not systemic and that those responsible—directly and indirectly—are prosecuted.

The good news is that Senator Chuck Hagel is co-sponsoring this bill in the Senate, and that Rep. Lee Terry co-sponsored it in the House. Please contact them to thank them for their support, and write to our other congressional members to urge them to support TVRA. Rep. Tom Osborne has reportedly said he doesn't see torture treatment as important in his district. F.I.R.S.T. clients include people from El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Puerto Rico, and many people from those countries—some of whom may be torture victims—live in Osborne's district.

For more information and a sample letter, please check out the F.I.R.S.T. website: <http://www.firstproject.org/letters.php>. Remember, torture does not just affect the person who was tortured, but its effects seep into that person's family, community, and ultimately all of society.

StratCom's New Mission Is Undermining the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

by Andrew Lichterman

Program Director, Western States Legal Foundation

In May, the parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) met at the United Nations in New York to review the status of the treaty. Since the end of the Cold War, the NPT review process has grown increasingly contentious. Non-nuclear weapons states continue to demand that the five original nuclear weapons states—the United States, Russia, England, China and France—comply with their obligation, embodied in Article VI of the Treaty, to negotiate for the elimination of their nuclear arsenals. The United States counters that disarmament progress has been more than sufficient, and that the key issue facing the treaty parties is efforts by non-nuclear weapons states, particularly Iran and North Korea, to acquire nuclear weapons.

Yet the United States plans to acquire strategic weapons and delivery systems with *new* capabilities, contrary to its 1970 NPT Article VI commitment to negotiate the “cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date...” These efforts aim to exploit advances in a wide range of missile, computing, and space sensing technologies that allow either conventional or nuclear weapons to be delivered over great distances with increasing accuracy. While claiming that it is reducing reliance on nuclear weapons, it appears that the U.S. military planners aim to replace nuclear weapons with more accurate, powerful conventional weapons where possible, while expanding the capabilities of its nuclear weapons to destroy targets that conventional weapons cannot. With its stated mission to

“[e]stablish and provide full-spectrum global strike,” Strategic Command (StratCom) will play a central role in planning and deploying the next generation of strategic weapons.

These efforts include:

- **Modification of existing nuclear warheads to achieve additional capabilities.** The U.S. in the late 1990s modified and deployed an existing nuclear weapon, the B61-11 bomb, to give it some earth penetrating capacity. Despite being rebuffed by Congress last year, the current administration has again requested funding for a “robust

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nuclear earth penetrator,” slated to be a redesign of an existing warhead. Opposition to nuclear weapons with new capabilities appears fairly strong, but Congress remains ready to fund programs that will preserve a large nuclear arsenal for decades to come. Further, past and current proposals to ‘cut’ the nuclear earth penetrator actually shift funds to research on conventional penetrators that could be applicable to a nuclear version as well. “It’s the data that I want. It’s not that it’s nuclear,” StratCom Commander General James Cartwright told the trade publication *Inside the Pentagon*. “It tells me really what happens when something hits the earth at very high speed... It’ll give me a sense of, ‘OK, if I can hit precisely,

then what happens to the energy? Does it really destroy something? Do I have to get a huge amount of energy to destroy something?”

- **Retooling of the nuclear weapons research, design, and production infrastructure to allow maintenance of a downsized nuclear arsenal still numbering in the thousands of weapons for many decades to come, while enabling the production of nuclear weapons for the “post-Cold War” missions envisioned by military planners.** The 2004 National Nuclear Security Agency *Strategic Plan* declared that the United States intends to maintain indefinitely sufficient “responsive infrastructure” to “enable timely reconstitution to larger force levels, if needed; field new or modified nuclear warheads either to respond to a stockpile ‘surprise’ or to meet new military requirements; and, ensure readiness to conduct an underground nuclear test, if necessary.” In order to do so, the U.S. is

modernizing its nuclear weapons research and manufacturing facilities, and is exploring the requirements for “small builds” of special purpose weapons.

- **Exploration of a different paradigm for nuclear weapons design, production, and certification, called the “reliable replacement warhead.”** The goal is an approach that will obtain greater reliability by combining modern manufacturing techniques with greater design margins, in some circumstances taking advantage of less demanding requirements than was deemed necessary for some Cold War missions. If successful, the program could provide a

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been so well placed to harm so many. And the strategic planning and implementation for war all over this planet now emanates from just south of Omaha, Nebraska.

StratCom was still adjusting to this new array of responsibilities when, this past April, it received yet another charge. In a development that takes the “Military-Industrial Complex” to an even creepier level, StratCom is slated to house a public/private “Global Innovation and Strategy Center” that, in addition to Pentagon and StratCom personnel, will be comprised of executives from Fortune 500 companies. The marriage of the military with the multinational corporation will be cozier than ever. And the part Omaha plays in hosting the masterminds of death and destruction will be even more solidly part of our local scene.

Americans in general have a strong regard for their military and, in Nebraska, Offutt Air Force Base is looked upon with pride. Given the current administration’s tendency to seek a military solution to every problem and its unconcealed contempt for international institutions like the UN, however, that pride has never been more dangerously misplaced.

As Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group wrote for the *Nebraska Report* in our last issue, “...there are grave dangers in the concentration of command power now being assembled by Secretary Rumsfeld at StratCom... it is now a permanent

state of war not peace that is the shaping and normative vision...” We in Nebraska have a special responsibility to alert the larger world about what is currently going on in our backyard. Others will not know unless we speak out. So gather with us on August 6 at Kinney Gate on Hwy. 75 in Bellevue to “Speak Out at StratCom.”

An educational forum and peace festival is scheduled for that afternoon at Bemis Park (33rd-36th and Cuming Streets in Omaha) from 4:00-8:00 p.m. Speakers, including Medea Benjamin, musicians, actors and other entertainers, will present a program built around the twin notions that “Never Again!” must nuclear weapons be used, and that war-planning now taking place at StratCom must end. And of course, as they have done so often in the past, the Des Moines Catholic Workers will be out at the Kinney Gate conducting a regular vigil from 8:00 a.m.–8:00 p.m. daily August 6, 7, 8 and 9, with some of the group on Tuesday the 9th potentially ‘crossing the line’ in an act of civil disobedience at 11:00 o’clock that morning. Visit www.omahasos.org. Get involved in the planning, attend the fundraisers which will occur throughout the summer and volunteer your special talents to help organize Speak Out at StratCom 2005. Other websites of interest are: www.codepink4peace.org and www.globalexchange.org.

The 'Smoking Gun' on Attacking Iraq

The recent 'smoking gun' revelations—coming out of Britain—that the Bush Administration did indeed fabricate the case for war against Iraq confirms all of our suspicions about this intervention. But, as Ray McGovern, the 27-year CIA analyst who delivered the keynote address at NFP's 2004 Annual Peace Conference notes, this "chilling" story has pretty much been ignored by the mainstream media. McGovern's analysis, reprinted below, first appeared on TomPaine.com, May 5, 2005.

Never in our wildest dreams did we think we would see those words in black and white—and beneath a SECRET stamp, no less. For three years now, we in Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS) have been saying that the CIA and its British counterpart, MI-6, were ordered by their countries' leaders to "fix facts" to "justify" an unprovoked war on Iraq. More often than not, we have been greeted with stares of incredulity.

the notion that we were sold a bill of goods.

Well, you can forget circumstantial. Thanks to an unauthorized disclosure by a courageous whistle blower, the evidence now leaps from official documents—this time authentic, not forged. Whether prompted by the open appeal of the international Truth-Telling Coalition (see http://www.tompaine.com/articles/appeal_for_truth_telling.php) or not, some brave soul has made the most explosive "patriotic leak" of the war by giving London's *Sunday Times* the official minutes of a briefing by Richard Dearlove, then head of Britain's CIA equivalent, MI-6. Fresh back in London from consultations in Washington, Dearlove briefed Prime Minister Blair and his top national security officials on July 23, 2002 on the Bush Administration's plans to make war on Iraq.

Blair does not dispute the authenticity of the document, which immortalizes a discussion that is chillingly amoral. Apparently no one felt free to ask the obvious ques-

the conjunction of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction." Period. What about the intelligence? Dearlove adds matter-of-factly, "The intelligence and facts are being fixed around the policy."

At this point Foreign Secretary Jack Straw confirms that Bush has decided on war, but notes that stitching together justification would be a challenge, since "the case was thin." Straw noted that Saddam was not threatening his neighbors and his WMD capability was less than that of Libya, North Korea, or Iran.

In the following months "the case" would be buttressed by a well-honed U.S.-U.K. intelligence-turned-propaganda-machine. The argument would be made "solid" enough to win endorsement from Congress and Parliament by conjuring up:

- Aluminum artillery tubes misdiagnosed as nuclear related;
- Forgeries alleging Iraqi attempts to obtain uranium in Africa;
- Tall tales from a drunken defector about mobile biological weapons laboratories;
- Bogus warnings that Iraqi forces could fire WMD-tipped missiles within 45 minutes of an order to do so;
- Dodgy dossiers fabricated in London; and
- A U.S. National Intelligence Estimate thrown in for good measure.

All this despite, as Dearlove notes dryly, the fact that "there was little discussion in Washington of the aftermath after military action." Another nugget from Dearlove's briefing is his bloodless comment that one of the U.S. military options under discussion involved "a continuous air campaign, initiated by an Iraqi casus belli" [a basis for declaring war]—the clear implication being that planners of the air campaign would also see to it that an appropriate casus belli was orchestrated.

The discussion at 10 Downing St. on July 23, 2002 calls to mind the first meeting of George W. Bush's National Security Council (NSC) on January 30, 2001, at which the president made it clear that toppling Saddam Hussein sat atop his to-do list, according to then-Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neil who was there. O'Neil was taken aback that there was no discussion of why it was necessary to "take out" Saddam. Rather, after CIA Director George Tenet showed a grainy photo of a building in Iraq that he said might be involved in producing chemical or biological agents, the discussion proceeded immediately to which Iraqi targets might be best

to bomb. Again, neither O'Neil nor the other participants asked the obvious questions. Another NSC meeting two days later included planning for dividing up Iraq's oil wealth.

Obedience School

As for the briefing of Blair, the minutes provide further grist for those who describe the U.K. prime minister as Bush's "poodle." The tone of the conversation bespeaks a foregone conclusion that Blair will wag his tail cheerfully and obey the learned commands. At one point he ventures the thought that, "If the political context were right, people would support regime change." This, after Attorney General Peter Goldsmith has already warned that the desire for regime change "was not a legal base for military action"—a point Goldsmith made again just 12 days before the attack on Iraq until he was persuaded by a phalanx of Bush Administration lawyers to change his mind ten days later.

The meeting concludes with a directive to "work on the assumption that the U.K. would take part in any military action."

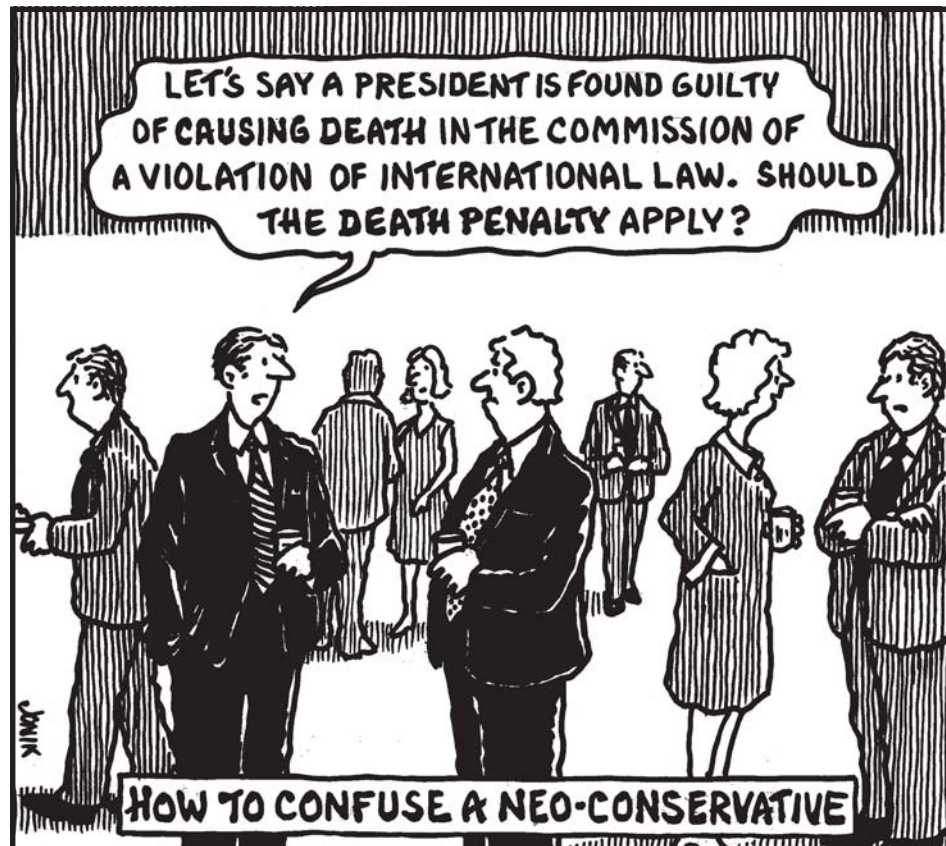
I cannot quite fathom why I find the account of this meeting so jarring. Surely it is what one might expect, given all else we know. Yet seeing it in bloodless black and white somehow gives it more impact. And the implications are no less jarring.

One of Dearlove's primary interlocutors in Washington was his American counterpart, CIA director George Tenet. (And there is no closer relationship between two intelligence services than the privileged one between the CIA and MI-6.) Tenet, of course, knew at least as much as Dearlove, but nonetheless played the role of accomplice in serving up to Bush the kind of 'slam-dunk intelligence' that he knew would be welcome. If there is one unpardonable sin in intelligence work it is that kind of politicization. But Tenet decided to be a 'team player' and set the tone.

Politicization: Big Time

Actually, politicization is far too mild a word for what happened. The intelligence was not simply massaged or mistaken; it was manufactured, with the President of the United States awarding foreman George Tenet the Medal of Freedom for his role in helping supervise the deceit. The British documents make clear that this was not a mere case of 'leaning forward' in analyzing the intelligence, but rather mass deception—an order of magnitude more serious. No other

continued on next page



It has been a hard learning—that folks tend to believe what they want to believe. As long as our evidence, however abundant and persuasive, remained circumstantial, it could not compel belief. It simply is much easier on the psyche to assent to the White House spin machine blaming the Iraq fiasco on bad intelligence than to entertain

tions. Or worse still, the obvious questions did not occur.

Juggernaut Before the Horse

In emotionless English, Dearlove tells Blair and the others that President Bush has decided to remove Saddam Hussein by launching a war that is to be "justified by

conclusion is now possible.

Small wonder, then, to learn from CIA insiders like former case officer Lindsay Moran that Tenet's malleable managers told their minions, "Let's face it. The president wants us to go to war, and our job is to give him a reason to do it."

Small wonder that, when the only U.S. analyst who met with the alcoholic Iraqi defector appropriately codenamed "Curveball" raised strong doubt about Curveball's reliability before then-Secretary of State Colin Powell used the fabrication about "mobile biological weapons trailers" before the U.N., the analyst got this email reply from his CIA supervisor:

"Let's keep in mind the fact that this war's going to happen regardless of what Curveball said or didn't say, and the powers that be probably aren't terribly interested in whether Curveball knows what he's talking about."

When Tenet's successor, Porter Goss took over as director late last year, he immediately wrote a memo to all employees explaining the 'rules of the road'—first and foremost, "We support the Administration and its policies." So much for objective intelligence insulated from policy pressure.

Tenet and Goss, creatures of the intensely politicized environment of Congress, brought with them a radically new ethos—one much more akin to that of Blair's courtiers than to that of earlier CIA directors who had the courage to speak truth to power.

Seldom does one have documentary evidence that intelligence chiefs chose to cooperate in both fabricating and "sexing up" (as the British press puts it) intelligence to justify a prior decision for war. There is no word to describe the reaction of honest intelligence professionals to the corruption of our profession on a matter of such consequence. 'Outrage' does not come close.

Hope in Unauthorized Disclosures

Those of us who care about unprovoked wars owe the patriot who gave this latest British government document to *The Sunday Times* a debt of gratitude. Unauthorized disclosures are gathering steam. They need to increase quickly on this side of the Atlantic as well—the more so, inasmuch as Congress—controlled by the president's party—cannot be counted on to discharge its constitutional prerogative for oversight.

In its formal appeal of Sept. 9, 2004 to current U.S. government officials, the Truth-Telling Coalition said this:

"We know how misplaced loyalty to bosses, agencies, and careers can obscure the higher allegiance all government officials owe the Constitution, the sovereign public, and the young men and women put in harm's way. We urge you to act on those higher loyalties... Truth-telling is a patriotic and effective way to serve the nation. The time for speaking out is now."

If persons with access to wrongly concealed facts and analyses bring them to light, the chances become less that a president could launch another unprovoked war, say, against Iran.

StratCom, conclusion

long-lasting nuclear arsenal with capabilities comparable to existing weapons, and possibly additional capabilities crafted for new missions as well.

- **Revamping systems used to plan and execute nuclear strikes.** As described in budget documents, these include upgrades to the Strategic War Planning System to "produce preplanned and adaptively planned options" for "Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and Nuclear, Chemical and Biological (NBC) targets using nuclear and/or conventional weapons" and a "Tunnel Target Defeat Advanced Concept and Technology Demonstration" that "will develop a planning tool that will improve the warfighter's confidence in selecting the smallest nuclear yield necessary to destroy underground facilities while minimizing collateral damage."

- **Modernizing ballistic missiles and other nuclear delivery systems, and beginning development of a new generation of systems to replace existing ones in coming decades.** The accuracy and reliability of Minuteman land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) are being upgraded, and supporting infrastructure also is being redesigned to allow for more rapid re-targeting. Trident submarine launched ballistic missiles improvements include guidance system upgrades and changes in the W76 warhead arming, fusing and firing system to allow ground burst use. New delivery vehicles under consideration include an enhanced cruise missile, submarine-launched intermediate range ballistic missiles, and a new generation of ICBMs. These missile programs are in their early phases, with contractors being encouraged to submit concepts that will exploit new technologies to provide additional capabilities such as greater accuracy and maneuverability. The nuclear-capable B-2 and B-52 long-range bombers are being upgraded as well, and the current budget request proposes over \$1.25 billion in spending for "next generation bomber" research through FY2011.

- **Developing a "Global Strike" capability that will allow the delivery of either conventional or nuclear weapons anywhere on earth in a few hours or less.** While retaining what the Nuclear Posture review describes as "[n]uclear attack options that vary in scale, scope, and purpose," U.S. military planners also hope to exploit advances in space technology, missile accuracy, computing, and communications to develop conventional weapons that can strike anywhere on earth in a matter of hours. Conventional options may include use of existing strategic missiles such as the MX "Peacekeeper" or the development of new systems, such as re-useable launch vehicles carrying several reentry vehicles capable of delivering a variety of weapons. These programs call for continued research on missiles, guidance, and hypersonic flight, technologies that also could be adapted for more advanced nuclear weapons delivery systems.

There is no way to predict exactly what mix of nuclear weapons and other high-tech "global strike" technologies the United States will develop. Near term military spending priorities may shift towards non-strategic forces if the United

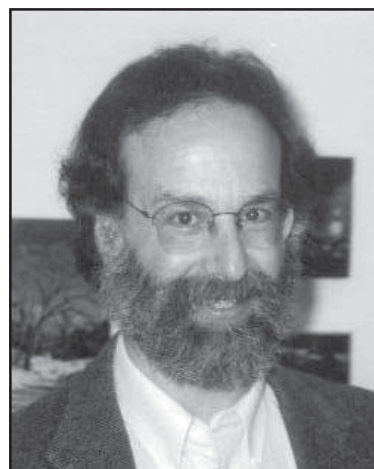
States attempts to sustain military occupations for long periods of time. It is clear, however, that the U.S. intends to retain a large and constantly modernized nuclear arsenal for the foreseeable future. According to the 2004 Defense Department *Strategic Deterrence Joint Operating Concept*, "...nuclear weapons allow the U.S. to rapidly accomplish the wholesale disruption of an adversary nation-state with limited U.S. national resources. While the legacy force was well suited for successful deterrence throughout the Cold War, an enhanced nuclear arsenal will remain a vital component of strategic deterrence in the foreseeable security environment." As StratCom Commander General James Cartwright told *Inside the Pentagon*, "It's more than just precision; I can't generate enough [conventional explosive] energy for some of these targets to destroy them. So I'm not leading you down a path that I can get rid of nuclear weapons."

By taking the position that nuclear weapons are acceptable tools of warfare that it will use to achieve a variety of goals, the U.S. has severely undermined the NPT's status as partial codification of an emerging global norm against nuclear weapons possession and use. The implication that the selective use of nuclear weapons in ordinary warfare is lawful and legitimate signifies acceptance of the end of nuclear non-proliferation as a normative and legal enterprise.

In the end, however, it is unlikely we will be able to eliminate nuclear weapons by opposing nuclear weapons alone. As U.S.

plans for new strategic weapons make clear, the goal is not nuclear superiority per se, but decisive military superiority on a global scale, using conventional weapons where possible and nuclear weapons where necessary. The very notion of non-proliferation "enforcement," that some countries have the right to judge and punish others for seeking "weapons of mass destruction," has become an excuse for war making, a cover for the power and profit agenda of secretive and undemocratic elites. The only solution that will increase the security of ordinary people anywhere is for all of us, in our respective societies, to do everything we can to get the most violent elements in our cultures—whether in or out of uniform—under control. In the United States, we will need a genuine peace movement, ready to make connections to movements for ecological balance, and for social and economic justice, and by doing so to address the causes of war. Before we can expect others to join us, it must be clear that we ourselves are leaving the path of violence.

Andrew Lichterman, Program Director at the Western States Legal Foundation (WSLF) in Oakland, California, was a featured speaker at SOS 2003. References and further information on the issues covered in this article can be found in the May 2005 WSLF Special Report, "War is Peace, Arms Racing is Disarmament: The Non-Proliferation Treaty and the U.S. Quest for Global Military Dominance," <http://www.wslfweb.org/docs/warispiece.pdf>. Visit their website at www.wslfweb.org.



Andrew Lichterman

A TORTURED TALE



by Tim Butz,
Executive Director
ACLU-Nebraska

Charging that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was directly responsible for the torture they experienced while being held by U.S. forces, eight former prisoners held at the U.S. prison at Abu Ghraib have sued him, charging violations of the U.S. Constitution, federal statutes and international laws.

In the first lawsuit of its kind, the American Civil Liberties Union and Human Rights First have filed a series of related suits against Rumsfeld and three high-ranking military officers on behalf of the torture victims.

Attorneys for the torture victims have given some information on what their clients endured. The experiences of Arkan Mohammad, a 26-year-old Iraqi, show the depravity and horror of prison life in Abu Ghraib. He was detained at Abu Ghraib and other sites for a year, during which he was repeatedly beaten by military personnel, sometimes to the point of unconsciousness.

Mohammed was also tortured with electrical shocks and subjected to sensory deprivation by locking him in a coffin-like box for days at a time, sometimes naked with a hood placed over his head. He was denied sleep and beaten when he started to doze.

There was psychological abuse in addition to the physical abuse. Guards urinated upon him in an attempt to degrade and humiliate him. They brandished weapons at him and made threats to kill him. They threatened to send him to Guantanamo, where he could be killed with impunity. When he was finally released, he was told to stay silent about what had happened to him, or the government would track



him down and he would never see his family again.

Mohammed continues to live with the physical and mental scars of his imprisonment. One of his arms is scarred from both stabbings and burnings he experienced in prison. He has frequent and traumatic nightmares and episodes of shortness of breath and gulping reflexes, none of which he experienced prior to his arrest and torture.

The ACLU/Human Rights First lawsuits have their roots in the 2004 revelations of misconduct by guards at Abu Ghraib, brought to light by journalist Seymour Hersch. Some of what went on in Abu Ghraib has been posted all over the

internet and shown on television, such as Lynndie England, grinning with a cigarette hanging from her mouth, pointing at the genitals of a nude and hooded Iraqi male prisoner in Abu Ghraib prison. The other Abu Ghraib photos were just as disturbing—nude Iraqi males stacked on the floor like a cord of firewood; a prisoner on a leash; a hooded prisoner standing on a box in a crucifixion pose with electrical wires hanging from his fingers; a bloodied prisoner lying on the concrete floor.

The government has responded to this scandal by claiming that one reservist, Corporal Charles Graner, was the ringleader of a conspiracy to abuse prisoners at Abu Ghraib. It has not charged anyone other than Graner, English and five others from the 327th Military Police Company. The seven were indicted by the military on charges of conspiracy and abuse. Graner was convicted following a trial. Three of the others submitted guilty pleas to the charges prior to Graner's trial.

Graner has already been sentenced to ten years in a military prison. At his sentencing hearing, Graner said that he knew it was wrong to beat and abuse prisoners, something that he described as "irregular treatment." He maintained that he was simply following orders from his superiors, whom he described as civilian contractors and military intelligence officers. As he was being led from the courtroom in handcuffs and leg irons, a reporter asked him if he had regrets, and he replied "No ma'am."

Graner's parents had another view of the matter. His mother, Irma Graner, told *CNN* that her son was a scapegoat for high-ranking officers, whom she described as "all guilty."

"He got ten years in prison for something he was told to do. He committed a crime for obeying orders and he would've committed a crime if he didn't obey orders," said Mrs. Graner.

For her part in the prisoner abuse scandal, English was charged and faced a military trial. She reached a plea bargain with military prosecutors, but it was dismissed by a military judge when Graner, her former supervisor, testified on her behalf. Graner told the court that English was told the photos were taken for training purposes, a statement that was inconsistent with English's guilty plea; a mistrial was declared.

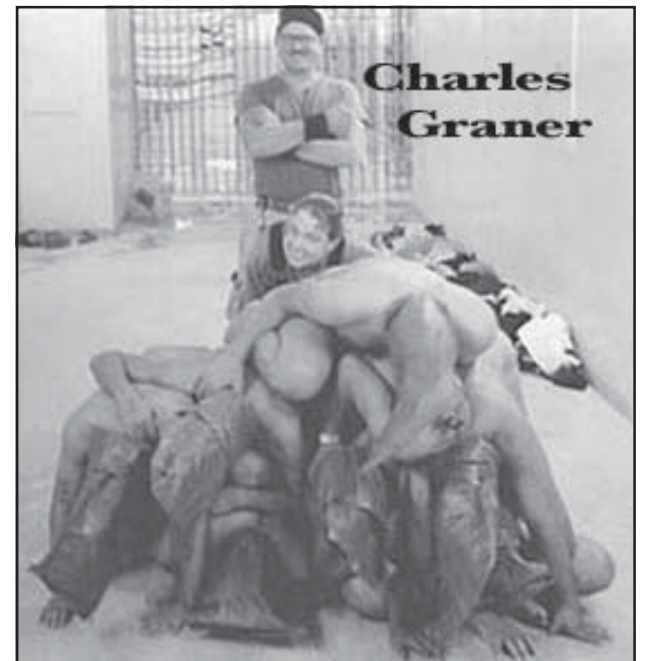
The complaint against Rumsfeld states that he "authorized an abandonment of our nation's inviolable and deep-rooted prohibition against torture or other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment of detainees in U.S. military custody."

The complaint alleges that Rumsfeld, in December 2002, personally authorized brutal and illegal interrogation techniques. "Secretary Rumsfeld bears direct and ultimate responsibility for this descent into horror by personally authorizing unlawful interrogation techniques and by abdicating his legal obligation to stop torture," said Lucas Guttentag, the lead attorney on the case and the director of the ACLU's Immigrants Rights Project.

Guttentag is working with a high-powered team of 17 attorneys. Among those representing the torture victims are former Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Bill Lann Lee; retired Admiral John Hutson, former Judge Ad-

vocate General of the United States Navy; and retired Brigadier General James Cullen, former Chief Judge of the U.S. Army's Court of Military Appeals.

Admiral Hutson shed light on why he and General Cullen joined the legal team. "One of the greatest strengths of the U.S. military throughout our history has been strong civilian leadership at the top of the chain of command," Hutson said. "Unfortunately, Secretary Rumsfeld has failed to live up to that tradition... It is critical that we turn to another military tradition, accountability."



In related lawsuits, the ACLU and Human Rights First also sued Lt. General Ricardo Sanchez (commander of U.S. troops in Iraq), Brigadier General Janice Karpinski (commander of Abu Ghraib prison) and Col. Thomas Pappas. The lawsuits were filed separately in federal courts in Connecticut, Texas and South Carolina. The multiple filings were necessary to satisfy federal requirements on court jurisdiction.

The world now knows that the mistreatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib was just part of the story; similar abuses have occurred at the U.S. Navy base at Guantanamo Bay and U.S. detention centers in Afghanistan. The ACLU and other advocacy organizations have obtained over 23,000 pages of government documents that shed light on development of prisoner abuse as a matter of official policy. Among the pieces of information in these documents is a record of complaints by the Federal Bureau of Investigation regarding abusive interrogation techniques being used at Guantanamo as early as 2002.

What happened at Abu Ghraib was no low-level conspiracy coordinated by a mere corporal, as alleged by the government. The ACLU/Human Rights First lawsuit hopes to prove that these individual acts were the result of official policy approved by Rumsfeld and carried out by others.

Note: You can read the Rumsfeld complaint and other trial documents including U.S. military documents on torture, by visiting www.aclu.org and clicking on the "New Face of America" button.

The Royal House of Fraud

by Mohammed H. Siddiq

Nebraskans for Peace supporter Mohammed Siddiq wrote the following analysis about his native country for the Nebraska Report. A naturalized U.S. citizen, he has lived in Lincoln since 1982.

Saudi Arabia is a nation of contrasts, the greatest of which being between its perception of itself and reality. It proclaims itself to a theocracy, a state which exists to reflect the will of God/Allah yet, in fact, the state exists almost exclusively to impose the will of a hereditary ruling class. It claims to a state which embraces deep-rooted spiritual values, yet, in fact, it values above all the power and wealth of the ruling elite. It postures itself as a modern Arab state, fully adapted to a 21st Century world, yet its entire structure depends upon enforcing a 17th Century code of conduct so as to subjugate its people and strangle opposition. It claims to be a state that seeks moderation in the troubled Middle East while upholding the independence of all Arab peoples, yet it has undertaken a massive military build-up and openly allied itself with the foreign interests of the United States, its superpower ally. Touting the sacred precepts of its religious tradition, it claims to be state that fosters the welfare and dignity of its people, yet it offers no meaningful political participation to its citizens and ruthlessly controls every aspect of their lives.

In short, Saudi Arabia official Saudi Arabia is a fraud. And the locus of the fraud is not hard to discern: It lies in the ruling household, the Al-Saud, an immensely wealthy and powerful clique of kings, princes (emirs) and their minions, for whom even the hold law of God is merely another means to maintain their sole grip on the reins of government. Theirs is one of the few surviving feudal monarchies in the world; and that it should be located at the crossroads of East and West, atop a vast ocean of oil, poses a threat to the security of the world to which the world should awaken, sooner rather than later.

The greatest fraud perpetrated by the Saudi government is that the nation is a theocracy. In principle, this means that the actions of the government are subject to the dictates of religion, in this case, Islam. In fact, the consistent practice of the House of Saud has been to subordinate religion to its own personal interests.

While the Koran, in theory, is the highest indeed, the only law of the land, the

Saudi kings have never hesitated to overrule the decisions of the clergy (the interpreters of the Koran) when it suited their purposes to do so. This was a critical element in their exercise of power. The Saudi kings could not tolerate any rivals to their absolute control of the state.

The result of this approach is that, today, in the 21st Century, if some poor defendant in one of the kingdom's courts, or some venerated Imam presumes to challenge the will of the king, the person is crushed. A man may be condemned to death without a fair trial; a woman accused of adultery may be stoned to death; a peasant accused of petty theft may have his hand cut off. Every publication, every book, magazine and newspaper is censored, scissored so as to conform to official policy. It is a blasphemy to criticize a prince and open opposition to the king is impossible.

From its creation in 1902 until the discovery of oil in 1930s, the Saudi royal household has ruled Saudi Arabia as it own personal fiefdom. The fact that they had conquered the other tribes in the region was sufficient proof, in their view, that the land and all its spoils belonged to them. Yet those spoils were not great. Arabia was an impoverished and backward place, which derived the bulk of its income from pilgrimages to the holy places. The oil changed everything.

When the potential wealth of the nation became clear, the House of Saud moved quickly to cement its grasp upon it. No sooner had the first well gushed than the Kingdom of Saud was formally proclaimed, and the princes began to proliferate. Virtually every office of power across the land was entrusted to a member of the king's household. The power of the princes, like that of the king, became ubiquitous and absolute. Saudi princes became ministers of one thing and another, and every other political officer was personally appointed by the king.

This practice continues today. A glance at any register of Saudi officials reveals the near total dominance of the nation's official life by members of the royal family. No one knows exactly how many princes there are, but they all have two things in common. They form the exclusive pool from which Saudi officialdom is recruited, and they owe allegiance solely to the king. Saudi politics is strictly

a family affair. There are no

elections, only births; and which bed you are born in

will determine whether you die as an ignorant herdsman, or as one of the wealthiest men in the world. It is important to specify 'men,' for naturally, in Saudi politics, no women need apply.

Saudi oil wealth is legendary. It is also unimaginable. Between 1938 and 1973, Saudi oil earnings totaled some \$35 billion. Then came the oil embargo (one of the Kingdom's gifts to its friends in the West) and the price of oil shot up 400 percent overnight. The net result was that Saudi oil income increased 50 times over. From 1973-1984, the total stood at \$661 billion. At the height of the oil 'crisis' in 1973, the Saudi government was making \$27.5 million *an hour*. Today, with the price of oil again shooting up, the Saudi princes are making almost inconceivable profits.

What is really staggering about these facts is that this ocean of money is considered to be the personal property, not of the people of Saudi Arabia, but of the Saudi royal family. The logic behind this immense fraud runs something like this: God gave oil to Saudi Arabia; God's will runs in Saudi Arabia; the King is God's representative on earth; the King controls God's endowment to the Kingdom. Once again, God's will is a convenient boon to the House of Saud, making it easily the wealthiest family on earth. But has this massive wealth brought domestic peace to the Kingdom? The question can best be answered by examining Saudi internal security expenditures for the last few years.

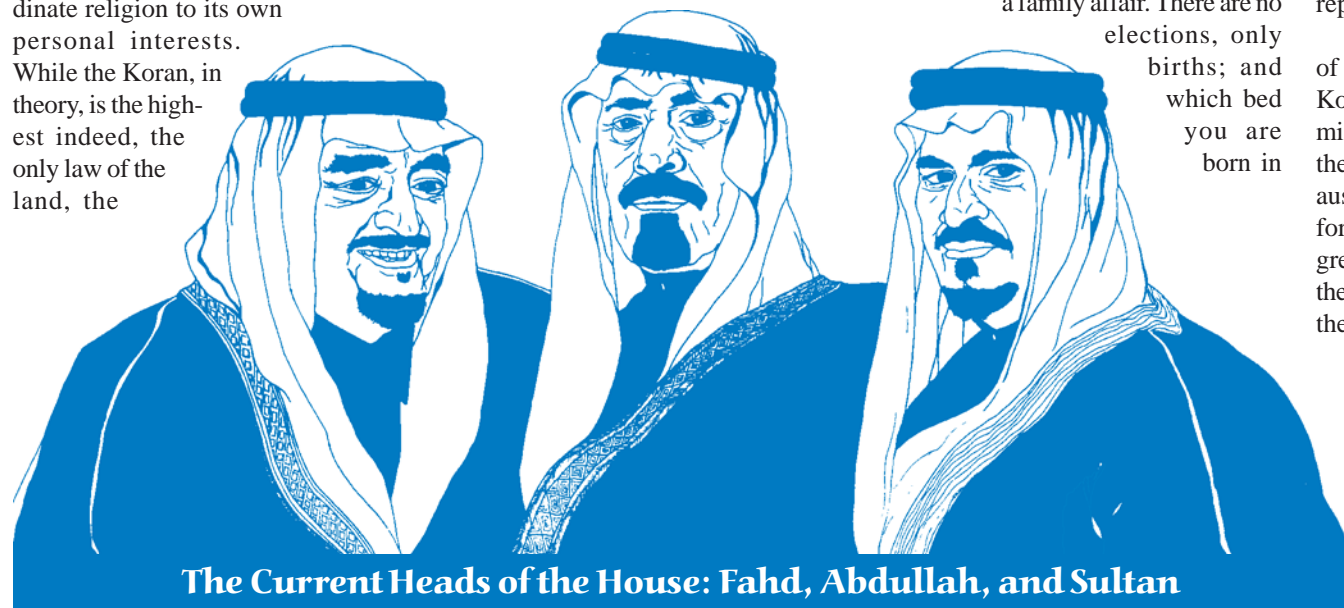
In recent years, Saudi internal security spending has shot up dramatically. By this we mean not the army or navy, but the Ministry of Interior, including internal security organs and intelligence. Since 1982, spending on internal security has increased by 90 percent, while intelligence expenditures have swelled fully 150 percent. These increases represent, respectively, more than double and triple the next largest growth areas in the Saudi defense budget.

Why, one must ask, this frantic interest in beefing up internal security? The answer points to a growing conviction on the part of the ruling elite that dissention is building, that popular discontent is mounting and that the lid is threatening to blow off. But is it conceivable that, in a kingdom which claims to be directed by the dictates of divine compassion, the rulers must devote more and more money to spying on their own people and expanding the organs of repression?

Here, again, can be found another fraud. For the House of Saud, while it hews to the last dot when it comes to the Koran's prescriptions for punishment, obedience and submission, ignores totally the holy Book's admonitions to share the wealth, feed the hungry, solace the poor and live the austere life of the spirit. Their failure to do this has created for the House of Saud a need to surround itself with ever greater instruments of coercion and force in order to stem the rising tide of indignation, resentment and hostility, which the princes' slavering devotion to power and wealth has engendered in the people. A Saudi people who, under the teachings of the Koran, are no less worthy of God's beneficence than the princes themselves are.

No nation, no people, no tyrant can live forever. The Royal House of Fraud may seem solid and secure from the outside, but from the inside it is rotting away.

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The Current Heads of the House: Fahd, Abdullah, and Sultan

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We Have Met the Enemy (of the U.N.) and It Is U.S.

by John Krejci
President, UNA-USA Chapter 100

Like it or not, the effectiveness of the United Nations depends in great part on the cooperation and leadership of the United States. That is the reason John Bolton's nomination is so disturbing. It is dangerous, both practically and symbolically. At this writing his confirmation is still in doubt, though likely. What the nomination represents is a wrongheaded initiative in U.S. foreign policy, i.e., unilateralism. The same policy that marched us into the Iraq war without a resolution from the Security Council.

It is worth noting that the most vocal critics of this war were not the authoritarian nations of the world, but the democracies of Western Europe. John Ruggie, former deputy to Kofi Annan, speaking in Lincoln recently, focused on an upside. He said that despite the recent acquiescence by many Americans, unilateralism will be difficult to sustain. The irony, according to Ruggie, is that, as the number of democracies increase in the world, unilateral action will be looked upon with more skepticism and fear. Our democratic allies ask: If the U.S. could strike Iraq without the approval of the U.N., what would prevent them from invading anyone?

The honor and prestige of the U.S. has continued on a downward spiral since the Iraq war. Now we are stuck in another guerilla conflict, in which our soldiers are picked off one by one and hundreds of Iraqi citizens are killed in reprisals or caught in the crossfire.

All the while the world looks on in horror. John Bolton's nomination only reinforces American commitment to this arrogant and bankrupt policy.

On the other hand, U.S. Senator Chuck Hagel has enunciated an alternative. He is a proponent of multilateralism and consistent supporter of the United Nations.

"We simply cannot go it alone. The centrality of alliances and multilateral institutions is fundamental to a successful foreign policy... Alliance in multilateral institutions must be understood as expansions of our influence, not as constraints of our power... The perception of American power around the world must not rest solely on our military orientation or image. It has always been

quiet confidence and inner strength, not just great display of military power, that have persuaded others to join our cause"

But despite Hagel's words and the many successes of the United Nations achieved through multilateral cooperation, it is difficult to get the word out. Few seem to grasp and remember the successes of joint action. Shakespeare said, "The evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones." So it is with the U.N.

Recent United Nations successes:

- One billion people have gained access to safe water and sanitation in the 1990s alone.
- 75 percent of the world's population have been immunized from the six vaccine-preventable diseases.
- Smallpox has been eradicated and polio reduced by 99 percent
- Nearly 22 million refugees are getting help.



- 83 million people in 80 countries get food aid each year.
- the U.N. and its agencies help the orphans of AIDS/HIV victims, supply school materials all over the world, and promote accountability for grave violations of human rights.
- the U.N. is also fighting poverty, promoting development and democracy through its programs.

The U.N. and its agencies, in cooperation with the NGOs, are quietly carrying out the idealistic goals of their founders. But no one seems to notice. What we hear from the critics is U.N. inefficiency, corruption and scandal. Let me quote a typical UN bashing letter to the editor,

"(The U.N.) has been ineffective in preventing genocide that has cost millions of lives in Rwanda, Sudan and other countries. Now it is embroiled in the oil-for-food scandal, and allegations that its soldiers and workers sexually exploited the people they were sent to protect... The U.N. is rife with conflicts of interest, greed and hypocrisy—all in the name of peace."

My response is: "We have met the enemy and it is us." The United Nations can only be as strong and as effective as its members will let it be. And who is the most influential member?

Kofi Annan was blamed for the Oil or Food scandal, but he did not control it. The United States as lead member of the U.N. Security Council set up the rules. The program did, in fact, achieve its goal—the alleviation of hunger in Iraq. And the most serious violations were not in the U.N. Oil For Food program but from sanctions violations outside that program. These violations consisted in illicit sales of oil by the Iraqi regime to U.S. allies Turkey and Jordan. The U.S. knew of them but chose to look the other way.

The critics of the U.N. demand that the United Nations be reformed and made more efficient. If they had paid attention they would know that Kofi Annan has made this the highest priority of his second term. More than a year ago, he appointed the "High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change" to study the U.N. and suggest reforms. Late last year, the panel returned its report with 101 recommendations.

When I attended a United Nations Association conference in New York last March, I had the privilege to hear Steve Stedman, a scholar from Johns Hopkins University, who served as special advisor to the panel.

He walked us through the report.

The task of the panel was to assess the threats to world security and advise the U.N. how it should respond. First, the panel came up with something that had eluded the U.N. before, i.e., a definition of terrorism. This is key because, until one defines terrorism, one cannot craft a strategy to combat it.

Secondly, the report called for a more efficient United Nations' bureaucracy. Panel

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Amy Goodman's Campaign for an Independent Media Comes to Lincoln & Omaha

by Steve Larrick

Nationally renowned journalist Amy Goodman brought her cross-country "Un-Embed the Media" campaign to capacity audiences in Omaha and Lincoln April 9. In presentations calling for "An Independent Media in a Time of War," the host of Pacifica Radio's popular "Democracy Now" news hour documented the role that the corporate-controlled media in the U.S. repeatedly played in beating the drums of war prior to the March 2003 invasion of Iraq. Despite strong public opposition to an invasion, she said, a survey of mainstream media sources found that only three out of 396 news interviews presented viewpoints opposing the Iraq invasion. The other 393 interviews favored an invasion.

Once the U.S. war in Iraq started, Americans were told not to question authorities regarding the war. But from Goodman's perspective, not allowing debate on these life-and-death, war-and-peace issues is both a serious disservice and a danger to a democratic society.

"General" News

In the build-up to invading Iraq, our primary sources for news became former generals and other military brass. Going to war was presented as a foregone conclusion, regardless of actual evidence or public sentiment to the contrary.

Goodman provided examples of how the corporate-controlled media hid the truth from the American people. She said *CNN* has two different news channels one for the U.S. market and one for the rest of the world. On April 9, 2003, for example, *CNN* for the U.S. showed marines pulling down a statue of Saddam Hussein. At the exact same time, however, *CNN International* showed a more balanced split screen of the same statue falling, but also a young Iraqi girl suffering from severe war injuries.

"I think Americans are compassionate people," Goodman said. "If they were to watch a week of real images of the war, they would call for an end to the war."

Describing the imbalanced presentation of news by the media, Goodman said, "The U.S. media shows U.S. missiles taking off. *Al Jazeera* [a major news source in the Middle East] shows where U.S. missiles land."

Being Misled and Silenced

It is increasing clear that the Bush Administration tragically misled America and the world with regard to Iraq. Iraq had nothing to do with the September 11, 2001, attacks on the U.S. Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction. Iraq had no significant links to al-Qaida prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Yet many Americans, Goodman noted, remain clueless regarding the reality in Iraq. This, in turn, contributes toward a continuing downward spiral in terms of understanding the impact of our present foreign policy and how the rest of the world perceives us.

"I'm not a big fan of reality TV, but we do need a little

reality TV in war," Goodman observed. "It is not our job to sanitize war."

"We need a media that is not a conveyor belt for the lies of this Administration," she said. "The media should be a sanctuary for dissent. We are supposed to hold those responsible accountable. We are silenced by the corporate media and that has to change."

How do we support our troops? Better armor and better medical care mean that more American soldiers are surviving horrific injuries. But when Iraq war veterans need more long-term health care, the Bush Administration is cutting medical and other benefits for U.S. war veterans.

Pacifica Radio and the Independent Media

Pacifica Radio was created in 1949 by Lewis Hill, a conscientious objector to World War II, to provide media coverage not run by corporations. Starting in Berkeley, California, Pacifica spread to New York in 1960. It expanded to Houston in 1970, where its transmitter was blown up twice in the first year by the Ku Klux Klan.

Now Goodman's hour-long "War and Peace" report for Pacifica is broadcast weekdays on over 330 stations across the country, including KZUM, Lincoln's community radio station at 89.3 FM. Pacifica has become the largest independent media market in the United States.

Goodman's hour-long program goes into depth on the news of the day. Whereas the average corporate media sound bite is 9 seconds, she said, "Democracy Now" takes more time to explain things like the Nuremberg Principles and the Geneva Conventions.

"A reporter's job is to go where the silence is," she said. "Pacifica allows people to speak for themselves."

Goodman said independent bookstores are a critical part of the independent media network. To back that up, she arranged with local, independent bookstores in Omaha and Lincoln to benefit from the signing of her books for sale at both lectures. Scores of people lined up after each lecture to purchase signed copies of her latest book, *The Exception to the Rule: Exposing Oily Politicians, War Profiteers, and the Media That Love Them*.

Bravest, Smartest, Truest, Most Un-embedded

Francis Mendenhall, Omaha dentist and Nebraska Green Party leader, introduced Goodman, saying, "She interviews the right people and asks the right questions. We know her by the work she does. She gets the stories told that should be told."

Goodman praised Fred Koramatsu, who successfully challenged the mistreatment of Japanese-Americans internees, saying that people should not be unjustly detained. After 40 years of legal challenges, on November 10, 1983, the courts found that the U.S. Government had lied about the Japanese threat and the judicial report said the internment had not been based upon valid evidence but upon racial prejudice. In 1998, Koramatsu was honored by President Bill Clinton with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Still, he came back again in 2003 to speak on behalf of more



than 600 prisoners detained at Guantanamo.

America: The Sword or the Shield?

Throughout the world, the United States is known both for its role as a sword and as a shield, said Goodman. America's sword-like violent presence was displayed in December, 1975, when Henry Kissinger and Gerald Ford went to Indonesia to support Indonesia's invasion of East Timor. Goodman related her own traumatic story of covering a funeral in 1991 for an East Timorese leader killed by the U.S.-backed Indonesian military. The Indonesian military attacked that funeral killing more than 270 people and nearly killing Goodman and her cameraman. Still, she lived to return to East Timor for its day of independence in 2002.

"We have a choice every hour of every day to support the sword or the shield," said Goodman. The choice of the shield is the choice of justice, peace, and, of course, "Democracy Now."

Goodman's home base for broadcasting is an old fire station just blocks away from Ground Zero in New York City. Her Pacifica office was the closest national broadcast when the first plane hit the World Trade Center at 8:47 a.m. and the second at 9:03 a.m. Ironically, at that time, she was broadcasting a documentary on the U.S.-backed overthrow of democratically elected Chilean President Salvador Allende on September 11, 1973.

Goodman noted that after September 11, the global community was united with the U.S. against terror. But the unjustified invasion of Iraq has squandered global goodwill. She noted that many of the families of victims of the September 11 attacks are saying that vengeance is not the answer. "Not in our name," they say. Retaliation only brings more suffering of innocent people.

"Media in this time is not only ahistorical but anti-historical," and without the knowledge and perspective history provides, Goodman said, the public cannot make informed and ethical choices. An independent media, un-embedded from the government and unshackled from corporate control is an essential first step if Americans are to regain some historical insight and get our country back on side of peace and justice. Because, as she noted, "If we had a just country, who would be behind bars and who would be free?"

Steve Larrick was the Nebraska Green Party's 2004 candidate for the 1st Congressional District.

NFP STATEMENT ON LB 312

THE NEW BUSINESS TAX INCENTIVES BILL

Mark Vasina, President of Nebraskans for Peace

As we go to press, the new business tax incentives bill, LB 312, is expected to sail through the final vote of the Legislature.

Introduced by Revenue Committee chairman Dave Landis, LB 312 was crafted to replace LB 775 (1987). Curtailing some tax breaks while raising or accelerating others, it would have modestly increased the taxpayer cost of LB 775. It also included strong company-specific disclosure. Taxpayers would have learned the cost as well as the jobs and investment associated with each new project.

However, as LB 312 emerged from Committee the original provisions had been morphed into the "Nebraska Advantage Act," incorporating many expensive features of the "dead" Advantage Nebraska Act (LB 646). Other tax incentive bills (some offering tax breaks for rural businesses and smaller manufacturers) were folded into LB 312 to secure buy-in from other Committee members. LB 312's new cost estimate is enormous: \$60 million per year, increasing the cost of LB 775 by over 40%.

Company-specific disclosure is retained, but reduced, delayed and obfuscated. Tax breaks used only will be reported, every other year, for a combined two-year period. Nevertheless, this is a truly significant victory for public accountability. Nebraska joins the growing number of states requiring better disclosure of public subsidies to business.

The Employment and Investment Growth Act of 1987—LB 775—is the most expensive business tax incentive program of its kind in the United States. Legislative research carried out last year at the request of Senator Chris Beutler showed that LB 775 is nearly four times more expensive on a per capita basis than the next most expensive tax incentive program (in the state of Washington) and many more times more expensive than similar programs anywhere else. LB 775's tax expenditures average nearly 5% of our state budget.

LB 312 was born this year in a pragmatic attempt to reshape LB 775 into a more focused—albeit no less expensive— incentive program. It also added two important features missing from LB 775, wage standards and project-specific disclosure of tax breaks. While the changes to LB 775 incorporated in LB 312 failed to address many of the most serious concerns of the program's critics, they were sufficient to earn the endorsement of Nebraskans for Peace and others.

LB 312 also failed—initially—to address the most serious concerns of LB 775's supporters, who have ambitious plans to expand existing tax incentives. As the amended bill emerged last week from the Revenue Committee, it incorporates provisions providing a sales tax exemption for manufacturing equipment (from LB 695), creating a tax credit for increases in research and development spending (from LB 672), and for investing in microenterprises (from LB 309). While these features add considerable cost to existing incentives—possibly as much as \$20 million a year, according to estimates from the Department of Revenue, even more fiscal damage results from the grafting onto LB 312 of numerous expensive features from

the "dead" LB 646—the so-called Advantage Nebraska Act—turning LB 312 into the "Nebraska Advantage Act" (established in Section 19).

All in all, the Department of Revenue expects LB 312 to add as much as \$60 million a year to LB 775's \$140 million average annual cost. **If LB 312 becomes law, tax incentives will explode from 5% of our state budget to 7% within a few short years.** These costs ignore lost property tax revenues stemming from LB 775 which hit certain communities and their schools very hard, and even more property tax revenue losses which will result from LB 312 as amended.

The cost we are asked to pay is simply too much. The competition between tax incentives and spending on essential public services such as education, health and safety will only intensify. The result is significant damage—not enhancement—to the business climate and to real economic development in our state.

Today we will provide each senator with a copy of *Rethinking Growth Strategies* (www.epinet.org/books/rethinking_growth_full.pdf), published in 2004 by the Economic Policy Institute in Washington. This book provides an excellent overview of economic research on the effectiveness of tax incentive programs. The evidence presented shows that "state and local tax incentives typically fail to draw firms to a particular location, substantially improve local economic development, or stimulate job creation in a cost-effective manner." On the other hand, strong evidence is presented that increased spending on public services such as quality schools, transportation and health care is positively correlated with economic growth. When we rob from our children's education to pay for enormous business tax incentives, we are doing double damage to the prospects for Nebraska's economic health.

The adverse impact of the recent budget crisis on public education in Nebraska remains severe. Despite the increases to education spending already slated to emerge from this legislative session, Senator Ron Raikes—the sole member of the Revenue Committee to vote against advancing LB 312—has called for spending an additional \$10 million on K-12 education. Moreover, the legislature has made no effort to restore the \$432 million in cuts to state aid for K-12 made between 2001 and 2004.

The escalating damage to the long-term economic health of our state certain to result from the excesses of LB 312 dwarfs the few positive aspects of the bill. The sales tax exemption for manufacturing equipment—a relatively equitable and cost-effective incentive extended to all manufacturing firms large and small—nevertheless should have been paid for by cuts to LB 775. A similar law was in effect for one year prior to its repeal in 1987 to help pay for LB 775. Its return 18 years later can only be attributed to a recent concern by LB 775 proponents to placate its critics among business owners who do not benefit from LB 775.

Although the wage standards included in LB 312 are weak because they lack a meaningful floor, they do signal a growing acknowledgement by civic leaders that public subsidies for business should be tied to living wages.

The disclosure provisions in LB 312 as amended repre-

House of Fraud, conclusion



Mohammed H. Siddiq

anyone else. The only question is what form it will take.

Already in Saudi Arabia, we see the stirrings of Islamic fundamentalism, such as revolutionized Iran under the Shah. We see demands for democratization and openness, such as we witnessed in the waning days of the Soviet Union. These same forces are being encouraged by the Saudi program of modernization. To thwart and contain them, the Saudi regime is resorting to an even greater reliance on the ancient means of governance, thereby intensifying the struggle and deepening the state of contradiction. On the one hand, it seeks to enlarge its wealth and power by more involvement with and concessions to the world outside. And, on the other, it strives to maintain its absolute, feudal control over its own people by retreating farther into the past.

The center cannot hold; things must fall apart. The tide of time is bound to overtake the House of Saud, and not even its legendary wealth can hold it back. The days of the old system are numbered... Its fall may be violent, brutal or lingering... But surely it will come. And when it does, a new nation in Arabia will be born. What form it will take, and what its attitude to the West will be, however, are still to be determined.

In their own interests, the leaders of the free world should start now to move against the ruling emirs of Saudi Arabia and side with the forces for democratization. The reasons are ample and obvious:

- 1) The Saudi regime's repression has bred a fanaticism that, through 9/11 and other acts of international terrorism, has already demonstrated the level of pain it can exert on the free world, and undoubtedly can do so again.
- 2) The ruling Saudi emirs are unelected men exercising illegitimate authority.
- 3) The ruling Saudi emirs have deprived the people of Arabia of a value system that can't be denied God-given value. The value of freedom.
- 4) The ruling Saudi emirs have failed to meet the expectations of their now highly-urbanized, better educated and politically aware citizens.
- 5) We need to remember that we are all connected. Either we are all safe, or none of us is safe. Either we are all free, or none of us is.

My blunt message is: "Get the ruling emir out." Expel him. Make him irrelevant. He needs to go, but there's no need to hurt him. After all, none of the ruling emirs who have been running the country for the last 73 years ever made it through Middle School.

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UN, conclusion

members saw the need to cut out the 'dead wood' and get rid of patronage appointments.

Third, they agreed that the Human Rights Commission had become a political mockery rather than a force promoting human rights. They recommended a smaller council that would actually address human rights issues throughout the world.

Fourth, the United Nations must be able to intervene more easily when there are massive violations of international law, such as genocide, ethnic cleansing and large scale atrocities, and the individual state cannot or will not protect its citizens. In this context, the panel addressed the preventive use of force stating, "A country can engage in anticipatory self-defense but any long-term use of force has to go through the Security Council."

Fifth, to do the above, the Security Council must be stronger and more effective. It needs to be expanded. The panel did not reach a consensus but put forth two models. Both suggested expanding the Security Council from 15 to 24 members. New representatives would include members from Asia, Africa and Latin America. Some European countries would lose their permanent

seats. The panel did not come to consensus in scrapping the archaic veto. All agreed that it would be desirable, but conceded that presently it was politically unfeasible.

The recommendations were given to Secretary General Annan. He responded to them positively in his document "In Greater Freedom," and called for a summit of the nations of the world in September—on the 60th anniversary of the U.N.—to implement these reforms.

This would be the ideal time for the United States to step in, show its leadership and support a reformed and more effective U.N. And this is precisely the problem that the Bolton nomination poses for those who truly want to reform the United Nations and make it the instrument of peace that it can be.

Bolton was partially correct when he trumpeted the relative importance of the United States for the U.N. But his unilateralism is 180 degrees off the mark. The U.S. should be a voice for the common good, not just our own self interest. Senator Hagel had it right, "Multilateral institutions must be understood as expansions of our influence not as constraints of our power."

LB 312, CONCLUSION

sent both a step forward from status quo and two steps backward from the language in the original bill. Project-specific information about tax breaks used would now be required, but only a single amount covering all credits and refunds used over a two-year period would be disclosed every other year. Much work will remain to be done regarding disclosure if LB 312 is passed in its current form.

But better disclosure is not enough. We must also have an honest and independent performance evaluation of the tax incentive program, funded entirely with tax dollars. The legislature must authorize a study of program costs and benefits to be carried out by Nebraska economists with research expertise in tax incentives and economic development.

The legislature must also undertake the real work of comprehensive tax reform with the triple goals of broadening the tax base, optimizing tax rates overall, and maintaining adequate spending to deliver quality public services. LB 312 does little more than expand an entitlement program which lowers or eliminates state taxes for a targeted segment of corporate taxpayers—some of the largest

firms doing business in Nebraska—which have the means and ability to pay those taxes, but lack the apparent willingness to do so.

I challenge the business leaders who assert that LB 775 is outdated and "behind the curve" to provide honest and meaningful examples of other states which offer a more generous tax incentive program than Nebraska does. I challenge our state senators to demand the same from the business lobbyists who will visit them daily to secure legislative support for LB 312.

And finally, I challenge our state organizations which advocate for workers, farmers, small business owners, educators and others to explore new and effective ways to speak out in public about our bloated tax incentive programs so that our shared concerns are heard and acted upon. Despite assurances by elected officials that "everyone is at the table," the institutional voices of all but Big Business were absent from the negotiations over LB 312. Together we must stop the Nebraska Advantage Act from turning—if passed in its current form—into the Nebraska Disadvantage Act.

“March to Whiteclay”

Saturday, June 11, 2005 • 12:00 Noon

NFP is organizing a march to Whiteclay from Pine Ridge on the anniversary of the still-unsolved murders of Ronald Hard Heart and Wilson Black Elk, Jr., who were slain there in 1999.

We will be departing from the parking lot of the Billy Mills Hall in the town of Pine Ridge and marching the two miles to Whiteclay for a rally on the main street.

This is an opportunity for Nebraskans to publicly demand action from our elected officials on the illegal alcohol sales in Whiteclay.

To join us, contact the NFP State Office at 402-475-4620 or email us at nfpstate@nebraskansforpeace.org.

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Much Bad News in the Inbox

Some fools want to “mine” and “manage” the Ogalalla aquifer, probably some of the same fools who keep voting Republican and still can’t figure out why they can only get \$2 a bushel for their corn.

Tax giveaways to the biggest, least-neediest Nebraska corporations are going up... up... up, on a Unicameral vote of 39-1. Only State Senator Ron Raikes opposed the bill to the end, tempting the mean girl in me to say he just wants to be different. However, the honest woman in me must admit that the Senator objects on the same grounds as I do—we need business which chooses Nebraska on our considerable merits and takes ownership of the good life through good corporate citizenship and paying a fair share of taxes.

But the item that set my hair on fire is the announcement of a new series on *PBS*, created by the agribusiness cartel to celebrate the corporate takeover of American agriculture and the miracles that globalization, bioengineering and winner-take-all, unfettered capitalism are about to produce for the hungry world.

You wait. This is only the middle of the right-wing takeover of the American media. (The beginning was Rush, then



FOX.) With a Bush appointment at the head of *PBS*, expect extensive gutting of serious programming and a great vomitus of corporate and conservative propaganda. We’re all going to have to deal. Do not on any account boycott public radio or television! That’s just what the sons of bucks are praying liberals will do—shoot ourselves in the foot and dry up support for the only meaningful independent media still standing!

So, here’s my prediction for the **Top Five Big Lies** the American Farm Bureau Federation and Monsanto and the rest will be serving up in lush video, rich with sentimental images of rural America and heavy scientific talk from folks whose universities depend on agribusiness grant funding for their research.

Who will benefit from these Big Lies? Chief beneficiaries are the multinationals, who get to buy the world’s overproduction of commodities at below the cost of production, and their good friends, ag state Republicans who continue to be returned to Congress, despite more than a quarter century of stagnant ag exports and a ten-year loss of a third of the value of all commodity products as income to U.S. ag producers.

• **U.S. farmers can compete with any farmers on the planet & the key to the future for U.S. agriculture is in exports.**

Actually, these are two sides of the same argument. The first is just juiced with extra testosterone, but they’re both wrong. The U.S. is a high-cost-of-production country. This is partly due to maintaining higher labor and environmental standards than low-cost-of-production competitor nations like China and Brazil.

• **GMO crops will end world hunger & globalization will lift everybody’s boat.** Hunger is political. Most folks who are hungry today weren’t hungry until somebody came and took away their fields, or burned them, or dammed their river, or poisoned it, or just forced them onto plantations or into mines or shantytowns—sometimes all of the above. GMO crops will end world hunger when poor people have money to buy food. This does not seem likely in a world where multinational corporations are free from the nuisance of nations and their laws, which is the true meaning of free trade.

• **The loss of the family farmer is a matter of inevitable progress.** In fact, the loss of the family farm was planned by the Committee for Economic Development and has been actively, sometimes openly, pursued by Republican leadership on an ongoing basis since the late 1940s. It is neither inevitable nor progress.

• **Niche markets can save U.S. agriculture.** Niche markets are saving some of

my dearest farming and ranching friends, but by definition these are limited entrepreneurial opportunities. Most U.S. farmers produce commodities, and to keep these folks on the land requires a structural solution.

• **Subsidies to U.S. farmers hurt small farmers in the U.S. and in developing countries.** Propounded by too many people who ought to know better—including the Center for Rural Affairs and Oxfam International—this Big Lie is the unkindest cut of all. The loan deficiency payment in truth is a subsidy to the grain trade allowing the multinational corporations to buy at a shocking price, even further below the producer’s actual cost of production. Driving U.S. prices to processors down sends world prices into freefall, guaranteeing overproduction which means still lower prices to processors. Meanwhile, food itself does not become cheaper. Desperate to increase profits so they can feed their own families, farmers worldwide bring more and more fragile and marginal land into cultivation, guaranteeing ever greater overproduction and ever lower prices to the grain trade.

This is the global race to the bottom of the economic barrel, brought to you by proud sponsors AFBF and Monsanto on the new *Fox*-style made-over “fair and balanced” *PBS*... and it’s just a little taste of “the nature of things to come.”

From the Bottom by Sally Herrin

The real political spectrum isn't right to left... it's top to bottom.