

US right wing discusses "nuking Mecca"

Patrick Martin
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The Bush administration tells the public that its nuclear weapons policy is aimed at promoting peace and deterring terrorism. But within the ultra-right circles that play a decisive role in the formulation of US government policy, the use of nuclear weapons is seen not as an unthinkable last resort, but rather as a desirable option.

In this milieu, bloodlust goes hand in hand with jingoism and racism.

In a discussion on the web site of the *National Review*, one of the leading far-right publications, senior editors suggested that in the event of a nuclear or radiation device being used in a terrorist attack on the US, the appropriate response would be to attack selected Arab capital cities with atomic bombs.

Writing on March 7, *National Review* editor Rich Lowry declared that among people he spoke with there was "lots of sentiment for nuking Mecca. Moderates opt for something more along these lines: 'Baghdad and Tehran would be the likeliest sites for a first strike. If we have clean enough bombs to assure a pinpoint damage area, Gaza City and Ramallah would also be on list. Damascus, Cairo, Algiers, Tripoli and Riyadh should be put on alert that any signs of support for the attacks in their cities will bring immediate annihilation.'"

When another *National Review* writer suggested that destroying Mecca might cause permanent outrage among one billion Muslims, Lowry rejoined, "This is a tough one, and I don't know quite what to think. Mecca seems extreme, of course, but then again, few people would die and it would send a signal."

The *National Review* was briefly in the news last fall when one of its contributing editors, Ann Coulter, pronounced herself in favor of new version of the medieval Crusades. In response to Arab terrorism, she wrote in *National Review Online*, "We should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to

Christianity." When the magazine issued a public apology—because of the embarrassment the incident caused the Bush administration in its Mideast diplomacy—Coulter objected and was dropped as a contributor.

In considering this public debate about how many millions to incinerate in the Middle East, one must remember that Lowry and his colleagues have the closest political and personal ties to the Republican Party, the Bush administration, and the Pentagon brass. At last month's Conservative Political Action Conference, where *National Review* was a major sponsor, the speakers included National Security Adviser Condoleeza Rice and Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson.

Casual discussion of mass murder is perfectly acceptable in political discourse in these circles, and at the highest levels of the American state. But so cowardly and cowed is the American press that not one reporter at Bush's March 13 press conference dared ask him what he thought about the homicidal ravings of his close political allies.



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