# Wolfowitz on Iraq: “Murky intelligence” suffices for pre-emptive wars

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US Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz has just returned from his first inspection trip to occupied Iraq, in the course of which he memorably declared, while standing in Baghdad behind a phalanx of American troops, “I think all foreigners should stop interfering in the internal affairs of Iraq.”

He was, of course, referring not to the United States, but to Iraq’s neighbors, Syria, Turkey and Iran, as well as Russia, Germany, France and other potential threats to US domination of the oil-rich nation.

In a series of television interviews Sunday, July 27, Wolfowitz presented a picture of conditions in Iraq that was so distorted as to be unrecognizable. He told his interviewer on Fox News, Brit Hume, “What the Iraqi people are feeling is, number one, an almost unanimous—well, not quite unanimous—sense of gratitude for helping to liberate them,” as well as “an enormous amount of fear” that Saddam Hussein’s regime might come back.

During the nine-day period that included Wolfowitz’s brief tour of the country, US forces staged hundreds of heavily armed raids in cities and towns throughout the center and north of Iraq. In three cases American soldiers opened fire on crowds of unarmed civilians, in Mosul, Baghdad and Karbala. The last city is in the predominantly Shia-populated southern half of Iraq, an area that Wolfowitz called “largely stable.”

The *Washington Post* described the scene in Mosul, citing eyewitness accounts of the incident, which took place the same day as the US assault in that city that killed Uday and Qusay Hussein: “They said a crowd of 40 or 50 young men had gathered just after 1 p.m., after the firefight had stopped, in an area near a traffic light at least 400 yards from the house where the Hussein brothers were killed. They said the crowd wanted to enter their mosque for prayers, but soldiers kept them away because it was too close to the firefight scene. The men became angry, yelled at the soldiers, and a few began throwing rocks, the witnesses said. At that moment, from four to eight soldiers fired short bursts into the crowd.”

Like other Bush administration spokesmen, Wolfowitz attributed all of the armed resistance encountered by American troops to remnants of the Baath Party dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. Such explanations are contradicted by the circumstances in which Hussein’s sons were killed July 22—hiding out in a villa in Mosul, more than 100 miles north of the main fighting, accompanied by only a single bodyguard and Qusay Hussein’s 14-year-old son, Mustapha.

The top US military officer, Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, further undermined such claims by stating, during his own visit to Iraq, that Saddam Hussein could not be a serious factor in the military situation because US raids were forcing him to keep continually on the move.

The Bush administration and the American media continually reiterate the “big lie” that there are only two sides in Iraq: the partisans of Saddam Hussein and those who support the “liberation” of Iraq by American conquest. While the vast majority of Iraqis shed no tears over the demise of Hussein’s regime, they regard the US-British occupation with mistrust and hostility, recognizing that its aim is the seizure and exploitation of Iraq’s enormous oil wealth.

Wolfowitz inadvertently suggested the real level of support for the US colonialist regime in Baghdad, when he told Fox: “The number of Iraqis who want to help liberate their country, who view the Baathists who are trying to bring back Saddam Hussein as their enemies, are in the thousands.” This in a country of nearly 25 million people!

In answer to questions on Fox and NBC’s “Meet the Press” about the US failure to find any trace of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)—the principal pretext advanced for conquering Iraq—Wolfowitz offered three arguments.

He claimed it was premature to suggest that no chemical or biological weapons would be found. “I flew over Baghdad,” he said. “It’s a city, I believe, as large as Los Angeles. You look at all those houses and realize that every basement might contain a huge lethal quantity of anthrax.”

Wolfowitz made no attempt to square this claim of hidden anthrax stockpiles in every Baghdad cellar with his description of Iraqis as universally grateful to the United States for invading their country.

By his account, the search for weapons of mass destruction is open-ended, and the Bush administration could justify occupation of Iraq indefinitely. The same argument would justify invading and occupying Tehran, Damascus, Riyadh, Cairo or any other major urban center on the planet—all in the name of the “war on terror.”

Second, Wolfowitz cited the claims of the Clinton administration in the 1990s that Iraq under Saddam Hussein continued to develop and possess chemical and biological weapons. This has been a more frequent theme of the White House and Pentagon since the controversy erupted last month over Bush’s false claim, in his

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State of the Union speech, that Iraq was seeking uranium in Africa to develop nuclear weapons.

Clinton himself came to Bush's rescue last week, in an appearance on the "Larry King Live" television program where he dismissed the criticism of the State of the Union speech with assurances that "everybody makes mistakes when they are president." Clinton's intervention only underscores his own role in spreading lies about alleged Iraqi weapons of mass destruction as the pretext for US provocations and attacks on the country.

The Clinton administration used unproven claims of Iraqi WMD to maintain the UN embargo of Iraq that cost the lives of an estimated 1.5 million people over 12 years, and justify repeated bombing raids on Iraqi targets. It was under Clinton that the CIA infiltrated the UN weapons inspection teams with agents who sought to pinpoint the location of Saddam Hussein and other key leaders so they could be targeted for assassination.

Wolfowitz's third argument on the absence of WMD was that information would only be forthcoming once Iraqi scientists and technicians lost all fear of a return of Saddam Hussein to power. So pervasive was the repression of the regime, he said, there remained "many buried secrets in that country."

References to torture and murder by Hussein's regime served Wolfowitz as an all-purpose diversion for all questions about the mounting difficulties and obstacles confronted by the US occupation authority. "It's difficult for Americans to imagine what it's like to live in a country, not only where they can grab you at night and torture you, but they'll grab your children and torture them in order to make you talk," he told NBC's "Meet the Press" moderator Tim Russert.

Neither Russert nor Fox's Brit Hume bothered to ask Wolfowitz why a series of American administrations supported Hussein's dictatorship, despite the screams of torture victims, when it served Washington's purposes. Wolfowitz's current boss, Donald Rumsfeld, as a special US envoy to Iraq in the 1980s conveyed the Reagan administration's backing for Saddam Hussein in his war against Iran, and met personally with the Iraqi leader in Baghdad.

The central purpose of Wolfowitz's television appearances was to advance a new justification for the ongoing bloodshed in Iraq. He told Russert, "The battle to secure the peace in Iraq is now the central battle in the global war on terror, and those sacrifices are going to make not just the Middle East more stable, but our country safer for our children and grandchildren." He made a nearly identical statement on Fox.

This is a remarkable reinterpretation of the events in Iraq. The Bush administration had been insisting that Saddam Hussein had or was developing weapons of mass destruction and might deliver them to terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda, which could use them against targets in the United States. Both claims have been exposed as lies, with the US occupation force unable to provide any evidence of weapons of mass destruction or significant links between the secular Baathist regime and the Islamic fundamentalists.

Now Wolfowitz is characterizing the resistance of the Iraqi people to US occupation, in the guerrilla warfare that has erupted since the collapse of the Baathist government, as "terrorism." He further declares the crushing of this resistance—i.e., the stamping out of popular aspirations to national independence and sovereignty—to be the heart of the Bush administration's "war on terrorism."

Dozens of American soldiers have been killed in the months since the fall of Baghdad. These deaths were caused, not by sophisticated weapons of mass destruction, but by the relatively primitive means available to an oppressed and occupied people: bullets, rocket-propelled-grenades, booby traps, crude bombs. Not a single one of these American soldiers would have died if they had not been dispatched to Iraq by the Bush administration to occupy that country. Their deaths are the product of a policy of aggressive war for oil and conquest, not the result of terrorism.

Wolfowitz went even further, declaring that the lesson of September 11, 2001—which the Bush administration has sought to connect to Saddam Hussein despite a complete lack of evidence—is that the US government must be prepared to launch military action based on "murky intelligence."

Those who criticize the war against Iraq because of the lack of evidence of weapons of mass destruction or ties to Al Qaeda have failed to draw this lesson, Wolfowitz said. He told Russert on "Meet the Press": "If people keep treating every intelligence uncertainty as an example of failure, I guess we have a problem. But stop and think. If in 2001, or in 2000, or in 1999, we had gone to war in Afghanistan to deal with Osama bin Laden, and we had tried to say it's because he's planning to kill 3,000 people in New York, people would have said, you don't have any proof of that. I think the lesson of September 11th is that you can't wait until proof after the fact. I mean, it surprises me sometimes that people have forgotten so soon what September 11th, I think, should have taught us about terrorism. And that's what this is all about."

It is hard to overstate the cynical and demented character of this argument. From a false premise—that the United States did not have hard evidence of the preparations for September 11, a premise that ignores the many indications that the terrorists were detected, but allowed to proceed with their plans—Wolfowitz draws the remarkable conclusion that it is wrong to demand proof before military action is launched. A preemptive US assault should be carried out, presumably, on the basis of mere suspicion of hostile intent, or even the possibility that hostile intent might develop in the future.

The above quoted passage deserves careful consideration. The Wolfowitz corollary to the Bush doctrine of preventive war amounts to advance authorization for US military action against any country, simply on the say-so of the president. It is a warning to the world—and the American people—of the violent and rapacious character of US imperialism.

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