## Desperate over growing debacle:

# Bush justifies Iraq occupation with lies on "terror"

**The Editorial Board**
**8 September 2003**

Faced with the deepening debacle of the US military occupation of Iraq and growing popular opposition at home, President Bush delivered a televised speech to the American people Sunday in which he attempted to justify the continuing slaughter there with claims that are recognized internationally as patent lies.

Timed just four days before the second anniversary of the September 11 attacks, Bush's speech started from the deceitful premise that Iraq was somehow responsible for the tragic events in New York City and Washington that day.

"Nearly two years ago, following deadly attacks on our country, we began a systematic campaign against terrorism," Bush began, asserting that first the war in Afghanistan and then the invasion of Iraq were carried out in retaliation for September 11.

"We acted in Iraq," Bush said, "where the former regime sponsored terror, possessed and used weapons of mass destruction and for 12 years defied the clear demands of the United Nations Security Council. Our coalition enforced these international demands in one of the swiftest and most humane military campaigns in history."

Bush's speech followed the release last week of a poll indicating that nearly 70 percent of the American public believes that Iraq was somehow responsible for attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, despite the fact that not a single Iraqi was among the 19 people identified as the airplane hijackers and the acknowledgement by administration officials themselves that there is no evidence tying the regime of Saddam Hussein to the attacks.

The public misconception is the product of an extraordinary level of complicity between the Bush administration and the media to distort reality, conceal information and terrorize the public into supporting a war of aggression.

It is significant that this lie is recycled for public consumption in the United States on the very weekend that the press in Europe and elsewhere around the globe has taken note of a comprehensive article by a former leading cabinet minister in the British government (see: British official charges US "stood down" on 9/11) charging that the Bush administration allowed the September 11 attacks to take place in order to create a pretext for launching longstanding plans to conquer Iraq and lay hold of its oil wealth.

Bush's resurrection of the false claim that Iraq was responsible for September 11 is a measure of his administration's desperation as the other main lie floated to justify the war—that US intervention was required to eliminate dangerous stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction—has been totally discredited. Having scoured the country for five months, the US military has found not a trace of the tens of thousands of liters of deadly chemical and biological weapons materials that Washington claimed were in Iraq in the months leading up to the invasion.

Meanwhile, the other claims made by the White House and the Pentagon—that Iraqis would welcome US troops as liberators and that Iraqi oil would finance the occupation as well as lucrative contracts for US corporations to reconstruct the war-ravaged country—have proven equally false.

US soldiers are dying on a daily basis in ambushes and attacks that those on the ground in Iraq attribute to a growing resistance movement that enjoys broad popular support. The inability of 130,000 US troops to maintain even a semblance of security has been brought painfully home by a series of four deadly car bombings that have sent the United Nations and other international agencies fleeing the country and caused the country's majority Shiite community to demand the end of the foreign occupation and the deployment of its own armed militias.

Oil production, subjected to continuous sabotage attacks, is at less than half the pre-war level and is projected by optimistic US administrators to reach that level—only a fraction of what Iraq's oil fields are capable of producing—only after another year.

Bush described those resisting US occupation as a "collection of killers" and "terrorists" whose attacks are directed against "decency, freedom and progress."

"They want us to leave Iraq before our work is done," he said. "They want to shake the will of the civilized world."

This remark—perhaps the only true statement in the speech—serves as an apt description of every movement of oppressed peoples to throw off the domination of the colonizers and oppressors of the "civilized world." The "work" that the Bush administration set out to do in Iraq is plunder. Its aim was to use overwhelming military force to conquer the country, seize control of its oil fields and turn it into an American-controlled protectorate.

Perhaps the most amazing aspect of the Bush administration's strategy was its apparent belief that all this could be accomplished without provoking mass resistance from a people with a powerful tradition of struggle against colonial rule.

The "decency, freedom and progress" that the US occupation has brought to Iraq has included the killing of thousands, brutal daily raids on the civilian population, the mass imprisonment of suspected opponents, the wiping out of the vast majority of workers' jobs and a shattered infrastructure that is unable to provide the population with regular electricity, clean water and other basic necessities. It is these

conditions that have created popular support for those Bush brands as "terrorists."

The one piece of new information contained in the US president's speech was his announcement that he will seek an additional appropriation from Congress of $87 billion. He said that out of this total, the vast majority—$66 billion—would go to cover "military and intelligence operations" in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, while just $21 billion would be earmarked for reconstruction costs in both of those countries.

According to conservative estimates, at least $15 billion is needed to rebuild Iraq's electricity system alone. Another $12 billion would be required to restore its water system.

While the money proposed will not even begin to repair the damage done by US bombings and economic sanctions, the vast sums that are being expended on the military will further swell a record federal deficit that is now projected to reach nearly $500 billion.

Bush said that one of his central objectives was "expanding international cooperation in the reconstruction and security of Iraq." Essentially, this amounts to an international shakedown operation. Having contemptuously rejected the objections of other governments to an illegal and unilateral US war, the Bush administration is now demanding that they ante up to pay for the American occupation.

While Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld dismissed France and Germany as "old Europe," when they opposed a United Nations resolution sanctioning a US invasion, the US administration is reduced to begging for some of their "old money," to bail it out of what has clearly become a bloody quagmire.

Bush's argument that these countries are obliged to finance US operations because the war in Iraq is being waged against "terrorism" is unlikely to have the desired effect in Europe, where the US war of aggression is largely seen as producing a far greater threat of terrorist actions against Western targets.

On the eve of Bush's speech, Secretary of State Colin Powell made his own address, claiming that Washington was still committed to multilateralism and appealing for a new spirit of unity between the major imperialist powers.

"For too many years, too many centuries, the imperial habits of great powers squandered untold resources, and talent and lives, jousting for real estate, glory and gold," Powell said. "Instead of wasting lives and treasure opposing each other as in the past, today's powers can pull in the same direction to solve problems common to all."

Yet in Iraq, this "common good" is presented as Europe bankrolling an occupation that leaves Washington in complete control of Iraq and in a position to dictate the terms for the privatization and takeover of its vast oil industry. Moreover, the consolidation of a military stranglehold over the Persian Gulf region places US imperialism in a position to dictate economic terms to its major rivals in both Europe and Japan. Sermons about the folly of imperial rivalries are unlikely to convince these rivals to bow to US demands.

Finally, Bush said he was pushing for the United Nations Security Council to approve a new resolution creating a so-called multinational force to be placed under US command. This plan—essentially to bring troops from countries such as India and Pakistan to take over the security posts where American soldiers are presently being shot on a daily basis—has met with broad opposition because of Washington's refusal to cede any of its unilateral control over Iraq. Even with a UN resolution, it is by no means clear that the troops would be forthcoming, given the broad popular opposition to any participation

in the US occupation.

Bush's rhetoric about US troops serving on the "front lines of freedom" will not likely have the desired effect on American soldiers in Iraq, who are demanding with increasing anger that they be brought home and who heard no suggestion from the president that they will be.

The mounting hostility within the American military toward the neo-colonial project in Iraq found sharp expression in a speech delivered last week by retired General Anthony Zinni to an audience of active-duty US Marine and naval officers.

"There is no strategy or mechanism for putting the pieces together," Zinni, the former commander of US forces in the Middle East, told the assembled officers. "We're in danger of failing."

The retired general drew a direct parallel between the present quagmire in Iraq and the catastrophe suffered by the US military in Vietnam, strongly suggesting that senior commanders feel betrayed by the Bush administration.

"My contemporaries, our feelings and sensitivities were forged on the battlefields of Vietnam, where we heard the garbage and the lies, and we saw the sacrifice," Zinni said. "I ask you, is it happening again?" The *Washington Post* reported that after the meeting officers bought tapes and compact discs of the speech to give to their colleagues.

It is now just over four months since Bush strutted across the deck of the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln in a flight suit, declaring major combat operations over and the US military's "mission accomplished." Since that day nearly 150 US soldiers have died in Iraq and perhaps ten times as many have been wounded—casualties that already exceed the numbers incurred during the invasion itself.

Having launched a illegal war based on predatory aims, the administration now confronts the disintegration of its entire policy and all of the ideological assumptions upon which it was based. Whether the Bush White House achieves its aims of securing European money and south Asian troops or not, continued US occupation will only mean increasing numbers of dead—both US and Iraqi—and stepped up attacks on social conditions, jobs and incomes of American workers to pay for the suppression of the justified opposition of the Iraqi people to foreign domination.

Against the Bush administration's desperate schemes for salvaging this criminal enterprise, American working people must raise the demand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all US troops from Iraq and Afghanistan.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**wsws.org/contact**