

“Muslims do not ‘hate our freedoms’ ...they hate our policies”

Pentagon report exposes lies of Bush administration

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A report issued last month by the Defense Science Board’s Task Force on Strategic Communication paints a frank picture of the enormous opposition that exists in the Middle East to the US occupation of Iraq and American foreign policy in general. Published by an advisory board that is part of the US Department of Defense, the report acknowledges that the vast majority of Arab and Muslim people see the US not as a force for democracy or liberation, but rather as the main source of repression and tyranny.

The Bush administration has repeatedly spoken of a “war for freedom,” and just last Tuesday President Bush declared that the Iraqi people will support the US because “free people will never choose their own enslavement.” But Bush, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Vice President Dick Cheney and the rest of the war cabal in Washington are well aware that the Iraqi masses, along with their counterparts throughout the Muslim world, see Washington as the primary cause of their enslavement.

This is certainly what their own report, issued by the Defense Science Board (DSB), tells them. The report, bearing the Pentagon seal on its cover, was posted two weeks ago on a US Department of Defense web site.

The report bluntly states that the overwhelming majority of people in Muslim and Arab countries are opposed to the US occupation of Iraq, and that this opposition is not, as Bush and the American media routinely assert, an expression of opposition to democracy, but quite the opposite. As the report declares, the Arab and Muslim people “do not ‘hate our freedoms,’ but rather, they hate our policies.”

The DSB Task Force on Strategic Communication was composed primarily of academics and ex-military personnel. Their report was part of the Defense Science Board 2004 Summer Study on the Transition to and from Hostilities, commissioned by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz. In his letter creating the Task Force, Wolfowitz declared, “Our military expeditions to Afghanistan and Iraq are unlikely to be the last such excursions in the global war on terrorism.” The Summer Study was intended to address a series of questions that would be critical in pursuing future US military interventions abroad.

Though it was completed by September 23, the report was not made public until late November, that is, after the US presidential elections. Since its release, it has been largely ignored by the US media and the entire political establishment. (See: “US media

ignores damning Pentagon report”).

The Task Force on Strategic Communication concluded that the interests of the US government and military were severely hampered by a crisis of credibility. The American government, the board found, is widely hated by the vast majority of the world’s population, particularly in the Middle East. What the US government says is not believed, and its actions are generally interpreted to be motivated not by lofty ideals of freedom and democracy, but by crass national interests. The war in Iraq has only intensified this hostility.

Some of the most intense opposition to the US government, the report notes, comes from the populations ruled by “the tyrannies of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Jordan, and the Gulf States.” The report continues: “The United States finds itself in the strategically awkward—and potentially dangerous—situation of being the longstanding prop and alliance partner of these authoritarian regimes. Without the US these regimes could not survive.

“There is no yearning-to-be-liberated-by-the-US groundswell among Muslim societies—except to be liberated perhaps from what they see as apostate tyrannies that the US so determinedly promotes and defends.”

That is, rather than a yearning to be liberated *by* the US, there is a yearning to be liberated *from* the US and the despotic regimes it supports.

In addition to US support for dictatorships in the region, the authors of the report gave other reasons for the widespread popular hatred of Washington. They wrote: “The overwhelming majority voice their objections to what they see as one-sided support in favor of Israel and against Palestinian rights...When American public diplomacy talks about bringing democracy to Islamic societies, this is seen as no more than self-serving hypocrisy.”

The report continued, “In the eyes of Muslims, American occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq has not led to democracy there, but only more chaos and suffering. US actions appear in contrast to be motivated by ulterior motives, and deliberately controlled in order to best serve American national interests at the expense of truly Muslim self-determination.”

The report cited a Zogby poll showing that the overwhelming majority of the population in Arab countries opposes US policy. In June 2004, only 2 percent of the people in Egypt had a favorable opinion of the United States, compared to 15 percent in April

2002. In Saudi Arabia, the figure was 4 percent, down from 12 percent in 2002. In Jordan, it was 15 percent, down from 34 percent, and in Morocco, it was 11 percent, down from 38 percent.

Approval for the war in Iraq was virtually non-existent in all the countries surveyed in the Zogby poll: Morocco—1 percent, Saudi Arabia—1 percent, Jordan—2 percent, Lebanon—4 percent, and the United Arab Emirates—4 percent.

This overwhelming opposition to American policy in countries whose governments are close US allies underscores the enormous social chasm between the tiny ruling elites and the general population. The ruling classes in these countries support the US government largely because Washington helps protect them from their own working classes.

If one accepts the propaganda relentlessly churned out by the US government and media, one is obliged to conclude that hundreds of millions of people in the Middle East and Central Asia have got it all wrong. Somehow or other, they have developed the mistaken impression that the Iraq war and US foreign policy as a whole are antithetical to their democratic and social aspirations.

Of course, these people—who are most directly affected by US policy—are not mistaken. Rather, the US government, the Democratic Party non-opposition, most of academia, and the media are lying, knowingly and systematically, to the people of America and the world, to justify a policy of militarism and plunder and conceal the imperialist aims that underlie it.

In passing, the DSB report acknowledges that the so-called “war on terrorism” is an ideological-political construct, devised in the aftermath of 9/11 for the purpose of manipulating public opinion and generating support for aggressive wars.

The report speaks of the September 11 attacks as a “catalyst in creating a new way to think about national security.” It continues: “The Global War on Terrorism replaced the Cold War as a national security meta narrative. Governments, media, and publics use the terrorism frame for cognitive, evaluative, and communication purposes. For political leaders, it is a way to link disparate events; identify priorities, friends, enemies, victims, and blame; and shape simple coherent messages. For journalists and news consumers the terrorism frame conflates and appears to make sense of diverse national security stories...Frames simplify and help to communicate complex events.”

An obvious conclusion that flows from the DSP report is that, far from diminishing the threat of terrorist attacks against the US, the enormous opposition to American policy has increased the danger. The report notes that the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq have heightened the stature of Islamic fundamentalists throughout the region. It states: “American direct intervention in the Muslim World has paradoxically elevated the stature of and support for radical Islamists, while diminishing support for the United State to single digits in some Arab societies.”

This constitutes a confirmation, from the horse’s mouth, as it were, of the prognosis made by the *World Socialist Web Site* in the immediate aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001. In a statement published September 12, 2001, the WSWS wrote: “It is the policies pursued by the United States, driven by the strategic and financial interests of the ruling elite, which laid the foundations for the nightmare that unfolded on Tuesday

[September 11]. The actions now being contemplated by the Bush administration—indicated by the president’s threat to make ‘no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them’—will only set the stage for further catastrophes.” (See: “The political roots of the terror attack on New York and Washington”)

Prior to the invasion of Iraq, the WSWS noted: “The Bush administration is setting into motion processes that will have the most convulsive impact, affecting not only the Middle East, but every part of the globe. The war will further inflame international public opinion, inevitably resulting in violent reprisals not only against US soldiers, but also against American civilians, both abroad and at home.” (See: “On the eve of the war against Iraq: the political challenges of 2003”)

The recommendations of the DSB are ludicrously incommensurate with the dimensions of the US foreign policy crisis outlined by its own findings. This, however, is inevitable, given the nature of the board as an instrument of US imperialist policy.

The Task Force report advises the president to create various panels, government positions and advisory boards to integrate “public diplomacy, public affairs, psychological operations (PSYOP) and open military information operations.” That is, the board calls for more effective and sustained propaganda.

While such measures may have a certain limited effect on public opinion within the United States, they will certainly do nothing to stem the growing opposition in the Middle East, and particularly in Iraq. The Iraqi resistance to the American occupation is not the product of a misunderstanding, or the failure of US imperialism to explain itself.

The American government has explained itself quite well to the Iraqi people: in the form of bombed out cities and massacred civilians, a puppet government that employs police-state methods, and the transformation of cities like Fallujah into concentration camps. The prosecution of a colonial-style war of occupation inevitably and unalterably requires ever greater levels of violence and repression.

It is, finally, worth noting that the response of the Bush White House to the DSB report is to request that Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, one of the main authors of the foreign policy debacle described by the Task Force, stay on for Bush’s second term.

The full report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication can be found at: http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/2004-09-Strategic_Communication.pdf



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