

The National Intelligence Estimate—a phony debate between two pro-war parties

Bill Van Auken, SEP candidate for US Senator from New York
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With less than six weeks until the US midterm elections, the Democrats and the Bush administration have launched a debate that is as heated as it is false concerning the latest National Intelligence Estimate's findings on the US war in Iraq and the so-called global war on terror.

Reports on the estimate were initially leaked to the press last weekend, provoking the White House to declassify selected portions of the document on Tuesday.

The conclusions reached in this report, which is supposed to synthesize the work of some 16 separate US spy agencies, are hardly remarkable and offer precious little justification for the tens of billions of dollars spent each year to keep the American intelligence apparatus going.

What did this apparatus discover? Essentially, that Washington's illegal war and occupation in Iraq and the resulting slaughter and maiming of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis as well as the imprisonment and torture of thousands of others have generated outrage throughout the Arab and Muslim world, and beyond.

"The Iraq conflict has become a cause célèbre for jihadists, breeding a deep resentment of US involvement in the Muslim world, and cultivating supporters for the global jihadist movement," the document states.

For anyone who has followed events over the past three years, this hardly comes as a surprise. It did not take the CIA's covert operatives or the NSA's massive international eavesdropping operation to uncover the evidence. It has been readily apparent in the streets filled with anti-US demonstrators in nearly every major Muslim country.

It has likewise been reflected in poll after poll demonstrating the plummeting popular regard for US policies. The most recent such survey came out of Iraq itself this week, where an international polling agency found that more than seven out of ten Iraqis favor the complete US military withdrawal from their country within the next year, and 60 percent—up from half in a poll taken by the same organization last January—support armed attacks on American troops.

Amid the staged political furor in Washington over the

NIE, the BBC revealed the existence of a document drafted for the Ministry of Defense in Britain that reached nearly identical conclusions, stating in part: "The war in Iraq ... has acted as a recruiting sergeant for extremists across the Muslim world ... Iraq has served to radicalize an already disillusioned youth and Al Qaeda has given them the will, intent, purpose and ideology to act."

The Democrats have seized upon the US report in an attempt to blame "Bush's war," and above all the administration's "incompetence" and "mismanagement" in waging this war, for making Americans less safe and derailing the "war on terrorism."

The sincerity of their concern over the intelligence report as well as the demands of some Democratic legislators for it to be fully declassified is called into question by the fact that this same NIE was submitted to the Senate and House intelligence committees last April and was available to every member of Congress.

None of them showed any interest in the document then, much less in its release to the public. It is kept secret not out of concern for "sources and methods," as the administration claims, but to better deceive the American people about the fiasco in Iraq.

Bush, who responded petulantly to questions regarding the NIE at a White House news conference Tuesday before announcing his decision to make selected portions of it public, has sought to twist the findings into a justification for his claim that the war in Iraq is an essential component of the "global war on terror."

Accusing his critics of inventing a "rosier scenario" without the intervention in Iraq, Bush dismissed the NIE findings, declaring, "My judgment is, if we weren't in Iraq, they'd find some other excuse, because they have ambitions."

As supposed proof that Washington's aggression in Iraq had nothing to do with a heightened threat of retaliatory attacks against the US itself, Bush cited 9/11 as well as the previous attacks on the USS Cole and the American embassies in Africa.

Among the “excuses” that Bush cited for fomenting support for Islamist movements were the US intervention in Somalia and the “Israeli-Palestinian” occupation. He could have added others, such as the ethnic civil war in Bosnia in the early 1990s, or the jihadist war against the Soviet army in Afghanistan in the 1980s, but, of course, in those cases Washington itself was aiding the Islamists.

While short on logic and rationality, Bush’s response to the controversy over the National Intelligence Estimate relied heavily on crude intimidation. At a Republican fundraising event in Alabama Thursday, the US president resorted to the language and tone of McCarthyism, denouncing the Democrats as “the party of cut and run,” who “offer nothing but criticism and obstruction and endless second-guessing.”

Typical of the Democratic response to the NIE was the statement of Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada, who declared that the document proved that “the Bush administration’s failed policies in Iraq are fueling global terrorism and making America less safe,” and concluded, “We need a new direction in Iraq so that America can finally win the war on terror.”

Speaking along similar lines, New York’s Democratic Senator Hillary Clinton declared: “The administration has lost focus on winning the war in Iraq, and all Washington Republicans can focus on is winning elections here at home.... Now, this November Americans will decide if they want to change course in Iraq or whether they want to continue with a rubber-stamp Congress that continually supports a failed policy in Iraq, and now, as we can tell from what’s been leaked about the NIE, a failing policy in terms of containing, deterring and defeating the terrorist leaders and operatives in the global war on terror.”

In his bullying denunciations, Bush deliberately misrepresents the Democratic Party, whose leaders advance no call for a withdrawal of US troops from Iraq—even though opinion poll after opinion poll have shown that this course of action is supported by a sizeable majority of the American people. Rather, they are contesting the 2006 midterm election on the basis of which party is more focused on “winning the war in Iraq” and better able to assure that “America can finally win the war on terror.”

The “war on terror” has been from its inception a propaganda cover for waging military aggression abroad and attacks on democratic rights at home that have nothing to do with protecting the American people. Rather, they are aimed at advancing the geo-strategic interests of US capitalism and protecting the wealth and power of America’s ruling financial oligarchy.

That the two major parties intend to contest the midterm election on the basis of which of them has the best strategy

for waging this “war” only confirms that both these parties are political instruments of this ruling elite.

One section of the released findings contained in the NIE was little noted in the media coverage, but deserves careful consideration.

It states: “Anti-US and anti-globalization sentiment is on the rise and fueling other radical ideologies. This could prompt some leftist, nationalist, or separatist groups to adopt terrorist methods to attack US interests. The radicalization process is occurring more quickly, more widely, and more anonymously in the Internet age, raising the likelihood of surprise attacks by unknown groups whose members and supporters may be difficult to pinpoint.”

In conclusion it states: “We judge that groups of all stripes will increasingly use the Internet to communicate, propagandize, recruit, train, and obtain logistical and financial support.”

The implications of these statements are clear. The concern of the more conscious layers within US intelligence and the political establishment is directed not merely at “Islamofascism,” “jihadists” or even terrorism, contrary to the relentless drumbeat of both official Washington and the media. Rather, it is aimed at any potential challenge to the interests of American capitalism. The greatest concern is that the crisis of global capitalism will produce such a challenge from the “left,” that is, through the emergence of an international revolutionary socialist movement within the working class.

Only the development of such a movement, based on the independent political mobilization of working people against the two-party system and the political domination of the banks and corporations, can provide the means to wage a genuine struggle against war and the attacks on both democratic rights and social conditions at home. The Socialist Equality Party is intervening in the 2006 elections to lay the political foundations for precisely such a movement.



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