

Washington exploits Mumbai attack to promote “war on terror”

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US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice flew to New Delhi Wednesday, ostensibly to deliver US condolences for the 173 people killed in the terrorist attacks that rocked Mumbai last week and express solidarity with the people of India.

This will likely be among the last major international initiatives launched by Rice, whose role in foisting the wars of aggression in Iraq and Afghanistan on the American people and implementing the US programs of torture and extraordinary rendition makes her an appropriate target for a war crimes indictment.

In the Middle East—where she is infamous for hailing the 2006 Israeli war that killed thousands of Lebanese civilians as the “birth pangs” of peace—protesters have frequently portrayed the American secretary of state as a vampire, her fangs dripping in blood.

This image serves as a fitting metaphor for her current foray into South Asia, where she is spearheading an attempt by Washington to exploit the blood of the innocent victims in Mumbai to promote the so-called “global war on terrorism” through which Washington pursues its geostrategic interests.

Speaking in New Delhi, Rice pointedly applied pressure on Pakistan, declaring that its government must “act with resolve and urgency and cooperate fully and transparently.” For its part, Pakistan has condemned the terror attacks and denied any involvement by its state agencies.

Rice suggested a nonexistent link between Al Qaeda and the Mumbai attacks, declaring, “This is clearly the kind of terror in which Al Qaeda participates.” She was later forced to backtrack on the remark, but still declared that those who attacked India’s commercial capital and those blamed for the 2001 terror attacks in New York and Washington “move in the same circles.”

If there is a connection between the Mumbai attacks

and those of September 11 it is to be found in the American response. Seven months after the planes flew into the World Trade Center and Pentagon, Rice described those tragic events as “an enormous opportunity” to “create a new balance of power.” Washington now sees a similar opportunity arising from the carnage in India to pursue its interests in South Asia.

While Rice was in New Delhi, the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, was in Islamabad, exerting pressure on Pakistan’s eight-month-old civilian government and on the country’s military commanders.

Mullen echoed Rice’s statements in New Delhi, calling on the government of President Asif Ali Zardari to “investigate aggressively any and all possible ties to groups based in Pakistan.” The admiral went further, however, declaring that the Pakistani government had “to take more, and more concerted, action against militant extremists elsewhere in the country.”

This last reference was clearly a demand that the Pakistani military intensify its operations in Waziristan, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and other territories bordering Afghanistan, which have provided support to Afghan forces battling against the seven-year-old US occupation. The American military has carried out its own repeated attacks in the area, killing Pakistani civilians in missile strikes as well as commando assaults.

It is apparent that Washington sees in the Mumbai events an opportunity to bully Pakistan into more effectively doing its bidding in support of the war in Afghanistan, or, should that fail, to justify the escalation of its own intervention.

Significant in this regard was a column published in the *Washington Post* Tuesday by Robert Kagan, a leading proponent of the Iraq war with close ties to the

Bush administration. Kagan called for forming an international force to invade Pakistan and "root out terrorist camps in Kashmir as well as in the tribal areas."

In arguing for such a military intervention, Kagan declared that it "would be useful for the United States, Europe and other nations to begin establishing the principle that Pakistan and other states that harbor terrorists should not take their sovereignty for granted. In the 21st century, sovereign rights need to be earned."

Such a move "to internationalize the response" to the Mumbai attack, Kagan argues, "would have the advantage of preventing a direct military confrontation between India and Pakistan."

Finally, he asserts that this kind of intervention is necessary because the US has the "obligation to demonstrate to the Indian people that we take attacks on them as seriously as we take attacks on ourselves."

Thus, the attempt to connect 9/11 with Mumbai and the full implications of this amalgam are spelled out quite clearly. As with the attacks of 2001, the terrorist acts in India are seen as the pretext for a new war of aggression and justification for riding roughshod over the sovereignty of a historically oppressed nation.

The military confrontation between India and Pakistan against which Kagan warns has been made all the more probable by US imperialism's interventions in the region.

For US strategic interests, such a war poses a serious threat in that Pakistan would likely withdraw troops it now has deployed on its western border with Afghanistan and move them east towards India, leaving the border region and the key lines of supply for US and NATO forces in Afghanistan unprotected.

For humanity, such a war poses the danger of a nuclear conflagration and the deaths of millions.

This crisis is unfolding barely six weeks before Barack Obama is to be sworn in as the next president of the United States. Here as elsewhere, there are indications that a "seamless transition" can be anticipated. Obama has repeatedly indicated that a top priority of his administration will be the escalation of the war in Afghanistan, along with its extension into Pakistan itself.

At his press conference last Monday introducing his national security team, Obama fully embraced the language of the "war on terrorism," indicating that he

will use similar cynical justifications for US aggression as those employed under George W. Bush.

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