

Iraq Disaster Warning

By WILLIAM S. LIND
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11/10/06 -- - WASHINGTON, Nov. 6 (UPI) -- The third and final act in the U.S. national tragedy that is the Bush administration may soon play itself out.

Sources indicate increasing indications of "something big" happening between the Nov. 7 congressional election and Christmas. That could be the long-planned attack on Iran.

An attack on Iran will not be an invasion with ground troops. We don't have enough of those left to invade Ruritania. It will be a "package" of air and missile strikes, by U.S. forces or Israel.

That this would constitute folly piled on top of folly is no deterrent to the Bush administration. Like the French Bourbons, it forgets nothing and it learns nothing. It takes pride in not adapting. Or did you somehow miss President George W. Bush's declaration of Presidential Infallibility? It followed shortly after his May 1, 2003 visit to the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln with the "Mission Accomplished" sign.

The Democrats taking either or both Houses of Congress, if it happens, will not make any difference. They would rather have the Republicans start and lose another war than prevent a national disaster. Politics comes first and the country second.

Many of the consequences of a war with Iran are easy to imagine. Oil would soar to at least \$200 per barrel if we could get it. Gas shortages would bring back the gas lines of 1973 and 1979. Our European alliances would be stretched to the breaking point if not beyond it. Most people outside the Bush bubble can see all this coming.

What I fear no one foresees is a substantial danger that we could lose the American army now deployed in Iraq. I have mentioned this in previous columns, but I want to go into it here in more detail because the scenario may soon go live.

Well before the second Iraq war started, I warned in a piece in *The American Conservative* that the structure of our position in Iraq could lead to that greatest of military disasters, encirclement. That is precisely the danger if we go to war with Iran.

The danger arises because almost all of the vast quantities of supplies American armies need come into Iraq from one direction, up from Kuwait and other Gulf ports in the south. If that supply line is cut, our forces may not have enough stuff, especially fuel, to get out of Iraq. American armies are incredibly fuel-thirsty, and though Iraq has vast oil reserves, it is short of refined oil products. Unlike German World War Gen. Heinz Guderian's army on its way to the Channel coast in 1940, we could not just fuel up at local gas stations.

There are two ways our supply lines from the south could be cut if we attack Iran. The first is by Shiite militias including the Mahdi Army and the Badr Brigades, possibly supported by a general Shiite uprising and, of course, Iran's Revolutionary Guards -- The same guys who

trained Hezbollah so well.

The second danger is that regular Iranian Army divisions will roll into Iraq, cut our supply lines and attempt to pocket us in and around Baghdad. Washington relies on American air power to prevent this, but bad weather can shut most of that air power down.

Unfortunately, no one in Washington and few people in the U.S. military will even consider this possibility. Why? Because we have fallen victim to our own propaganda. Over and over the U.S. military tells itself, "We're the greatest! We're number one! No one can defeat us. No one can even fight us. We're the greatest military in all of history!"

It's wrong. The U.S. armed forces are technically well-trained, lavishly resourced Second Generation militaries. They are being fought and defeated by Fourth Generation opponents in both Iraq and Afghanistan. They can also be defeated by Third Generation enemies who can observe, orient, decide and act more quickly than can America's vast, process-ridden, Powerpoint-enslaved military headquarters. They can be defeated by strategy, by stratagem, by surprise and by preemption. Unbeatable militaries are like unsinkable ships. They are unsinkable until someone or something sinks them.

If the United States were to lose the army it has in Iraq, to Iraqi militias, Iranian regular forces, or a combination of both (the most likely event), the world would change. It would be our Adrianople, our Rocroi, our Stalingrad. American power and prestige would never recover.

One of the few people who does see this danger is the doyenne of American foreign policy columnists, Georgie Anne Geyer. In her column of Oct. 28 in The Washington Times, she wrote, "The worst has not, by any means, yet happened. When I think of abandoning a battleground, I think of (the 1840s), when thousands of Brits were trying to leave Afghanistan through the Khyber Pass and all were killed by tribesmen except one man, left to tell the story."

Our men and women in Iraq are in isolated compounds, not easy even to retreat from, were that decision made. Time is truly running out.

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