

NeoCons Are Busy Covering Their Asse(t)s

Israeli press reports about the Israeli Defense Force's Chief of Staff dumping stocks just before war broke out served as a reminder that the very leaders who demand that citizens trust them to do what is best for the country are often busy covering their asse(t)s in case their policies don't work out so well. In the case of Dan Halutz, the man in charge of Israel's war against Hezbollah and Lebanon, the Israeli general was so confident in his own war plans that he felt it prudent to dump his entire portfolio of stocks as his colleagues were meeting to give the go ahead for war.

There's a long tradition of tyrants and despots who stashed money and bought villas outside the borders of the country they were terrorizing. Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, who looted and strong-armed the Philippines for decades, had their Hawaii getaway. Idi Amin, the butcher of Uganda, was never tried and imprisoned for his crimes against his people, but instead spent 20 years living luxuriously in Saudi Arabia. Jean-Claude ("Baby Doc") Duvalier hasn't gone to prison yet either, though his wealthy playboy lifestyle in French Cote d'Azur seems to have been ended by a rancorous and expensive divorce.

But the United States is no banana republic. Surely its leaders, especially those who send other Americans off to war, would never contemplate profiting personally from their decisions or evading responsibility for their mistakes. Well, think again. America's neocon leaders have been busy covering their asse(t)s in case their policies of endless war and raping the American economy produce too much blowback.

Learn who's doing what after the break.

NeoCon Continental

For all the contempt that the NeoCons shower upon "Old Europe," they sure seem to find it a good place to invest and even live. Vice-President Cheney likes to tout how great the American economy is, but he and his wife Lynne don't have much confidence in the dollar. Kiplinger Reports took a close look at the Cheney's financial disclosure report recently, and found that the Second Couple is betting against the U. S. economy. The biggest chunk of their estimated \$96 million in change is bet on a fund that specializes in predominately European bonds and had only 6% of its assets in dollar-based investments when Kiplinger took a look. (Warren Buffett, no NeoCon, but known for his financial acumen, is doing the same.) How nice for them. If the Vice-President's relentless push for a new war against Iran succeeds, and oil prices skyrocket to two or three times the previous record, with a resulting collapse of the dollar, it won't be the Cheneys who suffer. NeoCon Al Dente Joining Cheney in his push for yet another war is charter NeoConner Michael Ledeen. He's co-founder of the "Coalition for Democracy in Iran" that lobbies for regime change in Tehran, and he has joined fellow NeoCon Bill Kristol in criticizing the Bush Administration recently for not attacking Iran and Syria. Ledeen is a real man of the world. He's reputed to have served often as a liaison between the Israelis and the U. S., but his first love seems to be Italy. He's been fascinated by Italian fascism, and reports connect him with neo-fascist movements in Italy like P2, though he denies it. He lived in Italy as a reporter for The New Republic in the 70s, and has continued to go there for extended stays ever since, most recently to research a book he's writing about Naples. Many have suggested that he was the American connection in the Niger uranium disinformation campaign because of his relationship with Italian intelligence, the original source of the forged documents. Ledeen, considered to be the most radical of the NeoCons, is most notorious for his advocacy of "creative destruction" of which Iraq serves as a "shining" example. What if that "creative destruction" spreads out of control to the United States? Don't worry yourself about Ledeen. He speaks fluent Italian and has a villa in the hills near Rome. NeoCon Kosh Style He was called the Deputy Secretary of Defense for Fiascos when he was at the Pentagon because of the way everything he touched turned to--well, you know. He's been involved in everything from the infamous Office of Special Plans to Abu Ghraib to the Franklin spy scandal. Tommy Franks called him, "the fucking stupidest guy on the face of the earth." Things may not work out so well for the public interest when Feith is in charge, but he's not so dumb when it comes to taking care of himself and his friends. After leaving the employ of the Defense Department where he had worked under Richard Perle during the Reagan administration, Feith formed a law partnership with Marc Zell with a focus on representing companies in the military-industrial complex who wanted to do more business with Washington. Feith & Zell weren't content with limiting their practice to the U. S. They merged with an Israeli firm to form FANDZ, an enterprise that touted its access to Defense Department officials after Bush II appointed Feith as third in command at the Pentagon. Shortly thereafter, FANDZ hooked up with Salem Chalabi, son of long-time Feith friend, Ahmed Chalabi. If justice ever came visiting in Washington, Feith might have reason to worry because of pal Chalabi's double-agenting, subordinate Larry Franklin's spying or Feith's own intelligence cooking in the runup to Iraq, but in the unlikely event that there's ever the threat of an indictment, Feith has it covered. He took good care of his friends at his old law firm FANDZ, and they are able to offer him lots of options when it comes to locations outside the U. S.: Since 9/11, Zell, Goldberg has become a leader in the newly emerging field of international security and anti-terrorism law, in conjunction with its Washington, D.C. office, and through its affiliate company FIST (Federal Israel Security Technologies LLC). Through its Moscow office and its Israel-based Russia-CIS practice group, the firm has gained extensive experience in what is becoming one of the world's most promising regional markets. Zell, Goldberg maintains a comprehensive network of correspondent relationships with quality business and tax law firms throughout the world with special emphasis on Europe (Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Eastern Europe and the CIS) and the Far East (China, Japan and South Korea). NeoCon à la Mode The NeoCon's "Prince of Darkness" is Richard Perle. He's been a key member of both the Committee on the Present Danger

and the Project for a New American Century. As chairman of the Defense Policy Board, he was one of the most influential backers of the Iraq war. Perle has no fear when it comes to attacking opponents of the policies he advocates. When the French were skeptical about the need for an immediate assault on Saddam in 2003, Perle was furious at one of America's oldest allies: France is no longer an ally of the United States and the NATO alliance "must develop a strategy to contain our erstwhile ally or we will not be talking about a NATO alliance" the head of the Pentagon's top advisory board said in Washington Tuesday. What a way to talk about your neighbors! It turns out that not only peaceniks like Alec Baldwin and George Clooney seek refuge in France, but also NeoCons like Richard Perle who feel it's prudent to cover their asse(t)s by buying a villa in Provence. What's Cookin'? When you see the president of the bank headed out the door with one hand holding a satchel full of cash and the other his family pictures, it might be time to make a withdrawal yourself. If you hear your town's mayor has put his house up for sale, it may be time to unload your place as well. The NeoCons claim their policies of endless war and huge deficits are going to preserve the "American way of life," but their personal actions must make anyone wonder whether they believe what they're telling the American people. If their policies sink the U. S., don't expect them to go down with the ship. They'll be enjoying the safety and stability of Europe where they're now stashing money and buying houses. Maybe it's time you began to cover your asse(t)s.