

press box

The PowerPoint That Rocked the Pentagon

The LaRouchie defector who's advising the defense establishment on Saudi Arabia.

By Jack Shafer

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Diplomatic china rattled in Washington and cracked in Riyadh yesterday when the *Washington Post* published a story about a briefing given to a Pentagon advisory group last month. The briefing declared Saudi Arabia an enemy of the United States and advocated that the United States invade the country, seize its oil fields, and confiscate its financial assets unless the Saudis stop supporting the anti-Western terror network.

The Page One story, by Thomas E. Ricks ("[Briefing Depicted Saudis as Enemies: Ultimatum Urged To Pentagon Board](#)," Aug. 6), described a 24-slide presentation given by Rand Corp. analyst Laurent Murawiec on July 10, 2002, to the Defense Policy Board, a committee of foreign policy wonks and former government officials that advises the Pentagon on defense issues. Murawiec's PowerPoint scenario, which is reproduced for the first time below, makes him sound like an aspiring Dr. Strangelove.

Just who the hell is Laurent Murawiec? The *Post* story and [its follow-up](#), also by Ricks, do not explain. The Pentagon and the administration insist that the presentation does not reflect their views in any way. The Rand Corp. acknowledges its association with Murawiec, but likewise disavows any connection with the briefing. (Neither Murawiec nor Rand received money for the briefing, Rand says.) According to [Newsday](#), Defense Policy Board Chairman [Richard N. Perle](#), a former Pentagon official and full-time invade-Iraq hawk, invited Murawiec to brief the group, so Perle can't exactly distance himself from the presentation. But he can do the next best thing—duck reporters' questions. Murawiec also declined reporters' inquiries, including one from *Slate*.

The first half of Murawiec's presentation reads calmly enough, echoing Fareed Zakaria's Oct. 15, 2001, [Newsweek essay](#) about why the Arab world hates the United States. Its tribal, despotic regimes bottle up domestic dissent but indulge the exportation of political anger; intellectually, its people are trapped in the Middle Ages; its institutions lack the tools to deal with 21st-century problems; yadda yadda yadda.

But then Murawiec lights out for the extreme foreign policy territory, recommending that we threaten Medina and Mecca, home to Islam's most holy places, if they don't see it our way. Ultimately, he champions a takeover of Saudi Arabia. The last slide in the deck, titled "Grand strategy for the Middle East," abandons the outrageous for the incomprehensible. It reads:

- **Iraq is the tactical pivot**
- **Saudi Arabia the strategic pivot**
- **Egypt the prize**

Egypt the prize?

Because none of the Defense Policy Board attendees are talking candidly about the session, it's hard to divine what "Egypt the prize" means or if Murawiec's briefing put it into any context. It sounds a tad loopy, even by Dr. Strangelove standards. The *Post* report does mention a "talking point" attached to the 24-page PowerPoint deck that describes Saudi Arabia as "the kernel of evil, the prime mover, the most dangerous opponent" in the Middle East. That's extreme talk even by the standards of the anti-Saudi editorialists at the *Weekly Standard* and the rest of the invade-Iraq fellowship.

Who is Laurent Murawiec, and where did he learn to write like this? The George Washington University Elliot School of International Affairs' Web site lists him as a [faculty member](#), but it lists no current or future classes by him. The site's biographical page adds that he's a graduate of the Sorbonne University, that he worked as "A foreign correspondent for a major French business weekly in Germany" (isn't that kind of vague?) and is the co-founder of GeoPol Services SA, "a consulting company in Geneva, Switzerland, which advised major multinational corporations and banks." It also lists him as a former adviser to the French ministry of defense and the translator (into French) of Clausewitz's *On War*.

A sweep of the Web shows that he [lectured on Islamic terrorism](#) in Toronto on March 11, 2002, under the aegis of the Canadian Institute for Strategic Studies. He wrote an article titled "[The Wacky World of French Intellectuals](#)" in the *Middle East Quarterly*, co-edited a [Rand Corp. book](#), and made [these comments](#) at a Nautilus Institute

conference. When he spoke on panel with Richard Perle at the American Enterprise Institute on Dec. 1, 1999, Murawiec was [introduced](#) as having just moved to the United States after "a dozen years" of working as managing director of GeoPol in Geneva, "a service that supplies advice to European clients, similar to what Kissinger Associates offers from New York, except without the accent." That is a bit of an overstatement. A Google search of "Murawiec and GeoPol" produces 12 hits. Compare that to the 10,300 hits on Google for "Kissinger Associates."

Murawiec's résumé would predict many Nexis hits, but a search of his name reveals just five bylines: Twice already this year, Murawiec has contributed to the neocon publication the *National Interest*, on the subject of Russia. [*Correction: Murawiec wrote for the National Interest once in 2000 and once in 2002. The topic both times was Russia.*] In 1999 he wrote for the *Post's* "Outlook" section on "internationalism," and in 1996 he contributed a piece to the *Journal of Commerce* on Russia. His only other Nexis-able byline is a dusty one from the Jan. 23, 1985, edition of the *Financial Times*, which describes Murawiec as "the European Economics Editor of the New York-based *Executive Intelligence Review* weekly magazine."

[Executive Intelligence Review](#), as scholars of parapolitics know, is a publication of the political fantasist, convicted felon, and perpetual presidential candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche Jr. It's not clear exactly when Murawiec left the LaRouche orbit. An [article by LaRouche](#) that appeared last year in *Executive Intelligence Review* calls Murawiec "a real-life 'Beetlebaum' of the legendary mythical horse-race, and a hand-me-down political carcass, currently in the possession of institutions of a peculiar odor." In 1997, LaRouche's wife Helga Zupp LaRouche wrote in *Executive Intelligence Review* (republished in the LaRouche-affiliated [AboutSudan.com Web site](#)) that Murawiec "was once part of our organization and is now on the side of organized crime." The truth value of that statement surely ranks up there with LaRouche's claim that the Queen of England controls the crack trade. To say, zero.

When Murawiec departed LaRouche's company is unclear, but Dennis King, author of 1989's *Lyndon LaRouche and the New American Fascism*, thinks it came when many followers split as LaRouche's legal problems grew and climaxed with a 1988 conviction for conspiracy and mail fraud. "[Murawiec] was not a political leader," says King, "but a follower who did intelligence-gathering."

Now that Murawiec has assumed such a vocal place in the policy debate, the man who gave him the lectern owes us the complete back-story. Over to you, Richard Perle.

Laurent Murawiec's 24-slide presentation to the Defense Policy Board was obtained by Slate and is presented here in type-treatment that approximates the original.

Taking Saudi Out of Arabia

Laurent Murawiec
RAND
Defense Policy Board
July 10, 2002

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*Taking Saudi out of Arabia:
Contents*

- *The Arab Crisis*
- *"Saudi" Arabia*
- *Strategies*

2

The systemic crisis of the Arab World

- The Arab world has been in a systemic crisis for the last 200 years
- It missed out on the industrial revolution, it is missing out on the digital revolution
- Lack of inner resources to cope with modern world

Shattered Arab self-esteem

- Shattered self-esteem
- Could God be wrong?
- Turn the rage against those who contradict God: the West, object of hatred
- A whole generation of violently anti-Western, anti-American, anti-modern shock-troops

What has the Arab world produced?

- Since independence, wars have been the principal output of the Arab world
- Demographic and economic problems made intractable by failure to establish stable polities aiming at prosperity
- All Arab states are either failing states or threatened to fail

The Crisis of the Arab world reaches a climax

- The tension between the Arab world and the modern world has reached a climax
- The Arab world's home-made problems overwhelm its ability to cope
- The crisis is consequently being exported to the rest of the world

How does change occur in the Arab world?

- There is no agora, no public space for debating ideas, interests, policies
- The tribal group in power blocks all avenues of change, represses all advocates of change
- Plot, riot, murder, coup are the only available means to bring about political change

The continuation of politics by other means?

- *In the Arab world, violence is not a continuation of politics by other means -- violence **is** politics, politics **is** violence*
- *This culture of violence is the prime enabler of terrorism*
- *Terror as an accepted, legitimate means of carrying out politics, has been incubated for 30 years ...*

The crisis cannot be contained to the Arab world alone

- The crisis has irreversibly spilled out of the region
- 9/11 was a symptom of the "overflow"
- The paroxysm is liable to last for several decades
- U.S. response will decisively influence the duration and outcome

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"Saudi" Arabia

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The old partnership

- Once upon a time, there was a partnership between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia
- Partnerships, like alliances, are embodied in practices, ideas, policies, institutions, people -- which persist after the alliance has died

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"Saudi" Arabia

- An instable group: Since 1745, 58% of all rulers of the House of Saud have met a violent demise
- Wahhabism loathes modernity, capitalism, human rights, religious freedom, democracy, republics, an open society -- and practices the very opposite
- As long as enmity had no or little consequences outside the kingdom, the bargain between the House of Saud and the U.S. held

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Means, motive, opportunity

- 1973: Saudi Arabia unleashes the Oil Shock, absorbs immense flows of resources -- *means*
- 1978: Khomeiny challenges the Saudis' Islamic credentials, provoking a radicalization and world-wide spread of Wahhabism in response -- *motive*
- 1979-1989: the anti-Soviet *Jihad* gives life and strength to the *Wahhabi* putsch within Sunni Islam -- *opportunity*. The Taliban are the result

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The impact on Saudi policy

- Wahhabism moves from Islam's lunatic fringe to center-stage -- its mission now extends world-wide
- Saudis launch a putsch within Sunni Islam
- Shift from pragmatic oil policy to promotion of radical Islam
- Establish Saudi as "the indispensable State" -- treasurers of radical, fundamentalist, terrorist groups

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Saudis see themselves

- God placed the oil in the kingdom as a sign of divine approval

- Spread Wahhabism everywhere, but keep the power of the al-Saud undiminished
- Survive by creating a Wahhabi-friendly environment -- fundamentalist regimes -- throughout the Moslem world and beyond

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The House of Saud today

- Saudi Arabia is central to the self-destruction of the Arab world and the chief vector of the Arab crisis and its outwardly-directed aggression
- The Saudis are active at every level of the terror chain, from planners to financiers, from cadre to foot-soldier, from ideologist to cheerleader
- Saudi Arabia supports our enemies and attacks our allies
- A daily outpouring of virulent hatred against the U.S. from Saudi media, "educational" institutions, clerics, officials -- Saudis tell us one thing in private, do the contrary in reality

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Strategies

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What is to be done?

- During and after World War I, Britain's India Office backed the House of Saud; the Foreign Office backed the Hashemites. The India Office won
- But the entire post-1917 Middle East settlement designed by the British to replace the Ottoman Empire is fraying
- The role assigned to the House of Saud in that arrangement has become obsolete -- and nefarious

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*"Saudi Arabia" is **not** a God-given entity*

- The House of Saud was given dominion over Arabia in 1922 by the British
- It wrested the Guardianship of the Holy Places -- Mecca and Medina -- from the Hashemite dynasty
- There is an "Arabia," but it needs not be "Saudi"

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An ultimatum to the House of Saud

- Stop any funding and support for any fundamentalist madrasa, mosque, ulama, preacher anywhere in the world
- Stop all anti-U.S., anti-Israeli, anti-Western predication, writings, etc., within Arabia
- Dismantle, ban all the kingdom's "Islamic charities," confiscate their assets
- Prosecute or isolate those involved in the terror chain, including in the Saudi intelligence services

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Or else ...

- What the House of Saud holds dear can be targeted:
—*Oil*: the old fields are defended by U.S. forces, and located in a mostly Shiite area

—**Money**: the Kingdom is in dire financial straits, its valuable assets invested in dollars, largely in the U.S.
—**The Holy Places**: let it be known that alternatives are being canvassed

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Other Arabs?

- The Saudis are hated throughout the Arab world: lazy, overbearing, dishonest, corrupt
- If truly moderate regimes arise, the Wahhabi-Saudi nexus is pushed back into its extremist corner
- The Hashemites have greater legitimacy as Guardians of Mecca and Medina

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Grand strategy for the Middle East

- Iraq is the tactical pivot
 - Saudi Arabia the strategic pivot
 - Egypt the prize

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