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National Movement to Impeach President Bush

## Who is behind "Al Qaeda in Iraq"? Pentagon acknowledges fabricating a "Zarqawi Legend"

by Michel Chossudovsky

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America's "War on Terrorism"

Abu Musab Al Zarqawi has been presented both by the Bush administration and the Western media as the mastermind behind the "insurgency" in Iraq, allegedly responsible for the massacres of Iraqi civilians.

Zarqawi is the outside enemy of America. The Bush administration in official statements, including presidential speeches, national security documents, etc. has repeatedly pointed to the need to "go after" Abu Musab Al Zarqawi and Osama bin Laden.

"You know, I hate to predict violence, but I just understand the nature of the killers. This guy, Zarqawi, an al Qaeda associate -- who was in Baghdad, by the way, prior to the removal of Saddam Hussein -- is still at large in Iraq. And as you might remember, part of his operational plan was to sow violence and discord amongst the various groups in Iraq by cold-blooded killing. And we need to help find Zarqawi so that the people of Iraq can have a more bright -- bright future." (George W. Bush, Press Conference, 1 June 2004)

The official mandate of US and British occupation forces is to fight and win the "war on terrorism" on behalf of the Iraqi people. Zarqawi constitutes Washington's justification for the continued military occupation of Iraq, not to mention the brutal siege of densely populated urban areas directed



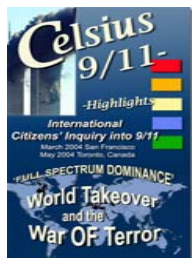
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against "Al Qaeda in Iraq" which is said to be led by Zarqawi.

Coalition forces are upheld as playing a "peace keeping role" in consultation with the United Nations. The Western media in chorus has consistently upheld the legitimacy of the "war on terrorism". It has not only presented Zarqawi as a brutal terrorist, it has also failed to report on the Pentagon's disinformation campaign, which has been known and documented since 2002.

## Pentagon PSYOP Zarqawi Program

In an unusual twist, the Washington Post in a recent article, has acknowledged that the role of Zarqawi had been deliberately "magnified" by the Pentagon with a view to galvanizing public support for the US-UK led "war on terrorism":

*"The Zarqawi campaign is discussed in several of the internal military documents. "Villainize Zarqawi/leverage xenophobia response," one U.S. military briefing from 2004 stated. It listed three methods: "Media operations," "Special Ops (626)" (a reference to Task Force 626, an elite U.S. military unit assigned primarily to hunt in Iraq for senior officials in Hussein's government) and "PSYOP," the U.S. military term for propaganda work..." (WP. 10 April 2006)*

The military's propaganda program, according to the Washington Post, has "largely been aimed at Iraqis, but seems to have spilled over into the U.S. media. One briefing slide about U.S. "strategic communications" in Iraq, prepared for Army Gen. George W. Casey Jr., the top U.S. commander in Iraq, describes the "home audience" as one of six major targets of the American side of the war." (WP, op cit.)

*An internal document produced by U.S. military headquarters in Iraq, states that "the Zarqawi PSYOP program is the most successful information campaign to date." (WP, op cit).*

The senior commander entrusted with Pentagon's PSYOP operation is General Kimmitt who now occupies the position of senior planner at US Central Command (USCENTCOM), responsible for directing operations in Iraq and the Middle East.

*"In 2003 and 2004, he coordinated public affairs, information operations and psychological operations in Iraq -- though he said in an interview the internal briefing must be mistaken because he did not actually run the psychological operations and could not speak for them. Kimmitt said, "There was clearly an information campaign to raise the public awareness of who Zarqawi was, primarily for the Iraqi audience but also with the international audience."*

*A goal of the campaign was to drive a wedge into the insurgency by emphasizing Zarqawi's terrorist acts and foreign origin, said officers familiar with the program. "Through aggressive Strategic Communications, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi now represents: Terrorism in Iraq/Foreign Fighters in Iraq/Suffering of Iraqi People (Infrastructure Attacks)/Denial of Iraqi Aspirations," the same briefing asserts...*

...

*It is difficult to determine how much has been spent on the Zarqawi campaign, which began two years ago and is believed to be ongoing. U.S. propaganda efforts in Iraq in 2004 cost \$24 million, but that included extensive building of offices and residences for troops involved, as well as radio broadcasts and distribution of thousands of leaflets with Zarqawi's face on them, said the officer speaking on background...*

The Zaraqawi program at the Pentagon was run concurrently with a related operation *"led by the Lincoln Group, a U.S. consulting firm, to place pro-U.S. articles in Iraq newspapers, according to the officer familiar with the program who spoke on background."* According to The Washington Post, however, there was no relationship between the Pentagon's PSYOP program and that run by the Lincoln Group on behalf of the Pentagon. (WP, 10 April 2006)

Disinformation and war propaganda are an integral part of military planning. What the Washington Post fails to mention, however, is its own role in sustaining the Zaraqawi legend, along with network TV, most of the printed press, and of course CNN and Fox News, not to mention a significant portion of the alternative media. Disinformation regarding the War on terrorism has been fed into the news chain by a limited number of "top feeders":

A relatively few well-connected correspondents provide the "scoops" that get the coverage in the relatively few mainstream news sources - the four TV networks, TIME, Newsweek, CNN - where the parameters of debate are set and the "official reality" is consecrated for the bottom feeders in the news chain. In other countries, this is what is known as propaganda - or, put less politely, psychological warfare. ([Chaim Kupferberg, The Propaganda Preparation for 9/11](#))

Zaraqawi has been identified by the US media as being behind the "insurgency" in Fallujah, Tal Afar and Samara. He was held responsible for the Amman hotel bombings as well as terrorist attacks in several Western capitals.. He is indelibly behind the suicide bomb attacks in Iraq as confirmed by the Washington Post: " The ruling Shiite leadership has Zaraqawi squarely in its sights. He has led the suicide bombers whose Shiite victims are now climbing into the thousands." ( 11 December 2005).

The Pentagon's PSYOP is a cover-up for US sponsored atrocities by the US media, which has upheld the "villainize Zaraqawi" focus in its news and editorials coverage of the Iraqi resistance movement.

The top U.S. military intelligence officer in Iraq said Abu Musab Zarqawi and his foreign and Iraqi associates have essentially commandeered the insurgency, becoming the dominant opposition force and the greatest immediate threat to U.S. objectives in the country.

"I think what you really have here is an insurgency that's been hijacked by a terrorist campaign," Army Maj. Gen. Richard Zahner said in an interview. "In part, by Zarqawi becoming the face of this thing, he has certainly gotten the funding, the media and, frankly, has allowed other folks to work along in his draft." (WP, 25 September 2005)

Amid the continuing bloodshed in Iraq, there is evidence of fresh thinking. The change is, ironically, brought about by Abu Musab Zarqawi himself, whose indiscriminate terrorism appears to have succeeded in uniting people there against his global jihad ideology. Since the hotel bombings in Zarqawi's native Jordan, more and more Sunni Iraqis and Arabs have condemned the terrorist leader's nightmarish vision for their societies -- one that promises further "catastrophic" suicide attacks. (WP, 4 December 2005)

Immediate withdrawal from Iraq is not an option the U.S. administration can or should entertain. It would give Abu Musab Zarqawi and his small band of foreign fighters the opportunity to claim victory and to announce that they have successfully defeated a superpower. This would strengthen al Qaeda's hand across the Middle East and elsewhere, and lead to greater instability throughout the region. (WP, 11 December 2006)

The US media has identified the nature of the insurgency, centering on the key role of Zarqawi and his ties to the former Baathist regime:

"The backbone of the insurgency appears to be an alliance between the die-hard Baathists and the network of terrorists mostly under the command of Abu Musab Zarqawi. It is a partnership of convenience; both groups are fighting the same battle, but for different reasons and with different goals. (WP, 8 May 2005)

[S]enior officials at the Pentagon and in Iraq say they believe that Mr. Zarqawi and the insurgency's "center of gravity" is now in the bends and towns of the Euphrates River valley near the Syrian border. (New York Times, 17 September 2005)

In Fallujah, the siege of the city, which resulted in thousands of civilian deaths was described as a battle against the "Zarqawi network":.

U.S. forces have conducted four airstrikes on what have been described as targets associated with Zarqawi's network in and around the city. Among them was a housing compound in an agricultural area about 15 miles south of Fallujah where the U.S. military said as many as 90 foreign fighters were meeting. The military said the strike, which occurred on Thursday evening, killed about 60 foreign fighters.

Witnesses and hospital officials disputed the account, saying that about 30 men were killed, many of them Iraqi. They said 15 children and 11 women also died in the attack.

Neither version of the strike could be independently verified.

The following night, the U.S. military said in a statement that it conducted "another successful precision strike" on a meeting of "approximately 10 Zarqawi terrorists" in central Fallujah. "There was no indication that any innocent civilians were in the immediate vicinity of the meeting location," the military said in the statement. (WP, 21 Sept 2004)

### **Concluding Remarks**

If indeed Zarqawi's role was fabricated as part of the Pentagon's PSYOP, what is the accuracy of these media reports?

The internal military documents leaked to Washington Post confirm that the Pentagon is involved in an ongoing propaganda campaign which seeks to provide a face to the enemy. The purpose is to portray the enemy as a terrorist, to mislead public opinion.

Counterterrorism and war propaganda are intertwined. The propaganda apparatus feeds disinformation into the news chain. The objective is to present the terror groups as "enemies of America." responsible for countless atrocities in Iraq and around the World. The underlying objective is to galvanize public opinion in support of America's Middle East war agenda.

US military-intelligence has created its own terrorist organizations. In turn, it has developed a cohesive multibillion dollar counterterrorism program "to go after" these terrorist organizations. To reach its foreign policy objectives, the images of terrorism in the Iraqi war theater must remain vivid in the minds of the citizens, who are constantly reminded of the terrorist threat. The Iraqi resistance movement is described as terrorists led by Zarqawi.

The propaganda campaign using the Western media, presents the portraits of the leaders behind the terror network. In other words, at the level of what constitutes an "advertising" campaign, "it gives a face to terror."

The "war on terrorism" rests on the creation of one or more evil bogeymen, the terror leaders, Osama bin Laden, Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, et al, whose names and photos are presented ad nauseam in daily news reports. **Without Zarqawi and bin Laden, the "war on terrorism" would lose its raison d'être. The main casus belli is to wage a "war on terrorism".**

The Pentagon documents leaked to the Washington Post regarding Zarqawi have revealed that Al Qaeda in Iraq is fabricated.

The suicide attacks in Iraq are indeed real, but who is behind them? There are indications that some of the suicide attacks could have been organized by the US-UK military and intelligence. (See references below pertaining to the British Special Forces Soldiers, caught planting bombs in Basra.)

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