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Pro-Likud network walks through
Washington's corridors of power

Jim Lobe

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WASHINGTON: An ad hoc office under US Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith appears to have acted as the key base for an informal network of mostly pro-Likud political appointees that

circumvented normal inter-agency channels to lead the push for war against Iraq.

The Office of Special Plans (OSP), which worked alongside the Near East and South Asia (NESA) office in Feith's domain, was staffed mainly by appointees closely identified, like Feith himself, with Likudist perspectives or with close ties to

individuals who have taken pro-Likud positions in the US public debate over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Feith, whose Israel-based law partner has acted as a spokesman for the Israeli settlers' movement, was an outspoken foe of the Oslo peace process throughout the 1990s. But others appointed by him to positions in OSP and NESA largely shared those views, according to a former colleague, retired Lieutenant Colonel Karen Kwiatkowsky, who worked in the NESA office from May, 2002 through February, 2003.

In an interview with The Daily Star, she said the two offices recruited personnel



*Earth, a
planet hungry
for peace*



*The Israeli
apartheid
(security) wall
around
Palestinian
population
centers (Ran
Cohen, pmc,
5/24/03).*



*The Israeli
apartheid
(security) wall
around
Palestinian
population
centers in the
West Bank
(Ran Cohen,
pmc, 5/24/03).*

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from the neoconservative American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), a think tank that works closely with Washington's biggest pro-Israel lobby, the American Israel Political Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

She also said that two of the staffers in the NESA office, including its chief, Deputy Undersecretary for Policy William Luti, had previously worked as aides to the former Republican speaker of the House of Representatives, Newt Gingrich, who is also based at AEI. OSP was created by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Deputy Secretary Paul Wolfowitz to review raw information collected by the official US intelligence agencies to uncover possible ties between Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and Al-Qaeda.

Retired intelligence officials from the State Department, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) have long charged that the two offices exaggerated and manipulated intelligence about Iraq before passing it to the White House.

The heads of NESA and OSP were Deputy Undersecretary William Luti and Abram Shulsky, respectively. Other appointees who worked with them in both offices included Michael Rubin, a Middle East specialist previously with the neo-conservative American Enterprise Institute (AEI); David Schenker, previously with the Washington Institute for Near East Policy; Michael Makovsky; an expert on neocon icon Winston Churchill and Chris Lehman, the brother of the John Lehman, a prominent neo-conservative who served as secretary of the navy under Ronald Reagan, according to Kwiatkowski.

Along with Feith, all of the appointees have



in common a close identification with the views of the Likud Party.

Also like Feith, many of the appointees were proteges of Richard Perle, an AEI fellow who doubles as chairman until last April of Rumsfeld's unpaid Defense Policy Board (DPB), whose members were appointed by Feith.

Luti in turn hired retired Colonel William Bruner, a former Gingrich staffer, and Chris Straub, a retired lieutenant colonel, anti-abortion activist, and former staffer on the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Through Feith, both offices worked closely with Perle, Gingrich, and two other DPB members and major war boosters former CIA director James Woolsey and Kenneth Adelman in ensuring that the

“intelligence” they developed reached a wide public audience outside the bureaucracy.

“They would draw up ‘talking points’ they would use and distribute to their friends,” said Kwiatkowski. “But the talking points would be changed continually, not because of new intel (intelligence), but because the press was poking holes in what was in the memos.”

In inter-agency discussions, Feith and the two offices communicated almost exclusively with like-minded allies in other agencies, rather than with their official counterparts, including even the DIA in the Pentagon, according to Kwiatkowski.

Rather than working with the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, its Near Eastern Affairs bureau, or even its Iraq desk, for example, they preferred to work through Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security (and former AEI executive vice-president) John Bolton; Michael Wurmser

(another Perle protege at AEI who staffed the predecessor to OSP); and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs Elizabeth Cheney, the daughter of Vice-President Dick Cheney.

At the National Security Council (NSC), they communicated mainly with Stephen Hadley, the deputy national security adviser, until Elliott Abrams, a dyed-in-the-wool neocon with close ties to Feith and Perle, was appointed last December as the NSC's top Middle East aide. "They worked really hard for Abrams; he was a necessary link," Kwiatkowski told IPS Wednesday. "The day he got (the appointment), they were whooping and hollering, 'We got him in, we got him in.'" But she recounts one incident in which she helped escort a group of half a dozen Israelis, including several generals, from the first floor reception area to Feith's office.

"We just followed them, because they knew exactly where they were going and moving fast." When the group arrived, she noted the book which all visitors are required to sign under special regulations that took effect after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. "I asked his secretary, 'Do you want these guys to sign in?' She said, 'No, these guys don't have to sign in.'" It occurred to her, she said, that the office may have not wanted to maintain a record of the meeting. One person in the OSP with a long career in the National Security bureaucracy told her at one point: "What these people are doing now makes Iran-Contra look like amateur hour."

