

[Desertpeace](#)

[CENTCOM'S MASTER PLAN AND U.S. GLOBAL HEGEMONY](#)

July 25, 2008 at 6:33 pm ([Conspiracy Theories](#), [Corrupt Politics](#))

CENTCOM's Master Plan and U.S. Global Hegemony

By Robert Higgs

Many people deny that the U.S. government presides over a global empire. If you speak of U.S. imperialism, they will fancy that you must be a decrepit Marxist-Leninist who has recently awakened after spending decades in a coma. Yet the facts cannot be denied, however much people's ideology may predispose them to distort or obfuscate those facts.



How can a government that maintains [more than 800 military facilities](#) in more than 140 different foreign countries be anything other than an imperial power? The [hundreds of thousands of troops](#) who operate those bases and conduct operations from them, not to mention the approximately 125,000 sailors and Marines aboard the U.S. warships that cruise the oceans, are not going door to door selling Girl Scout cookies. United States of America is the name; intimidation is the game.

Of course, the kingpins who control this massive machinery of coercion never describe it in such terms. In their lexis, American motives and actions are invariably noble. Listening to these bigwigs describe what the U.S. forces abroad are doing, you would never suspect that they seek anything but "regional stability," "security," "deterrence of potential regional aggressors," and "economic development and cooperation among nations." Inasmuch as hardly anybody favors instability, insecurity, international aggression, economic retrogression, and mutual strife among nations, the U.S. objectives, and hence the actions taken in their furtherance, would appear to be indisputably laudable.

Yet, from time to time, a U.S. leader lets slip an expression so revealing that it warrants a thousand times greater weight than the vague, mealy-mouthed banalities they routinely dispense. I came across such a statement recently. In seeking funds in 2007 for construction of a \$62 million ammunition storage facility at Bagram Air Base, [Admiral William J. Fallon](#), then the commander of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), referred to Bagram as "the centerpiece for the CENTCOM Master Plan for future access to and operations in Central Asia."

Pause to savor this phrase for a moment; let it roll around in your mind:

CENTCOM Master Plan for future access to and operations in Central Asia. What an intriguing expression! What dramatic images of future U.S. military actions it evokes! But can those actions be anything other than the very sort that empires undertake? Ask yourself: why does the U.S. military anticipate conducting operations in Central Asia, a region that lies thousands of miles from the United States and comprises countries that lack either the capacity or the intention to seriously harm Americans who mind their own business in their own national territory? Indeed, what is the U.S. military doing in Central Asia in the first place? Have you ever heard of ["the Great Game"](#)?

When the Army sought the funds for the new ammunition storage facility at Bagram again this year, its request echoed Admiral Fallon's sentiments by [stating](#): "As a forward operating site, Bagram must be able to provide for a long term, steady state presence which is able to surge to meet theater contingency requirements." The statement's reference to "a long term, steady state presence" would seem to be especially revealing because it takes for granted that U.S. forces will not be leaving this part of the world any time soon. Giving even more weight to this interpretation, Congress approved not only the \$62 million for the ammunition storage facility, but also \$41 billion for a 30-megawatt electrical power plant at Bagram, a plant large enough to serve more than 20,000 American homes.

Along the same lines, Lt. Colonel John Sotham, commander of the 455 Expeditionary Force Support Squadron, which is now stationed at Bagram Air Base, recently [described](#) a number of improvements his squadron is making at the base, looking toward giving it "a more permanent footprint." He added: "It's pretty clear that the U.S. Air Force will be at Camp Cunningham [a living area at Bagram] and involved in the fight against terrorism for a very long time." He relished the opportunity to "help drive Bagram from expeditionary to enduring!"

The United States government divides the world into [six military regions](#) called [Unified Combatant Commands](#). (A separate Africa Command has been created only recently. Once it is fully operational, it will include all of the African countries except Egypt. A few other northeastern African countries were previously included in the Central Command's area of responsibility.) The Central Command, abbreviated as [CENTCOM](#), stretches from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen in the West to Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Tajikistan, and Pakistan in the East. The easternmost reaches of this combatant area butt up against India, China, and Russia.

Looking carefully at the map, one discovers that Israel is not included in the CENTCOM area, but in the European Command area. In a sense, however, we may describe the twenty-one countries in CENTCOM's newly defined "area of responsibility" as a sort of logical complement of Israel: the people of every one of these countries devoutly wish (and here I have chosen my adverb carefully) that Israel had never come into existence and that it will go out of existence as soon as possible. Thus, CENTCOM's area, inhabited predominantly by Muslims, comprises a predominant subset of Israel's avowed enemies.

It comes as no surprise, then, that of all the unified commands, CENTCOM is

the one in which, in today's world, the U.S. empire's rubber meets the road most abrasively. The command's area of responsibility includes a great part of the world's known petroleum and natural gas deposits, a preponderance of Israel's enemies, and the places in which the George W. Bush administration has chosen to focus its so-called Global War on Terror. Of course, the region also includes Iraq and Afghanistan, where U.S. forces have been fighting for years, and, sandwiched between these two battlefields, Iran, where Dick Cheney and the rest of the neocons ardently desire to extend the fighting at the earliest opportunity.

The high imperial authorities are not embarrassed by the U.S. empire; on the contrary, they are immensely proud of it. They simply do not describe their activities as the maintenance and exploitation of an empire. If you care to read an extended example, I invite you to peruse [Admiral Fallon's testimony](#) of May 3, 2007, before the Senate Armed Services Committee, regarding CENTCOM'S "posture." This carefully prepared statement, written in impeccable military bureaucratese, illustrates well how imperial commanders wish to represent their forces' actions and, equally important, how members of Congress wish to have those actions represented to them. Of course, it's all a solemn farce, a polished and meaningless charade staged purely for public-relations purposes—a ceremonial hors d'oeuvres served in public before the diners consume the entrée, which consists of a [massive amount](#) of the taxpayers' money ladled out to the armed forces and their civilian contractors.

"Our top priority," Fallon declares, "is achieving stability and security in Iraq." Everyone knows, of course, that Iraq was more stable and secure before the U.S. invasion, which suggests that perhaps the quickest way to reestablish those conditions is for the U.S. forces to leave the country. Certainly many Iraqis resolutely oppose a permanent U.S. presence there, and some of them will continue their violent resistance to U.S. forces as long as the Americans remain. Intelligent adults also know that when Fallon or any other U.S. official speaks of achieving stability and security, he has in mind the achievement of those blessed conditions only on terms acceptable to the U.S. government, and most likely in accordance with its prescription. That the U.S. forces will ever pull out of Iraq and leave the Iraqis to do as they please is virtually impossible to conceive at this point. Indeed, a mere pullout is nearly inconceivable, despite the great amount of talk that goes on about it on both sides. On the Iraqi side, this talk is sincere; on the U.S. side, it is all for show.

Fallon testified that in Afghanistan, "the foundation of security and governance is in place." He must have known how ludicrous that statement was. Outside of Kabul, the U.S. forces, their allies, and the puppet regime control hardly anything, and U.S. and allied forces that move about the country are at constant risk of attack. The Taliban has not been vanquished, and in fact it has been rebuilding its ranks and its operational capabilities recently. The likelihood that outside forces will ever impose their designs on Afghanistan's backward but fiercely resilient tribesmen verges on nil. Even Fallon has the temerity to observe that "parts of the country have never known centralized governance." Great powers have sought to conquer Afghanistan and bend it to their imperial will for centuries, never with more than short-lived success. Eventually the

imperialists leave, and the Afghans remain.

In an earlier day, Rudyard Kipling advised "[The Young British Soldier](#)" who served in Britain's imperial army:

When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan's plains,
And the women come out to cut up what remains,
Jest roll to your rifle and blow out your brains
An' go to your Gawd like a soldier.

It's probably still good advice. Alternatively, you can get yourself killed by your own comrades and instantly become a [Great American Hero](#), thanks to the Great American Military Bullshit Information Team (GAMBIT).

Continuing his parade of politicking platitudes, Fallon declares that "Iran's most destabilizing activity has been the pursuit of nuclear weapons technology in defiance of the international community." Of course, if the Iranians have undertaken any such pursuit at all, which remains in doubt, it has been not in defiance of the mythical "international community," but in defiance of the United States and Israel, as everybody who reads the newspapers knows. It is nothing short of astonishing that U.S. officials speak in almost hysterical tones of the threat posed by nonexistent Iranian nuclear weapons, yet never breathe a word about the hundreds of such weapons already in the Israeli arsenal, not to mention the thousands that remain at the disposal of U.S. forces. Of course, members of Congress, who live in mortal fear of the American Israel Political Affairs Committee (AIPAC), want to be seen listening to this phony-baloney message, so military politicians such as Admiral Fallon dare not disappoint them.

Fallon arranged the bulk of his testimony around a description of how CENTCOM's "initiatives are organized into five focus areas: setting conditions for stability in Iraq; expanding governance and security in Afghanistan; degrading violent extremist networks and operations; strengthening relationships and influencing states to contribute to regional stability; and posturing the force to build and sustain joint and combined war fighting capabilities and readiness." Notice that except possibly for the third item listed ("degrading violent extremist networks and operations"), none of this has more than a very remote connection with defending the people of the United States against foreign enemies.

Instead, it has everything to do with maintenance of the U.S. empire in the Middle East and Central Asia. The U.S. government maintains a lavishly financed Department of Defense, ostensibly to protect Americans in their own country from foreign attackers. In reality, however, this department acts as an overfed foreign legion, operating around the world as an offensive or potentially offensive force to bully other countries into submission to the U.S. government's wishes.

To read Fallon's testimony is to take a refresher course in U.S. nation building. He speaks about "infrastructure development," "provision of basic services to Iraq's citizens," and improving "local government performance and capacity." In

Afghanistan, he perceives that the "priorities are roads and electricity, followed by agricultural development, microcredit, job skills, and education." The occupation force, he testified, "is actively pursuing initiatives in these areas, from building schools and providing them with supplies to encouraging and stimulating the growth of small businesses." Should we laugh or cry?

Someone needs to remind the admiral and his audience that the military is trained and equipped to dispense death and destruction. Military leaders [know nothing](#) about nation building, and their efforts along these lines result only in gigantic waste of time, money, and lives. (Of course, we must never forget, especially when discussing the U.S. empire, that one man's waste is another man's fabulously enriching government contract.)

To make matters even worse, "CENTCOM supports US government and United Kingdom lead nation counter-narcotics activities." No U.S. war is complete, it seems, without dragging the disastrous drug war along with it.

The imperial authorities constantly emphasize their efforts to promote our security by suppressing "violent extremism" abroad. Repeat after me: extremism always bad; moderation always good. If Barry Goldwater were alive today and still telling us that "extremism in defense of liberty is no vice," he might well be placed on the Air Force's target list for the [Predator](#) drone. While decrying the violent extremists in the Middle East, Admiral Fallon notes: "Unfortunately, their tactics and radical ideology remain almost unchallenged by voices of moderation." It takes a heap ofchutzpah to impose sanctions on a country, killing hundreds of thousands of children and others with weakened immune systems, then invade the country, killing hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children by bombing, shooting, shelling, beating, stabbing, suffocating, and immolating them, then create such chaos and violence among the populace that millions are forced to abandon their residence and rendered homeless, then announce your regret that so few speak in favor of moderation. Next thing you know, the Devil will express regret that so few denizens of Hell speak in favor of fraternal kindness and Christian charity.

Fallon aims at "de-legitimizing the underlying social and political movements that support" the extremist groups. He fails to recognize that such delegitimization is utterly impossible as long as the U.S. forces continue to occupy Iraq and Afghanistan and to brutalize their people. The admiral proposes "building capacity in governance and security that helps at-risk societies address problems that foster internal and local grievances." The overwhelming grievance in the Middle East, however, is the presence of U.S. forces and Washington's support for local dictators and their legions of thugs. Fallon, however, looks to "empowering credible experts to expose the flaws and internal contradictions of the enemy's ideology; provide viable, competing alternative worldviews; and contest the intellectual 'safe harbors' where extremist ideas incubate." U.S. military leaders seem to have made a little progress since the days when they lived by the motto, "If you've got 'em by the balls, their hearts and minds will follow." Yet the idea that in the midst of everything the U.S. forces are doing in the Middle East they can employ "credible experts" to transform the dominant ideology is sheer lunacy. Al-Qaida

requires no wily recruiting agents in Afghanistan and Iraq; its supporters need only invite people to look out their windows.

Fallon speaks glowingly of the various Middle Eastern dictatorships with whom the U.S. government maintains cordial relationships. (It's amazing how many "friends" you can win with a combination of generous bribes and credible threats.) The United States' "close, reliable partner nations" include such paragons of social and political modernity as Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Pakistan." Moreover, "Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates are important partners in maintaining stability in the Gulf." An honest observer feels compelled to recognize, however, that every one of the filthy-rich sheiks in these desert despotisms would gladly cut Fallon's throat if they weren't raking in such fabulous amounts of money from the current arrangements.

The admiral does recognize a few problems. "Our present inventory of language and intelligence specialists (especially human intelligence) and counterintelligence agents does not support current requirements." Translation: because we don't speak or understand Arabic, Pashto, Persian, or any other local language in this part of the world, we haven't a clue as to what's going on in the politics and social life of these countries, and therefore we are constantly at the mercy of English-speaking collaborators who will take the risk of feeding us lies and fabricated "intelligence" long enough to get rich and then flee the country before their infuriated countrymen kill them.

Notwithstanding the many troubles that plague the imperial crusaders in CENTCOM's area of responsibility, Fallon bravely concludes, "we fight tirelessly against those who would do us harm." He fails to mention, however, that the people of southwest Asia would harbor no grievances whatsoever against Americans if the U.S. government had only possessed the intelligence and the decency to stay out of their affairs.

This originally appeared at [MWC News](#)

Possibly related posts: (automatically generated)

- [GERMANY'S IMMORAL POLICY TOWARDS THE PALESTINIANS](#)
- [Iraq: No Withdrawal Timetable, No Deal](#)
- [U.S. Official Makes Visit to Pakistan Amid Insurgency Spike in Region](#)
- ["General Time Horizon" Eyed For Troop Cuts](#)

Post a Comment

Name (required)

E-mail (required)

URI