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The Voice of the White House

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Webmaster

Washington , D.C. , February 28, 2008 : “The New York Times is now full of all kinds of idiot stories about the fictional Holocaust. This must be in advance of the new legislation being proposed to have Bush declare a National Day of Atonement wherein all Americans will have the chance to reflect on the Great Sufferings of the Jewish People. We now see references to Anne Frank Diaries which is pathetic since the German government proclaimed these famous tear jerkers as stone fakes some years ago and of course the new German comic book designed to “sensitize” German school children to the evil ways of their fathers. I wonder why no one ever talks about the Great Armenian Holocaust of 1916? Many, many more Christian Armenians were butchered by the Muslim Turks than Jews died during WW II but we never see any mention of this well-proven slaughter. Why? Because Israel is friendly with the Turks who do not want anyone daring to mention their nastiness and since the Jews own all the media in America today, we see nothing. Of course the newspapers are a dying institution; everyone gets their news from the internet and no one can control the internet, not even the evil CIA or the AIPAC, so the National Day of Atonement, coming up soon, may help fill the coffers of Our Best Ally.

If you study the psychology of mass actions, you will note that the public always seems to back the winner. Obama has a very good political action team, a good deal more money than anyone else and has established a very powerful forward momentum. The public does not like a loser and note that Hillary has been losing ground, and important delegates at an increasing rate.. If you are perceived as successful, you will be successful. They way the candidates for the Democratic nomination are being civilized with each other indicates that a ticket with both of them is not an impossibility. Obama's best asset, outside of himself, is his wife. Hillary's worst asset, outside of herself, is her husband. Neither one of the Clintons likes to lose and they show it. No grace under pressure.

Frantic right-wing commentators, used to eight years of Karl Rove-type malice, lies and innuendo, are getting very close to calling Obama a nigger and if and when they do, they will discover that the black community has not forgotten the ugliness of Katrina or many years of social repression. I have known many very many far right, rich Republicans and the words "kike" and "nigger" are often used in what we would like to think would be the best company.

When one of my rich east coast establishment friends said, "My God, you can't vote for that uppity coon!" my response was that I would vote for the white half. He was not amused, but I was. “

There will be major elections in Russia coming up. It doesn't take a Harvard graduate to detect great official anger in the United States , directed against Vladimir Putin. His predecessor, Boris Yeltsin, was a drunk and in the pay of the U.S. Putin, a former colonel in the KGB, took over from Boris and began methodically to either stop the sale of Russia 's immense oil and gas fields or, if contracts had been let to eager western oil companies, cancel them. The so-called ‘Oligarchs’ were a group of exclusively Jewish Russian gangsters who were conniving with the aforesaid oil companies. Putin not only stopped this looting of Russia but he persecuted the Oligarchs, driving most of them to safety in Israel (who never extradites any Jew, regardless of the alleged crime involved) Not only were the oil companies livid at their huge losses (they had shipped hundreds of millions of dollars worth of new equipment to the Russian fields, equipment which Putin simply took over and put to good use...for Russia, not western oil interests.) and the Jewish business community took a decidedly negative view of Putin and his actions. This led directly to official anger in the White House and the media. In fact, Vladimir Putin has done an excellent job in bringing order to a chaotic Russia and, on a more direct note, brought huge sums of money into his country, raising the standard of living to a high level. Now, Russia has staked out drilling areas in the Arctic , areas American oil interests are frantic to obtain. If the oil companies are frantic, Bush obediently upbraids Putin and tries to find some way to annoy him, such as missile sites being located in Poland . (Two are already in place as I write) The world in general, and the United States in particular, would be far better off if God in His wisdom called George W. Bush to His bosom.”

Russia's Last Hope

February 29, 2008

by Victor Erofeev

New York Times

Moscow- If I recover from a bout of stomach illness by Sunday, I will cast my ballot in Russia's presidential election. But there's no need to rush to get well, because my vote will make no difference.

There was a day when it did seem that my vote mattered. In 1996, I found myself in Ireland on Election Day and made a huge effort to go to the embassy in Dublin and vote for Boris N. Yeltsin, because I feared that the Communists could return to power under his opponent, Gennadi A. Zyuganov, and I would again have serious problems. Mr. Zyuganov is running for president again this year, but I no longer fear him. He will lose.

This not only reassures me, but also leads me to think about how President Vladimir V. Putin, in his eight years in power, managed to destroy Communism. He finished it off so brutally that it's silly to even think about the possibility of its return. Yet some people outside Russia believe that Mr. Putin did away with only the democrats, the liberal parties and the independent news media. No, he also threw out power-seeking oligarchs, who are very unpopular with the Russian people, and he rid the country of chaos and instability, which, he tells us, were rampant in the 1990s.

No matter how you look at it, President Putin also brought order to Chechnya : at least they're no longer flying young Russian soldiers back in body bags every day. And if television is offering more humorous programs and songs from around the world instead of political discussions, people only welcome this. As for opposition parties, the real ones, they quarreled among themselves and became so indistinguishable in their radical demands that the people, with President Putin's help, stopped taking note of them.

For the majority of Russians, Mr. Putin will enter history as a positive figure. That during his rule he actively relied on his K.G.B. colleagues doesn't bother a lot of people. Whom else should he lean on in his struggle to impose order? He worked with the human material that came to him from the depth of Russian history, people who to this day drink, steal and consider politics a source of personal power and enrichment. If Mr. Putin preferred not to be trusting, it was because he clearly sensed the rot in the national gene pool.

That he went too far in some things, that he irritated Europe , that he was sometimes vindictive — these are separate matters. His friends in the K.G.B. were raised on hatred for the West. Now, at least, they limit themselves for the most part to negative rhetoric about the West. So there is progress. Mr. Putin gave his people faith in tomorrow: It's no accident that Russia today is full of packed restaurants, game parlors, casinos, discothèques, cars and books about everything from Buddhism to homosexuality. Mr. Putin was lucky all eight of his years in office: oil prices rose, Russia grew rich and life became good. Private life remains remarkably free.

His biggest mistake was his longing to make Russia the successor to the Soviet Union : this gave rise to the imperial discourse that so frightened neighboring countries, his defense of the Soviet Union's aggressive foreign policy and the damage to Russia's image in the world. What's worse is that our next president, Dmitri A. Medvedev, whom President Putin chose as his heir as if he were a czar, will have to deal with the Russian weaknesses that were hidden from the population under propaganda slogans. The failure to modernize industry or agriculture, the growing corruption in government, the ubiquitous drunkenness, the record numbers of murders and suicides, the terrible state of Russian health care and the problems that come with a shrinking population will fall on Mr. Medvedev's young shoulders.

Nobody, probably not even President Putin, knows Mr. Medvedev's real goals and values. He was never a public politician — though the talk on the street, not shared by dissidents, makes him out to be liberal, cultured, moderate and even pro-Western. As a young man he fought for democracy on the side of the future mayor of St. Petersburg , Anatoly Sobchak, and he was never noted for professional connections to the secret services. Yet his close ties to his current chief speak, at least, to limitless patience and self-limitation.

Whether Mr. Medvedev emerges as a new Khrushchev, ready for an ideological thaw, or a new Gorbachev, who also came to office without his own team, is impossible to say. Mr.

Putin has not died, as Stalin and a series of aged Communist leaders did when they gave up power. He is there, smilingly holding Mr. Medvedev by the hand. The king is not dead, and it is too early to shout: "Long live the new king!"

Once again the future of Russia is wide open and unpredictable. Will there be dual rule? Will there be confrontation between two leaders or will they peacefully coexist? Might Dmitri Medvedev disappear along the way, leaving power once again to Vladimir Vladimirovich? I have no answers. But I will say this: For better or for worse, Mr. Medvedev is the last hope for me and for the Russia I love. If he proves to be a false figure of history, then Russia, no matter how hard it tries to look like a superpower, will sink to the depths like that submarine Kursk. Dmitri Anatolevich, the choice is yours.

Victor Erofeyev is the author of the short-story collection "Life With an Idiot." This article was translated by The International Herald Tribune from the Russian.

SECRECY NEWS

from the FAS Project on Government Secrecy

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NBC WEAPONS AND MISSILES, AND MORE FROM CRS

Noteworthy new publications from the Congressional Research Service include the following.

"Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Weapons and Missiles: Status and Trends," updated February 20, 2008 :

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/RL30699.pdf>

"Water Infrastructure Needs and Investment: Review and Analysis of Key Issues," updated January 23, 2008 :

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/homesecc/RL31116.pdf>

"Russian Energy Policy toward Neighboring Countries," updated January 17, 2008 :

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34261.pdf>

"North American Oil Sands: History of Development, Prospects for the Future," updated January 17, 2008 :

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL34258.pdf>

PRESERVATION OF IRAQ WAR RECORDS, AND MORE DOD DOCTRINE

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recently reaffirmed the requirement to preserve historically valuable records pertaining to the Iraq War.

"Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and NOBLE EAGLE and current operations pertaining to Iraq are a prominent part of American and world history. It is important that we preserve the historical records of these continuing operations and we obtain information and lessons that can be applied in planning, shaping, and implementing our national defense in the future."

See Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Notice 5760, Preservation of Historical Records of Operations Enduring Freedom and Noble Eagle and Pertaining to Iraq , 7 September 2006 , current as of 31 January 2008 :

<http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/cjcsn5760.pdf>

A new Army Regulation defines policies and procedures governing military civilians who are engaged in human intelligence and counterintelligence activities. See Army Regulation 690-950-4, "Military Intelligence Civilian Excepted Career Program," 20 February 2008 :

<http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/ar690-950-4.pdf>

A revised new Army Field Manual 3-0 on "Operations" has not yet been released. But the Defense Department has released revised doctrine on Joint Operations. See Joint Publication 3-0, change 1, 13 February 2008 :

http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp3_0.pdf

HOUSE REPUBLICAN BLASTS BUSH ADMINISTRATION "STONEWALLING"

"The disdain and uncooperative nature that this administration has shown toward Congress... is so egregious that I can no longer assume that it is simply bureaucratic incompetence or isolated mistakes.

Rather, I have come to the sad conclusion that this administration has intentionally obstructed Congress' rightful and constitutional duties."

That rather damning criticism comes not from a liberal opponent of the Bush Administration, but from one of its most right-wing supporters in Congress, California Republican Rep. Dana Rohrabacher.

"This administration is setting a terrible precedent. What people have to understand... is when there is a liberal Democrat in the White House, the President will have set [the precedent] that Members of

Congress can simply be dismissed, and that when they are trying to do a congressional investigation need not be cooperated with, in fact, can be obstructed. Is that the type of President that we want? Is that acceptable? It shouldn't be acceptable to Democrats and it shouldn't be acceptable to Republicans," he said on the House floor on February 26.

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/congress/2008/rohr022608.html>

Rep. Rohrabacher described a series of incidents in which the Bush Administration blocked congressional initiatives or failed to meet his expectations. Some of the offenses described, like the failure to administer a polygraph to former national security advisor Samuel R. Berger concerning his theft of documents from the National Archives, seem idiosyncratic or otherwise questionable. But the Congressman's outrage appears genuine enough.

"It is truly with a heavy heart, Madam Speaker, that I stand here reciting example after example of the maliciousness and condescending attitude exhibited by this administration. It is a problem that's flowing from the top."

"When I hear my friends on the other side of the aisle accusing this administration of stonewalling, of coverups, or thwarting investigations, I sadly must concur with them," Rep. Rohrabacher concluded.

What the *Times* Didn't Tell About McCain

February 27, 2008

by Robert Scheer

TruthDig.com

As Republican presidential candidate Sen. John McCain twisted briefly in the wind kicked up by that New York Times story suggesting he had swapped political favors for the personal favors of an attractive lobbyist for the telecommunications industry, I kept waiting for the public policy punch line. Surely the Times would spell out just what it was that McCain had delivered to big media beyond what the paper originally reported: an all-too-typical congressional request that the FCC speed up its review of a broadcast licensing dispute.

Vicki Iseman, the lobbyist in question, is praised on her company's Web site for her "extensive experience in telecommunications, representing corporations before the House and Senate Commerce Committees," and for "her work on the landmark 1992 and 1996 communications bills." Now that's a biggie, because the 1996 legislation, although you would never have learned this from the mainstream media at the time, opened the floodgates for massive media consolidation, thus rewarding media moguls for their many millions in campaign

contributions. McCain was a big player on that Commerce Committee at the time, and I expected a Times revelation as to just how Iseman got McCain to help gift the media barons with their dream legislation.

The revelation never came, because the annoying reality is that McCain was one of the rare Senate opponents of the telecom bill that Iseman was pushing-as opposed to The New York Times, which like every other major media outlet pushed for the legislation (in the case of the Times, without ever conceding its own corporation's financial bias in the matter). McCain was one of five senators (and the sole Republican) who, along with Democrats Russ Feingold, Patrick Leahy, Paul Simon and the great Paul Wellstone, voted against the atrocious legislation, which President Bill Clinton signed into law.

The Times, which now has the temerity to question McCain's integrity on telecommunications policy, ran a shameful editorial back then, under the headline "A Victory for Viewers," insisting after the passage of the legislation that "there was one clear winner-the consumer." Seven years later, the paper's "Editorial Observer," Brent Staples, bemoaned one direct consequence of the passage of the Telecom Act, under the title "The Trouble with Corporate Radio: The Day the Protest Music Died." Noting that "corporate ownership has changed what gets played-and who plays it," Staples observed that the top two radio owners went from having a total of 115 stations before the act was passed to 1,400 between them afterward.

This concentration of ownership in all media was the inevitable result of the legislation that the media moguls sought. That far-reaching impact was obvious only one year after the act's passage, as Neil Hickey noted at the time in the Columbia Journalism Review: "... far and away the splashiest effect of the new law during the last year has been the historic, unprecedented torrent of mergers, consolidations, buyouts, partnerships, and joint ventures that has changed the face of Big Media in America." He then offers a staggering list of massive multibillion-dollar mergers consummated during that first year.

One of the early winners was Rupert Murdoch's News Corp., which quickly became the biggest owner of television stations, bolstering its lineup of media properties such as TV Guide, HarperCollins and Twentieth Century Fox; quite a gift from legislation signed by President Clinton, which perhaps explains the warm relationship that subsequently developed between Murdoch and Hillary Clinton. Murdoch sponsored a fundraiser for Clinton's senatorial re-election campaign in 2006, but when asked during the Iowa primary about Murdoch's vast media holdings, including Fox News, the New York Post and The Wall Street Journal, Clinton ducked the question. Avoiding any reference to Murdoch, she conceded that "... there have been a lot of media consolidations in the last several years, and it is quite troubling."

It's not easy to maintain an evenhanded appraisal of McCain as he appropriates the Bush mantle. Of course, I wouldn't vote for him; he is willing to let the Iraq war go on for a hundred years, and at the rate of at least \$200 billion a year, that makes a mockery of his efforts to defeat earmarks and other wasteful government spending-beginning with the massive waste in the Pentagon budget that he has done so much to expose. His capitulation on President Bush's use of torture is even more appalling. But it is absurd to attempt to pigeonhole McCain as a patsy for corporate lobbyists when he has been in the forefront of key efforts to challenge their power.

Robert Scheer is editor of Truthdig.com and a regular columnist for The San Francisco Chronicle.

Army: Service must cut combat tours

February 26, 2008

by Anne Flaherty

Associated Press

WASHINGTON - Top Army officials told a Senate panel on Tuesday that the Army is under serious strain and must reduce the length of combat tours as soon as possible.

"The cumulative effects of the last six-plus years at war have left our Army out of balance, consumed by the current fight and unable to do the things we know we need to do to properly sustain our all-volunteer force and restore our flexibility for an uncertain future," said Gen. George Casey, chief of staff of the Army.

Casey told the Senate Armed Services Committee that cutting the time soldiers spend in combat is an integral part of reducing the stress on the force.

He said he anticipates the service can cut combat tours from 15 months to 12 months this year, so long as the president reduces the number of active-duty Army brigades in Iraq and Afghanistan to 15 units by July as planned.

However, the number of soldiers retained under the service's "stop loss" policy — which forces some soldiers to stay on beyond their retirement or re-enlistment dates — is unlikely to be reduced substantially.

"We are consuming readiness now, as quickly as we're building it," said Army Secretary Pete Geren, who also testified.

Geren also urged Congress to pass a \$100 billion war spending bill this spring, contending that the Army will run out of money by July.

According to the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, the Army could probably last until August or September by transferring money from less urgent accounts. Army officials counter that this approach is inefficient and can cause major program disruptions.

The hearing came as the Senate headed toward a vote on whether to cut off money for the Iraq war within 120 days. The measure, by Sen. Russ Feingold, D-Wis., was widely expected to fall short of the 60 votes needed to pass.

Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell said the bill is a good chance for the Senate to go on record again as refusing to cut off money for the war.

"All the more so will we oppose it when the fight in Iraq, by all accounts, is showing clear-cut tactical progress, and now, at last, some important political progress is also being made," McConnell, R-Ky., said.

In recent months, violence in Iraq has declined and the Baghdad government has made small steps toward political reconciliation, including plans to hold provincial elections on Oct. 1. While Democratic voters remain largely against the war, the security improvement has helped to cool anxiety among Republicans and stave off legislation demanding that troops start coming home.

With Feingold's bill almost assured to fail and lacking a veto-proof majority in Congress even if such a proposal passed, Democrats are talking about whether to shift their strategy. Instead of repeating losing votes on legislation tying money to troop withdrawals, many party members want to focus more on the policy issues surrounding Iraq, including the preparedness of U.S. troops and reining in private contractors.

Another desire by many Democrats is to tie the ailing economy to the war. A coalition of anti-war groups said this week that it plans to spend more than \$20 million this year to convince voters that the Republican party's support for the war is bad for their wallets.

Still, other Democrats, including Feingold, D-Wis., say they want to pursue more votes to end funding for the war.

According to aides, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., who co-sponsored Feingold's proposal, agreed to stage Tuesday's vote in exchange for Feingold's earlier support of a defense policy bill.

Anti-war activists say they believe Americans are increasingly aware of the economic burden that the Iraq war has caused. This election season, they say, voters will blame Republicans for supporting the war at a time of rising health care and college costs and in the midst of a mortgage foreclosure crisis.

"Leaders who do not recognize this connection will be at a disadvantage come election day," said Jeff Blum, director of USAction, which plans to spend \$10 million this year on organizing a grass-roots effort against Republican candidates.

MoveOn.org, another anti-war group, says it will spend at least \$5 million targeting congressional seats, including Republican Sens. Susan Collins of Maine, John Sununu of New Hampshire, Norm Coleman of Minnesota and McConnell of Kentucky.

Brad Woodhouse, head of Americans United for Change, estimates his group will spend about \$8.5 million, focusing primarily on political advertisements.

"What Can He Change?"

March 1, 2008

by Immanuel Wallerstein

It now seems highly probable, although not yet certain, that Barack Obama will be the Democratic candidate for president. And it seems highly probable that he would win a contest with John McCain. It also seems almost certain that the Democratic majorities in both the Senate and the House of Representatives will be enlarged. Thus, it seems that Obama would enter office with a relatively strong mandate from the voters.

If one asks how Obama, who entered the race some six months ago as a young and unlikely victor, has been able to achieve this, the answer seems clear. He has emphasized the theme of "change" and this theme seems to have resonated with the voters, including many who have not voted before. Of course, change is an ambiguous term, and its meaning varies according to those who embrace it. But it seems that the theme of "change" responds to a high degree of discomfort in the United States with the present overall situation in the country and the world. The two zones of maximum discomfort are the war in Iraq and the state of the economy.

What a majority of voters seems to be saying is that they think the war in Iraq is a quagmire, and that it was a mistake to have invaded the country. As for the economy, the voters seem to be saying that their actual standard of living has been going down and they are very afraid that it will go down still further. So, basically, they are rejecting the main lines of argument of the Bush regime, and are blaming it in large part for their discomforts. What specific changes the voters want seems less clear, but they want something.

Obama has a second appeal beyond embracing the theme of change. It is a question of style. He says he is willing to talk with anyone - with presumed unfriendly forces internationally, with presumed allies internationally, and with persons from all political factions internally. This contrasts with Bush's repeated insistence that there are all kinds of groups with whom the United States should never "negotiate."

There is a second kind of stylistic appeal of Obama. He says, over and over, "Yes, we can!" This is a theme borrowed from the legendary leader of Hispanic farm workers, Cesar Chavez, whose slogan was "!Sí, se puede!" This theme appeals particularly to all those who have felt marginalized in the U.S. political system, and who find this theme one that empowers them.

So, now that Obama seems so near to becoming president, there has begun to be considerable discussion in the press, on the internet, and in public debate about what kinds of changes Obama actually intends to undertake. This seems to me the wrong question. The real question is what kind of changes Obama can make, a quite different question.

Obama's record is that of a liberal Democrat who opposed the Iraq war and whose mode of action has always been left-of-center, sometimes forcefully, sometimes very prudently. He certainly intends to bring a different style to the White House. How radically different a policy he intends to implement is far less clear. But even supposing that he is more politically radical than he seems to be on the surface, the question still remains, what can he do? Presidents of the United States can undoubtedly affect policy in important ways - George W. Bush has proved that - but they are also prisoners of their office. It is therefore worth reviewing what are the options in foreign policy, in economic policy, and in that looser arena we might call cultural policy.

In foreign policy, the most immediate and overwhelming issue is the Middle East - not only vis-à-vis Iraq, but also vis-à-vis Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and Israel/Palestine. Bush has worked hard to bind the hands of his successor. But Bush has made the error of thinking that U.S. policy in the Middle East is primarily in the hands of the U.S. government. I do not think this is true any longer. There is a whirlwind of forces in this region that are far beyond the limited power of the United States government to channel their directions.

Anti-American nationalism is slowly but surely gathering enormous steam in Iraq. The Taliban are creeping back into de facto power in Afghanistan, and threatening as a by-product to disrupt the functioning of NATO as an international force. In Pakistan, it seems that the

United States is reduced to praying quietly that its ever less popular friend, Pervez Musharraf, can weather the storm. The Iranians have decided that they can simply defy the United States without incurring any real danger. And both Israel and the Palestinian Authority are on ever-shakier ground, internally and internationally. Condoleezza Rice is largely being ignored by everyone. Will Obama's Secretary of State be treated differently?

If the whirlwind undoes U.S. policies in the region, then even if U.S. forces are withdrawn from Iraq, will it follow that western Europe, Russia, China, and Latin America will actually move closer to the United States, even if they will appreciate Obama's friendlier and more intelligent style? The underlying geopolitical trends are against the United States. Obama can do better than Bush, but how much better?

The story is not too different when we look at the state of the U.S. economy. No doubt, a Democratic administration will have a different policy on taxation, on health care, on the environment. And probably the poorer 80% of the population will be better off. But the manufacturing jobs are not going to return, even if the United States scuttles its neoliberal trade pacts. In this arena, too, there is a whirlwind, one that is perhaps even more powerful than the geopolitical whirlwind in the Middle East, and the United States does not control its unfolding.

That leaves one arena in which Obama may have some leeway, what I called loosely the cultural arena. His campaign has been mobilizing a popular force that is both gaining strength and autonomy. It is that of people saying "yes, we can." Obama may have been of help in igniting the force, but it is becoming a self-driven force that will now have much impact on what he does as president. In a broad sense, it is a force that will be pushing him, as president, to the left, both directly and via its impact on members of Congress.

It is very difficult to say exactly where this force would push Obama. But its impact may turn out to be comparable to that of the so-called religious right on Republican party policies in the last thirty years. Martin Luther King, Jr. said "I have a dream." The dream was of a different United States with different priorities and far more egalitarian mores. If this next period leads to even a partial realization of such a dream, it will of course have a long-term impact on the role the United States plays, and wishes to play, in the world-system. It will have a long-term impact on the kind of economic structures the United States maintains for itself and the world maintains for itself.

Change is indeed possible, and potentially a very positive change. It all depends far less on Obama than on the rest of us. But Obama might, only might, give us the space in which the "we" of "yes, we can" can push him and the United States.

Iraq drains resources from U.S. Pacific Command

February 28, 2008

by Bryan Bender

The Boston Globe

From his headquarters at the U.S. Pacific Command here, Admiral Timothy Keating is responsible for the largest geographic region in the country's military.

But Keating, the four-star admiral who oversees a territory encompassing more than half the earth's surface and five of the world's largest standing armies, has steadily fewer forces at the ready in the event of a crisis.

The war in Iraq is depriving Keating and other commanders of their ability to respond to a military crisis, draining away thousands of personnel and critical equipment, as well as hamstringing their ability to conduct exercises and forge alliances with foreign nations that one day could prove instrumental, according to interviews with senior military leaders and specialists.

"The readiness of our forces is affected by combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq," Keating said in an interview last week in his office, where photos of World War II's storied commanders like Admiral Chester Nimitz hang on the walls. "We are at a higher risk state."

An estimated 30,000 marines and soldiers usually under Keating's command are fighting in the greater Middle East, including large elements of the U.S. Army's 25th Infantry Division on duty in Iraq since 2006.

McCain and Obama trade jabs on Iraq Louisiana governor pierces business as usual McCain's birthplace prompts queries about whether that rules him out One of the division's brigades is currently in Iraq, while another recently returned and expects to head back by the end of the year. Eight army formations based in the Pacific, including military police and other support troops, are also deployed there.

At the same time, thousands of U.S. Air Force personnel from bases in Hawaii, Alaska, Guam and Japan have served in Iraq each year since the U.S.-led invasion began in 2003, while other specialized units from the navy's Pacific Fleet - including Seals units and construction battalions - are also supporting ground operations in the Middle East, which is in the area covered by the Central Command, not Keating's Pacific Command.

The cumulative effect the deployments to the Middle East are having on military readiness across the globe has set off alarms at the Pentagon's highest levels.

"Because we've got 80 percent of our special forces in Central Command, there's a lot of special forces work that they've been doing for years in other parts of the world that just isn't getting done," including training and counterterrorism missions, Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in an interview last week. "That builds risk over time, and we have to assess that."

Mullen, who became the top military officer in late 2007, said he was assessing "what we're ready for" and the likelihood of a new crisis that would require a significant U.S. military response: a humanitarian disaster like the tsunami of 2004, a major terrorist attack or an outbreak of international hostilities.

In the Pacific, Keating said he did not foresee a major conflict on the horizon, but he said trouble spots remained, including areas where anti-American terrorist groups were operating and areas where tensions lingered between large military forces.

"There is a significant threat stream for terrorism in the southern Philippines," Keating said, pointing out that an estimated 8,000 U.S. military personnel were "providing medical and engineering assistance throughout southern Philippines."

Other "sources of greater concern," he added, are the India-Pakistan border, North and South Korea and tensions with China across the Strait of Taiwan.

"Overarching all of them" is "the movement of violent extremists, their supporters, and their financial backers" throughout the region, he said.

For now, Keating said, he is confident that his command - stretching east to Alaska and west to Madagascar, and encompassing the Pacific and Indian oceans, Australia, South Asia and East Asia - can maintain "military pre-eminence." Still, he said, "We have had to adjust" strategic plans "a little bit because of the 30-some thousand marines and soldiers who are ordinarily in our" area "but are not."

At Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, the lead article in Hawaii Army Weekly on Feb. 15 reported that four soldiers from the 25th Infantry Division's Second Brigade were killed by an improvised explosive device this month in Taji, Iraq. The division has served as the main deterrent force in the Pacific region.

"We are and must remain responsible to the commander as his army component to deploy where directed as needed within the Pacific area of responsibility," Brigadier General Mick Bednarek, the division commander, said in an interview last week, referring to Keating.

But Bednarek acknowledged that the fact of multiple deployments to Iraq "has taken a toll" on the "Tropic Lightning" division.

The division's 3rd Brigade returned from Iraq last fall without vital gear, including communications and surveillance systems. Bednarek expects it to be difficult "getting my equipment reset and returned to us prior to deploying" back to Iraq later this year.

Meanwhile, the division's ability to train with foreign forces in countries like Thailand and the Philippines has already suffered, a critical piece of what Keating calls "strategic engagement."

Keating believes that those types of activities are critical for maintaining long-term U.S. security in the region.

But with no end in sight to the deployments to Iraq - where the United States has 160,000 troops - other U.S. military responsibilities will suffer, according to Michèle Flournoy, a former U.S. assistant secretary of defense for strategy.

"Right now we do not have what we should have as a global power with global interests," Flournoy told the House Armed Services Committee on Feb. 14. By remaining in Iraq, she said, "we should acknowledge that we are accepting a significant level of risk."

Turkey declines to pledge quick Iraq exit, US mounts pressure

February 29, 2008

AFP -

ANKARA (AFP) - - Turkey insisted Thursday that its offensive against Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq will continue "as long as necessary," while US President George Bush mounted pressure on Ankara to wrap up its incursion quickly

As US Defence Secretary Robert Gates held talks in Ankara, Turkish warplanes bombed separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) positions in northern Iraq and intensive fighting was reported on the ground near a major rebel base.

Seven Kurdish rebels were killed during clashes Wednesday, bringing to 237 the number of separatist fighters killed in a week of fighting, the Turkish army reported Thursday.

In Washington, Bush said the incursion, launched on February 21, should be "limited and... temporary in nature."

He urged the Turkish military "to move quickly, achieve their objective and then get out... as quickly as possible."

Speaking after meeting with Gates earlier, Turkish Defence Minister Vecdi Gonul refused to give a timetable for a pull-out.

"Turkey will remain in northern Iraq as long as necessary" and the troops will return home once PKK hideouts are destroyed, he told reporters.

"There is no need for us to stay there after we finish (off) the terrorist infrastructure... We have no intention to interfere in (Iraqi) domestic politics, no intention to occupy any area," he said.

Gates had said Tuesday the offensive should last no longer than "a week or two" but Turkish army chief Yasar Buyukanit made it clear that Ankara would not be constrained by deadlines.

"A short time is a relative term. Sometimes this can mean one day and sometimes one year," he said after talks with Gates, adding that the United States has been fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan "for years."

Ankara says an estimated 4,000 rebels use northern Iraq as a base in their campaign for self-rule in Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast; the conflict has claimed more than 37,000 lives since the PKK took up arms in 1984.

The United States, along with the European Union, lists the PKK as a terrorist group and has supported NATO ally Turkey by providing intelligence on PKK movements.

Gates played down suggestions the United States could cut off the intelligence supply if Turkey refuses to withdraw quickly.

"We have shared interests and I think those interests are probably not advanced by making threats or by threatening to cut intelligence," he said.

But Washington is concerned that the incursion could broaden into a wider conflict between Turkish forces and the Iraqi Kurds, who run the autonomous administration of northern Iraq and are staunch US supporters.

Turkey has long accused Iraqi Kurds of providing the PKK with safe haven and weapons, and warned them this week not to shelter rebels fleeing the fighting.

As Gates flew back to Washington, he told reporters on his plane he discussed no date for withdrawal in Ankara but "I think they got our message."

Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell added: "They made it clear they believe it is in their interest to accomplish this operation quickly. But they also wish to accomplish the objectives they set out to."

Gates, who also met with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and President Abdullah Gul, urged Ankara to back up military action with political and economic gestures to the sizeable Kurdish community.

"That's the only way to isolate terrorism from the population and provide a long-term solution," he said.

Erdogan's government is already under pressure at home to improve Kurdish rights, tackle rampant poverty in the southeast and pardon PKK rebels to encourage them to lay down arms.

In northern Iraq, Turkish fighter jets and artillery pounded several locations near a key rebel base in Zap, close to the Turkish border, and intensive clashes erupted on the ground, local Iraqi security sources said Wednesday.

Turkish forces were also dropping leaflets over the snow-bound mountains calling on the militants to surrender.

The army says it has destroyed dozens of rebel hideouts, camps and ammunition depots, while losing 27 men.

The PKK claims to have killed around 100 soldiers, lost five and to have downed a Turkish attack helicopter.

Comment: George W. Bush and his partners in crime have no influence anymore, anywhere.. The Turks got annoyed and then very angry because Kurdish commandos kept crossing from northern Iraq, under American military control and killing Turks. Bush could do nothing to stop this and the Turks warned him several times that if he couldn't establish order, they would take it upon themselves to protect their citizens. Now the useless Bush wants to stop endangering the Kurdish oil that Israel has its eyes on. Everyone but the Democrats realizes that the United States has become a paper tiger and Bush is nothing more than a shabby hand puppet for the Neocons. George is now worried about his legacy. Don't worry, George, you won't have any. BH

Bush's Successful Surge: Official photograph Nr. 3.



Officially, this is no longer happening, according to the obedient Department of

Defense and the even more obedient American media. Obviously, therefore, this must not be a real picture. Of course the hundred such pictures we got from a member of the U.S. Army must be concocted by alQueda. After all, the CIA makes up the silly binLaden tapes so why can't alQueda make up Medical Corps pictures? Our beloved President ought to post these in the White House dining room when he is drinking his dinner. BH

US Military and Clandestine Operations in Foreign Countries - 1798-Present

February 25, 2008

by Global Policy Forum

1798-1800 France : Undeclared naval war against France , marines land in Puerto Plata.

1801-1805 Tripoli : War with Tripoli (Libya), called "First Barbary War".

1806 Spanish Mexico : Military force enters Spanish territory in headwaters of the Rio Grande .

1806-1810 Spanish and French in Caribbean : US naval vessels attack French and Spanish shipping in the Caribbean .

1810 Spanish West Florida : Troops invade and seize Western Florida , a Spanish possession.

1812 Spanish East Florida : Troops seize Amelia Island and adjacent territories.

1812 Britain : War of 1812, includes naval and land operations.

1813 Marquesas Island : Forces seize Nukahiva and establish first US naval base in the Pacific.

1814 Spanish (East Florida): Troops seize Pensacola in Spanish East Florida .

1814-1825 French, British and Spanish in Caribbean : US naval squadron engages French, British and Spanish shipping in the Caribbean .

1815 Algiers and Tripoli : US naval fleet under Captain Stephen Decatur wages "Second Barbary War" in North Africa .

1816-1819 Spanish East Florida : Troops attack and seize Nicholls' Fort, Amelia Island and other strategic locations. Spain eventually cedes East Florida to the US .

1822-1825 Spanish Cuba and Puerto Rico : Marines land in numerous cities in the Spanish island of Cuba and also in Spanish Puerto Rico.

1827 Greece : Marines invade the Greek islands of Argentiere, Miconi and Andross.

1831 Falkland/Malvinas Islands : US naval squadrons aggress the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic .

1832 Sumatra , Dutch East Indies : US naval squadrons attack Qallah Battoo.

1833 Argentina : Forces land in Buenos Aires and engage local combatants.

1835-1836 Peru : Troops dispatched twice for counter-insurgency operations.

1836 Mexico : Troops assist Texas war for independence.

1837 Canada : Naval incident on the Canadian border leads to mobilization of a large force to invade Canada . War is narrowly averted.

1838 Sumatra , Dutch East Indies : US naval forces sent to Sumatra for punitive expedition.

1840-1841 Fiji : Naval forces deployed, marines land.

1841 Samoa : Naval forces deployed, marines land.

1842 Mexico : Naval forces temporarily seize cities of Monterey and San Diego .

1843 China : Marines land in Canton .

1843 Ivory Coast : Marines land.

1846-1848 Mexico : Full-scale war. Mexico cedes half of its territory to the US by the Treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo .

1849 Ottoman Empire (Turkey): Naval force dispatched to Smyrna .

1852-1853 Argentina : Marines land in Buenos Aires .

1854 Nicaragua : Navy bombards and largely destroys city of San Juan del Norte. Marines land and set fire to the city.

1854 Japan : Commodore Perry and his fleet deploy at Yokohama .

1855 Uruguay : Marines land in Montevideo .

1856 Colombia (Panama Region) Marines land for counter-insurgency campaign.

1856 China : Marines deployed in Canton .

1856 Hawaii : Naval forces seize small islands of Jarvis, Baker and Howland in the Hawaiian Islands .

1857 Nicaragua : Marines land.

1858 Uruguay : Marines land in Montevideo .

1858 Fiji : Marines land.

1859 Paraguay : Large naval force deployed.

1859 China : Troops enter Shanghai .

1859 Mexico : Military force enters northern area.

1860 Portuguese West Africa : Troops land at Kissembó.

1860 Colombia (Panama Region): Troops and naval forces deployed.

1863 Japan : Troops land at Shimonoseki .

1864 Japan : Troops landed in Yedo.

1865 Colombia (Panama Region): Marines landed.

1866 Colombia (Panama Region): Troops invade and seize Matamoros , later withdraw.

1866 China : Marines land in Newchwang.

1867 Nicaragua : Marines land in Managua and Leon in Nicaragua .

1867 Formosa Island (Taiwan): Marines land.

1867 Midway Island : Naval forces seize this island in the Hawaiian Archipelago for a naval base.

1868 Japan : Naval forces deployed at Osaka , Hiogo, Nagasaki , Yokohama and Negata.

1868 Uruguay : Marines land at Montevideo .

1870 Colombia : Marines landed.

1871 Korea : Forces landed.

1873 Colombia (Panama Region): Marines landed.

1874 Hawaii : Sailors and marines landed.

1876 Mexico : Army again occupies Matamoros .

1882 British Egypt : Troops land.

1885 Colombia : (Panama Region) Troops land in Colon and Panama City .

1885 Samoa : Naval force deployed.

1887 Hawaii : Navy gains right to build permanent naval base at Pearl Harbor .

1888 Haiti : Troops landed.

1888 Samoa : Marines landed.

1889 Samoa : Clash with German naval forces.

1890 Argentina : US sailors land in Buenos Aires .

1891 Chile : US sailors land in the major port city of Valparaiso .

1891 Haiti : Marines land on US-claimed Navassa Island .

1893 Hawaii : Marines and other naval forces land and overthrow the monarchy. Read More

1894 Nicaragua : Marines land at Bluefields on the eastern coast.

1894-1895 China : Marines are stationed at Tientsin and Beijing . A naval ship takes up position at Newchwang.

1894-1896 Korea : Marines land and remain in Seoul .

1895 Colombia : Marines are sent to the town Bocas del Toro.

1896 Nicaragua : Marines land in the port of Corinto .

1898 Nicaragua : Marines land at the port city of San Juan del Sur.

1898 Guam : Naval forces seize Guam Island from Spain and the US holds the island permanently.

1898 Cuba : Naval and land forces seize Cuba from Spain .

1898 Puerto Rico : Naval and land forces seize Puerto Rico from Spain and the US holds the island permanently.

1898 Philippines : Naval forces defeat the Spanish fleet and the US takes control of the country.

1899 Philippines : Military units are reinforced for extensive counter-insurgency operations.

1899 Samoa : Naval forces land

1899 Nicaragua : Marines land at the port city of Bluefields .

1900 China : US forces intervene in several cities. Massive looting by U.S. troops.

1901 Colombia/Panama: Marines land.

1902 Colombia/Panama: US forces land in Bocas de Toro

1903 Colombia/Panama: With US backing, a group in northern Colombia declares independence as the state of Panama

1903 Guam : Navy begins development in Apra Harbor of a permanent base installation.

1903 Honduras :Marines: go ashore at Puerto Cortez.

1903 Dominican Republic : Marines land in Santo Domingo .

1904-1905 Korea: Marines land and stay in Seoul .

1906-1909 Cuba: Marines land. The US builds a major naval base at Guantanamo Bay .

1907 Nicaragua : Troops seize major centers.

1907 Honduras : Marines land and take up garrison in cities of Trujillo , Ceiba, Puerto Cortez, San Pedro, Laguna and Choloma.

1908 Panama : Marines land and carry out operations.

1910 Nicaragua : Marines land in Bluefields and Corinto.

1911 Honduras : Marines intervene.

1911-1941 China: The US builds up its military presence in the country to a force of 5000 troops and a fleet of 44 vessels patrolling China 's coast and rivers.

1912 Cuba : US sends army troops into combat in Havana .

1912 Panama : Army troops intervene.

1912 Honduras : Marines land.

1912-1933 Nicaragua: Marines intervene. A 20-year occupation of the country follows.

1913 Mexico : Marines land at Ciaris Estero.

1914 Dominican Republic : Naval forces engage in battles in the city of Santo Domingo .

1914 Mexico : US forces seize and occupy Mexico 's major port city of Veracruz from April through November.

1915-1916 Mexico: An expeditionary force of the US Army under Gen. John J. Pershing crosses the Texas border and penetrates several hundred miles into Mexican territory. Eventually reinforced to over 11,000 officers and men.

1914-1934 Haiti: Troops land, aerial bombardment leading to a 19-year military occupation.

1916-1924 Dominican Republic: Military intervention leading to 8-year occupation.

1917-1933 Cuba: Landing of naval forces. Beginning of a 15-year occupation.

1918-1920 Panama: Troops intervene, remain on "police duty" for over 2 years.

1918-1922 Russia: Naval forces and army troops fight battles in several areas of the country during a five- year period.

1919 Yugoslavia : Marines intervene in Dalmatia .

1919 Honduras : Marines land.

1920 Guatemala Troops intervene.

1922 Turkey : Marines engaged in operations in Smyrna (Izmir).

1922-1927 China: Naval forces and troops deployed during 5-year period.

1924-1925 Honduras: Troops land twice in two-year period.

1925 Panama : Marines land and engage in operations.

1927-1934 China: Marines and naval forces stationed throughout the country.

1932 El Salvador : Naval forces intervene.

1933 Cuba : Naval forces deployed.

1934 China Marines land in Foochow .

1946 Iran : Troops deployed in northern province .

1946-1949 China: Major US army presence of about 100,000 troops, fighting, training and advising local combatants.

1947-1949 Greece: US forces wage a 3-year counterinsurgency campaign.

1948 Italy : Heavy **CIA** involvement in national elections.

1948-1954 Philippines: Commando operations, "secret" **CIA** war.

1950-1953 Korea: Major forces engaged in war in Korean peninsula.

1953 Iran : **CIA** overthrows government of Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh.

1954 Vietnam : Financial and materiel support for colonial French military operations, leads eventually to direct US military involvement.

1954 Guatemala : **CIA** overthrows the government of President Jacobo Arbenz Guzman.

1958 Lebanon : US marines and army units totaling 14,000 land.

1958 Panama : Clashes between US forces in Canal Zone and local citizens.

1959 Haiti : Marines land.

1960 Congo : **CIA**-backed overthrow and CIA assassination of Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba.

1960-1964 Vietnam: Gradual introduction of military advisors and special forces.

1961 Cuba : **CIA**-backed Bay of Pigs invasion.

1962 Cuba : Nuclear threat and naval blockade.

1962 Laos : **CIA**-backed military coup.

1963 Ecuador : **CIA** backs military overthrow of President Jose Maria Valesco Ibarra.

1964 Panama : Clashes between US forces in Canal Zone and local citizens.

1964 Brazil : **CIA**-backed military coup overthrows the government of Joao Goulart and Gen. Castello Branco takes power.

1965-1975 Vietnam: Large commitment of military forces, including air, naval and ground units numbering up to 500,000+ troops. Full-scale war, lasting for ten years.

1965 Indonesia : **CIA**-backed army coup overthrows President Sukarno and brings

Gen. Suharto to power.

1965 Congo : CIA backed military coup overthrows President Joseph Kasavubu and brings Joseph Mobutu to power.

1965 Dominican Republic : 23,000 troops land. CIA assassinated Trujillo , Chief of State

1965-1973 Laos : Bombing campaign begin, lasting eight years.

1966 Ghana : CIA-backed military coup ousts President Kwame Nkrumah.

1966-1967 Guatemala: Extensive counter-insurgency operation.

1969-1975 Cambodia: CIA supports military coup against Prince Sihanouk, bringing Lon Nol to power. Intensive bombing for seven years along border with Vietnam .

1970 Oman : Counter-insurgency operation, including coordination with Iranian marine invasion.

1971-1973 Laos: Invasion by US and South Vietnames forces.

1973 Chile : CIA-backed military coup ousts government of President Salvador Allende. Gen. Augusto Pinochet comes to power.

1975 Cambodia : Marines land, engage in combat with government forces.

1976-1992 Angola: Military and CIA operations.

1980 Iran : Special operations units land in Iranian desert. Helicopter malfunction leads to aborting of planned raid.

1981 Libya : Naval jets shoot down two Libyan jets in maneuvers over the Mediterranean .

1981-1992 El Salvador: CIA and special forces begin a long counterinsurgency campaign.

1981-1990 Nicaragua: CIA directs exile "Contra" operations. US air units drop sea mines in harbors.

1982-1984 Lebanon Marines land and naval forces fire on local combatants.

1983 Grenada : Military forces invade Grenada .

1983-1989 Honduras: Large program of military assistance aimed at conflict in Nicaragua .

1984 Iran : Two Iranian jets shot down over the Persian Gulf .

1986 Libya : US aircraft bomb the cities of Tripoli and Benghazi , including direct strikes at the official residence of President Muamar al Qadaffi.

1986 Bolivia : Special Forces units engage in counter-insurgency.

1987-1988 Iran: Naval forces block Iranian shipping. Civilian airliner shot down by missile cruiser.

1989 Libya : Naval aircraft shoot down two Libyan jets over Gulf of Sidra .

1989 Philippines : CIA and Special Forces involved in counterinsurgency.

1989-1990 Panama: 27,000 troops as well as naval and air power used to overthrow government of President Noriega.

1990 Liberia : Troops deployed.

1990-1991 Iraq: Major military operation, including naval blockade, air strikes; large

number of troops attack Iraqi forces in occupied Kuwait .

1991-2003 Iraq: Control of Iraqi airspace in north and south of the country with periodic attacks on air and ground targets.

1991 Haiti : CIA-backed military coup ousts President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

1992-1994 Somalia: Special operations forces intervene.

1992-1994 Yugoslavia: Major role in NATO blockade of Serbia and Montenegro .

1993-1995 Bosnia: Active military involvement with air and ground forces.

1994-1996 Haiti: Troops depose military rulers and restore President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to office.

1995 Croatia : Krajina Serb airfields attacked.

1996-1997 Zaire (Congo): Marines involved in operations in eastern region of the country.

1997 Liberia : Troops deployed.

1998 Sudan : Air strikes destroy country's major pharmaceutical plant.

1998 Afghanistan : Attack on targets in the country.

1998 Iraq : Four days of intensive air and missile strikes.

1999 Yugoslavia : Major involvement in NATO air strikes.

2001 Macedonia : NATO troops shift and partially disarm Albanian rebels.

2001 Afghanistan : Air attacks and ground operations oust Taliban government and install a new regime.

2003 Iraq : Invasion with large ground, air and naval forces ousts government of Saddam Hussein and establishes new government.

2003-present Iraq : Occupation force of 150,000 troops in protracted counter-insurgency war

2004 Haiti Marines land. CIA-backed forces overthrow President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Note: This list does not pretend to be definitive or absolutely complete. Nor does it seek to explain or interpret the interventions. Information and interpretation on selected interventions will be later included as links. Note that US operations in World Wars I and II have been excluded.

The Wailing Wall

Sharon 's son begins Israeli jail term

February 27, 2008

AFP -

TEL AVIV (AFP) - - The son of former Israeli premier Ariel Sharon began a seven-month prison sentence on Wednesday for corruption and fraud in connection with his father's Likud party leadership bid.

Omri Sharon, a 43-year-old former MP, was taken from Tel Aviv district court in a prison van to a minimum-security jail in the centre of the country, just a day after his coma-stricken father turned 80.

Sharon was sentenced to jail and fined 300,000 shekels (81,000 dollars) in February 2006 after he was found guilty of fraud during his father's 1999 campaign for the leadership of

the right-wing Likud.

However, his sentence was delayed to allow him to spend time with his father, who had suffered a debilitating stroke in January 2006.

Last month, the Supreme Court ruled that Sharon must begin his jail term.

Ariel Sharon quit Likud to form the Kadima party in November 2005, just months after withdrawing Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip after 38 years of occupation and only weeks before he suffered the stroke that ended his career.

Omri Sharon, who was a key backroom ally, attracted an outpouring of national sympathy following the stroke because of his devotion, spending much of his time at his father's bedside.

The Progress of the Royal Turnip

February 28, 2008

by Brian Haring

In January of 2006, Aerial Sharon, Prime Minister of Israel, had a major brain hemorrhage and stroke and ended up paralyzed. Sharon was 77 years old and grossly overweight at the time of his stroke. He became comatose and had a 7-hour operation. He went in for a minor operation and had a stroke on the way. It is even more serious as he is only 5' 7" and over 260 pounds; the over weight being a real hindrance.

On 28 May 2006, Sharon was transferred from the hospital in Jerusalem to a long-term care unit of the Sheba Medical Center in Tel HaShomer, a large civilian and military hospital. *Ha'aretz* reported that this move was an indication that Sharon's doctors did not expect him to emerge from his coma in the foreseeable future. Dr. Yuli Krieger, a physician not involved in Sharon's case, told Israel Radio that the chances of waking up after such a lengthy coma were small. "Every day that passes after this kind of event with the patient still unconscious the chances that he will gain consciousness get smaller," said Krieger, Deputy Head of Levinstein House, another long-term care facility.

On 23 July 2006, CNN reported that Sharon's condition was deteriorating and his kidney function was worsening. On July 26, 2006 doctors moved him to intensive care and began hemofiltration. On 14 August 2006 doctors reported that Sharon's condition worsened significantly and that he was suffering from pneumonia in both lungs. On August 29, doctors reported that he had been successfully treated for his pneumonia and moved out of intensive care back to the long-term care unit.

On 3 November 2006, it was reported that Sharon had been admitted to intensive care after contracting an infection, though doctors insisted that his condition was 'stable'. He was moved out of the intensive care unit on November 6, 2006 after treatment for a heart infection. Doctors stated that "his heart function has improved after being treated for an infection and his overall condition has stabilised".

Sharon has remained in a long-term care centre since 6 November 2006. Medical experts have indicated that Sharon's cognitive abilities were destroyed by the massive stroke, and that he is in a **persistent vegetative state** with extremely slim chances of regaining consciousness. Due to circulation problems, doctors have had to amputate both of Sharon's legs at the knees. The amputated legs have been placed in cold storage to be reunited with the remainder of Sharon upon his death.

On 13 April 2007, it was reported that Sharon's condition has slightly improved and according to his son, Omri, was marginally responsive.

Beloved by far right Israelis, Sharon will forever be associated with the brutal military assaults and the Sabra and Shatila massacres in Lebanon in 1982.

And, to add insult to injury, the irrational American televangelist, Pat Robertson put on his clown suit and spoke to his 700 Club about Sharon :

'Ladies and Gentlemen I said last year that Israel was entering into the most dangerous periods of its entire existence as a nation. That is intensifying this year with the loss of Sharon . Sharon was personally a very likeable person and I am sad to see him in this condition, but I

think we need to look at the Bible and the Book of Joel. The prophet Joel makes it very clear that God has enmity against those who “divide my land.” God considers this land to be His. You read the Bible and He says “this is my land” and for any Prime Minister of Israel who decides he is going to carve it up and give it away, God says “no, this is mine.” I had a wonderful meeting with Yitzhak Rabin in 1974. He was tragically assassinated, it was a terrible thing that happened but nevertheless he was dead. And now Ariel Sharon who again was a very likeable person, a delightful person to be with, I prayed with him personally, but here he’s at the point of death. He was dividing God’s land and I would say woe unto any Prime Minister of Israel who takes a similar course to appease the EU, the United Nations, or the United States of America . God says “this land belongs to me. You’d better leave it alone.”’

As well as being a chief poster boy for dignity pants, Brother Pat is as nutty as a fruitcake (most televangelists are, but not as crazy as the loonies who send them money) and is a firm believer that if the Jews take over all of Jerusalem, Jesus will come waltzing down the highway, singing to himself and bring about the New Jerusalem, the Rapture, the Battle of Armageddon and other bizarre and fictive. happenings Way to go Pat, and take your Prozac! BH