

## US Out! Tehran via Baghdad no more

by Pepe Escobar via stan - Asia Times *Thursday, Oct 27 2011, 12:07pm*

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The new Holy Trinity mythology peddled by Washington to an unsuspecting world is that the Libya war is over, the Iraq war will be over by New Year's Eve, and the Afghan war will be over by 2014. And, Oh yes, Lindsay Lohan is the reincarnation of the Virgin Mary!

Let's focus on Iraq. There is one real reason for the United States troop withdrawal in December; the Nuri al-Maliki government in Baghdad bluntly denied blanket immunity from prosecution of war crimes to US soldiers. This implies, crucially, the Maliki government evicting the Pentagon from very convenient military bases in Iraq out of which a strike on Iran could be conducted.

It's essential to remember that this Shi'ite-majority Iraqi government - which inherited a totally devastated country - was arrived at via US-approved democratic elections. Now that entails two poetic justice developments; a democratic Iraq getting closer to the Islamic Republic of Iran; and democracy expelling the militarized face of empire.

No wonder Washington is dazed and confused. Naturally the Pentagon, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the State Department and/or all of the above are already working around the clock to come up with any number of mischief scenarios.

Expect reams of think-tank Middle East "experts" suggesting a US withdrawal as a diversionist tactic; the creation of a false flag/black ops gambit, such as the suicide bombing of a Saudi ambassador (oops, already tried this one); blaming the "terror" on Tehran; and then reshipping thousands of troops back to keep Iraq "safe from terror".

Washington currently has fewer than 40,000 US troops in Iraq, down from an all-time high of 170,000 in late 2007. For the moment, some 16,000 Americans (the size of an army division), split between US diplomats and "civilian contractors", aka weaponized mercenaries (8,000 of them, plus 4,500 "general life support", aka the help) are supposed to be staying on in Iraq.

This mix of bureaucrats, CIA spooks, special forces and barely disguised slaves will be the de facto US Secretary of State Hillary "We came, we saw, he died" Clinton's private army.

Iraqi nationalist leader Muqtada al-Sadr has other ideas; he has already announced that "they are all occupiers and resisting them after the end of the agreement is an obligation". It's easy to do the math and infer the consequences.

And they even stole our oil

If one pays attention to the Office of the Inspector General report number ISP-I-09-30A, even this 16,000 army division figure is bogus. The report, written in 2009, calls for a "significant rightsizing" (gotta love the terminology) of the larger-than-the-Vatican US Embassy in Baghdad, aka Clinton's palace; and stressed, "the rightsizing process has to begin immediately."

Yet no matter how many "rightsized" US boots remain on Iraqi ground, still the "how to nail Iran"

gambit looms large. The key feature of the recent Justice Department/Federal Bureau of Investigation/Drug Enforcement Agency "Fast and Furious" plot (see The Occupy Iran Fast and Furious plot (extended) Asia Times Online, October 14) was not its implausibility; it was to hammer home that the Iranians are evil entities who dare to disrespect the US by concocting all manner of Hollywood suspension of disbelief schemes to spread "terror".

Then there's the alleged veneer of respectability added to the sub-standard Hollywood shtick. Take a look at this Brookings Institution report, titled "Which Path to Persia?" [1] and written by a bunch of usual suspects such as Kenneth Pollack, Bruce Riedel, Michael O'Hanlon and Martin Indyk.

The record shows that Washington in fact has thrown almost everything in this book at Iran. The only "strategy" missing is a unilateral Israeli strike (the neo-conservatives are dying for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to go for it) which would be met by an Iranian retaliation, thus dragging in the US and opening up the possibility for a ground invasion (doomed from the start, but why should these authors care?)

Predictably, the ideal scenario for these and other Beltway armchair warmongers is for Tel Aviv to launch a sneak attack, with "retreating" US troops in Iraq offered as bait/sacrificial victims for a vicious Iranian retaliation. There couldn't be a more ideal pretext for dragging Washington into an unwinnable war - all over again.

Yet the bottom line, which Washington neo-conservatives will never process, is that the US lost the Iraq war, period.

There were no Saddam Hussein weapons of mass destruction, never. There was no Saddam-al-Qaeda connection. There was no bombing the Middle East into democracy because this was fabricated after the Shock and Awe fact; and although former US vice president Dick Cheney had elevated Iraq's oil fields to the status of a US national security priority in the early months of 2001, even before 9/11, the US didn't get the oil; the best contracts went to the Russians and the Chinese (see Iraq's oil auction hits the jackpot Asia Times Online, December 16, 2009).

As for how Washington "reconstructed" the country it devastated, suffice to read the painfully tragicomic account by former State Department insider Peter van Buren. [2]

This all feels like the Frank Zappa hit The Torture Never Stops. After the spectacular success of the cowardly North Atlantic Treaty Organization operation in Libya, those same nullities who in 2002, in the run-up to the attack on Iraq, were bragging that "real men go to Tehran", now want to use Americans as bait for an Israeli attack - and this while US sanctions on Iran are about to become a de facto blockade, which international law still deems as an act of war.

In a less than ideal world, a rogue MQ-9 Reaper would put these armchair warmongers out of their misery.

Notes:

1. [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/files/rc/papers/2009/06\\_iran\\_strategy/06\\_iran\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/files/rc/papers/2009/06_iran_strategy/06_iran_strategy.pdf)

2. [http://www.amazon.com/We-Meant-Well-American-Project/dp/0805094369/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1319599334&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/We-Meant-Well-American-Project/dp/0805094369/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1319599334&sr=1-1)

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[http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle\\_East/MJ27Ak02.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/MJ27Ak02.html)

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Cleaves Alternative News. <http://cleaves.lingama.net/news/story-2810.html>