

The Worsening Situation in Iraq

by Janet Jagan

The escalation of conflict in Iraq also brings to closer examination quite a number of matters, all relating in one way or another to the policies of the Bush administration in the USA. There is the hearing in Washington about the 9/11 attacks on the New York Twin Towers and the Pentagon. Evidence being heard by the bipartisan panel is raising new perceptions about the ability of the Bush Cabinet and its advisers to deal with the vital information that reached the White House before the catastrophic events of 9/11/2001.

Evidence is piling up that had Bush and his advisers paid attention to the intelligence reports, something might have been done to forestall the terrorists or at least to warn the public of an impending horrific assault. Some countries are distancing themselves from the Iraq occupation.

Known as a friend of the USA, King Abdullah of Jordan said recently that the invasion and occupation of Iraq has created widespread animosity against the USA among ordinary citizens across the Middle East. He has now postponed a visit to President Bush.

Spain's newly sworn in Prime Minister Jose Rodriguez Zapateu branded the Iraq occupation a fiasco and will be removing Spanish troops in the near future. Honduras is also withdrawing its troops.

The whole Arab world is in anger over the Bush endorsement of the Ariel Sharon plan to leave Gaza, but not the West Bank - both areas belonging to the Palestinian people. The Plan by Israeli Prime Minister Sharon gives nothing to the Palestinian people and Bush's support eliminates the USA as a "broker" in the matter.

Arab anger has also risen over the assassination of Hamas leader Abdel-Aziz al-Rantisi and the US reaction - that Israel has the right to defend itself against terrorist acts. The Hamas leader was killed in Gaza when an Israeli military helicopter shot a missile at the car Abdel-Aziz was in.

Even the UK, which has been labeled Bush's puppy, came out with a very strong condemnation of this act as "unlawful, unjustified and counter-productive." The European Union deemed the act "unlawful". A recent Reuters report states that Arab leaders who had predicted that a US invasion of Iraq would unleash chaos in multi-ethnic Iraq and the region now feel that their "ominous prophecy" is coming true.

The recent escalation of fighting by Shi'ite Muslims in the South and Sunni Muslims mainly in Fallujah can be termed "uprisings." However, listening to the American generals in Baghdad over TV, one would get the impression that the fighting is being carried out by terrorists and criminals. The US military have said unambiguously that they are out to kill Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, who, they claim, leads a few malcontents and criminals. Despite the downplaying of the threat to stability, Reuters news reports that "tens of thousands of Shi'ites" supported Sadr in his "main power base, the Baghdad slum district of Sadr City." Sadr's guerillas are in control of Najaf. No doubt there would be a greater upsurge of resistance to the US occupation if Sadr were captured or killed.

American military top brass, speaking to the media in Baghdad, profess that their attacks are only on the fighters, but evidence shows that the number of dead is high - some 600, of which many are civilians, children, the elderly and women. CNN showed a small child who lost a hand and a leg in Fallujah, while his grandfather who was carrying him, was killed. No matter how the generals try to downplay the upsurge in fighting, the fact remains that the USA is in serious trouble in Iraq. It has already lost more soldiers in two weeks of fighting than it did during the war on Iraq. The irony of it all - and remarked upon by the world media - is that UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and US President George Bush, who went against the advice and rulings of the United Nations in order to rush into Iraq, now are calling on the UN to come in and save the sticky situation. This was made clear last week when the two key leaders of the "Coalition" that invaded Iraq met at the White House and called on the UN for help. Their faces should have been a bright red!

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Cheddi Jagan Research Centre