

The March to War: Naval Build-Up in the Persian Gulf and the Eastern Mediterranean

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We bring to the attention of our readers, this carefully documented review of the ongoing naval build-up and deployment of coalition forces in the Middle East.

The article examines the geopolitics behind this military deployment and its relationship to the Battle for Oil.

The structure of military alliances is crucial to an understanding of these war preparations.

The naval deployment is taking place in two distinct theaters: the Persian Gulf and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Both Israel and NATO are slated to play a major role in the US-led war.

The militarization of the Eastern Mediterranean is broadly under the jurisdiction of NATO in liaison with Israel. Directed against Syria, it is conducted under the façade of a UN peace-keeping mission pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 1701. In this context, the war on Lebanon must be viewed as a stage of a the broader US sponsored military road-map.

The naval armada in the Persian Gulf is largely under US command, with the participation of Canada.

The naval buildup is coordinated with the planned air attacks. The planning of the aerial bombings of Iran started in mid-2004, pursuant to the formulation of CONPLAN 8022 in early 2004. In May 2004, National Security Presidential Directive [NSPD 35 entitled Nuclear Weapons Deployment Authorization](#) was issued. While its contents remains classified, the presumption is that NSPD 35 pertains to the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in the Middle East war theater in compliance with CONPLAN 8022.

These war plans must be taken very seriously.

The World is at the crossroads of the most serious crisis in modern history. The US has embarked on a military adventure, a long war, which threatens the future of humanity.

In the weeks ahead, it is essential that citizens' movements around the world act consistently to confront their respective governments and reverse and dismantle this military agenda.

What is needed is to break the conspiracy of silence, expose the media lies and distortions, confront the criminal nature of the US Administration and of those governments which support it, its war agenda as well as its so-called Homeland Security agenda which has already defined the contours of a police State.

It is essential to bring the US war project to the forefront of political debate, particularly in North America and Western Europe. Political and military leaders who are opposed to the

war must take a firm stance, from within their respective institutions. Citizens must take a stance individually and collectively against war.

The probability of another war in the Middle East is high. Only time will tell if the horrors of further warfare is to fully materialize. Even then, the shape of a war is still undecided in terms of its outcome.

If war is to be waged or not against Iran and Syria, there is still the undeniable build-up and development of measures that confirm a process of military deployment and preparation for war.

The diplomatic forum also seems to be pointing to the possibility of war. The decisions being made, the preparations being taken, and the military maneuvers that are unfolding on the geo-strategic chessboard are projecting a prognosis and forecast towards the direction of mobilization for some form of conflict in the Middle East.

In this context, people do not always realize that a war is never planned, executed or even anticipated in a matter of weeks. Military operations take months and even years to prepare. A classical example is Operation Overlord (popularly identified as "D-Day"), which resulted in the Battle of Normandy and the invasion of France. Operation Overlord took place on June 6, 1944, but the preparations for the military operation took eighteen months, "officially," to set the stage for the invasion of the French coast. It was during a meeting in Casablanca, Morocco in January, 1943 that the U.S. President, F.D. Roosevelt, and the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, outlined a strategy to invade Normandy.[1]

With regard to Iraq, the "Downing Street memo2" confirms that the decision to go to war in 2003 was decided in 2002 by the United States and Britain, and thus the preparations for war with Iraq were in reality started in 2002, a year before the invasion. The preparations for the invasion of Iraq took place at least a entire year to arrange. [2]

The period from 1991 to 2003 has seen continuous military operations against Iraq by the Anglo-American alliance. This period that has lasted for over a decade saw stages of heavy bombardment and major air strikes on a crippled Iraqi republic and its citizens. In reality the conditions for the groundwork and preparations of the invasion and eventual occupation of Iraq took over ten years to materialize. Iraq was weakened and its strength diluted within these ten years.

Even prior to this decade of Anglo-American bombardment and U.N. sanctions, Iraq was caught in an eight-year war with Iran in the 1980s. The war between Iran and Iraq was also fuelled and organized by the United States to weaken both. In retrospect the manipulation of a war between Iran and Iraq to weaken both states seems to be strategic planning in preparation for future military operations against them. In this time preparations were also being made by securing the Balkans for future Anglo-American operations. The Balkans is adjacent to the Middle East and is also a geographic extension of the region. Preparations were made by expanding NATO, shifting military bases eastward, and securing energy routes. Dismantling the state of Yugoslavia was also a part of this objective. Yugoslavia was the regional power of the Balkans and Southeast Europe. This was done through close coordination between the Anglo-American alliance and NATO. Now all eyes are on Iran and Syria. Will there be another Anglo-American initiated war in the Middle East?

Overview of Naval Confrontation Against Iran

The Pentagon has already drawn up plans for U.S. sponsored attacks on Iran and Syria.[3] Despite the public posturing of diplomacy by the United States and Britain, just like the Iraq Invasion, Iran and Syria sense another Anglo-American war in the horizon. Both countries have been strengthening their defenses for the eventuality of war with the Anglo-American alliance.

A conflict against Iran and Syria, if it were to materialize, would be unlike previous Anglo-American sponsored conflicts. It would be wider in scope, deadlier, and have active aerial and water (naval) fronts.

Sea power would be of greater significance than in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Lebanon. The United States would covet a quick victory. The chances of this happening are unknown. If there were to be a conflict with Iran, the United States and its partners would want to keep the Straits of Hormuz open for the flow of international oil. The Straits of Hormuz are the "energy lifeline of the world."

The United States would without doubt quickly aim for the collapse of the Iranian and Syrian commands and military structures.

It must be noted that the Iranian Armed Forces are characterized by well structured military organization, with advanced military capabilities, when compared to Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Lebanon. Moreover, Iran has been preparing for a scenario of war with the Anglo-American alliance for almost a decade. These preparations were stepped up following the NATO-U.S. led attack on Yugoslavia (1999).

The types of military units and weapons systems being deployed in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea by the United States are considered to be best suited for combat against Iran, also with a view to keeping the Straits of Hormuz open for oil tankers. This also includes forces that would be able to secure bridgeheads on the Iranian coastline. These U.S. forces consist of early warning units, reconnaissance, amphibious elements, maritime search and rescue units, minesweepers, and rapid deployment units.

US Strike Groups: Cargo intended for War?

The U.S.S. Enterprise a U.S. Navy flagship is under deployment to the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea. This includes all the warships and vessels that compose Carrier Strike Group 12 (CSG 12) Destroyer Squadron 2 (DESRON 2), and Carrier Air Wing 1 (CVW 1). The stated objective for the deployment of the U.S.S. Enterprise, a nuclear powered aircraft carrier, and other U.S. Navy vessels is to conduct naval security operations and aerial missions in the region. The deployment does not mention Iran, it is said to be part of the U.S.-led "War on Terror" under "Operation Enduring Freedom."



(Photo: Global Research)

Originally the name for Operation Enduring Freedom was "Operation Infinite Justice," which highlights the unlimited scope and intentions of the War on Terror. "Operation Iraqi Freedom" which envelops the Anglo-American invasion and the continued occupation of Iraq is also a component of these operations. A large number of U.S. warships are deployed in the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman, and the Arabian Sea.

While this deployment is said to be related to ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the warships are carrying with them equipment which is not intended for these two war theaters. Minesweepers and mine-hunters have absolutely no use in landlocked Afghanistan and are not needed in Iraq which has a maritime corridor and ports totally controlled by the Anglo-American alliance.

Other warships in the Enterprise Strike Group include the destroyer U.S.S. McFaul, the war frigate U.S.S. Nicholas, the battle cruiser U.S.S. Leyte Gulf, the attack submarine U.S.S. Alexandria, and the "fast combat support ship" U.S.N.S. Supply. The U.S.N.S. Supply will be a useful vessel in confronting the Iranian forces in the Persian Gulf in close-quarter combat. Speed will be an important factor in responding to potentially lethal Iranian missile and anti-ship missile attacks.

The U.S.S. Enterprise carries with it a host of infiltration, aerial attack, and rapid deployment units. This includes Marine Strike Fighter Squadron 251, Electronic Attack Squadron 137, and Airborne Early Warning Squadron 123. Squadron 123 will be vital in the event of a war with Iran in detecting Iranian missiles and sending warnings of danger to the U.S. fleet. Special mention should be made of the helicopter squadron specialized for combating submarines traveling with the strike group. "Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron 11" will be on board the U.S.S. Enterprise. The Persian Gulf is known to be the home of the Iranian submarine fleet, the only indigenous submarine fleet in the region.

The Eisenhower Strike Group, based in Norfolk, Virginia, has also received orders to deploy to the Middle East. The strike group is led by the U.S.S. Eisenhower, another nuclear battleship. It includes a cruiser, a destroyer, a war frigate, a submarine escort, and U.S. Navy supply ships. One of these two naval strike groups will position itself in the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea while the other naval strike group will position itself in the Persian Gulf, both off the Iranian coast.



(Photo: Global Research)

Another Strike Group Performs Anti-Submarine Drills and Sets Sail for the Persian Gulf

Another assault or strike group of U.S. warships, "Expeditionary Strike Group 5," are setting off to sea too. This strike group is setting sail from Naval Station San Diego with the Persian Gulf in the Middle East as their final destination. Over 6,000 U.S. Marines and Navy personnel will be deployed to the Persian Gulf and Anglo-American occupied Iraq from San Diego.[4] Approximately 4,000 U.S. sailors and 2,200 U.S. Marines from the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit at Camp Pendleton will make the bulk of the force. The warships and the servicemen they carry will reportedly have a tour of duty in the Persian Gulf and "possibly" Anglo-American occupied Iraq for half a year. They will also be joined by other ships including a Coast Guard vessel. A Marine air wing of 38 helicopters also is on board and travelling to the Persian Gulf.

The Marine contingent of the force is not destined for deployment in Iraq. It must be noted that the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit is, however, able to "rapidly deploy" on "order" using large landing craft stowed aboard the strike group's warships. If ordered this rapid deployment unit has the strong potential of being used as part of an invasion force against Iran from the Persian Gulf. The Marine unit would be ideal in being part of an operation with the objective(s) of securing Iranian ports to create beachheads for an invasion.

Expeditionary Strike Group 5 (ESG 5) is being led by the assault ship the U.S.S. Boxer as the flagship. Expeditionary Strike Group 5 (ESG 5) will also consist of the U.S.S. Dubuque, a "dock landing vessel," the naval transport ship the U.S.S. Comstock, the battle cruiser the U.S.S. Bunker Hill, the guided-missile hauling destroyer the U.S.S. Benfold, and the guided-missile

hauling destroyer the U.S.S. Howard. Once again, these vessels will all be deployed in the Persian Gulf, in nearby proximity to the Iranian coast.

It is noteworthy to mention that the command and control structure of the group will be separated from the vessels for maximum flexibility. Also before the U.S. Naval strike group reaches the Persian Gulf it will be performing "anti-submarine drills and operations." The anti-submarine exercises will take place off the coast of Hawaii, in the Pacific Ocean. This can be training and preparation intended for combating the Iranian submarine fleet in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea. The warships will also be joined in Hawaii by Seattle-based U.S. Coast Guard and by a Canadian navy frigate, the H.M.C.S. Ottawa.

Canada Contributes to the American-Led Naval Build-Up in the Persian Gulf

The Conservative government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper is actively collaborating in this military endeavor.

Canadian foreign policy has been steadily and successively militarized by two successive governments.

The government of Prime Minister Paul Martin (Liberal) implemented the "three-dimensional policy" of the "3-Ds" ("Diplomacy", "Development," and "Defense), adding a military component to Canadian foreign aid and development assistance.

The 3-Ds brought Canada into performing as more active role in U.S.-led operations in NATO garrisoned Afghanistan. Despite the public protest, Canada has become an integral member of the Anglo-American military alliance.

Canada's involvement is not limited to Afghanistan as suggested by the press reports and official statements.

The H.M.C.S. Ottawa has been dispatched to the Persian Gulf, leaving in September, from British Columbia. Officially the H.M.C.S. Ottawa is being deployed as part of Canada's contribution to fighting the "War on Terrorism." The Canadian vessel is the first publicly known ship to be deployed to the waters of the Middle East in about a year.[5] The Canadian vessel is slated to be fully integrated into Expeditionary Strike Group 5 (ESG 5), which will be seafaring in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, off the Iranian coast.



HMCS Ottawa
(Photo: Global Research)

The Canadian Pacific Fleet vessel, the H.M.C.S. Ottawa, will be the twentieth official Canadian naval deployment in support of the United States and Britain in the War on Terrorism. About 225 personnel will be on board the Canadian Navy ship, including a Sea King helicopter detachment.[6]

While the H.M.C.S. Ottawa is supporting the American-led war on terrorism, it is also to participate in anti-submarine exercises off the coast of Hawaii.

For what purpose are these exercises being conducted? How many countries in the Middle East or Persian Gulf have submarines? Iran is the only country in the Persian Gulf, which is not an ally of the U.S., which possesses an indigenous submarine fleet.

US Coast Guard Implicated in the Conflict with Iran

The U.S. Coast Guard is the fifth and smallest branch of the U.S. Armed Forces. The other four branches of the U.S. military are the U.S. Marines, Navy, Air Force, and the Army. The U.S. Coast Guard is unique in that it is a force that is one-third military, one-third law enforcement, and one-third a maritime search and rescue entity. In peacetime the U.S. Coast Guard falls under the jurisdiction and mandate of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, but at the Defense Department's request, the Coast Guard can operate under military missions at sea. In a time of war when the need is urgent, the U.S. Coast Guard falls under the direct jurisdiction of the Pentagon as a military force.

The U.S. Coast Guard is beginning to see more use and deployment with the U.S. Navy. Coast Guards are being prepared for operations in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea. Although this is not an unusual event by itself, it can be significant in relationship to other events and military movements unfolding and taking place. The U.S. Coast Guard will be of great value in the event of a conflict with Iran. U.S. Coast Guard can "enter ports that other warships can not." [7] This would be useful in securing bridgeheads of entry for an invasion force into Iran. The U.S. Coast Guard is also specialized in maritime search and rescue operations, unlike the U.S. Navy or the Marines. This is significant since it is predicted by military analysts that there will definitely be U.S. vessels that will be destroyed and heavily damaged in the Persian Gulf by the Iranian Armed

Forces in the event of a conflict between the United States and Iran. U.S. Coast Guard will be crucial in rescue operations, besides speedy operations, protecting U.S. Navy ships, and the entry of ports or shores which other warships can not enter.

"What we bring to the strike group is the ability to conduct intercepts and maritime security operations," and, "The tools used to fight crime and save lives at home [in the United States] are valuable in the war zone [the Persian Gulf]," elucidates Lee Alexander the commander of the U.S.S. Midgett[8]

Media Reports of Planned Attacks on Iran and Syria

There have been several reports in the international media, which have provided details regarding the military plans to attack Iran and Syria. These include reports from Israeli sources on attacks intended for Syria, Iran, and Lebanon. Some of these media reports even quote Members of the Israeli Knesset (MKs).[9] The German and European media have published various articles on possible NATO and Turkish involvement in the planned U.S. air strikes on Iran. The Times (U.K.) reported in March, 2006 that:

"When Major-General Axel Tüttelmann, the head of NATO's Airborne Early Warning and Control Force, showed off an AWACs early warning surveillance plane in Israel a fortnight ago, he caused a flurry of concern back at [NATO] headquarters in Brussels. It was not his demonstration that raised eyebrows, but what he said about NATO's possible involvement in any future [Anglo-American] military strike against Iran. 'We would be the first to be called up if the NATO council decided we should be,' he said. NATO would prefer the emphasis to remain on the 'if', but Tüttelmann's comments revealed that the military alliance [NATO] could play a supporting role if America launches air strikes against Iranian nuclear targets [including military facilities, industrial locations, and infrastructure]." [10]

United Press International (UPI) on December, 2005 reported that:

The Bush administration is preparing its NATO allies for a possible military strike against suspected nuclear sites in Iran in the New Year [2006], according to German media reports, reinforcing similar earlier suggestions in the Turkish media.

The Berlin daily Der Tagesspiegel this week quoted NATO intelligence sources who claimed that the NATO allies had been informed that the United States is currently investigating all possibilities of bringing the mullah-led regime [Iranian government] into line, including military options. This all options are open line has been President George W. Bush's publicly stated policy throughout the past 18 months.

But the respected German weekly Der Spiegel notes What is new here is that Washington appears to be dispatching high-level officials to prepare its allies for a possible attack rather than merely implying the possibility as it has repeatedly done during the past year [2005].

The German news agency DDP cited Western security sources to claim that CIA Director Porter Goss asked Turkey's premier Recep Tayyip Erdogan to provide political and logistic support for air strikes against Iranian nuclear and military targets. Goss, who visited Ankara and met Erdogan on Dec. 12 [2005], was also reported to have asked for special cooperation from Turkish intelligence to help prepare and monitor the operation.

(...)

DDP cited German security sources who added that the Turks had been assured of a warning in advance if and when the military strikes took place, and had also been given a green light to mount their own attacks on the bases in Iran of the PKK, (Kurdish Workers party), which Turkey sees as a separatist group responsible for terrorist attacks inside Turkey.[11]

The "green light" given by the United States for Turkish military incursions would in all likelihood also include Kurdistan, including at some point Iraqi Kurdistan and Kurdish inhabited areas in Syria.

Time Magazine and the "Prepare to Deploy Order" of the Eisenhower Strike Group

The latest U.S. reports provide details of preparations to go to war with Iran and Syria. Time magazine confirms that orders have been given for deployment of a submarine, a battleship, two minesweepers, and two mine-hunters in the Persian Gulf by October 2006. There are very few places in the world where minesweepers would be needed or used besides the Persian Gulf. There also very few places where anti-submarine drills are required , besides the Persian Gulf.

Anti-submarine drills are what Expeditionary Strike Group 5 (EST 5) is performing in the Pacific before it heads to the Persian Gulf, together with Canada's H.M.C.S. Ottawa and units of the U.S. Coast Guard.

The *Time Magazine* article intimates that the operation could result in heavy American casualties.

"The first message was routine enough: a 'Prepare to Deploy Order' sent through naval communications channels to a submarine, an Aegis-class cruiser, two minesweepers and two mine-hunters. The orders didn't actually command the ships out of port; they just said be ready to move by October 1 [2006]. A deployment of minesweepers to the east coast of Iran would seem to suggest that a much discussed, but until now largely theoretical, prospect has become real: that the U.S. may be preparing for war with Iran." [12]

Award-winning investigative reporter and journalist Dave Lindorff has written:

[Retired] Colonel Gardiner, who has taught military strategy at the National War College [of the United States], says that the [U.S. Navy] carrier deployment and a scheduled Persian Gulf arrival date of October 21 [2006] is "very important evidence" of war planning. He says, {"I know that some naval forces have already received 'prepare to deploy orders' [PTDOs], which have set the date for being ready to go as October 1 [2006]. Given that it would take about from October 2 to October 21 to get those forces to the [Persian] Gulf region, that looks about like the date" of any possible military action against Iran. (A PTDO means that all crews should be at their stations, and ships and planes should be ready to go, by a certain date - in this case, reportedly, October 1.) Gardiner notes, "You cannot issue a PTDO and then stay ready for very long. It's a very significant order, and it's not done as a training exercise." This point was also made in the Time article.

(...)

I think the plan's been picked: bomb the nuclear sites in Iran, says [Colonel] Gardiner. It's a terrible idea, it's against U.S. law and it's against international law, but I think they've decided to do it. Gardiner says that while the United States has the capability to hit those sites with its cruise missiles, the Iranians have many more options than we [the United States] do.

(...)

Of course, Gardiner agrees, recent ship movements and other signs of military preparedness could be simply a bluff designed to show toughness in the bargaining with Iran over its nuclear program. But with the Iranian coast reportedly armed to the teeth with Chinese Silkworm anti-ship missiles, and possibly even more sophisticated Russian anti-ship weapons, against which the [U.S.] Navy has little reliable defenses, it seems unlikely the Navy would risk high-value assets like aircraft carriers or cruisers with such a tactic. Nor has bluffing been a Bush [Administration] MO [tactic] to date.[13]

The Pentagon responded to the Time magazine report by stating that the Chief of Naval Operations had merely asked the U.S. Navy to "put 'fresh eyes' on old U.S. plans to blockade two Iranian oil ports on the [Persian] Gulf." [14] This response in itself is questionable to analysts. Why would the United States want to stop the flow of oil from Iran, a major petroleum exporting nation, which would harm U.S. allies and the world economy?

Iranian Naval Force and Anti-Ship Missiles

Iranian naval strength is divided into two main forces. One is the Navy within the Iranian Regular Armed Forces and the other is the naval branch of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. Both forces have been updating and improving their equipment over the years. The aim of both naval forces is to act as a deterrent to the threat of invasion or attack from the United States.

Iran has a submarine fleet of Iranian and Russian manufactured submarines, a hovercraft fleet that was once the largest in the world, ROVs (remotely operated vehicles), various surface vessels of different sizes and operations, naval airborne units which include several helicopter squadrons, minesweepers, and a large arsenal of anti-ship missiles. The Iranian submarine fleet also includes mini-submarines manufactured domestically in Iran. [15]

Iran has been going through a naval build-up in the last decade. For example, in connection with the August 2006 Iranian war games and exercises, the Iranian military displayed its latest "Patrol Torpedo (PT) boats." PT boats are small naval vessels that have been used effectively to attack larger warships. These types of ships could be a threat to the U.S. strike groups deploying in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea. Naval Commander Kouchaki told Fars News Agency (FNA) that: "Joshani [a new Iranian PT boat] enjoys the world's latest technology, specially with regard to its military, electrical and electronic systems, frame and chassis, and it has the capabilities required for launching powerful missiles." "Similar to Iran's first PT boat 'Peykan', 'Joshani' also has a speed of over 45 sea knots which makes it even faster than the same generation of PT boats manufactured by other countries. The vessel is capable of using various missiles and rockets with a range beyond 100 km [62.14 miles], high maneuverability power that helps it to escape torpedoes, and enjoys the most advanced sea shell of the world called 'Fajr'." The 76mm-caliber shell, which only Iran, the United States, and Italy can manufacture, of the new Iranian PT boat also enjoys a wide variety of military capabilities and can hit sea and air targets within the range of 19 km or 23 thousand feet in distance, respectively. [16]

Iran has also tested a series of "submarine-to-surface" anti-ship missiles during its August 2006 war games [17]. The latter seem to have raised some concern that Iran could disrupt the flow of oil through the Persian Gulf in the event of an Anglo-American assault. [18]

In its April 2006 war games, Iran tested an anti-ship missile, reported as "the world's fastest," with a top speed of approximately 362 kilometres per hour (km/h) or 225 miles per hour (m/h). The anti-ship missile is designed to destroy large submarines and is said to be too fast for most vessels to escape even if it is caught on their radar. [19] Early warning systems will be essential for the U.S. in combating the Iranian military.

If storm clouds should gather above the Persian Gulf, the United States will have to keep the Straits of Hormuz open, international oil traffic running, and simultaneously face a large barrage of Iranian missiles from land, air, and sea. This includes deadly Iranian anti-ship missiles that Iran has developed with the help of Russia and China.

There have been warnings by analysts that the Persian Gulf could be closed off and turned into a shooting gallery by the Iranian Armed Forces. Iranian weaponry is also reported to be invisible to radar and can travel at high speeds. Amongst names mentioned in regards to Iranian anti-ship

missiles are the modified Russian and Chinese "Silkworms" and "Sunburns," which are based on earlier Soviet models.

The Iranian arsenal includes anti-ship missiles like the C-802 and Kowsar. The C-802 anti-ship missiles are missiles that originate from China. Kowsar anti-ship missiles are basically land-based anti-ship missiles (land-to-sea missiles) which can dodge electronic jamming systems.[20]

At this stage, it is impossible to say how the U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard will perform against Iranian anti-ship missiles, in the context of a "real combat situation."

Navy and Troop Movements in the Eastern Mediterranean

There is also considerable military movement and build-up of allied forces in the Eastern Mediterranean, formally under the guise of a peace-keeping operation pursuant to U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701.

Italy has redeployed Italian troops from Iraq, including commando units and armored reconnaissance units, to Lebanon. Two marine units, one belonging to the Italian Army and the other belonging to the Italian Navy, have been sent to Lebanon. Both are veteran units of separate tours of service in Anglo-American occupied Iraq. The Italian Army has sent the "Lagunari" of the Venice-based marine infantry unit the "Serenissima Regiment," while the Italian Navy has sent the "San Marco Regiment."

Spanish units and troops have been deployed near Tyre and the Israeli border in South Lebanon. Spain, with two warships off the coast of Lebanon is projected to have the third largest force from the E.U., after Italy and France.[21] Large contingents of Spanish troops are additionally based away from the Mediterranean coast, around Jdeidet-Marjayoun (Marjayoun), near the Syrian border and both the Sheba Farms and Golan Heights occupied by Israel.

German warships will also join the vessels of other fellow NATO members in patrolling the coasts of the Eastern Mediterranean. Germany will eventually take over command of the naval forces from Italy. The German government has launched battle frigates and fast patrol boats to post-siege Lebanon.[22]

"The naval mission, the first German deployment to the Middle East since the end of the Second World War, was backed by 442 lawmakers, with 152 against and five abstentions. As many as 2,400 German [naval] personnel will now be deployed to the region, backed by a one-year mandate expiring August 31, 2007. The mission brings the number of German soldiers [meaning servicemen] serving overseas to above 10,000 for the first time in postwar [meaning post-World War II] history." [23]

The coalition government of Denmark, formed by the Danish Conservative People's Party and the Liberal Party of Denmark, has been a steadfast supporter of Anglo-American military objectives. The Danish government led by Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen has sent Danish troops to both Anglo-American occupied Iraq and NATO garrisoned Afghanistan. Three Danish warships have also set sail for the Eastern Mediterranean to join the NATO armada of warships gathering off the Lebanese and Syrian coastlines. The Peter Tordenskiold, a naval corvette, and two Danish missile cruisers, the Raven and the Hawk, have been on stand-by for military operations in the Eastern Mediterranean since the end of the Anglo-American sponsored siege of Lebanon. The Danish naval attachment has been waiting in Wilhelmshaven, a German naval base, for a "go-ahead order" for nearly two weeks in early September, 2006.[24] The Danish government is also talking about sending more troops to Afghanistan, which would join the 2,000 troops to be dispatched by Romania and Poland in early October, 2006.[25]

In Lebanon, France is involved in military operations on the ground, whereas Italian and German warships head the naval mission in the Eastern Mediterranean. Some 2,000 French troops are slated to be deployed in Lebanon. French tanks and armored units have helped comprise "the most powerful Armor ever deployed by a United Nations peacekeeping force" in history.[26]

Greek warships are also part of the naval armada in the Eastern Mediterranean. Ten Greek warships, which include diving units and navy helicopters, have added their strength to the NATO naval force off Lebanon with orders to "use force if needed." The Greek naval commitment is coming at a reported cost of approximately 150,000 Euros for every week of operation to the Greek government. The Greek warships will dock in the southern port of Larnaca. Larnaca is on the southern side of the island of Cyprus and faces Lebanon. This is until the naval facilities of the Lebanese capital, Beirut, are deemed ready and safe by the commanders of the naval armada.[27]

The Netherlands is deploying alternating warships, with a reported 150 Dutch sailors. The Dutch warships will be comprised of one frigate and a supply ship offering logistics support to the naval fleet gathering in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Dutch deployment should start sometime in October 2006 and will continue sailing the Eastern Mediterranean until August, 2007. The Dutch Defense Minister has also said that the Dutch commitment could be extended by an additional extra 12 months.[28]

Belgium is also dispatching 400 troops to Southern Lebanon. The Belgian Defense Minister has been one of several defense officials visiting Lebanon to make preparations for military operations in Lebanon.[29] Other defense officials in liaison with Lebanon have been dispatched by Italy and France.

Turkish troops have not yet positioned themselves in Lebanon and face strong domestic opposition. Turkey, an Israeli ally and NATO member, is to send troops to Lebanon by the end of October, 2006.[30] This is happening despite of the mass public outcry and opposition in Turkey to the deployment of Turkish soldiers to Lebanon.

A former Turkish high ranking civilian representative of NATO in Afghanistan, Hikmet Cetin in a televised address attempted to reassure Turkish public opinion, emphasizing that Turkish troops would be going to Afghanistan, rather than to Lebanon:

...the number of Turkish soldiers [in Afghanistan] has more than doubled from 300 to 700 over the last month [September, 2006]. Ankara can increase the number of soldiers in the upcoming period for the security of Kabul [Afghanistan], but it won't send soldiers to clashes [in South Lebanon]."[31]

Bulgaria, another NATO member with troops in Afghanistan and (until 2005/2006) in Iraq, will be sending naval and ground forces to Lebanon.[32]

In turn, Britain will be dispatching a small contingent of troops to South Lebanon.[33] The U.A.E., an Arab sheikdom, has been given a mandate to clear the Israeli landmines and booby-traps left south of the Litani River,[34] an important source of water in the Levant that Israel has always had its eyes on. The U.A.E. has contracted its de-mining operations in South Lebanon to a British private security firm. The British security firm, "ArmorGroup International," has received a 5.6 million U.S. dollar (2.9 million pound sterling) contract for a year of work in South Lebanon.[35] ArmorGroup has also been providing security for the United States military in Iraq, the Persian Gulf, and Afghanistan, including protecting U.S. Navy facilities in Bahrain. The British security firm has additionally been providing security for oil and gas consortiums in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, Nigeria, and the former Soviet Union, including Kazakhstan and the Republic of

Azerbaijan.[36] As in the cases of Afghanistan and Anglo-American occupied Iraq, private security firms are also starting to move into Lebanon, along with NATO.

NATO has "unofficially" moved in to fill the vacuum left by war in Lebanon as it "officially" did in the case of Afghanistan. NATO signed a military cooperation agreement with Israel in 2005. These NATO troops could become an occupation force, as is the case in Afghanistan.[37]

Israeli ground forces have not fully withdrawn from South Lebanon pursuant to the U.N. Security Council resolution and ceasefire.

Meanwhile Israeli vessels have turned over the responsibility for the enforcement of the illegal naval embargo on Lebanon to NATO naval vessels and warships.

This naval embargo recalls the internationally illegal "No-fly Zones" established over Iraq by the United States, Britain, and France, which contributed to weakening Iraq in the years prior to the 2003 Anglo-American invasion.

The crucial question is whether this naval embargo and militarization of the Eastern Mediterranean is part of the preparations for future military operation(s) directed against Syria. The illegal embargo has U.N. approval. It is upheld as part of the monitoring of the Lebanese coastline to enforce the entry of military supplies and weapons into Lebanon.

Russia and China Send Troops to Lebanon, A Symmetrical Strategic Move

The Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China have also deployed troops in Lebanon. Is this for peacekeeping or are there other objectives of strategic nature?

A Russian sapper (military field/combat engineer) battalion is also being airlifted to Lebanon by the Russian Air Force.[38] The Russian Defense Minister has said that the Russian sappers and their battalion will start work in Lebanon at the start of October 2006. All that is formally needed is "an agreement on the status of the combat engineer battalion with the Lebanese government." [39]

Russian troops will be deployed near the city of Sidon (Saida) in South Lebanon, off the shores of the Mediterranean. While Russian troops are freshly entering Lebanon, there is also a Russian naval presence on the Syrian seashore.[40] (See Russian Base in Syria, a Symmetrical Strategic Move, July, 2006)

Unlike their Russian allies, Chinese troops were present in Lebanon before the Anglo-American sponsored Israeli attacks. The Chinese presence in Lebanon was under the authority of a small U.N. peacekeeping force. Around 200 Chinese military engineers already work for the U.N. in South Lebanon clearing mines and unexploded ordnance. The small U.N. force saw the death of one of its Chinese member at the hands of Israeli attacks during the Anglo-American sponsored siege of Lebanon. Approximately another 1,000 Chinese troops will be added to the Chinese military presence in Lebanon. [41]

Chinese and Russian forces will also be in close proximity to the Port of Ceyhan and the energy route being opened in the Eastern Mediterranean. This is a symmetrical action if one considers the U.S. military presence and support for Taiwan as a means to control the strategic oil route to China and Japan from the Middle East.[42]

Russia and China are the two largest members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). they are permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, decisively opposed to Anglo-American initiatives in the Middle East, the Korean Peninsula, and Sudan.

Additionally, Russia and China together with Iran are challenging Anglo-American oil interests in Central Asia and the Caspian Sea Basin.

Israel is an extension of the Anglo-American alliance and also NATO through a military pact with Turkey and the "NATO-Mediterranean Dialogue," including the June 29, 2004 Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.[43] With the build-up and marshalling of troops from member states of NATO, Russia and China could be sending troops in a deliberate symmetrical move to Lebanon to establish a military equilibrium in the important balance-of-power of the Levant and Eastern Mediterranean.

The War on Lebanon and the Battle for Oil: the Baku-Tbilisi-Cehyan Oil Terminal

There is undeniable international competition for energy resources in the world. The Baku-Tbilisi-Cehyan (BTC) Oil Terminal (also called the Caspian-Mediterranean Oil Terminal) has an outlet on the Turkish coast of the Eastern Mediterranean in close proximity to Syria and Lebanon. The opening of this pipeline is geo-strategically an important victory. This is a geo-strategic victory for the Anglo-American alliance, Israel, the large oil corporations, and their partners, but it is a geo-strategic set back for Russia, China, and Iran on the other hand. It seems that the sovereignty of Lebanon has been put into further danger with the opening of the strategic oil terminal.

The occupation of Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) has been followed by the militarization of the Eastern Mediterranean, [44] The July 2006 Israeli siege of Lebanon is intimately related to the opening of the Baku-Tbilisi-Cehyan (BTC) Oil Terminal, the marshalling of naval vessels in the Persian Gulf-Arabian Sea, and an anticipated war against Iran and Syria.

Syria is also taking steps to strengthen its military. Russia is helping Syria build and upgrade its air defense systems. The Syrian military has additionally made numerous orders for Russian and Iranian manufactured warplanes and missiles. Belarus and China are also aiding the Syrian military.

Professor Michel Chossudovsky has given details on the Israeli war on Lebanon, the militarization of the Eastern Mediterranean, and the international rivalry for energy resources;

Is there a relationship between the bombing of Lebanon and the inauguration of the world's largest strategic pipeline, which will channel more than a million barrels of oil a day to Western markets?

Virtually unnoticed, the inauguration of the Ceyhan-Tbilisi-Baku (BTC) oil pipeline, which links the Caspian Sea to the Eastern Mediterranean, took place on the 13th of July [2006], at the very outset of the Israeli sponsored bombings of Lebanon.

(...)

The bombing of Lebanon is part of a carefully planned and coordinated military road map. The extension of the war into Syria and Iran has already been contemplated by U.S. and Israeli military planners. This broader military agenda is intimately related to strategic oil and oil pipelines. It is supported by the Western oil giants, which control the pipeline corridors. In the context of the war on Lebanon, it seeks Israeli territorial control over the East Mediterranean coastline.

(The War on Lebanon and the Battle for Oil, July 26, 2006)

Syria and Lebanon must be subjugated if the United States and its partners are to secure the Eastern Mediterranean coastline to expand the oil terminal from Ceyhan, Turkey to Israel, lock out Russia and China from securing international energy resources, and ultimately creating a monopoly over world energy resources.

The Eastern Mediterranean, a "Second Front" Guarded by NATO?

There has been a significant build-up of military force, including naval power, in Lebanon and the waters of the Eastern Mediterranean. This force is composed of troops and naval vessels from several NATO countries including Italy, Spain, France, Turkey, Germany, and the Netherlands.

NATO's "Operation Active Endeavor," implemented in the wake of 9/11 is fully integrated into the U.S. sponsored "War on Terrorism". The Operation is overseen by the Commander of "NATO Allied Naval Forces, Southern Europe" based in Naples.

In this context, a NATO naval task force of warships has been monitoring the Eastern Mediterranean since late 2001, years before the Israeli aerial siege of Lebanon (2006). This task force of NATO warships has been "trained and prepared for a prolonged operation in the Eastern Mediterranean since 2001." [45]

According to one Israeli source, the NATO military presence in the Eastern Mediterranean is part of the war plans pertaining to Syria and Iran:

"This expectation [of a war launched against Iran and Syria] has brought together the greatest sea and air armada Europe [NATO] has ever assembled at any point on earth since World War II: two carriers with 75 fighter-bombers, spy planes and helicopters on their decks; 15 warships of various types - 7 French, 5 Italian, 2-3 Greek., 3-5 German, and 5 American; thousands of Marines - French, Italian and German, as well as 1,800 U.S. Marines. It is improbably billed as support for a mere [expected] 7,000 European soldiers who are deployed in Lebanon to prevent the dwindling Israeli force of 4-5,000 soldiers and some 15-16,000 Hezbollah militiamen from coming to blows as well as for humanitarian odd jobs. (...) So, if not for Lebanon, what is this fine array of naval power really there for? First, according to our military sources [in Israel], the European participants feel the need of a strong naval presence in the eastern Mediterranean to prevent a possible Iranian-U.S.-Israeli war igniting an Iranian long-range Shahab missile attack on [American-NATO bases used against Iran from eastern] Europe; second, as a deterrent to dissuade Syria and Hezbollah from opening a second front against America and Israel from their Eastern Mediterranean coasts." [46]

In the case of a war with Syria and Iran, NATO forces in the Eastern Mediterranean would no doubt play a decisive role. The Eastern Mediterranean would become one of several fronts, which could include Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Persian Gulf.

NATO Enlargement and the Caucasus

Just as it did in Afghanistan, NATO has moved into Lebanon. Under a formal peacekeeping mandate, NATO has become a de facto occupation force that is party to the Anglo-American agenda.

There are two other factors that fall into the NATO equation. The first is the militarization of Georgia and the Republic of Azerbaijan, two former republics of the Soviet Union which are firmly aligned with NATO. Georgia occupies a strategic position with regard to the control and protection of the oil pipeline corridors out of the Caspian Sea Basin. It also constitutes a wedge between

Russia, Armenia, and Iran. Azerbaijan serves primarily as an oil source in the Caspian Sea basin at the outset of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline.

It is Georgia which is being propped up militarily to counter Russia, Iran, and their ally Armenia.

A strategic triangle is formed by Afghanistan in the east, the Caucasus in the north, and the Levant in the west, with Iraq and Iran somewhat in its center.

Georgia is essential to gaining control of this area from the north. The Caucasus region is also an interlinked front with the Middle East and Central Asia that will become more active as the Anglo-American military roadmap proceeds.

It seems that rising tensions between Russia and Georgia are part of this process. The civil unrest and conflicts in the Caucasus are intimately related to the struggle to secure Middle Eastern and Central Asian energy resources.

The Balkans, the heart of Central Asia, and Sudan are another strategic triangle of the Anglo-American military roadmap. The reconfiguration of Yugoslavia and the entrance of states such as Bulgaria, Albania, Montenegro, and Macedonia into the NATO sphere are also essential steps in the Anglo-American roadmap.

Russia has been outraged at the harboring of Chechen rebels in Georgia and the Georgian government's collaboration with the United States in undermining Russian influence in the Caucasus. Russia has fought back and tried to counter Georgian and Anglo-American influence in the Caucasus by supporting the Abkhazian and South Ossetian independence movements. Additionally, border delimitation has become an issue between Georgia and Russia. This has resulted in an uneasy stalemate, but the situation seems to be changing. Russian troops have also been leaving their bases in Georgia[47] and tensions have been rising between the Russians on the one hand and Georgia and NATO on the other.

September 2006 has seen relations on the brink of collapse. The Georgian government has charged the Russian military with spying in Georgia and the Russian Federation of trying to oust the Georgian government and install a pro-Russian, anti-NATO government in its place. In addition, South Ossetian forces have shot down a helicopter with the Georgian Defense Minister on board and, days later, Georgian authorities foiled what they claim was an attempt at a "coup d'etat" supported by Russia, which is something that the Russian government denies.[48]

There is also a striking parallel between peacekeeping operations in Georgia and Lebanon. Both are bogus operations with a hidden agenda. In Georgia it is Russian troops that are deployed as peacekeepers and in Lebanon peacekeeping is "unofficially" dominated by NATO. The Georgian Foreign Minister has said: "If we continue to drive the situation [in Georgia] ... with existing actors and with the dominant power of Russia ...we will end up in violence [war]," He has demanded that Russian troops stationed in Georgia withdraw and has accused Moscow of seeking to undermine the Georgian government.[49]

The second factor is the rapid expansionist policy of NATO.

NATO has been expanding eastward. It is now seeking entry for Georgia, the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ukraine, and several other countries.[50] The Russian Foreign Minister has told the Secretary-General of NATO that the Reconfiguration of NATO military forces in Europe, as well as the desire of the United States to deploy certain elements of missile launching sites in Eastern Europe are the issues of concern for us [the Russian Federation]."[51]

In this regard, the Associated Press points to rising tensions between the Russian Federation and NATO, pertaining to Georgia's membership in NATO

Moscow [the Russian government] denounced the move [to embrace Georgia further into NATO] as a Cold War throwback that hurt Russian interests and could further destabilize the Caucasus region. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov threatened to send two divisions of Russian troops to the border with Georgia to ensure that "Russia's security won't be hurt if Georgia enters NATO."

The strained relations between Russia and Georgia worsened Thursday when Moscow recalled its ambassador, announced the recall of diplomats and complained to the United Nations about Georgia's detention of five Russian officers on spying charges. Mr. Ivanov called Georgia a "bandit state."

Georgia charged four of the officers on Friday with spying and was to put them on trial later in the day, said Shota Khizanishvili, spokesman for the Interior Minister. A fifth officer was released Friday (September, 2006).[52]

Formation of a Eurasian Military Alliance?

Since August 2006, Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan have been holding joint military exercises and anti-terrorism drills. These operations were conducted under the SCO and/or the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) (with the involvement of the Commonwealth of Independent States, CIS). These military exercises were conducted at a time when Iran was also involved in major war games.

- Russia and Belarus held joint military exercises in 2006 (June 17-25)[53]
- U.S. military operations and war games were held with Bulgaria and Romania, in the Balkans (July-August, 2006)[54]
- Iranian War Games started on August 19, 2006[55]
- Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Anti-terrorism exercises including Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were held in late August 2006[56]
- China and Kazakhstan held joint anti-terrorism drills also in late August (start August 23/24, 2006)[57]
- Russia, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan held joint anti-terrorism drills (September 19-23, 2006)[58]
- China and Tajikistan hold their first joint military exercise (September 22-23, 2006)[59]
- CIS and Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Anti-Terrorism Drills in Armenia (September 26-28, 2006)[60]

The initiation of a "Eurasian Energy Club" was the practical outcome on September 15, 2006 for the SCO during a conference held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.[61] This is a goal that cannot be achieved unless Iran is a full member of the SCO.

IRNA quoted the Uzbek Deputy Prime Minister, Rustam Azimov, as saying that "the economic projects, on which [SCO] agreements were reached during the International Shanghai Conference [SCO], cannot be implemented without the cooperation of Iran, as a significant regional country." [62]

Mongolia is also set to become a full member of the SCO. Mongolia, Iran, India, and Pakistan are all observer members of the SCO. Armenia, a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the CIS, and Serbia, a historical ally of Russia, are potential candidates for the SCO. Armenia has also made it clear that it has no intention of joining the E.U. or NATO.[63] Belarus has also expressed interest in joining the SCO as a full member state.[64]

The expansion of the SCO and the complete inclusion of Iran as a full member has been challenged by the Helsinki Commission (the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe) during an inquiry (September 26, 2006) into the impact of the SCO on Anglo-American objectives and U.S. influence in Central Asia.

The expansion of the SCO was said to be unlikely because the "economic mission of the SCO seems ill-defined" and that the organization is not likely to add new members who may end up competing with Russia and China for control of Central Asia. It was also pointed out during the Helsinki Commission hearing that, "They [the members of the SCO] are bound together by a shared set of security interests and a shared set of perceived risk[s]."

"Security interests and perceived risks" being connotations for the growing threat of Anglo-American intrusion into the former Soviet republics of Central Asia

The war games held in the former Soviet Union and Central Asia[65] were dominated by Russia and China. They were conducted under the disguise of fighting "terrorism, extremism, and separatism." Terrorism, extremism, and separatism are critical arenas of cooperation for all member states.[66] What is the hidden agenda? Are these war games related in any way to U.S. war preparations?

Terrorism, extremism, and separatism are nurtured by Anglo-American covert intelligence operations including sabotage and terrorist attacks by Special Forces. Inciting ethnic, ideological, and sectarian tension and separatist movements have been a traditional hallmark of Anglo-American strategy in the Middle East, the Balkans, India, Southeast Asia, the former Soviet Union and Africa.

As for the manipulation and creation of extremism, Afghanistan is testimony of this strategy. Afghanistan is where the Pakistani ISI and the United States helped create the Taliban to fight the Soviet Union. The United States, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia have also worked in supporting extremist movements in the former Soviet Union. This is one of the reasons that the Iranian government has remained silent in aiding or acknowledging religious based ideologues or separatist movements in the Caucasus and the former Soviet Union, including Chechnya.

Kurdistan: The Seeds of Balkanization and Finlandization?

Both the United States and Israel have been covertly training a number of Kurdish groups in Northern Iraq. Iran and Syria have accused Israel of establishing a military presence in Iraqi Kurdistan. Israel has also trained Anglo-American special forces in assassination missions and the formation of "hunter-killer teams" in Iraq.[67]

Magdi Abdelhadi, an Arab and Middle Eastern affairs analyst has written:

Ever since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq began over three years ago [in 2003], Arab journalists have been speaking of Israelis operating inside the autonomous region of Kurdistan [in Northern Iraq].

They said this was evidence that toppling that Saddam Hussein was only the first chapter in a wider American-Israeli conspiracy to eliminate threats to their strategic interests and re-draw the map of the Middle East [vis-à-vis a military roadmap].

Syria and Iran, which have common borders with Kurdish areas, are believed to be the primary targets.[68]

There are deliberate attempts to manufacture or create civil strife and division within the countries of the Middle East. The underlying objectives are balkanization (division) and finlandization (pacification).[69]

Kurdistan is the geographic heart of the contemporary Middle East and the Gordian knot holding all its mosaic of states and people together. Kurdistan is also strategically the land-bridge connecting Syria and the Eastern Mediterranean with Iran. The Kurdish people have been continuously manipulated and deceived by the United States. The deliberate manipulation of the Kurdish people by the United States and Israel could deal a severe and chaotic blow to the stability of Kurdistan and the national unity of Syria, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and by extension the neighbors of these countries.

Moreover, the balkanization of Iraq could set in motion a domino-effect, which could have an impact in the entire Middle East and beyond. The United States has created the conditions for social division within Iraq. Dividing Iraqi society weakens the resistance movement to the Anglo-American military occupation. Creating sectarian and ethnic divisions in Iraqi society has a direct bearing on U.S. war plans pertaining to Iran and Syria. The premise is that Iraqis would be too busy fighting each other to offer significant support to Syria and Iran.

The balkanization of Iraq is also consistent with Anglo-American objectives for the "Eurasian Corridor" and the "Yinon Plan[70]" for the Greater Middle East.

Both objectives overlap and depend on a partnership between the United States, Britain, and Israel. These objectives rely on initial regime change(s) from within a targeted state through the triggering of ethnic and sectarian conflicts. This strategy is also being used against Russia, China, and Central Asia. The ultimate objective is the creation of a new set of Kuwait-like or Bahrain-like mini-states or Anglo-American protectorates in the Middle East and the former Soviet Union that can easily be controlled by the U.S., Britain, and Israel.

In an interview with *Der Spiegel*, the Syrian President said that the Middle East was teetering on the brink of chaos and conflict. When asked about the partition or balkanization of Anglo-American occupied Iraq, the Syrian President said:

"It would be harmful, not just for Iraq, but for the entire region, extending from Syria to the [Persian] Gulf and into Central Asia. Imagine snapping a necklace and all the pearls fall to the ground. Almost all these countries have natural dividing lines, and when ethnic and religious partition occurs in one country, it'll soon happen elsewhere. It would be like the end of the Soviet Union-only far worse. Major wars, minor wars, no one will be capable of keeping the consequences under control." [71]

The problem can further be compounded. A war with Syria could spill over and ignite further conflicts in Palestine, Jordan, and Lebanon, while also affecting Turkey, Cyprus, and the entire Arab World.

A war with Iran or any balkanization affecting Iran would also contribute to destabilizing the Caucasus, Turkey, and Central Asia which all have ethnic and cultural ties with Iran. This includes North Ossetia-Alania, Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, which are part of the South Federal District of the Russian Federation.

A war with Iran could spill over into the ethnically diverse Caucasus with serious and unpredictable ramifications for Russia.

The Caucasus is intimately interlinked with Iran. The conflicts between Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, the internal conflicts in Georgia over South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and the fighting in Chechnya and Dagestan could all light up again. These conflicts would not only threaten Russia's national security, they would also affect the SCO, which is integrated with China, Russia and several former Soviet republics as well as the CSTO..

Connect-the-Dots: All the Pieces Coming Together?

There is an evident military build-up of conventional, ground, air, naval, and nuclear forces in and around the Middle East and Central Asia. It includes the mobilization of British troops on the Iranian border[72], and the extension of military tours of service in Anglo-American occupied Iraq and NATO garrisoned Afghanistan.[73] The 1st Brigade of 1st Armored Division, a 4,000 man unit which is operating in the Al-Anbar province of Iraq, bordering Syria, has had their tour of duty extended. They are not the first group of American or British soldiers to have their tours of duty extended in Iraq or Afghanistan. The brigade has about 4,000 soldiers in Iraq.[74] They were scheduled to be in Iraq for a maximum of 12 months, but their tours have been extended repeatedly like other military units. The U.S. Army has also extended the tour of the Alaska-based 172nd Striker Brigade, an army unit with over 3,500 troops, several times.[75]

Many of the Arab dictatorships will also secretly support the Anglo-American alliance. They will watch as Syria and Iran are attacked and Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan are further devastated by conflict. The pro-U.S. governments of Saudi Arabia, the Arab sheikdoms, Egypt, and Jordan are supportive of the U.S. "military roadmap", despite the fact that the people in these countries are firmly opposed to the U.S. led war. The hopes of a Palestinian state have also been abandoned by their leaders.

They have demonstrated this in their involvement against Iraq before and after the 2003 Anglo-American invasion. They have tacitly accepted the oppression of the Palestinian people, as well as the Israeli invasion and bombing of Lebanon (phrased in Lebanon as the "Arab conspiracy against Lebanon"). There have been media reports that Saudi Arabia and Israel have also been conducting secret talks in regards to Iran and the broader Middle East.[76]

Romania and Bulgaria are already important hubs for Anglo-American military operations in Eurasia extending from the Balkans to the Middle East and Central Asia. Both states are also important partners of the Anglo-American alliance. According to Lawrence Korb in a 2003 article in The New York Times:

The Pentagon is smitten with Romania. And Poland. And Bulgaria too. The Defense Department is considering closing many, if not all, of its bases in Western Europe - which are primarily in Germany - and to shift its troops to Spartan new sites in the former Soviet bloc. Already we [the public] are told that the First Armored Division, now on the ground in Iraq, will not return to the bases in Germany it left in April [2003]. And Gen. James Jones, the head of the European Command [of the United States], said this month that all 26 Army and Air Force installation in Germany, except for the Air Force base at Ramstein, might be closed. In effect this could mean transferring five army brigades, some 25, 000 troops, to the East [meaning Eastern Europe; Bulgaria and Romania].

(The Pentagon's Eastern Obsession, NYT, July 30, 2003)

In retrospect the Pentagon's decision to move eastward was strategically correct and based on the premise of the eastward shift of Anglo-American military operations. The situation in the former Yugoslavia and the Balkans was placated in the second half of the 1990s. With the start of 2001 the time had come to advance operations further eastward.

NATO has also been in liaison with Washington, London and Tel Aviv. Anglo-American and Israeli interests have been served by NATO. NATO either formally or informally has been sending troops to assist in the "occupational phase" of all Anglo-American operations after the "blitzkriegs" or "initial military phases." NATO and member states have been acting as occupation forces in Afghanistan and Iraq and are also moving into Lebanon. The Secretary-General of NATO has promised that the NATO mission in Afghanistan will expand and intensify.[77]

NATO spokesmen in Afghanistan have reported that by February 2007 General McNeil of the U.S. Army will take over command of NATO forces in Afghanistan, called the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and American troops in Afghanistan. This means that American troops and NATO troops, which have been under separate command structures, will now be joined under one command structure in Afghanistan.[78] The media has pointed to the fact that U.S. troops would be under NATO command. But what is really at stake is that a U.S. General is now overseeing NATO forces.

Roughly 12,000 mostly American troops in Afghanistan will begin to integrate with NATO in October 2006.[79] The top NATO command post in Afghanistan is currently headed by Lieutenant-General David Richards of Britain. In the case of a conflict with Iran, NATO troops in Afghanistan would attack Iran. Similarly, NATO troops stationed in Lebanon would attack Syria.

The Pakistani Connection

There are also signs that NATO and the United States are expecting the collapse of General Musharraf and the Pakistani government because of the chaos that would be triggered in Pakistan from attacks on Iran and Syria.[80] This could explain the request that India send troops into Afghanistan.[81] NATO and Indian interests would converge in ensuring that Pakistan and its nuclear arsenal not fall into the hands of radicals or extremists that could threaten Anglo-American interests and the security of India.

The Affirmation of a March to War from the Leaders of Syria, Iran, and Venezuela

There is no arms ban on Syria for importing defensive systems, but a merchant ship coming from Asia and Egypt has been detained in Limassol, Cyprus carrying air defense systems headed for Syria. The ship is free to leave, but the fate of its cargo is still undecided.[82] Syria's president and government have also said they expect to be attacked by Israel in the context of a broader Middle East war.[83]

In an NBC interview with Brian Williams, the Iranian President said that the White House and U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East are "moving the world toward war." This is a significant assertion coming from a leader of a Middle Eastern state and such a statement must be taken very seriously. The Iranian President, made a similar statement in his September address to the U.N. General Assembly, pointing to the fact that the United States was dragging the world towards a major war.

Iranian leaders have announced that British and American diplomacy efforts are merely bravado for the general public. They point to the "illusion of trying to solve crisis through diplomacy." In the cases of both Iraq and Afghanistan the United States and Britain decided to go too long before they informed the public of their intentions. In the case of Iraq there exist de-classified documentation that prove this to be true and in the case of Afghanistan there was no possible logistical way of preparing for an invasion without months of planning prior to the declaration of war, which took place on the 12th of September 2001

Iran is fully aware of the U.S. threat to bomb and invade. Its population is fully aware of the possibility of Anglo-American air raids. Iran has cautioned the United States and Britain. In August 2006, Iranian war games in coordination with Russian, Chinese, and CSTO war games took place throughout Iran, including all of Iran's geo-strategically important border provinces with Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Persian Gulf, Turkey, and Iraq. Clear signals were being sent to the Anglo-American alliance.

Venezuela, an Iranian ally, has warned the United States repeatedly that it will not watch Iran and Syria being invaded or attacked. The President of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, has alluded to

U.S. military preparations for the invasion of Iran in his speech to the 61st U.N. General Assembly:

"And now [the United States is] threatening Venezuela - new threats against Venezuela, against Iran [too]?"[84]

The Venezuelan President also stated: Meantime, the incumbent U.S. administration is also dreaming [incorrectly planning] of invading Iran and Venezuela to take control of the oil resources of these two countries as well [as those of Iraq]."[85]

How Venezuela plans to aid Iran and Syria in a war against the United States is a topic of debate, but it is very likely that, in the case of war, Venezuelan diplomatic relations with the U.S. government and oil supplies to the United States will be cut off.

Link Between the Persian Gulf and Eastern Mediterranean?

There is as process of ongoing militarization in the Levant and the Eastern Mediterranean, essentially led by NATO forces, under the pretext of U.N. peacekeeping.

If the U.S. led war were to proceed, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) Oil Terminal, as well as the pipeline route leading to Ceyhan, would be an obvious military target of Syrian-Iranian forces. Meanwhile, the Iranian Navy would attempt to block the Straits of Hormuz. This could deliver a halting grind to the flow of world oil supplies as Iran has repeatedly promised. Venezuela could also stop the flow of its oil as its government has repeatedly warned.

Ýncirlik Air Base is a major NATO base in Turkey, next to the Syrian border and coastline. It must be noted that American nuclear weapons have also been positioned in Turkey's Ýncirlik Air Base. The latter was one of the main hubs for the United States and NATO during the 2001 Afghanistan military campaign. This Turkish base is still of vital importance to the United States, Britain, and NATO. Thousands of American and British airmen are stationed there. It is also adjacent to the Baku-Tbilisi-Cehyan (BTC) Oil Terminal.

The Baku-Tbilisi-Cehyan (BTC) Oil Terminal will become even more significant and important if Iran should successfully close off the Straits of Hormuz.

This is one of the reasons why the Ýncirlik Air Base is strategically important. The Ýncirlik Air Base would be used to protect the Port of Ceyhan, the outlet of the Baku-Tbilisi-Cehyan (BTC) Oil Terminal. The NATO armada in the eastern Mediterranean as well as Israel would also play an important role in protecting the Baku-Tbilisi-Cehyan (BTC) Oil Terminal if Syria or Iran attempted to disrupt the flow of energy to the Eastern Mediterranean.

There are two distinct naval armadas: in the Persian Gulf-Arabian Sea and in the Eastern Mediterranean off the coastlines of Syria and Lebanon.

These armadas are being built-up concurrently. The Eastern Mediterranean build-up is essentially characterized by Israeli and NATO naval and ground forces. In the Persian Gulf, the naval armada is largely American with the participation of the British, Australia, and Canada. In this extensive land mass between the Eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf, various military movements on the ground are occurring, including Northern Iraq and Georgia.

The broader war theater would extend far beyond, northwards to the Caspian Sea Basin and eastwards to Pakistan and China's Western frontier. What we are dealing with is a chessboard for another Middle Eastern war, which could potentially engulf a much broader region.

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