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IRAN

Iranian Bombshell

Time

By Elaine Shannon

3/13

As the U.N. Security Council prepares to debate Iran's nuclear ambitions--perhaps as early as next week--Bush Administration officials are readying a new intelligence briefing for council members on Tehran's weapons programs. It will rely mainly on circumstantial evidence, much of it from documents found on a laptop purportedly purloined from an Iranian nuclear engineer and obtained by the CIA in 2004. U.S. officials insist the material is strong but concede they have no smoking gun.

They do, however, have diagrams that they believe show components of a nuclear bomb. According to a Western diplomat familiar with the U.S. intel brief, a Farsi-language PowerPoint presentation on the laptop has "catchy graphics," including diagrams of a hollow metallic sphere 2 ft. in diameter and weighing about 440 lbs. Other documents show a sphere-shaped array of tiny detonators. No file specifically refers to a nuclear bomb, but U.S. officials say the design of the sphere--an outer shell studded with small chemical-explosive charges meant to detonate inward, which would squeeze an inner core of material into a critical mass--is akin to that of classic devices like Fat Man, the atom bomb dropped on Nagasaki during World War II. "Because of the size and weight and the power source going into it and height-of-burst requirements," says the diplomat, Western experts have concluded that the design "is only intended to contain a nuclear weapon. There's no other munition which would work." A report issued last week by Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), says Iranian officials have dismissed a number of the laptop documents as fabricated.

Intelligence of this kind helped secure the backing of Russia and China in last month's IAEA vote to refer Iran to the Security Council. Western officials hope the new briefing will win council support for further action; most of them see no viable alternative to U.N. efforts to try to gain Iran's compliance. As a Western diplomat puts it, "There's a military option--but not a military solution."

Fisk Vick, Again

National Review

By Michael Ledeen

3/14

As part of its relentless campaign to blame all of mankind's misfortunes on George W. Bush, today the Washington Post unleashed Karl Vick (my candidate for the Walter Duranty Memorial Prize) and David Finkel on American efforts to help Iranians who dare to challenge the mullahs. "U.S. Push for Democracy Could Backfire Inside Iran," screams the front-page headline, and the policy point of the article is nicely contained in the first paragraph: Prominent activists inside Iran say President Bush's plan to spend tens of millions of dollars to promote democracy here is the kind of help they don't need, warning that mere announcement of the U.S. program endangers human rights advocates by tainting them as American agents. Some Iranian dissidents attended workshops in Dubai last spring, and, with that ominous

vagueness that so often characterizes reporting on things Iranian, at "about the time" that the administration announced it would support pro-democracy forces inside Iran, they were arrested. The Post seems not to have inquired about the treatment inside the regime's prisons, but Vick and Finkel got a catchy quotation from Emad Baghi: "We are under pressure here both from hard-liners in the judiciary and that stupid George Bush."

I love the moral equivalence: Bush wants to help them acquire freedom, while the regime (neatly reduced to a couple of bad guys in the Ministry of Injustice) crushes them. And Bush is the stupid one.

If you read carefully, you will notice that the unfortunate Mr. Baghi is not exactly free to speak his own mind, since his wife and daughter were in jail, undergoing interrogation. Baghi excoriates Bush for helping "outside groups and we're in here suffering."

So, in keeping with the paradigm established by Walter Duranty--the man who never found Stalin the least bit objectionable--Vick/Finkel blame Bush for the ongoing savagery of the Islamic republic. No matter that pro-democracy dissidents have been arrested, tortured, and murdered for 27 long years in Iran; the actions of the regime are simply blamed on Bush. "You know what a vulnerable situation we have here in Iran," Baghi says, "It was not a good thing to invite us to such a workshop."

Really? But Baghi and others still went to it, because they would be able to learn the lessons of the many successful non-violent democratic revolutions that have swept the world since 1975. They knew it was risky--Baghi was incarcerated for three years in the '90s, after all--but they were willing to take that risk. Even strong men can be broken, especially when their wives and daughters are in the hell holes of Tehran's infamous prisons, and they can be convinced or compelled to renounce their ideals in order to save the lives of their women. No news here. Just ask those doomed Soviet citizens who "confessed" at Stalin's show trials.

Vick and Finkel go out of their way to tell us that there is no hope of popular insurrection in Iran today, and carefully quote a failed "reformist" saying that nothing good can come from outside help (even though it is hard to find a successful revolution, including our own, that did not have an outside base of support), and that, even if there were hope at one time, that moment has passed. The regime has won: "[T]he capacity for civil society is so depleted that homeowners cannot be bothered to protest the cutting of trees in an eastern Tehran park to make way for a freeway extension."(I wonder if this refers to the thousands of trees cut down in order to hide any evidence of seepage of nuclear materials from an underground facility.)

It's hilarious that Vick and Finkel would offer this tolerated ecological "violence" to show that resistance to the regime is weakened, when, as they wrote, thousands of workers were recently demonstrating against the regime, from Tehran to Khuzestan. Nor do we hear about the bravery of Iranian women, who just last week demonstrated in Tehran and were clubbed, slashed, and incarcerated. They knew it would happen, but were willing to sacrifice themselves to show their own courage and the regime's ferocity. But such news would undermine the whole thrust of the Post's latest effort at agitprop, so we don't hear anything about anti-regime protests, even though they are the true background to all events in contemporary Iran.

The real story is in today's New York Sun, increasingly our newspaper of record. Eli Lake interviewed one of the organizers of the workshop, who lays it out clearly: "[H]e fears that the state is trying to extract a confession through torture from Ali Afsahi [a journalist who attended two workshops in Dubai] to misrepresent the aims of the session." And in fact, it seems that Afsahi approached the Post to help Vick/Finkel slime Bush and the dissidents. Like Baghi, Afsahi wasn't exactly free to speak his own mind. As Lake tells us, Afsahi's wife "only received a phone call from him on Sunday and...he was crying." Lots of brave Iranians are crying, but lots of brave Iranians are now encouraged to see that at long last the United States is helping them.

Only Lake bothers to point out that one of the workshops, organized by the estimable Peter Ackerman's International Center for Nonviolent Conflict, was entirely private. Not a penny of money from "stupid Bush." But of course, the mullahs don't go in for such distinctions; as always, they lash out at anyone who dares question the legitimacy of their regime.

Back in the Cold War, those of us who supported the Bukovskys and the Sharanskys were often told by the Walter Durantys of that time that we were fools, because we were only making things worse for the dissidents. But they were the real fools, and morally corrupt fools at that. So will it be today, provided that George W. Bush and his people have the tenacity to join this epic struggle, which uniquely fuses high virtue with fundamental national security.

Faster, please.

--Michael Ledeen, an NRO contributing editor, is most recently the author of *The War Against the Terror Masters*. He is resident scholar in the Freedom Chair at the American Enterprise Institute.

IRAQ

Seven Questions: What Next for Iraq?

Foreign Policy
No author given
3/11

When President Bush speaks derisively about advocates of "cutting and running" from Iraq, he has in mind people like Nir Rosen, a journalist whose reporting has led him to the conclusion that U.S. withdrawal is the best policy. Rosen recently explained to FP why leaving Iraq is the best option, why Moktada al-Sadr is the only man who can keep Iraq together, and why Iran and the United States are natural allies.

FOREIGN POLICY: What does the current stalemate over the appointment of a prime minister say about the political process in Iraq, and whether the tensions on the ground can be discussed and eased at a political level?

Nir Rosen: I think it shows just once more that events inside the Green Zone have really no relation to what happens on the street in Iraq. They are bickering among themselves about how to create a government. But outside the Green Zone, they wouldn't last a minute, not one of these leaders, they would immediately be killed.

Events inside the zone have been a big theater: What it does show is that they can't even cooperate at a political level. Meanwhile, their militias are already fighting each other, whether they are Kurdish, Shia, or Sunni. It shows there is no hope of any political rapprochement. Not that that would have an impact on the ground, because on the ground it is the militia leaders who are in charge. Every neighborhood has its own little army, every mosque has its own little army, that's where the power lies in Iraq, with the guys with the guns on the street.

FP: Is civil war in Iraq inevitable now? Is there a way out?

NR: People have been asking me that a lot lately. There's been a civil war in Iraq since 2004. It's on a low scale, and nobody has really been paying attention because it's happening at night, away from where the journalists are. The casualty numbers are still fairly low, but they've been steadily increasing. In the north, immediately after the war, the Kurds emptied a lot of areas of non-Kurds, and Arabs have "ethnically cleansed" some areas of Kurds. So it's been reciprocal. In the south, soon after the war started, Shiites were taking over Sunni mosques. In Baghdad, Shiites and Sunnis attacked each other's clerics and mosques starting in 2004. In Sunni-majority neighborhoods, they drove out Shiites with threats and killings. There were population exchanges basically. It was sort of like "Bosnia light."

Militias are getting stronger and stronger. Hatred is growing between Sunnis and Shiites. To Sunnis, all Shiites are Iranian. To Shiites, all Sunnis are Baathists, Saddamists or Wahabbis. Iraq is now not just in a civil war, it's practically a regional war, because you have Iran strongly supporting the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution, and Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and individuals from Syria supporting the Sunnis because they're terrified of a Shiite-dominated Iraq. And as the civil war in Iraq escalates, you're going to find that the nation-state concept is sort of irrelevant. If a Sunni tribe is attacked in Iraq and they have relatives in Jordan, Syria, or Saudi Arabia, as many do, those tribal relatives are going to come in at a certain point, too, and it's going to draw in the whole region.

FP: Are these tribal and sectarian ties stronger than the Iraqi national identity?

NR: This wasn't the case in the beginning. I think the United States contributed to this. There certainly were grudges, Shiites had good cause for that, as they were the primary victims of Saddam. But in 2003, nobody used the words "Shiite" or "Sunni", there was a very strong nationalist discourse. Sunnis and Shiites held joint prayers, and sectarian attacks were rare. [Abu Musab al] Zaraqawi's movement contributed a great deal, of course, because his ideology despises Shiites more than anything—even Jews or Christians, in fact. And U.S. policy alienated the Sunnis right from the beginning, dismissing the army and the Baathists for example, which disenfranchised the community and treated it as the enemy. And by apportioning seats on the interim Governing Council according to the faction—Kurdish, Sunni, and Shiite—we sort of enshrined sectarianism. And we made the Shiites the good guys, the Sunnis the bad guys, this is a process that Washington contributed to. And it's going to get much worse. I think you're looking at Mogadishu in 1991 or Beirut in 1982. Soon we will stop seeing 50 people dead every day, and start seeing thousands. My friends in Amria, the Sunni neighborhood, tell me that three bodies are found every morning lying there on the main street.

FP: You favor a withdrawal of U.S. forces. Wouldn't a withdrawal empower Islamist extremists and result in even greater bloodshed?

NR: Islamic extremists took over the country on April 9, 2003. The U.S. military was present, but it wasn't in control. The vacuum we created by dissolving the security forces immediately led to clerics and tribal leaders taking over—the most reactionary, conservative forces of Iraqi society. The country hasn't recovered from that. The looting contributed as well, there was no Iraqi infrastructure left, there were only clerics controlling various neighborhoods, both Shia and Sunni. And one of the reasons why Washington resisted Iraqi calls for elections in the spring of 2003 was because it was afraid that clerics and tribal leaders would win the elections. In fact, they both took over in January 2005. So we basically had almost two years of destruction for nothing. At this point, U.S. forces perhaps control whatever military base they're on, but when it comes to ruling Iraq, the clerics are in control.

FP: In a recent article, you suggested that Moktada al-Sadr is the only man who can keep Iraq together. How?

NR: I don't think anyone can keep Iraq together at this point. But if you try to think of a leader who is respected by all sides, ironically, it's Moktada, because his rhetoric is Iraqi nationalist and people identify him as an Arab, whereas they view the Supreme Council in Dawa as Iranian implants. Moktada, right from the beginning, held joint prayers and demonstrations with radical Sunnis, he helped them in their fight against U.S. forces. And radical Sunnis have helped Moktada fight U.S. forces in the south. So when I speak to insurgents, Moktada is the only leader they respect. His own men refer to the two intifadas they fought against the Americans in the spring and summer of 2004. His staunch anti-Americanism is actually what unites Sunnis and Shiites. But at this point, I don't think anybody can save Iraq, but at least he is somebody who hopefully will be involved in bringing the tensions down at some point, though unfortunately his men have recently been involved in a lot of sectarian reprisals as well.

FP: How will the Iraq war impact geopolitics in the long term?

NR: I think we are going to see decades of hostility between the West and the Middle East now. Very well-trained fighters who have gained experience in Iraq can now go to Europe and elsewhere in the Middle East. There have been several attempts in Jordan recently. Just last week they arrested 2 Iraqis and one Libyan, with a lot of explosives attempting to bomb some civilian location. Likewise in Saudi Arabia, in Syria, you are going to see increased sectarianism. I think the Muslim Brotherhood will take over in Syria, and sectarianism is increasing even in Lebanon, where Sunni and Shiite hostility had not been so intense before. There were recently demonstrations where Sunnis were chanting for Zarqawi and threatening the Shiites of Hezbollah. So throughout the region you have a huge civil war. It's looking bad everywhere.

I'm not the first one to say this, but Iran is the big winner in all of this. The United States has no leverage over Iran at this point. If the United States were to strike Iran, Iran could simply support the Shiites in Iraq. And if the Iraqi Shiites start attacking U.S. and British forces en masse, it will make the Sunni insurgency look like child's play.

Since the war, radical Islam has strengthened in Iraq. Hamas won in Palestine, and the Muslim Brotherhood gained strength in Egypt. Throughout the region, political, radical Islam, which might have been a spent force until a few years ago, is only

strengthening. This is blowback, just like in the 1980s when a generation of Arab jihadists went to Afghanistan and gained skills. We are now going to have a new generation of young fighters experienced in jihad from Iraq. They're going to lead the fight for the next 20 years. When I was in recently in Pakistan, near the Afghan border, I bought a magazine dedicated to the heroes of Fallujah. I was in Mogadishu this summer, and there was actually a store named after Fallujah, and guys walking around wearing Fallujah T-shirts. Throughout the Muslim world, people actually believe that America is the enemy of Islam and even if this might not be true, they have Abu Ghraib and the destruction of Iraq to point to. We've also given reform and democracy a bad name. Suddenly, the dictatorships in the Arab world don't look so bad, in comparison to Iraq, and people are more suspicious of change.

FP: Christopher Hitchens has proposed a "Nixon goes to China" approach to Iran. What do you think of this idea?

NR: I think that's probably the first intelligent thing I've heard Hitchens say in the past five years. I think that's very important. Had this happened earlier, perhaps Mahmoud Ahmadinejad would have not won the elections. The Iranians have been speaking about a dialogue of civilizations for a long time, and Washington has responded only with threats and enmity, really. I think increased business ties would certainly strengthen the U.S.-Iranian relations. I don't think there's any reason for the United States and Iran to be enemies, apart from the Iranian-Israeli hostility. I think they are natural allies. It's about time Washington made an overture to Iran. We certainly don't want to miss the boat and let the Europeans make inroads economically in Iran, a market the United States needs. The Iranian people have no inherent hostility toward the United States. I think such a move would work.

-- Nir Rosen is a fellow at the New America Foundation. His writing has appeared in The New York Times Magazine, The New Yorker, Harper's, and The New Republic. His book on postwar Iraq, In the Belly of the Green Bird: The Triumph of the Martyrs in Iraq, will be published by Free Press in May 2006.

Judging Saddam - No Easy Thing, to Try a Mass-Muderer

National Review

By David Pryce-Jones

3/13

The trial of Saddam Hussein is without precedent in the Arab world. Rulers there remain in power until their natural death or their murder by a successor. In Iraq in living memory, the king and his family and his prime minister were trampled until their corpses were unrecognizable. Two of the nationalists who then seized power were themselves violently overthrown. Fear that this would be his own fate drove Saddam to many of his crimes. Baghdad is without a settled government for the time being, and mayhem on the street is not yet checked. But however fraught the context, Iraqis -- and people throughout the Middle East -- are taking note on their TV screens of each and every stage in the establishment of the rule of law. In that sense, Saddam's is indeed a show trial.

From the moment of his capture in December 2003, he was obviously going to provide a field day for the swarm of legalists and busybodies who have no responsibility but plenty of objections and fantasies about the nature of the world.

Sure enough, the likes of Amnesty International, Ramsey Clark, and every other self-important leftist are agog to accuse the United States of imposing victor's justice. But there was never any question of trying Saddam outside Iraq. Iraqis had the will and the capabilities to hold the trial, and they set up a tribunal for this purpose.

As was only to be expected, Baathist brutality immediately joined hands with legalism in the attempt to compromise proceedings against Saddam. One of the five judges -- along with several members of the tribunal staff -- was murdered. Unseen hands have also shot dead two of the defense lawyers, and a third fled the country. Lawyers for Saddam are meanwhile practicing the usual tricks of the trade. The tribunal, they claim, has no legitimacy; they have not had enough time to prepare; and they will summon American presidents to show "U.S. complicity" with Saddam's crimes. They'll summon British prime ministers, too!

Other landmark cases are open to comparable legalistic objections. At Nuremberg, one of the Allied judges was a Soviet apparatchik involved in Stalinist crime at least the equivalent of Nazi crime. When the octogenarian Marshal Pétain was tried for treason as a collaborator with Hitler, his lawyers wanted the trial to be declared invalid on account of his age and poor memory. The Israelis infringed international law in kidnapping Adolf Eichmann in order to bring him to court. Milosevic sounds like Saddam, saying that his own court -- the international tribunal at The Hague -- has no legitimacy to try him. The special features of such cases prove only how elusive natural justice is.

In the dock with Saddam are his half-brother, Barzan Ibrahim al-Tikriti, formerly head of the intelligence apparatus; Taha Yassin Ramadan, Saddam's vice president; and five other defendants. Trying them was Rizgar Muhammad Amin, the presiding judge on a panel of five. A soft-spoken Kurd, he addressed Saddam as mister. Naturally interpreting politeness as weakness, Saddam began to bluster that he was president of Iraq, he would boycott the court, he would not submit to handcuffs, blah, blah, blah. When guards escorted him by the arm, he played angry. His whole body, he said, displayed signs of abuse by his American gaolers.

In the courtroom duel between them, Judge Amin had the upper hand: He gave Saddam scope to show himself a bully, a coward, and a liar. On account of the legalisms, however, the trial has gone into a series of recesses, and just as it was about to restart in January, Judge Amin resigned, complaining, "I can't stand anymore the criticisms I get from the street or from TV. This is my fault, and I feel sad because of it all, so my duty is to resign." Who knows what pressures, what threats, he was under? One possible successor turned out to be an ex-Baathist. The chief judge now, Raouf Rashid Abdel-Rahman, is another Kurd, as it happens from Halabja, where in 1988 Saddam ordered the gassing of 5,000 people.

As the defense intended, the legalisms and ensuing recesses have thrown shadows of uncertainty over the trial. So far, the court has dealt only with the atrocity that occurred in 1982 at the village of Dujail, which is a microcosm of Saddam's tyranny. He and a convoy were driving through when gunmen opened fire on them. In reprisal, some 400 villagers were arrested, and about 150 of them put to death. Witnesses have given evidence that whole families were rounded up and tortured, and that the men among them were never seen again. Listening to the recital of facts, Saddam at one point told the judge to "go to hell." During another session, a witness from Dujail testified that while he was being tortured, Barzan Ibrahim was present, sitting and eating grapes. Now it was Barzan's turn to begin shouting.

Playing to the gallery in the hope of creating an impression that the trial is unfair has become the defense strategy. Barzan Ibrahim has tested the authority of Judge Abdel-Rahman by cursing the court as "the daughter of a whore." Saddam, in turn, shouted "Down with traitors" and "Down with America." Not intimidated, the judge brought these disruptions to a close by having Saddam and Barzan, with their attorneys, removed from the courtroom. "You want to leave?" he said. "The court ejects you." The trial then proceeded in their absence, with court-appointed attorneys substituting, until the judge ordered another recess.

Media reports were almost unanimous that this was chaos, a shambles, or a "Soviet-style travesty of justice," as one official newspaper put it in Tehran, of all places to be worrying about legal niceties. Public opinion in Iraq, however, tends to be impressed by the grip of the judge. The authorities expect the trial to end in the course of the year, but this may be wishful thinking.

Crime on a totalitarian scale implicating a whole society is notoriously hard to pin down in court, as was seen in Germany. A book just published in Paris, *Le Livre Noir de Saddam Hussein*, shows how small a space the Dujail atrocity occupies in the spectrum of Saddam's crimes. The characteristic red wraparound that adorns French books makes the statement, "Two million victims." Here is a companion volume to *The Black Book of Communism*, which appeared in Paris about ten years ago. Its editor is Chris Kutschera, a journalist, and he has gathered contributions from Arab, American, British, and French specialists, covering every aspect of Saddam's decades of absolute rule. All of them qualify as leftists, prone to establishing obligatory credentials with some gibe about the United States, but all of them also believe that it was right to overthrow Saddam Hussein.

His violence was a repetitive process of killing whoever he imagined to be in his way, whether at home or abroad. So far, 47 mass graves have been located. Like parts of Europe in 1945, or Pol Pot's Cambodia, the country is an ossuary. Given the circumstances, nothing like civil society could take shape. In the pages of this Black Book, the everyday stories stand out, of lives destroyed for no reason. Paulus al-Sinatti was a press photographer who published a picture of Saddam's elder cousin, then titular president. In the photo, the man's hand appeared to have been half cut off. In the eyes of the secret police, this implied lack of power. So, they pounced on al-Sinatti. Refusing to believe that a technical error had occurred in the development of the photograph, they tortured him. He died soon afterward.

A woman whose father and uncles were killed speaks for the hatred inevitably inspired in the huge majority now following the trial on television: "If I catch Saddam, I'll cut him in pieces."

Whether or not justice is perfect, and whether or not Saddam and the other defendants are in their seats to listen, the court offers an alternative to the repetitive process of killing that maintained Saddam and his regime in power. Testifying, one woman wept to recall how she had been hung by the hands, beaten, and given electric shocks. Barzan then ordered the guards to hang her by the feet, whereupon he kicked her three times in the chest. "Master, I have nothing to confess," she entreated him during this ordeal. "Why are you doing this to me?"

The whole ghastly crew of tyrants and their henchmen for whom murder is the

determining factor of politics will take note of what answer this trial gives to such a question.

LEBANON

Next

New Republic
By Annia Ciezadlo
3/13

In the dahiyeh, Beirut's Shia suburbs, Iraq is as close as the nearest mosque. Many families have someone who has made the pilgrimage to Shia shrines in the Iraqi cities of Karbala and Samarra; some have relatives studying in Najaf's religious seminaries. And, if you ask people which cleric's religious edicts they follow, a surprising number cite Grand Ayatollah Ali Al Sistani. So the "war of the mosques," as one newspaper dubbed the conflict set off by the bombing of Samarra's Al Askariya shrine, is getting blockbuster ratings in dahiyeh living rooms. Umm Hussein, a Shia grandmother from the Hezbollah stronghold of Haret Hreik, sees Iraq's combustion as a warning for Lebanon: "Look at the Shia in Iraq," she laments, as the war plays live on Al Jazeera. "They allied with the Americans, and look at what's happening to them."

Today, as Iraq teeters on the so-called "brink" of Sunni-Shia civil war, the Bush administration's notion that Iraq would become a model democracy, spreading freedom throughout the region like fairy dust, seems criminally naive. Iraq has spread something else throughout the region: fear. In Lebanon, roiled by even murkier sectarian crosscurrents than Iraq, the mosque bombings have rekindled old fears of civil war. With the Shia ascendant in Iraq, Lebanon's Sunni minority fears that the more numerous Shia here will overpower it. "Every time the Lebanese Shia put on a show of hundreds of thousands of people, being led by one guy, it scares the hell out of the Sunnis," says Timur Goksel, a former top U.N. official in Lebanon who now teaches conflict management at the American University of Beirut.

The Shia, the only Lebanese sect with its own militia, fear that the United States will use other sects as proxies to disarm Hezbollah. A spectacularly ill-timed visit by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice inflamed that suspicion. But, if Lebanon's Shia have not turned on their fellow Lebanese, that's because they have someone better to blame: the United States. At a massive rally on February 23, ostensibly to protest the Samarra bombing, Hezbollah leader Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah blamed the United States for the conflagration in Iraq and dared it to come to take away the group's arms. "When Nasrallah accused the U.S. of being behind sectarianism in Iraq and the latest attacks in Iraq, that also means that he expects the U.S. to try and provoke similar warfare here," says Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, a political science professor at Lebanese American University.

And Umm Hussein, whose voice the United States should heed, agrees with Nasrallah. "This is what the Americans want to do in Lebanon," she says. "They will set Shia and Sunni against each other. They will create a civil war."

On the streets of Beirut, you hear it again and again: Sectarian tensions are higher today than in 1975, when the country plunged into its 15-year nightmare of

internecine carnage. "This polarization is much more threatening for me than a frank war where people are killing each other," says Lokman Slim, a founder of Hayyabina ("Let's Go"), a civil society group that promotes a secular Lebanon. "In fact, we are living in what some sociologists call the 'priming period.' Mentally, they are ready to fight."

Tensions have been growing between the Shia and other sects in Lebanon since February 14, 2005, when a massive car bomb killed former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, a Sunni potentate with a large popular following. That most Lebanese Shia were aligned with the country's Syrian occupiers--and Hariri's probable killers--didn't help Sunni-Shia relations. They deteriorated further when Nasrallah held a huge pro-Syrian rally last March in downtown Beirut. A colossal anti-Syrian protest followed on March 14, and the battle lines were drawn. Over the next year, as more bombings and assassinations followed, communal relations just got worse.

Resentment reached a boiling point on December 12, when anti-Syrian politician Gibran Tueni was killed hours before a crucial U.N. report on Hariri's assassination. That night, the Lebanese Cabinet formally asked the United Nations to expand its investigation into other political murders and to form an international tribunal to investigate Hariri's killing. Five Shia ministers stalked out of the Cabinet meeting and refused to return, paralyzing the government for weeks.

During Tueni's funeral, as thousands of Lebanese marched behind his coffin, giant truck-mounted loudspeakers blasted out a pledge he had made during the March 14 anti-Syrian rally: "We swear by God Almighty," the dead man's voice intoned endlessly, "Muslims and Christians, to remain united forever in defense of our great Lebanon."

But, for young Sunnis at the funeral, such as Ahmed Al Masri, Christians weren't the problem. The 23-year-old is a follower of Hariri's son, Saad, leader of the current parliamentary majority. "We have, in Lebanon, some people who share the dream of the terrorists. And we will not be able to do anything as long as they are here," said Masri, referring to the Shia. His solution? Sectarian cleansing. "We should send them all back to Iran," he shouted, without a hint of hyperbole, as Tueni's voice reverberated in the background.

The Shia, Lebanon's poorest and most populous sect, have always felt like second-class citizens in their own country. Saad-Ghorayeb witnessed the hostility this breeds during a recent political science class. When she related an incident of discrimination--she's half Sunni, half Shia--a Sunni student spoke up, saying such things didn't happen in Lebanon. The Shia in the class turned on him angrily, each relating a personal experience of prejudice. One brought out a picture of his sister, who killed herself after her boyfriend's Sunni family forbade him from marrying her, and burst into tears. Other students offered to take the classroom's mini-civil war outside, narrowly avoiding a fistfight. "I left trembling," says Saad-Ghorayeb. "I thought, 'I'm never going to broach a subject like this again.'" Her students, she points out, go to one of the most elite colleges in Beirut: "These are the richest people in Lebanon, and, if they feel this way, God knows how the Shia man on the street feels."

Enter Condi, with a truly abysmal sense of timing. The very same day that Nasrallah gave his fiery speech blaming the United States for the Askariya shrine's destruction--rallying orderly rows of several hundred thousand Shia in the dahiyeh--Rice was

sitting down for a photo op with Saad Hariri. When Prime Minister Fuad Siniora praised Rice for her "patience" in dealing with Lebanon, it was like an admission that Lebanon answers to the United States.

To Lebanon's Shia, accustomed to seeing U.S. plots under every table, Rice's visit was evidence of foul plans afoot. "I want to ask: Why did Condi Rice come at this moment?" demanded Mohieddin Naamani, a civil servant from southern Lebanon, banging his fist on a coffee-shop table. "There's something dangerous going on."

In fact, the only thing going on has been a series of slowmotion p.r. flops for Washington: a Hamas victory, the coup de grace of Iraq's destruction, and a victorious Arab world tour by renegade Iraqi cleric Moqtada Al Sadr, who pointedly offered his services to "mediate" between Syria and Lebanon. What Lebanese like Naamani don't understand is that Rice's government needs Hariri--in a year of foreign policy disasters in the Middle East, Lebanon is a rare victory.

But what Rice clearly has failed to grasp is that visiting Hariri isn't just paying homage to the son of a slain leader; it's throwing America's lot in with Lebanese Sunnis (and Hariri's Saudi patrons, no friends to the Shia). In Lebanon, political parties don't just represent different points of view; they also represent religions. If the U.S. government is serious about promoting democracy in Lebanon, it should be very careful of wading into the riptides of Levantine politics. To align with one side against another--regardless of their respective political merits from an American standpoint--is to play favorites in religious rivalries that the United States has proved it barely understands.

"Communities feel united by a common oppressor who transcends sect," points out Saad-Ghorayeb. "When they're united against a common oppressor, it does breed a sense of sectarian harmony. It's an ecumenical experience." For most of the past year, Lebanon's common enemy has been Syria. If we're not careful, the United States may end up replacing it.

-- Annia Ciezadlo is a Beirut-based writer.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Inside Dubai Inc.

Time

By Daren Fonda

3/13

Without much oil under its sands, Dubai is no petro powerhouse. But you can't beat it for being the most colorful sheikdom in the Middle East--or the most ambitious. What other desert land can claim one of the world's largest indoor ski slopes, featuring fresh powder year round? While flying in on the stylish, state-owned Emirates Airlines, you might notice the artificial islands in the shape of a palm tree or the 56-story Burj al-Arab hotel, as tall as the Eiffel Tower, built like a billowing sail. Westerners are welcome, along with their vices. Europeans in bikinis mingle on the beach with Muslim women in abayas; alcohol flows freely at Dubai's nightclubs and resorts. With events like the Dubai World Cup, a horse race with a record \$6 million purse, Dubai draws 7 million visitors a year, along with big-name acts from Luciano

Pavarotti to Tiger Woods. Its economy has nearly tripled in size, to \$34.5 billion, in just a decade. "We have built a success story in a short span of time," says Mohammad al-Gergawi, executive chairman of Dubai Holding, the government-run conglomerate that oversees most of the emirate's big domestic and foreign investments. "In 10 to 15 years, we put Dubai on the map."

It took some members of the U.S. Congress about a day and a half to accomplish as much notoriety for the place, such was their outrage over the latest piece of Dubai's economic development. A state-controlled company, Dubai Ports World, which aims to be a major player in the global-shipping industry, last November agreed to pay \$6.8 billion to buy a British firm, Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Co. (P&O), which controls terminal operations under five U.S. port authorities, including those in New York City, Baltimore and Miami. Citing security issues and a lack of information from the Bush Administration, usually free-trade Republicans like Peter King, chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, have all but vowed to show up at the docks to stop the deal. "A lot of Republicans feel they were hung out to dry," says King. The tussle has even offered the prospect of former President Bill Clinton, a Dubai adviser, squaring off with his spouse, New York Senator Hillary Clinton, who opposes the buyout. Geopolitics makes strange bedfellows. The deal is on hold pending a 45-day national-security review that DP World asked for in the hope of winning support and easing fears about its antiterrorism credentials.

The P&O acquisition is emblematic of a Middle Eastern merchant state on the rise, one that aspires to be much more than an amusement park for jet-setters. Run since 1995 by a press-shy crown prince, Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, who became emir this year (Sheik Mo, to finance types), Dubai has established a network of holding companies, funds and corporations with more than \$15 billion in overseas investments and a domestic goal of turning Dubai into a hub for everything from financial services to biotechnology. Call it Dubai Inc., a conglomerate with Sheik Mo as CEO. "We are not that different [from] small states like Singapore," says Mohammed Alabbar, head of Dubai's Department of Economic Development and chairman of the real estate developer Emaar. "They realized their economy is too small, so they said, 'Let's go to a broader market.' That's what's happening."

By most metrics, the plan has worked brilliantly. Dubai's economy is the healthiest in the Middle East, growing at a 16% annual clip and diversifying well beyond oil (which accounts for just about 6% of GDP). Dubai's ports and free-trade zones bustle. The government has built high-tech centers, including Dubai Media City and Dubai Internet City, attracting companies from Microsoft to IBM. A research park called DuBiotech is luring drug companies. The Dubai International Financial Center, a "financial free zone," aims to lead the region's securities exchanges, although there will be plenty of competition for that honor.

Sheik Mo, known for his love of thoroughbred horses, has been on a shopping spree. In recent months his investment vehicles have acquired the Tussauds Group wax museums and a 2% stake in DaimlerChrysler. U.S. purchases include the landmark Essex House hotel and Helmsley Building in New York, and 69 apartment-rental properties in southern U.S. states. And he's clearly not done. Says Alabbar: "For any businessman, you need to operate in the American economy and understand it. That's where a lot of the stuff in the world starts. That's why I am in California." (And to visit his son, who attends college in San Diego.) Perhaps most impressively, the sheik has eschewed the opaque, connection-fueled style of business typical of the Middle East and insisted on Western standards of accounting and transparency.

Dubai's embrace of Western business principles was no match for Western politicians with security fears, either real or politically opportunistic. The Bush Administration, stung by a rebellion in its own party, announced last week that it would review a deal by another Dubai firm to buy a British company, Doncasters, which makes precision parts for U.S. military aircraft and tanks at plants in Georgia and Connecticut.

Senators who want to block the ports deal, such as New York Democrat Charles Schumer, point out that the 9/11 attackers laundered money through Dubai and that the sheikdom participates in a boycott of Israel by the United Arab Emirates, of which it is one sheikdom among several. (Despite the boycott, DP World does business with Israeli firms.) Congressman King, for one, told TIME he wants assurances that al-Qaeda supporters "will not be able to work their way into the company." That task might fall to the chief operating officer of DP World--a guy from New Jersey named Edward (Ted) Bilkey.

Dubai certainly isn't short on big names coming to its aid. Power brokers Bill Clinton and Bob Dole (whose spouse is a North Carolina Senator), along with Madeleine Albright's lobbying shop, have advised DP World. Clinton has described the U.A.E. as a model Middle East government and in 2002 gave two speeches in Dubai, pulling in \$450,000. Nor is the Bush Administration unfamiliar with DP World. Critics grouse that Treasury Secretary John Snow's former company, transportation giant CSX, sold its international port operations to DP World in 2004, for \$1.15 billion. Dubai also works with the Carlyle Group, the Washington-based investment firm stocked with former government insiders.

The congressional uproar leaves Dubai's bosses feeling burned by a double standard, one that promotes globalization only when it is within the U.S.'s comfort zone. "The media is saying 'The world is flat', but when it comes to Arabs there are a lot of barriers," says a Dubai official. "People are thinking about the clash of civilizations. It's important for the world to see us working together." Sheika Lubna al-Qasimi, Dubai's Minister of Economy and Planning, predicts that the bottom line will win out after the review. "At the end of the day, this is about business," she told TIME. Whatever the outcome, she adds, it won't halt military and intelligence cooperation between the U.S. and her country.

Yet if the U.S. is going to block deals for what Dubai sees as political reasons, there is less of an incentive to trade with American companies--and it could bolster Dubai's effort to attract Arab capital to its nascent financial center. More concretely, Dubai is committed to \$200 billion in projects, including expanding the city of Dubai's airport, and tons more hotels and condos. Dubai recently unveiled a plan to create a "global aerospace manufacturing and services corporation" that will offer leasing and repair services, challenging firms like General Electric (start-up funds: \$15 billion). Emaar is building an entire city in Saudi Arabia, a \$23 billion project that will include an airport, seaport, schools and hospitals.

All this activity has fed speculation that Dubai Inc. is a bubble built on debt. Certainly, Dubai is a borrower. "The big secret is that Dubai doesn't have much money," says Harry Alverson, managing director of the Carlyle Group. "Most of what they do is very leveraged." Yet borrowing to finance growth is what hot companies--and countries--do. That's why Carlyle is a partner. And why Alabbar is confident the

Dubai miracle is no mirage. "The whole region needs to be served," he says, "and there is nobody there except Dubai."

U.S. POLITICS AND POLICY

Dating-Game Diplomacy

National Review

By Barbara Lerner

3/13

The Dubai Ports deal appears to be dead, killed by the overwhelming opposition of ordinary Americans. Now conventional foreign-policy experts worry about the damage this allegedly rude, Arab-phobic act will do to our ongoing diplomatic courtship of the United Arab Emirates and its Arab sister states in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). As these anxious experts see it, the UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and Bahrain have been doing us a great favor by hosting our military on their territories, and if we had any sense, we would reward them for these generous acts of friendship by approving any investments in our country their governments care to make. Instead, we have recklessly offended them all by rejecting the UAE's Dubai Ports deal, arousing their justified anger, and putting their willingness to continue hosting our military at risk. To undo the damage and avert these potentially dire consequences, these experts tell us, we must now work harder than ever to soothe and placate them, and get back into their good graces.

Call that the dating-game school of diplomacy.

Now let's take another look at our relations with the UAE and its sister states, based on the geopolitical realities of the Gulf region. From this perspective, we see that the UAE and four of its sister states don't host the U.S. military as a favor to us, out of friendship. They host our forces because it is in their national interest to do so; because America is their protector; because without our military might, they would cease to exist, being gobbled up by their larger neighbors, just as Kuwait was gobbled up by Saddam Hussein until we threw the Iraqi invaders out and restored the country to its ruling emirs in 1991.

Iraq isn't much of a threat at present, thanks to our toppling of Saddam Hussein in 2003 and our ongoing military presence there, but this is an unstable region, long riven by a multitude of bitter and old border disputes. Two other Gulf neighbors, Iran and Saudi Arabia, have longstanding claims to some of the UAE's oil lands and to oil rich parts of its sister states too. Saudi Arabia is the sixth member of the GCC, the big sister of the group, and her relationship to the other five was, until quite recently, something like that of Big Nurse to the inmates in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. In the last few years, the growing instability of the Wahhabi kingdom has weakened the Saudi's ability to dominate and bully. Nevertheless, the smaller states' existential peril remains very real.

To begin to understand just how vulnerable and threatened the UAE and its sister states are, it helps to have a clear picture of their size in relation to the size of the neighboring Gulf states that covet their territories and their oil. So let's look at population numbers, using estimates on which the U.S. Census Bureau and the CIA World Factbook agree. (Our State Department offers somewhat different figures, but

no matter; whichever figures you use, the UAE and its four Arab sisters are tiny little statelets, surrounded by hostile, rapacious giants.)

Here are the numbers: The UAE has about two and a half million inhabitants, making it a little bigger than Kuwait, which has two and a third million, and a little smaller than Oman, which has three million. Qatar and Bahrain are smaller still, with less than a million inhabitants each. All five together have less than ten million inhabitants, and most of these are hired hands who can never become citizens-- either pampered foreign managers who run the countries' state-owned businesses or much-abused foreign laborers and domestics who do the countries' dirty work. Compare that to Saudi Arabia's more than 26 million natives and Iran's 68 million, and you get some idea of how perilous a situation the UAE and its little sisters are in, and how completely they depend on the protection of a strong outside power for their existence. Indeed, they have lasted this long only because they have always had a powerful foreign protector--before us, it was the British. To put it in plain English, we don't owe them; they owe us.

Our failure to recognize this basic fact and act on it by demanding a fair price for our protection allows statelets like the UAE to play on both sides, befriend Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda before 9/11 and terrorist groups like Hamas today. Their ties to Hamas are especially close because so many of these statelet's foreign managers are Palestinians, except in Kuwait, which drove about 370,000 of them from its territory after they collaborated with Saddam Hussein in the invasion and despoliation of their country. Still, even Kuwait remains fiercely committed to the Palestinians' cause--the destruction of our ally, Israel--and all five support the boycott of Israeli goods, although Oman, Qatar, and Bahrain have occasionally shown signs of wanting to relax it.

The UAE has been especially relentless in resisting any such softening of Arab rejectionism, and why not? It earns them brownie points with all the Arab fanatics and all the terrorist groups in the region, and costs them nothing in terms of our support. We don't grasp the diplomatic leverage our position gives us, and therefore we cannot use it to advance our interests and those of allies who actually share our goals. Instead, we let ourselves be bullied by arrogant and hostile little statelets who shrewdly exploit our indiscriminate eagerness to make all Arabs like us, and win what our diplomats are pleased to call their "friendship." In fact, friendship among states--to the extent that it exists--is based on respect, and an easily manipulated over-eagerness to please is more likely to generate contempt. As Harry Truman, a genuine foreign-policy maven, used to say about another hard place, Washington, if you want a friend, get a dog.

--Barbara Lerner is a frequent NRO contributor.

Departure Port

New Republic
By Byron York
3/13

As the weekend of February 18 began, most members of Congress were just getting home for the Presidents' Day recess. There, they were experiencing the first blast of anger from constituents upset over the Bush administration's decision to allow a company owned by the government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to manage

operations at several big U.S. ports. People had heard about the deal on talk radio, and they seemed to be growing madder by the minute.

Back in Washington, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, preparing for a cross-country trip, was getting a steady stream of phone calls and e-mails about the issue. His last scheduled event in Washington was an appearance that Sunday morning on CBS's "Face the Nation." Expecting a question about the ports, Frist was prepared to make a very public break with President Bush. "He was going to say that he had reservations about the deal and it should be reviewed," says a GOP aide. But host Bob Schieffer, still working over the week-old story of Dick Cheney's hunting accident, never asked. "That's the old media for you," the aide says.

Forty-eight hours later, everyone was asking. And Republicans in Congress--Frist and House Speaker Dennis Hastert and just about everybody else--abandoned Bush with astonishing speed. Such a mass desertion has never happened before in Bush's presidency, not even over the nomination of Harriet Miers to the Supreme Court (when it took many Republicans weeks to go public with their reservations). The instant furor over the ports deal was different, and it revealed something that has been mostly below the surface for quite some time: Republicans on Capitol Hill are furious at George W. Bush.

They're mad for a bunch of reasons, the first being their genuine concern about the deal. Will the port operators be confined to moving and storing containers, as the White House says, while Americans remain in charge of security? Is the UAE as reliable an ally in the war on terrorism as the White House claims? Was the administration's process of approving the UAE deal as thorough as it says? "People are saying that this is all about an election," says one House leadership aide. "But this is probably an issue that a year ago--just after an election--would have caused a firestorm."

But, of course, Republicans are angry for political reasons, too. For them, the port deal is symptomatic of the high-handed way the White House treats its congressional allies. For years now, many lawmakers have been willing to put up with such treatment, because they believed there was a finely tuned political machine in the White House that would ultimately prevail. Now, they no longer believe that, and they're worried.

It's not that Bush's approval numbers are bad, although they are (34 percent, according to a recent CBS survey). In their view, Bush is not a political liability because his approval ratings are low. His approval ratings are low because he's a political liability. Shortly after the ports controversy blew up, I called a strategist who often works with top GOP lawmakers and asked whether the Republican revolt would be happening if the president had a 60 percent approval rating. That's the wrong way to look at it, he said. Presidents have high approval ratings because they avoid the dumb mistakes that Bush made in the ports affair. "When you're at 60 percent, you don't do these sort of things," he said.

The first political misstep Republicans cite in the ports deal is that the president blindsided them. News of the deal took them all by surprise. Talk to any Republican, from the intern who answers the phones to members of the leadership, and they'll tell you they learned about the deal from press reports. Would it have killed the administration to tell its GOP supporters in Congress about it in advance? "It may be that the deal is a fine deal, but it should have been done in a way in which they said,

“OK, here's our decision, let's go brief people,” says one well-connected Senate aide. “Nobody should have been surprised, but, instead, everybody was surprised.” (The aide, like nearly every Republican who vented about the president for this article, spoke only on the condition that he or she not be named; the president is weak enough for Republicans to oppose him, but not so weak that he can be openly dissed without consequence.)

Blindsiding Congress once was bad enough, but then the White House did it again when Bush vowed to veto any legislation that would stop the deal. Hastert and Frist were taken aback. Why was the president threatening war when they hadn't even talked about it? “We didn't know it was coming,” says yet another top aide, who guessed that Bush's statement was the ill-considered result of emergency strategy sessions in the isolation of Air Force One, on which he was returning to the White House from Colorado. “It was a huge mistake to threaten to veto legislation that will have the support of 70, maybe 80 percent of the American people.”

Another point of resentment among Republicans is that, having surprised GOP lawmakers, the White House then expected them to defend the president. “The administration really expected that members of Congress who hadn't been given any explanation, who hadn't been briefed, and who didn't know what was going on, were going to go out in public and sell it,” says a former leadership aide who keeps close tabs on the issue. “Members are tired of using their political capital to cover for the administration.”

More than one Republican uses the A-word--arrogance --to describe the president's attitude toward his GOP allies. The White House's we-know-best approach worked better when Bush was riding high, or at least higher than he is now. Now, Republicans say, what does the president, struggling to keep his job approval ratings from dropping below 30 percent, have to be arrogant about?

All that might have been tolerable had the ports deal been a one-time-only mistake. Instead, a number of Republicans view it as just the latest in a series of screwups that began with the Social Security reform campaign and continued with the Miers nomination and the response to Hurricane Katrina. “They don't like how it's not working,” says the well-connected Senate aide. “There's a perception, and it's an accurate perception, that these are mistakes that shouldn't be happening in the fifth year.” Both House and Senate Republicans have laid into White House officials for their respective retreats, urging that the White House get its act together--so far, to no avail.

Put all that together, eight months before an election, and you have a lot of frightened Republicans. These days, GOP lawmakers are polling behind Democrats on issues like health care, education, and the deficit. National security is pretty much their only strength--and now Bush has hurt them on that. When a Rasmussen poll reported that 43 percent of those questioned trusted congressional Democrats to handle national security, versus 41 percent who trusted Bush, many Republicans' first reaction was to question the poll. Their second reaction was to lash out at Bush for angering the Republican base. GOP lawmakers know that he could determine whether they retain control of the House and Senate. “Each one of these candidates is tied to the White House,” says the well-connected Senate aide. “The president is the leader, so, no matter how hard somebody fights, they can go down because the White House is lousy.”

After Social Security, Katrina, Miers, and the UAE, the bottom line is that Republicans don't want to bet their futures on Bush anymore. "It's just been going on for so long," says the former aide. "We're in final-straw territory."

-- Byron York is the White House correspondent for National Review.

WAR ON TERRORISM

One Life Inside Gitmo

Time

By Adam Zagorin

3/13

The U.S. government says Detainee 063 has provided invaluable intelligence. His lawyer says that the statements were coerced and that the interrogation log-- published exclusively on TIME.com--proves it

The prisoner didn't trust his lawyer at the start, refusing even to speak with her. She did what she could to win his confidence, donning a hijab, the head covering worn by observant Muslim women, when she visited him at Camp Delta at the U.S. Naval Base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Eventually, he began to ask how his aging father in Saudi Arabia made contact with her, how he could be sure she was not another interrogator trying to extract more information from him. "He asked me the same questions over and over," says Gitanjali Gutierrez. "He desperately sought some means of reassuring himself that I was a real lawyer and would not betray him."

It's no wonder that Gutierrez's client would be worried. He is Mohammed al-Qahtani, the Saudi thought by U.S. counterterrorism officials to be the so-called 20th hijacker, the would-be fifth terrorist on the flight that crashed in a Pennsylvania field on 9/11. In a June 20, 2005, cover story, TIME chronicled part of the interrogation of al-Qahtani, based on a highly classified log kept at Guantánamo over a 50-day period in the winter of 2002-03. The 84-page log, available in full on TIME.com, showed U.S. interrogators using a wide range of tactics to get him to talk, including sleep deprivation, exposure to cold, forced standing, denial of bathroom breaks, denial of clothing and all manner of emotional manipulations. In the log itself, al-Qahtani both admits and denies working with al-Qaeda. U.S. forces captured him fleeing the battle in Tora Bora in Afghanistan in December 2001. The month before 9/11, he tried to enter the U.S. through Orlando, Fla.--while 9/11 leader Mohamed Atta waited for him in the airport parking lot--but was deported after he became evasive with an immigration agent. The Pentagon contends that over time al-Qahtani, known as Detainee 063, proved an invaluable source, identifying al-Qaeda financial contacts in several Arab countries, describing meetings with the organization's top leadership and fingering at least 30 other Guantánamo detainees as bodyguards of Osama bin Laden.

Having spent more than 30 hours in December and January speaking through an interpreter with al-Qahtani at Guantánamo, Gutierrez, the first person to report publicly on his mind-set since his story broke, says he now recants his previous incriminating statements, claiming they were extracted under extreme duress. That may not be surprising. Nor was Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman's response: that "the al-Qaeda training manual specifically encourages those captured to make

false claims of abuse." But the more that becomes known about the al-Qahtani case--a unique window into the otherwise secretive practices at Guantánamo--the greater the government's vulnerability to challenges to its conduct there. Lawyers for some 60 Guantánamo prisoners told TIME they plan this week to file in a Washington federal appeals court a motion questioning the legality of their clients' detention, based in part on the log of al-Qahtani's questioning that appeared on TIME.com last week. "Using the interrogation logs, we can now demonstrate as fact that statements procured from a man who was abused and tortured have been used to justify the continued detention of Guantánamo prisoners," said Marc Falkoff, a lawyer with Covington & Burling who represents 17 of those detainees. Says Joshua Colangelo-Bryan, another of the lawyers in the case (*al-Odah v. United States*): "Mr. al-Qahtani's statements were elicited in a manner that undermines their credibility entirely. The logs reveal that, with a single day's exception, al-Qahtani was the victim of sleep deprivation that usually lasted a full 20 hours a day for seven straight weeks."

Meanwhile, Gutierrez, a staff attorney for the Center for Constitutional Rights, a New York City--based nonprofit organization that al-Qahtani's father approached last year for help, has challenged his detention in federal court in Washington on the grounds that it is illegal. According to Gutierrez, al-Qahtani insists that he is innocent and that he made many false statements to appease his interrogators. She says he told her he had informed interrogators of his false declarations, a contention supported in part by his interrogation log.

A Pentagon report in July 2005 found that al-Qahtani had been subjected to treatment that was--though not a violation of Defense Department policy--cumulatively "abusive and degrading." It specifically recommended that the commandant of Guantánamo, Major General Geoffrey Miller, be reprimanded for failing to adequately monitor the interrogation of a high-value detainee, believed to be al-Qahtani. But Miller's superior, Southern Command Commander General Bantz Craddock, decided against the reprimand. Congress last December passed a provision, sponsored by Senator John McCain of Arizona, that bars U.S. personnel from engaging in "cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment" of detainees anywhere. The provision came too late for al-Qahtani; it's not clear how much protection it will afford prisoners like him who are subjected to such handling in the future.

In a U.S. district court in Washington last week, lawyers for Mohammad Bawazir, a Yemeni held at Guantánamo since May 2002, challenged treatment of their client that they argued constituted torture. Bawazir, who had lost 33 lbs. in a hunger strike, claims that in January Guantánamo authorities repeatedly force-fed him by brutally inserting into his nose a thick feeding tube and then roughly pulled it out, causing excruciating pain. The Justice Department argued that Bawazir cannot seek protection under the anti-abuse provisions of the McCain amendment because it contains "no private right of action" that would let defendants sue the government. In other words, Justice says, the government can bust an interrogator for abusing a detainee, but the detainee has no recourse.

The McCain provision was an amendment to the Detainee Treatment Act, written by Senators Lindsey Graham and Carl Levin, which, according to Justice's interpretation, gives Guantánamo inmates access to U.S. courts only for purposes of appealing their convictions by military commissions or their designations as enemy combatants, which allows the government to detain them indefinitely without trial. Says Tom Malinowski, Washington advocacy director for Human Rights Watch: "Only the

Supreme Court or the Congress can resolve the contradiction between the McCain amendment, which prohibits cruel treatment, and the Detainee Treatment Act, which prevents prisoners from complaining about that treatment in court."

In al-Odah--which many legal experts believe will end up before the Supreme Court--the government has invoked the Detainee Treatment Act in an attempt to preclude extensive court review of the prisoners' detentions. But the detainees' lawyers argue that the act clashes with a 2004 Supreme Court ruling that opened the federal courts to any prisoner held by the U.S. anywhere in the world. "The issue in this case is critically important because if the government has its way, Guantánamo will be returned to a legal black hole," says Eric Freedman, a professor of constitutional law at Hofstra University and a consultant to several detainees. "It would be an outrage if evidence being used to hold prisoners was extracted by unconscionable methods and that fact did not come to light in a court of law."

Questions surrounding the Detainee Treatment Act will be raised in arguments before the Supreme Court as well on March 28, when lawyers for Salim Ahmed Hamdan, alleged to be bin Laden's driver, challenge government attempts to put him on trial before a military commission, claiming his detention is illegal. Guantánamo detainees did win one victory last week when the Pentagon was compelled by a federal judge to release the names and nationalities of all the prisoners who have participated in hearings considering their enemy-combatant status--about 300 of the 500.

As for Detainee 063, according to his lawyer, he is a broken man. In her first meetings with al-Qahtani, says Gutierrez, his mind wandered, and he engaged in rambling monologues. She found him fearful and at times disoriented. Her descriptions called to mind reports by FBI agents who said al-Qahtani, upon arriving at Guantánamo in 2002, resisted interrogation and so was subjected to intimidation by a military dog and "intense isolation over three months" that led to "behavior consistent with extreme psychological trauma (talking to non-existent people, reporting hearing voices, crouching in a cell covered with a sheet for hours)."

When al-Qahtani still didn't break, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld personally authorized a series of harsh interrogation techniques for him. Concern about the legality of some of those methods prompted the Pentagon to outlaw their use in January 2003, barely a month after Rumsfeld authorized them. Gutierrez says al-Qahtani "painfully described how he could not endure the months of isolation, torture and abuse, during which he was nearly killed, before making false statements to please his interrogators." As documented in the interrogation log, at one point al-Qahtani became seriously dehydrated because of his refusal to drink water regularly, causing him to be hospitalized and his heart rate to drop to 35 beats a minute.

According to the Pentagon, al-Qahtani admitted that he had been sent to the U.S. by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, architect of the 9/11 attacks, and that he had met bin Laden on several occasions. Al-Qahtani also confirmed that he had received terrorist instruction at two al-Qaeda training camps and met with numerous senior al-Qaeda leaders. Says the Pentagon's Whitman: "The record clearly shows that al-Qahtani is a dangerous individual who should be held to account for his acts of terrorism."

ECONOMICS OF THE MIDDLE EAST

Learning to Leverage

Newsweek International

By Stephen Glain

3/13

Not so long ago in the Middle East, even a prince couldn't get a loan. From Turkey to Iran and throughout the Arab states in between, cash was king. Companies had little or no debt on their books and governments with sound credit ratings were reluctant to raise money through bond issues. The basic business notion of leveraging--or stretching investments through debt--was as alien to the Middle East as a vodka martini in Riyadh.

No longer. Thanks to long-awaited financial reforms and a regionwide boom fueled by high oil prices, the rivers of cash that have coursed through the Middle East for centuries are finally being harnessed into a modern reservoir of credit. A flurry of government debt issued over the last half-decade has established benchmark prices for a growing number of corporate bonds, which offer companies funding sources that can be cheaper and more flexible than bank loans. Policymakers are fine-tuning legislation that would permit 30-year home mortgages for the first time, and banks are already finding ways to provide long-term housing credits. "Leverage is picking up," says Saudi Prince Mohammed K.A. Al Faisal, who manages some of the kingdom's largest investment portfolios, with stakes in everything from petrochemical plants to steakhouses. "This is a very significant trend."

Capitalism is built on loans, and Saudi Arabia can't join the global age without them. Nor is the Arab world as backward as it may sound: the fact is that many emerging markets, even in hot, growing regions of Asia, are only now introducing such basic instruments of finance as a corporate bond market. Bankers and investors are eyeing retail lending as the Middle East's next big credit market. Turkey is moving to create long-term mortgage guarantees this year. Similar proposals are gaining in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Though solid numbers are hard to come by in the Middle East, credit cards and consumer loans are starting to spread, say bankers.

None too soon. A cash culture has stunted real-estate markets even in countries with fast-growing populations. Turkish demand for homes is estimated to be twice the supply. In Egypt, the shortage of credit has left an estimated 1 million small to midsize flats closed and uninhabited.

On the corporate side, petrochemical giant Saudi Basic Industries Corp. late last year issued a \$267 million domestic corporate bond--the kingdom's first--as it prepared to spend some \$8 billion on new projects over the next three to five years. Saudi finance officials are busy preparing for more corporate debt issues as the stock market tests new highs. "When you have a booming stock market, people get preoccupied with equity," says Abdulaziz Alzoom, a director at Saudi Arabia's Capital Market Authority. "But it will not be long before we have the demand and the infrastructure for a world-class debt market."

The changes in Egypt date to 2003, when the Egyptian pound was floated against the dollar. As official and black-market exchange rates converged, a liquid and legal foreign-exchange market emerged. That drove up confidence in the local market, and Egyptian banks began weekly auctions of government securities. The state-owned Bank of Alexandria is now introducing such retail products as credit cards, which are still a novelty in the region, as well as a pilot home-mortgage plan. "It

used to be the treasury division was for bookkeepers," says Bank of Alexandria CEO Mahmoud Abdel Latif. "Now it's a major earner on the money market."

Even Syria, which has arguably the most backward financial system in the region, is getting into the act. In a country that not so long ago had no automated-teller machines, gleaming new banking halls now offer clients auto loans and letters of credit. "For decades, our money was sleeping," says Waddah Abd Rabbo, editor in chief of the weekly Syrian economic newspaper Al-Iktisadiya. "Now things are changing. Soon we'll have a new banking system." Better hurry. The rest of the region's capital is wide awake.

ISLAM IN AMERICA

Crying Wolf - Is America a Dangerous Place for its Muslim Citizens?

National Review

By Daniel Mandel

3/13

Spokesmen for Muslim groups in the West have made a large number and wide variety of claims against the societies in which they live. They speak of racism and discrimination, with the alleged misdeeds they cite ranging from defamation in the media and in Hollywood to physical attacks.

Capitol Hill and the White House seem to think these claims have a basis in fact. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Senate passed a resolution condemning "any acts of violence or discrimination against any Americans, including Arab Americans and American Muslims"; shortly thereafter, George W. Bush warned that intimidation of Muslims "should not and . . . will not stand in America." Presidents and Senates don't make statements of that type without believing that the situation calls for them. But does it?

If America were in the grip of anti-Muslim ferment, we could expect to see a major increase in hate crimes against Muslims and a corresponding lack of receptiveness to Muslim entreaties in the government, the media, and the public. According to a number of Muslim and Arab advocacy organizations, this is precisely what is happening.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), in "Unequal Protection," its civil-rights report for 2005, provides several graphs registering dramatic increases in reported civil-rights and hate-crimes cases: 1,522 civil-rights cases in 2004, up from 1,019 in 2003 and 602 in 2002; and 141 "actual and potential" hate crimes in 2004, as against 93 in 2003 and 42 in 2002. The Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) too, in its 2001–2002 report on hate crimes, alleged 165 violent incidents from January to October of 2002, amounting to a "significant increase over most years in the past decade."

The reality is rather different. Fabricated incidents and frivolous complaints have abounded in these reports and others like them. For example, no fewer than five cases of arson or vandalism of Muslim businesses appear to have been the result of attempted insurance fraud on the part of the businesses' owners. In two cases, CAIR protested on behalf of those alleging hate crimes, Mirza Akram and Amjad Abunar,

demanding investigations -- and then was struck dumb when each man was charged with arson. Other incidents reported by CAIR cannot be substantiated. There are no police records to back up the alleged explosion of a bomb outside a Houston mosque in July 2004. Another case CAIR cites -- a mosque fire in Springfield, Mass. -- was eventually ruled to be a juvenile robbery in which the fire was lit to obliterate evidence of a break-in, and was not motivated by anti-Muslim bias. Past ADC reports have referred to egg-pelting incidents against Muslims on a university campus that, on inspection, proved in one case not to have had an obvious hateful motive, and in the other to have been a fabrication by the supposed victim.

Turning to the most serious crime -- murder -- of eight reported by CAIR in the year following September 11, 2001, all but one had ambiguous motives and on investigation could not be attributed to anti-Muslim motivation. More recently, Daniel Pipes and Sharon Chadha took a microscope to some incidents in CAIR's latest report and concluded that, of "twenty 'anti-Muslim hate crimes' in 2004 that CAIR describes, at least six are invalid." Findings like these fatally compromise the credence that can be paid to CAIR's reports.

Beyond citing examples that appear to be outright fabrications, the authors of CAIR's reports show a remarkable ingenuity in defining what constitutes an expression of anti-Muslim bias. Hollywood has been a particular target of Muslim groups for its supposed insensitivity. The ADC decries "the extremely serious problem of negative stereotyping of Arabs and Arab Americans in the entertainment industry." With metronomic regularity, Muslim groups protest action films dealing with Middle Eastern terrorists for reinforcing a supposed culture of intolerance and racism. To Westerners, they present their argument as an appeal for fair play. Elsewhere -- particularly in the Middle East -- their complaint takes on an anti-Semitic complexion -- the culprit now being conscienceless Jewish domination of a Hollywood that slavishly serves the interests of Israel, or of the U.S. military-industrial complex, or whatever variant thereof the subject and occasion demand.

In fact, nothing very sinister is afoot. Hollywood has always dealt in a range of stock characters and situations, and this is not reprehensible when it has a basis in fact. It is not malignity, but reality, that leads filmmakers to depict Nazis as Germans or World War II Japanese generals as imperialists. Likewise, documentaries and films on terrorism that are inspired by actual events tend to tell Middle Eastern, not Scandinavian, stories. If anything, Hollywood has latterly gone to extraordinary lengths to avoid offending Muslims, dragging other groups into service as terrorist villains. In *The Sum of All Fears*, the Middle Eastern terrorists of Tom Clancy's novel were transformed, following CAIR's intercession with the director, into European neo-Nazis. In *The Interpreter*, sub-Saharan Africans replaced the Muslims originally intended as terrorist villains. Recently, Fox acceded to CAIR's concerns over an episode of its series 24 that depicted Muslim terrorists by announcing it would give airtime to CAIR for public-service messages.

Hollywood's pusillanimity in the face of criticism from Muslim groups mirrors a sometimes misplaced sensitivity and presumption of guilt displayed by other institutions. CAIR is a Saudi-funded organization whose founder is on record praising suicide bombers and saying he would like the Koran to be the highest authority in America, and whose personnel have been implicated in crimes consistent with these positions. One would expect that, with such a record, CAIR would be shunned. To the contrary, it is courted by government, law-enforcement agencies, civil-liberties groups, and religious bodies. Corporations too have been obsequious, perhaps

because commerce is highly sensitive to organizations willing and able to trumpet claims of discrimination and insensitivity. As a result, Arabic-script logos deemed offensive to Muslims have been removed by advertisers; a broadcaster who offended CAIR has been fired; and Internet providers have taken down websites filled with content hostile to Islam -- something unlikely to occur in respect of anti-Jewish hate sites.

It is something of an Islamist triumph that such a weak case for corrective action has drawn such wide support in a country where Muslims have done exceedingly well. For the truth is that American society is generally respectful of Muslim needs and concerns. Muslim men and women who have lost their jobs for violating employer dress codes (by insisting on beards or traditional garb), or who have suffered even inadvertent discrimination in the workplace, have been either generously compensated or reinstated. Conversely, other groups suffering more from hate crimes tend to get ignored. In 2004, the FBI reported 1,374 crimes motivated by religious bias, of which 954 (67.8 percent) were committed against Jews, but only 156 (12.7 percent) against Muslims. This has not resulted in allegations of an anti-Jewish crime wave in the United States, much less in concerted action to address pervasive racism against Jews.

On any serious index of hate crimes and discrimination against Muslims, Americans are not significantly represented. We should remember this truth next time complaints emerge from CAIR and likeminded groups. In particular, the mainstream media should treat these claims without credulity and independently verify allegations; government and institutions should shun radical pressure groups; and corporations, perhaps the most vulnerable target of campaigns alleging racism and insensitivity, should deploy strategies other than caving in.

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