

Anti-Imperialist News Service

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Iraqis Organize Against U.S. Occupation

During the last week, tens of thousands of Iraqis, in several cities, have come into the streets to protest U.S. occupation of their country and demand that U.S. troops get out immediately.

In Baghdad, demonstrations have taken place every day. On Friday, April 18, tens of thousands of people marched through several neighborhoods and converged in the central district of Azamiyah to demand an end to U.S. occupation. Banners and slogans said: "No to America!" "We Reject American Hegemony!" and "Leave Our Country, Iraq Belongs to Iraqis." Two days earlier, a large protest in front of a U.S. marine headquarters proclaimed: "Down, down U.S.A. — don't stay, go away!"

These mass actions were supported by a broad array of religious and political organizations and leaders. Speakers demanded that the U.S. "army of occupation" immediately leave the country saying "Get out before we kick you out." Another statement called on the people to "unite with each other to send America and Britain out of your country. It is a duty for the Iraqi nation." The protests also explicitly denounced U.S. attempts to set up a puppet government. One statement said: "We must oppose the federal government the U.S. wants to set up in the coming few days. Our movement wants every Iraqi to take part in rebuilding and set up a new modern state." Banners proclaimed: "We want true freedom, not American puppets."

Similar actions have been organized in other cities. On April 15, at least 20,000 Iraqis marched in Nasiriya, under banners reading: "No to America, No to Saddam." The rally was organized to coincide with and oppose a meeting organized by U.S. occupationist forces as part of the attempt to rig up a puppet administration.

Also on April 15, U.S. troops fired on a peaceful political rally in Mosul called to oppose U.S. occupation. U.S. Brigadier-General Vince Brooks admitted that "Fire was indeed delivered from coalition forces, it was lethal fire and some Iraqis were killed as a result." Press reports say

that 15 people were killed and hundreds wounded.

The fact that such broad and militant actions are being organized within days after U.S. bombs stopped falling shows the determination of the Iraqi people.

It is the duty of the American people to support the Iraqi people's struggle against U.S. occupation and U.S. colonialism.

End the Occupation of Iraq!

No to Colonization!

**U.S. Troops Out of Iraq and the
Middle East!**

U.S. Threats and Pressure Against Syria

U.S. aggression is not stopping in Iraq. Already the Bush administration is threatening and pressurizing countries throughout the Middle East.

Spokespersons for the Bush administration talk openly about the "demonstration effect" of the U.S. war against Iraq and its military occupation of the country. On April 14, for example, national security adviser Condoleezza Rice said: "it is time to sign on to a different kind of Middle East. Another "senior administration official" was quoted as saying the Iraq war "opens all sorts of new opportunities for us."

Syria has already come fire.

On April 14, the White House declared Syria to be a "rogue state" and accused it of building weapons of mass destruction, supporting terrorism and "harboring the remnants of the Iraqi

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Colonial Reconstruction of Iraq

After destroying Iraq with weeks of all-out bombing and military invasion, in addition to 12 years of economic sanctions, the U.S. has now announced it is starting the “reconstruction” of the country.

Contracts worth billions of dollars for this reconstruction have already been handed out by the U.S. government. On April 17, for example, the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) awarded a contract worth \$680 million to the Bechtel Group of San Francisco. A week earlier, the U.S. revealed that Kellogg, Brown & Root, a division of Halliburton, was awarded a \$7 billion oil construction contract. Six other U.S. companies, including Stevedoring Services of America, have recently been awarded high no-bid contracts by the U.S. administration.

According to U.S. officials, the total cost of rebuilding Iraq’s oil industry, airports, water and electric-power system, irrigation systems, roads and railroads, hospitals, etc, is expected to reach \$100 billion.

Initially, “the American taxpayer will pay the initial contract costs,” according to officials, but the U.S. government is also planning to make the Iraqi people pay for the reconstruction of the infrastructure destroyed by the U.S. military.

Revenue from Iraqi oil wells, for example, is expected to pay many of the reconstruction bills. On April 17, officials in Washington revealed that \$1.7 billion dollars, money taken from previously frozen Iraqi assets in the U.S., was being flown to Iraq aboard military cargo planes to help pay for reconstruction efforts. The U.S. dollar, officials said, would

become the new currency, replacing the Iraqi dinar.

According to the White House, only U.S. corporations will receive reconstruction contracts, and the United Nations will be excluded from playing any role in managing the process.

And the huge contracts are being awarded to corporations with high-level contacts with the White House and to companies that have donated millions to Republican and Democratic party candidates. Bechtel, for example, has a history of ties to the White House and Pentagon. Former U.S. Secretary of State, George Shultz, as well as former Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger also served on the Bechtel board. President Bush also recently appointed Bechtel’s chief executive, Riley Bechtel, to serve on the President’s Export Council. Halliburton was previously run by Vice-President Cheney.

Permanent U.S. Military Bases

Deputy Defense Secretary Wolfowitz has already indicated that the U.S. will directly rule the country for “at least six months.” More than 100,000 U.S. troops are expected to “police” Iraq, and on April 19, the New York Times reported that U.S. military officials are planning to setup four permanent military bases throughout Iraq.

In short, U.S. imperialism is going full-steam ahead in carrying out the economic, political, and military annexation of Iraq. ■

Threats Against Syria (from page 1)

regime.” On the same day, Secretary of State Powell threatened Syria with “measures of a diplomatic, economic or other nature” and would not rule out the possibility of war. On April 13, Deputy Defense Secretary Wolfowitz said: “There’s got to be a change in Syria,” and aides to Defense Secretary Rumsfeld told the press that “contingency plans” for an invasion of Syria were being drawn up. Later in the week, the U.S. shut down an oil pipeline used to transport oil from Iraq to Syria.

In addition, 150 members of the U.S. House of Representatives are cosponsoring a bill calling for far-reaching economic and diplomatic sanctions against Syria until Bush certifies that it has stopped all support to the Hezbollah and other groups labelled as “terrorist” by the U.S. A companion bill, cosponsored by Democratic Senator Boxer and Republican Senator Santorum is being introduced in the Senate.

Advisers to the Bush administration and other unofficial spokespersons are even more blunt in their warmongering. For example, Michael Ledeen, an adviser to leading members of the Bush Defense Department, wrote in the New York Sun on March 19:

“Once upon a time, it might have been possible to deal with Iraq alone, without having to face the murderous forces of the other terror masters in Teheran, Damascus and Riyadh, but that time has passed. It would be a terrible humiliation for America and Britain to fall prey to needless bloodshed because we blinded ourselves to the larger war in which we are now engaged. Iraq is a battle, not a war. We have to win the war, and the only way to do that is to bring down the terror masters, and spread freedom throughout the region. Rarely has it been possible to see one of history’s potential turning points so clearly and so dramatically as it is today. Rarely has a country been given such a glorious opportunity as we have in our hands. But history is full of missed opportunities and embarrassing defeats. We’ll know soon which destiny we will achieve.”

In short, U.S. imperialism aims at the conquest and colonization of the Middle East. It has already launched an aggressive war against Iraq and is setting up a military occupation of the country. Bush is boasting about U.S. military power and openly threatening to set the entire Middle East on fire. The fact is that U.S. imperialism will remain on the warpath until it is defeated by the struggles of the peoples. ■