

“Committee for the Liberation of Iraq” Sets Up Shop

By Jim Lobe

A small group of well-placed right-wing activists with close ties to hawks in the offices of Pentagon chief Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney, as well as next Senate Majority Leader, Trent Lott, is busy readying a new campaign to rally public support for the invasion of Iraq.

The “Committee for the Liberation of Iraq” is setting up offices on Capitol Hill this week, according to its president, Randy Scheunemann, Lott’s former chief national-security adviser who last year worked in Rumsfeld’s office as a consultant on Iraq policy. The chairman of the new Committee, Bruce P. Jackson, is a former vice president of Lockheed Martin who chaired the Republican Party Platform’s subcommittee for National Security and Foreign Policy when Bush ran for president in 2000.

Jackson, who also served as chairman of the U.S. Committee to Expand NATO, which spearheaded a “citizen’s” campaign to persuade Congress to ratify NATO’s eastward expansion in 1998, resigned from Lockheed earlier this year to, in his words, “pursue democracy building projects full-time.”

He, Scheunemann, and a prominent Republican fund-raiser who worked with Jackson on the NATO Committee, Julie Finley, founded the Project on Transitional Democracies, for which he is now president. He also leads the U.S. Committee on NATO, a successor to the expansion effort, in which both Scheunemann and Finley are officers.

The new Committee on Iraq appears to be a spin-off from the Project for a New American Century (PNAC), a front group consisting

mainly of neoconservative Jews and heavy-hitters from the Christian Right whose public recommendations on fighting President George W. Bush’s “war against terrorism” and alignment with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in the second intifada have anticipated to a remarkable degree the administration’s policy course.

Both Scheunemann and Jackson have signed a number of PNAC’s open letters to Bush, including one sent just eight days after the September 11 attacks on New York and the Pentagon, calling for Washington to carry the anti-terrorist campaign beyond al Qaeda to Syria, Iran, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Palestine Authority and, of course, Iraq.

Other signers included Richard Perle, chairman of Rumsfeld’s Defense Policy Board (DPB), Frank Gaffney, a Perle protege who now heads the Center for Security Policy (CSP), and several of Perle’s colleagues at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), including former UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, Michael Ledeen, and Marc Reuel Gerecht.

Gary Schmitt, PNAC’s executive director, has agreed to join Jackson, Finley, and Scheunemann, as an officer in the new Iraq group.

Scheunemann told FPIF that they are still recruiting members for the Committee’s board of directors. So far, however, former Secretary of State George Shultz, former Democratic Sen. Bob Kerrey, and ret. General Wayne Downing, a former lobbyist for the Iraqi National Congress (INC) who worked as Bush’s top counter-terrorism official on his National Security Council staff until he unexpectedly resigned last summer, have all signed on.

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Like Downing, Scheunemann has long-standing links to the INC, a very loose coalition of Iraqi dissidents and opposition groups headed by the controversial Ahmed Chalabi. Chalabi and the INC have long been championed by the neoconservatives around Rumsfeld and Cheney but disdained as ineffectual and possibly corrupt by regional specialists at the State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and the uniformed brass, including ret. General Anthony Zinni, who served as commander of the Pentagon's Central Command in the late 1990s.

In 1998, Scheunemann, who was then working for Lott, drafted the "Iraq Liberation Act" that authorized 98 million dollars for the INC, only a fraction of which was spent by the Clinton administration, largely due to opposition from State, the CIA, and Zinni. The Pentagon recently took control of the bulk of the unspent funds to begin training various INC factions.

The mission statement of the new Committee, whose website is at www.liberationiraq.org, describes its purpose as "promot[ing] regional peace, political freedom and international security by replacing the Saddam Hussein regime with a democratic government that respects the rights of the Iraqi people and ceases to threaten the community of nations."

It says the current government in Baghdad "poses a clear and present danger to its neighbors, to the United States, and to free peoples throughout the world."

"The Committee for the Liberation of Iraq will engage in educational and advocacy efforts to mobilize U.S. and

international support for policies aimed at ending the aggression of Saddam Hussein and freeing the Iraqi people from tyranny," it goes on. It "is committed to work beyond the liberation of Iraq to the reconstruction of its economy and the establishment of political pluralism, democratic institutions, and the rule of law."

Scheunemann told FPIF the group will concentrate its efforts on the media "both in the U.S. and in Europe."

The new committee appears to be the latest organization used by neo-conservatives and other right-wingers in a long line of similar front groups stretching back over a quarter of a century, first to the Coalition for a Democratic Majority and then to the more bipartisan Committee on the Present Danger (CPD), which campaigned against détente and arms control treaties during the Carter administration.

During the 1980s, they spawned new groups—consisting mostly of the same people—such as the Committee for the Free World; Prodemca (Friends of the Democratic Center in Central America), which supported Reagan administration policies in Central America; and the Institute for Religion and Democracy (IRD), which campaigned against the overseas work of mainstream Protestant churches and liberation theology of the Roman Catholic Church; among others.

Many of the activists in these groups were associated with AEI, the leading neoconservative think tank in Washington and one whose foreign-policy positions have never enjoyed as much influence as now.

In the lead-up to the Gulf War 11 years ago, many of the same individuals launched the Committee for Peace and Security in the Gulf (CPSG), co-chaired by Perle along with former New York Democratic Rep. Stephen Solarz. It worked closely with both the Bush Sr. administration in mobilizing support for the war, particularly in Congress, and with a second group financed by the Kuwaiti monarchy called Citizens for a Free Kuwait. CPSG also received a sizable grant from the Wisconsin-based Lynde & Harry Bradley Foundation, a major funder of both PNAC and AEI.

As recently as 1998, the CPSG called in an open letter to Clinton for Washington to adopt a “comprehensive political and military strategy for bringing down Saddam and his regime” centered on support for the INC and U.S. air power. More recently, it lobbied Congress to give Bush authority to wage war against Iraq.

The 1998 letter was signed by many of the charter members of PNAC, which had been launched the year before, who are now the leading Iraq hawks inside the administration. They include Rumsfeld and four of his top deputies at the Pentagon, Paul Wolfowitz, Douglas Feith, Dov Zakheim, and Peter Rodman; the arch-unilateralist undersecretary of state for arms control and international strategy, John Bolton; Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky; and senior National Security Council staffers Elliott Abrams and Zalmay Khalilzad.

PNAC’s Schmitt and its two co-founders, Bill Kristol and Robert

Kagan; CSP’s Gaffney; as well as several AEI associates, including Perle, Jeffrey Gedmin, Ledeen, Joshua Muravchik, and David Wurmser also signed.

PNAC published its own letter urging stronger action against Iraq in January, 1998. It stressed that “American policy cannot continue to

during his unsuccessful presidential run from 1999-2000, as well as a senior adviser to former Sen. Robert Dole in 1996.

Jackson served as national co-chairman of the Dole for President Finance Committee in that same year and worked with Scheunemann on the Party’s Platform subcommittee

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be crippled by a misguided insistence on unanimity in the UN Security Council” before taking unilateral military action. That letter was signed by Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Rodman, Bolton, Dobriansky, Abrams, Khalilzad, Kagan, Kristol, and Perle, as well as half a dozen other leading neocon and right-wing lights.

One year later, many of the same figures helped create the Balkan Action Committee (BAC) in support of NATO’s campaign against Serbia. Wolfowitz, Rumsfeld, and Perle all served on BAC’s executive committee, which, like the Prodemoca and the CPSG, for example, published open letters to the president and took out ads in major newspapers like the *New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

Scheunemann’s Republican connections do not only run to Lott. He served as foreign policy adviser to Sen. John McCain, a key Iraq hawk,

for National Defense and Security Policy. A Military Intelligence officer in the U.S. army from 1979 to 1990, Jackson worked in the offices of both Frank Carlucci and Dick Cheney when they served as defense secretaries under Reagan and Bush Sr. After a brief stint as an investment banker for Lehman Brothers in New York, he joined Martin Marietta, rising to his last post as vice president for Strategy and Planning at Lockheed Martin after the two defense giants’ merger.

An outspoken champion of Taiwan, Jackson first came to public prominence as head of the U.S. Committee to Expand NATO, which sought the alliance’s inclusion of nations from Central and Eastern Europe, a lucrative new market for Lockheed Martin and other defense contractors. At the time, he described his role as Committee president as a “hobby,” but, according to a report by the World Policy Institute, he worked

virtually full-time on the lobbying effort.

Also working with him was Steve Hadley, an assistant secretary of defense under Bush Sr. and currently

Bush Jr. Deputy National Security Adviser. Hadley was then employed by Shea and Gardner, a law firm that represents Lockheed Martin.

Several months ago, *The Washington Post* reported that PNAC's deputy director, Tom Donnelly, was joining Lockheed Martin. Several weeks later, he was reported to have been posted at AEI.

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– excerpt from the **Statement of Concern**

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