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The Writing on the Latrine Walls

By William Rivers Pitt
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I sat with a photographer from Reuters who had just returned from a six-month tour of Iraq. He had been tagging along with the Kellogg Brown & Root operation, subsidiary of Halliburton, and saw everything there was to see. He went from new military base to new military base, from the oil work in the north and back to the south, observing how busy were the contactors for Halliburton.



"I feel like I compromised every one of my principles by even being over there," he told me after the story had been spun out a bit. His eyes, which had seen too many things through the lens of his camera, were haunted.



It was two years ago that talk about invading Iraq began to circulate. Reasons for the invasion were bandied about - they had weapons of mass destruction, they had a hand in September 11, they will welcome us as liberators - but it wasn't until the Project for the New American Century got dragged into the discussion that an understanding of the true motives behind all this became apparent.



The Project for the New American Century, or PNAC for short, is just another right-wing think tank, really. One cannot swing one's dead cat by the tail in Washington D.C. without smacking some prehensile gnome, pained by the sunlight, scuttling back to its right-wing think tank cubicle. These organizations are all over the place. What makes PNAC different from all the others?

The membership roll call, for one thing:

- Dick Cheney, Vice President of the United States, former CEO of Halliburton;



- Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense;
- Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense;
- Elliot Abrams, National Security Council;
- John Bolton, Undersecretary for Arms Control and International Security;
- I. Lewis Libby, Cheney's top National Security assistant;

Quite a roster.

These people didn't enjoy those fancy titles in 2000, when the PNAC manifesto 'Rebuilding America's Defenses' (Adobe document) was first published. Before 2000, they were just a bunch of power players who had been shoved out of the government in 1993. In the time that passed between Clinton and those hanging chads, these people got together in PNAC and laid out a blueprint. 'Rebuilding America's Defenses' was the ultimate result, and it is a doozy of a document. 2000 became 2001, and the PNAC boys - Cheney and Rumsfeld specifically - suddenly had the fancy titles and a chance to swing some weight.

'Rebuilding America's Defenses' became the roadmap for foreign policy decisions made in the White House and the Pentagon; PNAC had the Vice President's office in one building, and the Defense Secretary's office in the other. Attacking Iraq was central to that roadmap from the beginning. When former Counterterrorism Czar Richard Clarke accused the Bush administration of focusing on Iraq to the detriment of addressing legitimate threats, he was essentially denouncing them for using the attacks of September 11 as an excuse to execute the PNAC blueprint.

Iraq, you see, has been on the PNAC menu for almost ten years.

The goals codified in 'Rebuilding America's Defenses,' the manifesto, can be boiled down to a few sentences: The invasion and occupation of Iraq, for reasons that had nothing to do with Saddam Hussein. The building of several permanent military bases in Iraq, the purpose of which are to telegraph force throughout the region. The takeover by Western petroleum corporations of Iraq's nationalized oil industry. The ultimate destabilization and overthrow of a variety of regimes in the Middle East, friend and foe alike, by military or economic means, or both.

"Indeed," it is written on page 14 of 'Rebuilding America's Defenses,' "the United States has for decades sought to play a more permanent

role in Gulf regional security. While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein."

Two years after the talk began, the invasion is completed. There are no weapons of mass destruction, there is no connection to September 11, and the Iraqi people have in no way welcomed us as liberators. The cosmetic rationales for the attack have fallen by the wayside, and all that remains are the PNAC goals, some of which have been achieved in spectacularly profitable fashion.

The stock in trade of Halliburton subsidiary Kellogg Brown & Root is the construction of permanent military bases. The Reuters reporter I spoke to had been to several KBR-built permanent American military bases in his six month tour of Iraq. "That's where the oil industry money is going," he told me. "Billions of dollars. Not to infrastructure, not to rebuilding the country, and not to helping the Iraqi people. It's going to KBR, to build those bases for the military."

According to the Center for Public Integrity, Halliburton subsidiary Kellogg Brown & Root has made \$11,475,541,371 in Iraq as of July 1. So that's one PNAC goal checked off the list.

As for the corporate takeover of the Iraqi oil industry, that has become the prime mission of the American soldiers engaged there. Kellogg Brown & Root also does a tidy business in the oil-infrastructure repair market. "The troops aren't hunting terrorists or building a country," said the Reuters photographer. "All they do is guard the convoys running north and south. The convoys north are carrying supplies and empty tankers for the oil fields around Mosul and Tikrit. The convoys south bring back what they pull out of the ground up there. That's where all these kids are getting killed. They get hit with IEDs while guarding these convoys, and all hell breaks loose."

That last goal, about overthrowing other regimes in the region, hasn't been as easy to follow through on as the PNAC boys might have hoped. The Iraqi people are fighting back, and the small-by-comparison force Rumsfeld said would be enough to do the job can't seem to pacify the country. Perhaps that is because too many troops are dedicated to guarding the oil supply lines. More likely, however, it is because of the sincere belief among the Iraqi people that they have been conquered - not 'liberated' but conquered - and their conquerors don't give a tinker's damn whether they live or die.

"The Americans over there have all these terms for people who aren't Americans," the Reuters photographer said. "The Iraqi people are called LPs, or 'Local Personnel.' They get killed all the time, but it's like, 'Some LPs got killed,' so it isn't like real people died. Iraqi kids run along the convoys, hoping a soldier will throw them some food or water, and sometimes they get crushed by the trucks. Nothing stops, those are the orders, so some LPs get killed and the convoy keeps rolling. The labels make it easier for them to die. The people are depersonalized. No one cares."

"Everyone is an 'insurgent' over there," the photographer told me. "That's another label with no meaning. Everyone is against the Americans. There is a \$250,000 bounty on the head of every Westerner over there, mine too, while I was there. The Americans working the oil industry over there are the dumbest, most racist jackasses I've ever seen in my life. That's the American face on this thing, and the Iraqi people see it."

930 American soldiers have died to achieve goals the PNAC boys gamed out before they ever came in with this Bush administration. Well over 10,000 Iraqi civilians have likewise died. Over \$200 billion has been spent to do this. Fighting today rages across several sections of Iraq, and the puppet 'leaders' installed by U.S. forces are about to drive a final stake into the heart of the liberation rhetoric by declaring nationwide martial law.

Two enemies of the United States - the nation of Iran and Osama bin Laden - are thrilled with the outcome to date. Saddam Hussein was an enemy to both Iran and bin Laden, and he has been removed. The destabilization and innocent bloodshed bolsters Iran's standing against the U.S., and sends freshly motivated martyrs into the arms of Osama.

Yes, the Halliburton contracting in Iraq for military bases and petroleum production is a cash cow for that company. The bases are being built. The oil industry has been privatized. The resulting chaos of the PNAC blueprint, however, has left the entire theater of the war in complete chaos. The Bush administration has insisted all along that this invasion was central to their 'War on Terror.' It has, in truth, become a failed experiment in global corporate hegemony writ large, foisted upon us by some men named Cheney and Rumsfeld who thought it would all work out as they had planned it in 2000.

It hasn't, except for the profiteering. For all their white papers, for all their carefully-laid plans, for all the power and fancy titles these erstwhile think-tankers managed to gather unto themselves, their works are now blood-crusted dust. They are clearly not as smart as

they thought they were. The overall 'War on Terror' itself has plenty of examples of these boys not being too swift on the uptake. Iraq is only the largest, and costliest, example.

The case of Mohammad Naeem Noor Khan is another perfect example. Khan was a mole, deep undercover within the ranks of al Qaeda, who was sending vital data on the terror organization from Pakistan to British and American intelligence. But officials with the Bush administration, desperate to show the American people they were making headway in the terror war, barfed up Khan's name to the press while bragging about recent arrests. Khan's position as a mole within al Qaeda was summarily annihilated. The guy we had inside was blown.

Pretty smart, yes? "The whole thing smacks of either incompetence or worse," said Tim Ripley, a security expert who writes for Jane's Defense publications, in a Reuters article on the blown agent. "You have to ask: what are they doing compromising a deep mole within al Qaeda, when it's so difficult to get these guys in there in the first place? It goes against all the rules of counter-espionage, counter-terrorism, running agents and so forth. It's not exactly cloak and dagger undercover work if it's on the front pages every time there's a development, is it?"

This would be the second agent we know of who has been blown by the arrogant stupidity of the Bush administration. The other, of course, was Valerie Plame. Plame was a 'Non-Official Cover' agent, or NOC, for the CIA. NOC designates the deepest cover an agent can have. Plame's deep-cover assignment was to run a network dedicated to tracking any person, nation or group that might give weapons of mass destruction to terrorists. Because her husband, Ambassador Joseph Wilson, had the temerity to accuse the Bush administration of lying in the public prints, the administration blew Plame's cover as a warning to Wilson and any other whistleblowers who might have thought of coming forward.

The Bush administration blew Khan's cover because they wanted to get a soundbite out for the election campaign. They blew Plame out of sheer spite, and out of desperation. The mole we had inside al Qaeda, and an agent we had tracking the movement of weapons of mass destruction, are both finished now because the PNAC boys are watching all their plans go awry, and they don't quite know what to do about it. That makes them stupid and exceedingly dangerous.

The soldiers over there are hip to the jive at this point. Michael Hoffman, a Marine corporal in artillery, was part of the original March

invasion. Before Hoffman's unit shipped out, his battery first sergeant addressed all the enlisted men. "Don't think you're going to be heroes," said Hoffman's sergeant. "You're not going over there because of weapons of mass destruction. You're not going there to get rid of Saddam Hussein, or to make Iraq safe for democracy. You're going there for one reason and one reason alone: Oil."

The Reuters photographer I spoke to couldn't get any soldiers to talk about how they felt when surrounded by their fellow soldiers. "They don't talk in the ranks, or just about anywhere on base," he said. "You have to go out to the latrine area, to the Port-O-Potties. For some reason, they talk there. You can read how they really feel - all the anti-Bush stuff, all the wanting to go home - in the writing on the shithouse walls."

William Rivers Pitt is a New York Times and international bestseller of two books - 'War on Iraq: What Team Bush Doesn't Want You To Know' and 'The Greatest Sedition is Silence.'

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