

Did Iran play America?

THE long-awaited and much over-hyped congressional 9/11 report is out. "Mistakes have been made," but true to passive voice obfuscation, nobody in particular made them. Four slices of blame go to the Clinton mob, with six slices going to the Bush junta. End of story. The report, now available in bookstores, only becomes interesting when one starts extracting its various factoids and combining these puzzle pieces with information already in the public domain.

Quite interesting is Iran's alleged role. The 9/11 Commission expresses concern that some of the Saudi hijackers responsible for the 9/11 attacks passed through Iran during the months before the hijackings. While the Commission didn't go as far as to allege an Iranian government link to the attacks, it has certainly raised concerns about Iran. It did this while exonerating Iraq, the country we invaded, as having no connection to the hijackers or to the attacks.

This new revelation about Iran makes Iraqi expatriate and Bush Administration darling Ahmed Chalabi's role in the big game all the more interesting. Chalabi came to prominence during the Bush team's fraud-laden run-up to the Iraq invasion. He ran a Project for a New American Century sanctioned franchise called the Iraqi National Congress – a wanna-be Iraqi government-in-exile devoid of any base of support in Iraq.

Chalabi was the Bush administration's main, and often only, source, for "intelligence" about Saddam Hussein's supposed weapons of mass destruction. Despite U.S. intelligence community warnings concerning Chalabi's credibility, and the failure to find any evidence to support his allegations, the Bush team championed his fabrications. And despite

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journalistic conventions warning about running with stories based on a single source, especially when that source is a stakeholder in the outcome of the story, the American press from The New York Times on down the credibility ladder, took Chalabi's word as gospel while downplaying his detractors.

The man who would have been king

Hence, the Iraq WMD myth was born and propagated based on the words of one man who harbored fantasies of returning to rule an Iraq subjugated by American military might. The alternative press dutifully exposed Chalabi, who was wanted in Jordan for bank fraud, as lacking credibility. At the same time, we in the alternative press were championing the stories told by former U.N. weapons inspector and military intelligence officer, Scott Ritter, among others. They argued rather persuasively that Iraq did not possess the weapons Chalabi alleged that they had.

Chalabi's fable, however, persevered. It was backed by the Bush administration's loyal trumpeters on talk radio and at Fox News, as well as by the entire mainstream American press corps. So strong was this WMD myth, that presidential candidate John Kerry, along with the usual spineless cadre of Democrats in congress, now claim to have been hoodwinked into voting Bush a blank check to invade Iraq.

Let's fast forward a bit. At least eleven thousand Iraqi civilians and 900 American service personnel are now dead, with many times that number seriously wounded. We've spent about \$160 billion dollars in Iraq while our healthcare, education and social service systems are starving for funds. Iraq is now littered with depleted uranium weapons debris and overrun with violent fundamentalists and criminals. The unemployment rate there is over 70%. The infrastructure is shot and the U.S. is hopelessly bogged down in an endless war with an ever-growing segment of the Iraqi population. And there were no weapons of mass destruction. And there were no connections between Saddam's regime and al Qaida, who in fact turned out to be his sworn enemies. Way to go Ahmed.

Then came the recent arrest of Ahmed Chalabi. It seems, at least according to U.S. intelligence sources, that Chalabi was an Iranian intelligence operative all along. And guess what? He fabricated the whole WMD story. How many lives could have been saved if only John Kerry and his fellow dupes had subscribed to The Nation or listened to Democracy Now!

Connect the dots

But let's connect the dots. If this new information coming out of Washington is credible, the Iranians may have helped with the 9/11 attacks, igniting America into a rather rabid

bout of political chaos. From there, our reactions were quite predictable. Chalabi, working for the Iranians and taking advantage of the political mayhem in the U.S., then duped a battle-hungry America into invading and destroying Iran's arch enemy, Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. This mother of all battles is one that the Iranians already understood they could never win – at least not without U.S. help. But it would take the trauma of the 9/11 attacks to make the war against Iraq politically possible.

Ultimately, the Iranians may have played both the Bush administration and the U.S. Congress, using the U.S. military as an Iranian proxy army to defeat Iraq, and ultimately, itself. The result is the destruction of Iran's secularist nemesis, Saddam Hussein's Sunni Arab regime in Iraq – a country with which Shiite Persian Iran fought a brutal war in the 1980s. With Saddam gone, Shiites would fill the power vacuum in Iraq, thus setting that country up to become an Iranian-style Shiite republic.

Iran loses its most potent adversary while gaining an oil rich friendly neighbor and a new sphere of influence. As a bonus, its other nemesis, the U.S., loses all of its credibility in the region, as do its Saudi partners who are also rivals of Iran's ayatollahs. This is where we are today.

The Bush junta knows no shame

Of course, this is all speculation. The Iranian conspiracy theory is only supported by circumstantial evidence – and may well prove as false as the Iraqi WMD story, though that story was supported by no evidence.

Still, it's interesting to watch the Bush team scramble in light of these allegations. The charges are serious – that they, crippled by a toxic combination of arrogance and stupidity, were played like marionettes by a minor league regime in Iran – ordering the American military to do Iran's bidding while undermining American security and global interests.

Damn. They must be hiding their heads in shame. But what to do? Have they all resigned in disgrace? Are they on the phone apologizing to the families of America's war dead? Are they touring Iraq's hospitals apologizing to the dead and dying over there? No. Not at all.

Without even an "oops," they've started rattling their sabers at their alleged puppet masters in Iran, with the now familiar threat of "regime change." Their arrogance knows no bounds and they have no shame. In Bush's America, there is no history and no future – there's only today and next month.

Of course there is one large hole in the 'Iran manipulated the Bushistas' theory. That's the fact that the current Bush team declared their intention to invade Iraq long before they seized the White House in 2000 (again, see their own documents posted at the

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Project for a New American Century website). And ironically, the Bush White House is shamelessly taking the lead in promoting the theory that Iran was connected with the 9/11 attacks, hoping America will get behind the next war and forget about the circumstances surrounding the last one. Iraq has always been our friend. We've always been at war with Iran.

Perhaps Chalabi isn't an Iranian spy after all. And perhaps Iran didn't support or aid the 9/11 hijackers. Who really knows? The point is that we should never send the world's most powerful army into war over weak theories, rumors or innuendo. Given what we do know to be true, the Bush team, at the very least, will enter the history books for their incredible idiocy and incompetence. At worst, they purposefully lead the country into a horribly destructive, needless, illegal and immoral war. Ultimately, whether they are the puppets or the puppeteers, they have to go.