

Bush taps antiterrorism advisor as Iraq pro-consul

The shaping of a repressive colonial regime

By Bill Vann
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The Bush administration has selected of L. Paul Bremer, the former “counter-terrorism ambassador” of the Reagan administration, to become the top US official overseeing the creation of a new puppet regime in Iraq.

Media reaction to the announcement has focused almost entirely on the internecine disputes between the State Department and the Pentagon. Most press reports have asserted that with the ascendancy of a former career diplomat, Secretary of State Colin Powell has scored a victory against his powerful rivals headed by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

There no doubt exist bitter divisions within the administration over strategy and tactics in Iraq. It became increasingly clear, moreover, that retired Lieutenant General Jay Garner, selected by Rumsfeld to head a Pentagon-controlled Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance, was far out of his depth in attempting to forge a US-controlled “transitional government” in the face of massive popular opposition.

Yet Bremer’s selection is significant above all for what it reveals about the nature of the regime that Washington is seeking to create. The question must be asked: what precisely are this man’s qualifications to oversee the Bush administration’s purported goal of establishing “a government of, by and for the Iraqi people?”

While Bremer served for 23 years as a career State Department diplomat, he has enjoyed the closest ties to the right wing of the Republican Party for at least two decades. In 1981, then-President Ronald Reagan’s Secretary of State Alexander Haig appointed him as his special assistant in charge of the department’s “crisis management” center.

Four years later, he was named ambassador-at-large for counterterrorism, responsible for developing and implementing US policies to combat terrorism. It was during this period that Washington labeled the African National Congress of South Africa and virtually every other national liberation movement as “terrorist” organizations.

It was on Bremer’s watch that the Reagan administration ordered US warplanes to carry out a terrorist bombing of Libya killing 40 civilians, including the adopted daughter of the country’s leader Muammar Gaddafi. In an earlier version of “preemptive strike,” the administration described the bombing raid as “self-defense against future attack.”

After leaving the State Department, Bremer joined Kissinger Associates, the consulting firm headed by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, where he was named managing director. Among the principal clients of the firm are US multinationals seeking assistance in penetrating foreign markets.

In 1996, Bremer drafted an opinion piece for the *Wall Street Journal* entitled “Terrorists’ friends must pay a price,” in which he called for the Clinton administration to deliver ultimatums to and then launch unprovoked military attacks against countries throughout the Middle East.

The countries that he said should be targeted included Libya, Syria, Iran and Sudan. Curiously, Iraq was omitted.

In 1999, the Republican-controlled House of Representatives placed Bremer in charge of a commission on terrorism, largely as a means of goading the Clinton administration on issues of national security.

In October 2001, he became the chairman and CEO of the Crisis Consulting Practice of Marsh Inc, a subsidiary of Marsh & McLennan Companies that advises corporations on threats of terrorism and other potential crises.

In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Bremer became increasingly involved as an advisor to the administration. He headed a panel on counterterrorism formed by the Heritage Foundation, a right-wing think tank close to the Bush White House.

His principal advice consisted of ending restrictions on the CIA going back to the 1975 Church Commission, which investigated the agency’s involvement in the assassination of foreign leaders and the overthrow of elected governments. He also called for the lifting of rules requiring

CIA agents in the field to obtain permission from higher-ups in the agency before placing known killers on the agency's payroll.

Earlier this year, Bremer participated with ex-CIA Director James Woolsey in a "teach-in" organized by a group called "Americans for Victory over Terrorism" and the UCLA student Republicans. It was at that conference that Woolsey, a close associate of Bremer, described the ongoing "war on terrorism" as the "fourth world war," predicting that it would last far longer than either World War I or World War II.

"Over the decades to come," he said, "...we will make a lot of people very nervous." Referring to various Arab leaders, he added, "We want you nervous. We want you to realize now, for the fourth time in a hundred years, this country and its allies are on the march." Woolsey, one of the most vociferous proponents of the US war on Iraq, is reportedly been considered for a leading role as well in the Iraqi "reconstruction" operation.

Deflating the widespread reports about Bremer's appointment representing a victory for Powell and "moderation," the *Washington Post* noted: "But Bremer, 61, is described as a hard-nosed hawk who is close to the neoconservative wing of the Pentagon. He is supported by Rumsfeld and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul D. Wolfowitz, officials said, and White House aides said the appointment affirms Bush's satisfaction with Pentagon control over Iraq until a new government is in place."

So what are Bremer's qualifications? He is a figure whose entire career is bound up with, on the one hand, national security, intelligence and US military aggression; and, on the other, servicing the needs of US-based multinational corporations.

Nothing could more clearly define the type of regime that Washington aims to establish in Iraq. Its overriding task will be to ruthlessly suppress the mass opposition of the Iraqi people and facilitate the looting of the country's wealth by the US banks and big business.

General Garner, meanwhile, will reportedly stay on, reporting to Bremer. He is supposedly in charge of repairing Iraq's infrastructure and seeing to humanitarian needs. He has repeatedly insisted, however, that the country faces no real problems. "There is no humanitarian crisis ... and there's not much infrastructure problem here, other than getting the electrical grid structure back together," he told reporters earlier this week.

Garner argued that, instead of worrying about the Iraqis, the US media should join him in a triumphalist celebration of the war. "We ought to be beating our chests every day," he said. "We ought to look in a mirror and get proud and stick out our chests and suck in our bellies and say: 'Damn,

we're Americans!'"

Shortly after Garner made these remarks, a coalition of eight major international relief organizations issued a statement implicitly criticizing apparent US indifference to a major humanitarian crisis developing in the country.

The statement said in part: "Already under severe strain and under-resourced before the war began, hospitals, water plants and sewage systems have been crippled by the conflict and looting.

"Hospitals are overwhelmed, diarrhea is endemic and the death toll is mounting. Medical and water staff are working for free, but cannot continue for long. Rubbish, including medical waste, is piling up. Clean water is scarce and diseases like typhoid are being reported in southern Iraq."

Garner and the US occupation forces are deliberately covering up this crisis in an attempt to stifle any questioning of US activities in Iraq and to prevent any international agencies from getting in the way of the fulfillment of US war aims.

The general began his military career as a US Army "advisor" supervising the "strategic hamlet" program during the Vietnam War in which tens of thousands of Vietnamese peasants were forced off their land and driven into concentration camps surrounded by barbed-wire. In a recent interview with the *New York Times*, Garner commented: "If President Bush had been president we would have won" the Vietnam War, adding that the US could have invaded the North.

This is the face that America is presenting to the people of Iraq. The task of Bremer and Garner is to quickly patch together a figurehead Iraqi regime made up of corrupt émigrés, former Ba'athists and anyone else who can be bought. The job of this regime will be to legitimize continued US military occupation and the takeover of the country's oil industry by US corporations. The conditions and rights of the Iraqi people will count for nothing. Instead, those in charge are determined to mete out unrestrained repression and violence to enforce American colonial domination.

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