

[DIPLOMACY]

WMD FOUND!

Though Israel claimed its Dimona facility was a manganese plant (at other times a textile factory), it's been accepted since 1960 that Israel is a nuclear power—though it has refused to declare itself, submit to International Atomic Energy Agency inspections, or comply with arms proliferation treaties. Whether by political pressure or *realpolitik* assessments of the regional balance of power, the U.S. has generally been willing to overlook its ally's noncompliance—until now.

While the president continues to focus on North Korea and Iran—both signatories to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, unlike Israel—his State Department has taken the unprecedented step of calling on Israel to forswear use and accept IAEA regulations, though not give up its arsenal. The statement calls for nothing in the “foreseeable future” but marks a major shift from customary avoidance of any confirming reference to Israel's nuclear capability.

[POSTWAR]

STRIKE OUT

Basic rule of espionage: never trust an informant named Curveball. Amended rule of espionage for neoconservatives: trust an informant named Curveball if he tells you what you want to hear.

Fourteen months, 600 pages, and \$10 million later, we have another report to tell us what we already know: the case for war was cooked. The Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction has returned a verdict: “We conclude that the Intelligence Community was dead wrong in almost all of its prewar judgments...”

Central to the narrative is a relative to a Chalabi aide—call me Curveball—who spun the WMD fantasies that outfitted Colin Powell's UN presentation and George Tenet's 2002 National Intelli-

gence Estimate. (We now learn that Curveball wasn't even in Iraq during the time he claimed to have been working on WMD systems.) The Foreign Service told the CIA that their informant was “typical of individuals we would normally assess as fabricators,” and a DOD employee “was concerned about Curveball's apparent hangover during their meeting.” A foreign government told the CIA that the key to their case had suffered a “nervous breakdown” and was “crazy.”

According to this report, the night before Powell's speech—Tenet was working with him—a high-level CIA official cautioned the director about Curveball's unreliability. His warning was ignored; the secretary of state told the world, “Every statement I make today is backed up by solid sources”; Iraq was pummeled for weapons it didn't have; and Tenet was given the Medal of Freedom for being “dead wrong.”

[PUBLIC OPINION]

REPUBLICAN DEMOCRATS

CBS/*New York Times* poll: “Should the United States try to change a dictatorship to a democracy where it can, or should the United States stay out of other countries' affairs?”

51 percent of Republicans said we should “try to change” other countries' political systems compared to just 13 percent of Democrats. Conversely, 78 percent of Democrats wanted no part of the democracy-promotion business, believing that we should “stay out”; 33 percent of Republicans agreed.



SANDY HUFFAKER www.caglecartoons.com

[MIDEAST]

TROUBLE IN PARADISE

When selling their war, neoconservatives promised that planting freedom's seeds in Iraq—aka leveling it—would inaugurate a springtime of democracy across the Middle East. Moreover, these little democrats would love us, live peacefully, and pump oil. Enter the law of unintended consequences, trenchantly observed in *Ha'aretz*, beneath the banner, “Pro-democracy, anti-US.” Author Zvi Bar'el writes,

...[T]he American administration and Bush in particular are perceived as a scourge. Reform movements in Egypt, Iran, Lebanon or Syria, whose members are ready to be killed for democracy in their country, go berserk the moment they are accused of receiving American funds or contributions. To attain public legitimacy, it appears that each of these movements needs an anti-American slogan in addition to the pro-democracy slogan. ... One sign raised in the demonstration in Egypt said, ‘No to America, Yes to democracy.’

[ECONOMICS]

MOST FAVORED NATION

“India and China together can reshape the world,” said Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on April 11. The occasion was the signing of an agreement with Chinese premier Wen Jiabao that moves the two countries toward resolving a longstanding boundary dispute—

but there is good reason to think that economics, not geography, was uppermost on both leaders' minds.

Wen's visit to the world's largest democracy earlier brought him to the offices of such Indian outsourcing firms as Tata and Infosys, whose chief product is the displacement of American workers. Wen proposed in Bangalore, one of India's high-tech hubs, that Chinese hardware and Indian programmers together could dominate the world's markets. "I strongly believe that if we join hands together we will certainly be able to set a new trail in the IT-business world. Combined, we can take the leadership position," he said.

The closeness between Beijing and New Delhi comes with a strategic component as well: according to the *International Herald Tribune*, "China was also understood to have promised to back India's bid for permanent membership of an expanded UN Security Council." Reshaping the world indeed.

[IMMIGRATION]

JOBS BUSH WON'T DO

To President Bush, they are "vigilantes," but to the beleaguered residents of Cochise County, Arizona, they are much needed reinforcements. The Minuteman Project was conceived as a way for citizens to call attention to the perilous situation at the Arizona-Mexico border, repeatedly penetrated by illegal immigrants in the face of U.S. government indifference.

The Minutemen are often caricatured as some right-wing militia, and any large group of this nature is bound attract some less than desirable characters. But the project would be entirely unnecessary if the federal government were doing its job to protect the borders. And in this, the Minutemen can justifiably claim some success: they have focused the media's attention on this issue and forced Bush administration to do its duty

by dispatching more border patrol agents to Arizona. Californians no doubt wonder when their Minutemen are coming.

[POLITICS]

BAIT & SWITCH

Some in the blogosphere hoped they had happened upon another Dan Rather "Memogate" scandal, but it wasn't meant to be. The memo advising Republicans that Terri Schiavo's plight was a "great political issue" turned out to be the work of a GOP staffer in the office of Sen. Mel Martinez (R-Fla.).

The aide enthused that the debate over reinserting Schiavo's feeding tube was "a tough issue for the Democrats." This crass political calculation is another reminder that many Republicans see the values social conservatives hold dear as a way to win votes rather than as legitimate concerns to be addressed. The "pro-life base" is supposed to be "excited" by hastily conceived, last-minute, and tragically futile legislation.

It's hard to imagine GOP leaders handling something like tort reform this way. Pro-lifers get symbolism and condescension; donors get results.

[TAXES]

FEEDING LEVIATHAN

After April 15, it comes as a relief to forget about taxes as quickly as possible. This year that would have been premature. According to the Tax Foundation, the date on which the average American earned enough to pay his state, federal, and local taxes came two days after the deadline for filing with the IRS; every penny you earned before April 17 might just as well have gone directly to Uncle Sam and his 50 dependents. The Tax Foundation reports that government consumes some 29.1 percent of Americans' income: "Americans ... spend more on taxes than they spend on food, clothing and medical care combined," notes Scott Hodgson, the group's president. ■

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CAFTA: Last Nail in the Coffin?

With U.S. prisons filling up with aliens, 10 million illegals here and counting, Californians fleeing east, savage Salvadorian gangs battling with machetes inside the

Beltway, and Minutemen headed for the Arizona border, Rip Van Republican has awakened to the threat of open borders. Meanwhile, the White House dozes on.

But just as the chickens are coming home to roost on the Bush failure to defend America's frontier, so they will soon be coming home on Bush's embrace of free-trade fanaticism.

As I write, the Department of Commerce has just released the trade deficit numbers for February. Again, the monthly trade deficit set a record, \$61 billion. In January-February 2005, the annual U.S. trade deficit was running \$100 billion above the all-time record of \$617 billion in 2004.

In the mail this week came the annual graphs and tables from Charles McMillion of MBG Information Services, who has patiently chronicled the decline and fall of the once-awesome U.S. industrial machine. Since 1992, when some of us urged the president's father not to grant MFN to China, the returns are these:

- Between 1993 and 2004, the U.S. trade deficit with Beijing grew 700 percent to \$162 billion.
- In the last decade, China's total trade surplus at U.S. expense was \$805 billion.
- China's leading exports to us, which account for almost half her \$162 billion trade surplus, came from shipments of computers, electrical machinery, and parts.
- Leading U.S. exports to China (Boeing alone excepted) were, in

ascending order: meat, meat offal, fibers, ore, slag, ash, organic chemicals, fertilizers, copper, cereals, raw hides, skins, pulp of wood, cotton, and the big seller—oil seeds and oleaginous fruits (soybeans). All very, very high-tech stuff.

China's surplus, the largest one nation has ever run against another, provides her with the hoard of cash to buy Russian and Western weaponry to menace Taiwan and the 7th Fleet and pile up the T-bills that give Beijing the leverage it enjoys today over the sinking U.S. dollar and shaky U.S. prosperity.

In the 1993 battle of NAFTA, the Clinton-Gore-Dole-Gingrich globalists predicted our trade surplus with Mexico would grow, Mexico would prosper, and illegal immigration would be easier to control. Either they deceived us, or they deceived themselves. For since NAFTA passed:

- The U.S. trade surplus with Mexico has vanished and the annual trade deficit is now running above \$50 billion a year.
- The cumulative trade deficit with Mexico is now over \$300 billion.
- 1.5 million illegal aliens are caught each year crossing our border and 500,000 make it in to take up residence and enjoy all the social programs a generous but over-taxed America can provide.

With Chrysler now a German company, GM and Ford down to less than half the U.S. auto market, and GM paper

looking like Argentine bonds, Americans now import \$188 billion worth of autos, trucks, and parts, three times what we export. Motown is no more king of the road.

With three million manufacturing jobs lost under Bush, the U.S. dollar looking like Monopoly money, trade deficits exploding, and our dependence on foreigners for oil, the critical components of our weapons, and the cash to finance our insatiable appetite for consumer goods all growing, one would think even Bush Republicans might pause before taking another great leap forward into a future of global free trade. One would be wrong.

For CAFTA, son of NAFTA, is at hand: the Central American Free Trade Agreement. The White House will bring it up, but only if enough Republicans can be bamboozled into going along. In return for access to our market, we get access to five Central American markets and the Dominican Republic—with a total economy the size of New Haven's—47 million consumers, half of whom are living in poverty by *their* standards.

The highest per capita income in Central America is \$9,000 a year in Costa Rica, which is less than the U.S. minimum wage. But CAFTA will enable agribusiness and transnational companies to set up shop in Central America to dump into the U.S. and drive our last family farmers out of business and kill our last manufacturing jobs in textile and apparel.

If there are any Reagan Democrats left still loyal to the GOP, CAFTA may see them off. For if the GOP passes CAFTA over Democratic opposition, Hillary's party may just be able to take back North Carolina, Ohio, and a couple of bright red farm states as well. ■