

“HANDOVER” IS A FRAUD

The occupation must end

Iraq Occupation Focus Factsheet #1

The US and British governments have proclaimed that the June 28th “handover” is a “transfer of sovereignty” to a new Iraqi government. The truth is that the occupation will continue, as will resistance to it in all forms.

After the handover...

More than 175,000 US-led foreign troops will continue to occupy Iraq. US troop levels will be maintained at 138,000 until at least the end of 2005 and may be increased. A permanent network of 14 US military bases is being established across the country.

US and UK troops will continue to be exempt from Iraqi law and the authority of the new government, as will the tens of thousands of foreign “security contractors” (mercenaries) currently working in the country.

US-UK forces will be in charge of recruiting, training and supplying all Iraqi forces, both military and police. The entire budget for these will come from the Pentagon. US administrators told the *New York Times* that if there was ever disagreement over military policy, “The American commander would only have to say, ‘OK, we’re out of here,’ and the Iraqis would back down.”

A puppet regime

The new Iraqi government has been appointed by the occupying powers. It is unelected, has little popular support, and no legitimacy.

Iyad Alawi, the US-approved prime minister, is a former Baath Party strongman who fell out with Saddam Hussein and has worked for many years with the CIA. His group, the Iraq National Accord, was the source for the notorious 45 minute claim that was used as a pretext for the invasion of Iraq. Alawi is working to reorganise former followers of Saddam behind the new regime created by the occupiers. All the other

posts in the interim government have been filled by US-vetted appointees, two-thirds of whom carry foreign passports, chiefly British and US.

According to the Wall Street Journal: “US administrators are quietly building institutions that will give the US powerful levers for influencing nearly every important decision the interim government will make... coalition advisers will remain in virtually all ministries after the handover...”

“I will remind you that the Americans are governing this country... [US proconsul] Bremer is the dictator of Iraq. He has the money. He has the signature.”

Lakhdar Brahimi, UN Envoy to Iraq, June 2004

Who’ll control the economy?

Control over Iraq’s oil revenues will continue to be in the hands of the Development Fund for Iraq, a group of 10 foreigners and one Iraqi appointed by the US. This body is legally prohibited from making changes in oil policy “until such time as an internationally recognized, representative government of Iraq is properly constituted” – at the earliest, at the end of 2005. Meanwhile, the IMF and World Bank will continue to exercise “accounting authority over the spending” of Iraqi oil revenues until Iraq’s foreign debts (incurred under Saddam) are resolved. None of the multi-million-dollar contracts signed by the occupation authorities with US companies can be reviewed.

Orders issued by the occupying powers have opened up state enterprises to privatisation and Iraqi firms to foreign ownership. They have allowed foreign corporations tax-free repatriation of all investment profits and 40-year leases on contracts, cut taxes for corporations and wealthy individuals, and abolished all tariffs and protective trade measures. As long as the occupation continues, the US and Britain will prevent any Iraqi government from rolling back these measures.

Who'll control the media?

The authority to license Iraq's television stations and newspapers and to regulate cell phone companies has been transferred to a commission whose members were selected by Washington. The commissioners' five-year terms stretch far beyond the planned 18-month tenure of the interim Iraqi government.

Human rights abuses will continue

The US will continue to detain thousands of Iraqis without charge or trial – in Abu Ghraib and elsewhere – and will continue to use the same methods as in the first year of occupation.

The occupation forces have imposed collective punishment, demolished civilian homes, blocked free movement through checkpoints and road closures, detained thousands of Iraqis without charge, sealed off entire towns and villages and used indiscriminate, overwhelming force in crowded urban areas. US forces killed over 40 people at a wedding party near Al Qaim, over 1000 people in Fallujah (half of them women and children) and thousands more in Najaf, Karbala, Kufa and Sadr City. The 'handover' will not put an end to any of this.

The new US ambassador to Iraq is John Negroponte, who as Reagan's ambassador to Honduras in the 1980s was complicit in extensive human rights violations and terrorist activities, including organising the murderous Contra campaign against Nicaragua. Negroponte will supervise the new US embassy in Baghdad – the largest embassy in the world – and exercise de facto power over the Iraqi population.

Iraqis want a real end to the occupation and free democratic future

A poll taken by the US administration in Iraq shows 92 percent of Iraqis consider the United States an occupying force and more than half believe all Americans behave like those portrayed in the Abu Ghraib prison abuse photos. 55 per cent of Iraqis felt life would be more secure if the US-UK occupying forces withdrew.

For Iraqis, occupation has been an economic and social disaster

According to the UN, unemployment in Iraq stands at 60%. A year after the invasion, the

occupying powers have still not established reliable supplies of electricity and clean water. Hospitals and health care remain desperately inadequate and security for ordinary Iraqis is non-existent.

"It's definitely worse now than before the war. Even at the height of sanctions, when things were miserable, it wasn't as bad as this. At least then someone was in control."

Eman Asim, Iraqi Ministry of Health, NY Times

"Hepatitis is everywhere. It's unbelievable that standing water still causes such outbreaks, a year after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq."

Omar Mekki, medical officer, World Health Organisation.

According to the UN, at the current rate of repair it will take another four to five years before 90% of the population has electricity.

The British role

Britain is the US's number one military and diplomatic partner and British troops form an integral part of the occupying force. The mission of British troops in Iraq is to enforce the occupation, and in doing so they are killing and injuring increasing numbers of Iraqi civilians. Meanwhile, British corporations see the occupation as a source for huge profits – in oil, banking, construction and security. The most constructive contribution Britain can make to the Iraqi people at the moment is to withdraw all British troops and call on our US partners to do the same and support the Iraqi people's struggle for real independence and a genuinely democratic future.

End the Occupation

The occupation is the result of an illegal and unjust invasion. It has no legitimacy and cannot be made to work for the benefit of Iraqis. Far from curbing violence and aiding reconstruction, the occupying forces foment violence and deter genuine reconstruction. Today, the occupation itself is the principal cause of violence, insecurity and terrorist acts against civilians in Iraq. Resistance to it has been widespread and diverse. It will not go away after the handover – because the handover does not satisfy basic Iraqi demands for freedom, self-determination and a democratic future.