

## The media as propaganda ministry

By Carla Binion

October 2, 2001—Former U. S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark discusses U. S. oil interests in “The Fire This Time” (Thunder’s Mouth Press, 1994.) Clark writes that Iraq has been a target of CIA activity for years and that in order to justify the Gulf War, the CIA worked to provoke Iraq to invade Kuwait. The official spin was that Iraq caused the Gulf War by invading Kuwait. The American people were never told that our own CIA provoked the invasion.

Clark also writes, “The Pentagon’s challenge was to figure out what would force Iraq, a country more interested in rebuilding than expansion, to take some action that would justify U. S. military intervention.” Today is a good time to ask, what would force Americans, the U. S. Congress and the rest of the world to support stepped-up, indefinitely long U. S. military intervention in the Middle East?

What drastic act would force Americans and Congress to uncritically give up civil liberties, throw billions at the Pentagon and jump on the war bandwagon? What heinous crime would automatically ensure that other nations would join us and support an undefined, unending war on terrorism—a war that would justify permanent U. S. military intervention in the Middle East? It would have to be a horrific event.

Television gives the public a sketchy, cartoon version of news, and the American people were fed cartoon versions of the Gulf War. Today TV news is giving us the same quality coverage of the so-called war on terrorism. The TV talking heads talk down to the American people, as if we’re the kids in the family and they are mommy and daddy. During the Gulf War, instead of hard facts about oil interests and raw, bloody carnage, the media showed mostly distant shots of dazzling pyrotechnics, Scud missiles, rockets’ red glare—a fireworks display for the kiddies.

Ramsey Clark also writes, “It was not Iraq but powerful forces in the United States that wanted a new war in the Middle East: the Pentagon, to maintain its tremendous budget; the military-industrial complex, with its dependence on Middle East arms sales and domestic military contracts; the oil companies, which wanted more control over the price of crude oil and greater profits; and the Bush administration, which saw in the Soviet Union’s disintegration its chance to establish a permanent military presence in the Middle East, securing the region and achieving vast geopolitical power into the next century through control of its oil resources.”

TV news talk show hosts keep the American people, us kids, in a cocoon of thumb-sucking ignorant bliss by: (1) omitting large amounts of key, defining information, and (2) using propaganda to glamorize corrupt politicians and whitewash their wrongdoing. They tell us what news we need to think about and what we don’t. We kids are never supposed to think about the CIA, or about U. S. oil interests.

Ramsey Clark says the Gulf War was “planned in Washington long before the first soldier invaded Kuwait.” He quotes a September 1990 letter from Jordan’s King Hussein, who stated: “The large industrial powers saw in the Gulf crisis a golden opportunity to reorganize the area according to designs in harmony with their ambitions and interests, at the expense of the aspirations and the interests of the Arab peoples, and to put in place a new international order.”

The Pentagon, says Clark, admitted as much. The New York Times on March 8, 1992, published a 46-page Pentagon document that refers to the U. S. destruction of Iraq as “a defining event in U. S. global leadership.” The document says, “In the Middle East and Southwest Asia, our overall objective is to remain the predominant outside power in the region and preserve U. S. and Western access to the region’s oil.”

“As demonstrated by Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait,” the document continues, “it remains fundamentally important to prevent a hegemony or alignment of powers from dominating the region.” Clark points out that for all President George H. W. Bush’s talk about Iraq’s “naked aggression,” the Pentagon “posed the invasion of Kuwait as a threat to Western oil access—not a violation of Kuwait’s sovereignty.”

Clark says that in “Secret Dossier: The Hidden Agenda Behind the Gulf War,” Pierre Salinger notes that Kuwait greatly increased its oil production on August 8, 1988. Iraq was dependent on stable oil prices, and Kuwait’s action sent oil prices spiraling down. Kuwait also demanded a 50 percent increase in the OPEC quotas and wanted to extract additional oil from the Rumaila field on the Iraq-Kuwait border. The U. S. supplied Kuwait with the drilling technology to steal oil from the part of Rumaila that was inside Iraq, says Salinger.

In addition, Kuwait had been one of Iraq’s main creditors, and Kuwait started pushing Iraq to pay back its debt. The sudden belligerent attitude of Kuwait toward Iraq was encouraged by the U. S., according to Middle East expert Milton Viorst, who in *The New Yorker* quoted Kuwaiti business owner and pro-democracy activist Ali al-Bedah, who said, “I think if the Americans had not pushed, the royal family [of Kuwait] would have never taken the steps that it did to provoke Saddam.”

A political science professor at Kuwait University, Dr. Mussama al-Mubarak told Viorst, “I don’t know what the government was thinking, but it adopted an extremely hard line, which makes me think that the decisions were not Kuwait’s alone.” A November 22, 1989, memo submitted to UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar recounted a meeting between Kuwaiti Brigadier Fahd Ahmed al-Fahd, the director general of Kuwait’s Department of State Security, and Director William Webster of the CIA.

“The memo discussed CIA training for 128 bodyguards for Kuwaiti royalty, and intelligence exchanges about Iraq and Iran between the CIA and Kuwait,” writes Ramsey Clark. The memo also said, “We agreed with the American side that it was important to take advantage of the deteriorating economic situation in Iraq in order to put pressure on that country’s government to delineate our common border. The Central Intelligence Agency gave us its view of appropriate means of pressure, saying that broad cooperation should be initiated between us, on condition that such activities are coordinated at a high level.”

The CIA claimed Iraq wasn't a subject of discussion "at that meeting," but according to Clark a number of experts dispute the agency's denial.

During the Gulf War, the TV news was largely controlled and distorted, the better to keep the American public, us kids, in the dark. Clark quotes James Le Moyne of the New York Times, "three Pentagon officials in the Gulf region said they spent significant time analyzing reporters' stories in order to make recommendations on how to sway coverage in the Pentagon's favor."

Clark says New York Times correspondent Malcolm Browne told Newsday on January 23, 1991, "I've never seen anything that can compare to it, in the degree of surveillance and control the military has over the correspondents. When the entire environment is controlled, a journalist ceases to be a reporter in the American or Anglo-Saxon tradition. He works a lot like the PK (Propagandakompanien, the Nazi propaganda corps.)"

Today's TV talking heads are all aflutter with worshipful submission to the George W. Bush administration, the CIA and the Pentagon. Geraldo Rivera can barely contain his eagerness to please the military-industrial establishment and serve as its mouthpiece. Bill O'Reilly wants to not only beat the drum for the war machine, but to beat down any dissenters. Meanwhile, as daddy Geraldo and papa Bill feed us kids the propaganda, where are the investigative reporters—democracy's watchdogs? The TV reporters are happy to be foxes guarding chicken coops.

The above-referenced 46-page Pentagon document asserts: "[W]e will retain the preeminent responsibility for addressing selectively those wrongs which threaten not only our interests, but those of our allies or friends, or which could seriously unsettle international relations." It continues, "Various types of interests may be involved in such instances: access to vital raw material, primarily Persian Gulf oil."

The New York Times summarized the Pentagon's purpose as "a world dominated by one superpower whose position can be perpetuated by constructive behavior and sufficient military might to deter any nation or group of nations from challenging American primacy." Ramsey Clark notes, "It is a vision of a world empire worthy of Alexander, Caesar, or Genghis Khan."

In an October 1, 2001, Time magazine article, "Conversations With a Father," Hugh Sidey reports that George H. W. Bush claims he seldom advises his son. Instead of talking politics after George W's recent speech to Congress, Sidey writes that father and son discussed "family, dogs and how the bass are doing in Crawford pond."

The Sidey article puts a silk-screen haze over the Bush family, no doubt to soothe and protect us kids. This cheerleading report paints the elder Bush as a kinder-gentler, reticent retiree. Bush bolsters the Golden-Pond illusion by telling Time, "Now and then George will ask me about something. But I am out of the line. I'm not up on things any longer. And I don't want to get crossways with his people."

To his credit, Sidey points out that George W's people are largely the same ones who worked for the father. But the author could have dispelled the "out of the loop" illusion by mentioning that immediately after the recent terrorist attacks, Papa Bush appeared on TV advising that now is the time to untie the hands of his former employer, the CIA. Instead, the article said, "This habit of small, intimate confidences is the rock on which the Bush clan is founded."

The elder Bush told Sidey his son's challenge is different from the one he faced in Desert Storm 11 years ago. Bush said, "I knew who our enemy was. I knew what our mission was." What he doesn't mention—and what is seldom mentioned in the mainstream media—is that the "mission" included the Pentagon's admittedly overriding concern with protecting U. S. oil interests.

The Time article could have questioned Bush's assertions instead of applying cosmetics to the Bush clan's public image. Sidey writes that during the Gulf War, members of Congress challenged the elder Bush's "decision to attack Iraq on the ground in Kuwait." But he didn't mention the reasons why some people challenged Bush.

According to Bob Parry and Norman Solomon's IF Magazine article, "The War That Couldn't Ku-wait," (September/October 1999) George H. W. Bush was "fixated on a ground war." Parry and Solomon wrote that chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell "wavered between siding with [field commander Norman] Schwarzkopf, who was willing to accept a peaceful Iraqi withdrawal, and lining up with President Bush, who hungered for a clear military victory."

The authors refer to Bob Woodward's book, "Shadow." According to Woodward, Bush told his inner circle of advisers, "We have to have a war." National security adviser Brent Scowcroft knew Bush's eagerness for war was too controversial to be made public, Woodward noted.

Parry and Solomon wrote that in mid-January, U. S. and allied forces began weeks of bombing that killed tens of thousands of Iraqis. The Iraqis were prepared to withdraw their troops from Kuwait, but Bush wanted to prove "America's war-fighting mettle" with a ground war that could "annihilate the Iraqi forces as they retreated."

Today Bush-the-younger has been offered a chance to talk about peace. But he seems to think "we have to have a war" just as Bush-the-elder did.

To recap: Ramsey Clark showed that the Gulf War occurred because powerful forces in the United States wanted a new war in the Middle East: the Pentagon, to maintain its budget; the military-industrial complex, to maintain Middle East arms sales and domestic military contracts; the oil companies, to control over the price of crude oil and greater profits; and the Bush administration, to establish a permanent military presence in the Middle East, securing the region and achieving vast geopolitical power into the next century through control of its oil resources.

To do so, those forces needed to provoke Iraq into invading Kuwait. Those forces and their Propaganda Ministry, the mainstream media, consider the American people to be the kids in the national family. During the Gulf War, as now, they give us a cartoon version of the news and keep secrets from us "for our own good." It's time we stood up to them and let them know we think the country would be far better off if they didn't hide behind their secrets.