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**“Plan Crimson: War on Canada:**

**Secret War Plans and the Malady of American Militarism”**

## How History Allows Insight into the Malady of American Militarism

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Between WWI and WWII, the United States developed and approved as official national policy three major war plans: a) *War Plan ORANGE* against Japan, b) *War Plan GREEN* against Mexico, and c) *War Plan RED* against the UK.<sup>1</sup> But there were other war plans as well. *Special Plan VIOLET* was approved by the Joint Board of the Army and Navy in 1925 for interventions in Latin America and the Carribean "to forestall action by other countries including the League of Nations."<sup>2</sup> There was a *War Plan WHITE* initiated in 1920 for suppressing internal insurrection by US citizens, but it was not developed or approved.<sup>3</sup> These war plans were all declassified in 1974 and can be purchased from the US National Archives. Germany was color coded black, but there never was a *War Plan BLACK*.<sup>4</sup>

*War Plan RED* was the largest of the war plans, the most detailed, the most amended, and the most acted upon.<sup>5</sup> The *Plan* presumed that a war with the UK would

begin by US interference in British Commonwealth commercial trade, "although other proximate causes to war may be alleged."<sup>6</sup> The *Plan* presumed that the British navy would take the Philippines, Guam, Hawaii, and the Panama Canal.<sup>7</sup> In exchange for these losses, the US would invade and conquer Canada.<sup>8</sup> Though ostensibly for war against Britain, it is almost devoid of plans to fight the British. The *Plan* is focused on the conquest of Canada, which was color coded CRIMSON. The US Army's mission, written in capital letters, was "ULTIMATELY, TO GAIN COMPLETE CONTROL OF CRIMSON."<sup>9</sup> The 1924 draft declared that US "intentions are to hold in perpetuity all CRIMSON and RED territory gained...The Dominion government [of Canada] will be abolished."<sup>10</sup> *War Plan RED* was approved in May 1930 at the Cabinet level by the Secretary of War and Secretary of Navy.<sup>11</sup>

It was not a plan of defense. The US would start the war, and even should Canada declare neutrality, it was still to be invaded and occupied.<sup>12</sup> In December 1930, the US Naval Attaché in Ottawa made an espionage report to the Joint Board on Canada's lack of readiness for war: "In as much as Canada had no idea of trouble with any other country it was not considered necessary to maintain a proper air force."<sup>13</sup> The US focus on invading Canada accelerated during the 1930's. Even as late as 1939, when World War II was beginning and the free world was mobilizing to fight fascism, the US Army War College and the Naval War College had set as their planning priority how to coordinate land and sea forces for a project entitled, "Overseas Expeditionary Force to Capture Halifax from Red-Crimson Coalition."<sup>14</sup>

For some unexplained reason, *The Washington Post* and Canada's national newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, recently decided to report on *War Plan RED*. Peter Carlson's Dec. 30, 2005, article in *The Washington Post* was entitled, "Raiding the Ice Box."<sup>15</sup> Shawn McCarthy's Dec. 31, 2005, article in *The Globe and Mail* was entitled, "They'd take Halifax (then we'd kill Kenny)."<sup>16</sup> Both articles are written with doses of disbelief, derision, and sometimes giggling or guffaws.

But *War Plan RED* is certainly not news, nor is the re-re-reporting of re-re-discoveries of *War Plan RED*. The first news report of the *Plan* was in 1935, when secret Congressional budgeting for three camouflaged air bases for surprise attacks on Canada, at \$19,000,000 each, was mistakenly made public by the government printing office.<sup>17</sup> This was reported by the *NY Times* on the front page.<sup>18</sup> This discovery was re-reported by the *Toronto Globe* under the headline, "U.S. Disavows Airport Yarn."<sup>19</sup> *War Plan RED* was re-discovered and re-reported in 1975 by the Reuters wire service,<sup>20</sup> and the *Globe and Mail* re-re-reported it.<sup>21</sup> It was again re-discovered and re-reported as news in 1991<sup>22</sup> and now again in 2005. History has lessons, but they cannot be learned by re-re-repeated disbelief or by giggling.

If US war plans for the conquest of Canada provoke laughter, that is a comment on those who are laughing, not a comment on the war plans. In its day, *War Plan RED* was not meant to be funny. The 1928 draft stated that "it should be made quite clear to Canada that in a war she would suffer grievously."<sup>23</sup> The 1930 draft stated that "large parts of CRIMSON territory will become theaters of military operations with consequent suffering to the population and widespread destruction and devastation of the country..."<sup>24</sup> In October 1934, the Secretary of War and Secretary of Navy approved an amendment authorizing the strategic bombing of Halifax, Montreal and Quebec City by "immediate air operations on as large a scale as practicable."<sup>25</sup> A second amendment, also approved at the Cabinet level, directed the US Army, in capital letters, "TO MAKE ALL NECESSARY PREPARATIONS FOR THE USE OF CHEMICAL WARFARE FROM THE OUTBREAK OF WAR. THE USE OF CHEMICAL WARFARE, INCLUDING THE USE OF TOXIC AGENTS, FROM THE INCEPTION OF HOSTILITIES, IS AUTHORIZED..."<sup>26</sup> The use of poison gas was conceived as an humanitarian action that would cause Canada to quickly surrender and thus save American lives.<sup>27</sup>

In March 1935, General Douglas MacArthur proposed an amendment making Vancouver a priority target comparable to Halifax and Montreal.<sup>28</sup> This was approved in

May 1935,<sup>29</sup> and in October 1935, his nephew Douglas MacArthur II began his espionage career as vice-consul in Vancouver.<sup>30\*\*</sup> In August 1935, the US held its then largest ever peace time military maneuvers, with more than 50,000 troops practicing a motorized invasion of Canada.<sup>31</sup>

What is the mentality and line of illogic that leads ranking military professionals, executive Cabinet officers, and Congressmen to plan and prepare war on an ally and good neighbor? Secret border bases? Surprise attacks? Strategic bombing of populated cities? Immediate first-use of poison gas? And at the same time they were planning this for Canada, they failed to plan for war against German Fascism, which was a very real threat to America. Clearly, something was wrong in the thinking of many high level civilian and military decision makers. These war plans warrant proper study, not dismissive derision, if America is ever to understand and control its military impulses.

For example, *War Plan GREEN*, for the invasion of Mexico, looks like a mirror image of America's current invasion plan for Iraq. Here are some direct quotations from the *Mexican War Plan* approved by Secretary of War in August 1919:<sup>32</sup>

"The oil fields of Tampico and Tuxpan are important not only to the commerce of the United States and of the world, but to that of Mexico...The fields are largely owned by American and British interests and are susceptible to great damage by the Mexicans. It is therefore important to seize these fields at once..." (p. 2).

"The first rule for conquering a nation is to defeat its army. The Mexican Army, if it accepts battle at all, will certainly do so in defense of the heart of its country. And the heart of the country is the Mexico City locality...An attack on Mexico City will not only bring the Mexican Army to a decisive battle, but will, if successful, afford to the United States the facilities it will need to reorganize and reestablish the government" (p. 3).

"The period of active operations will be short, as compared to the period of guerilla operations. The early disbandment of temporary [US] troops is highly desirable. It is the testimony of all well acquainted with Mexican character that any number of Mexicans can be hired to fight against anyone and for any one who will regularly pay and feed them. The Mexican soldier will be cheaper and more efficient against banditry than the American and the cost can be more easily charged against the Mexican government" (p. 4).

"In addition, an Army can be established that will not be anti-American and which may, for many years in the future, exercise on the Mexican government an influence favorable to the United States" (p. 4).

Some further direct quotes from the 1927 draft of *War Plan GREEN*:<sup>33</sup>

"The military purpose of this Plan is the use of the armed forces of the United States to overthrow the present existing Federal Government of Mexico and to control Mexico City until a government satisfactory to the United States has been set up" (p. 1).

"...the foregoing purpose can best be initiated by depriving the existing Federal Government of munitions of war from outside sources, interrupting the receipt of its revenues as far as practicable, driving it from Mexico City and accomplishing its overthrow. Wide publicity as to the object of the military operations may reduce Mexican resistance by influencing the Mexican people to give allegiance to a new Federal Government" (p. 1).

"The United States should declare a state of war against Mexico and establish a blockade, in order to interrupt the entrance of munitions of war and receipt of revenues. In the event that a state of war is not declared to exist, blockade operations are limited to

such "peaceful blockade" as is authorized by the President" (p. 1).

Replace the word "Mexico" with "Iraq" and change the corresponding city names, and this war plan will read like America's current military strategy in Iraq:

- \* In both plans, the goal is to seize control of another nation's oil.
- \* In both plans, there is a priority on protecting the oil production facilities from damage by the defending national forces.
- \* In both plans, economic sanctions and blockade will weaken the nation prior to the US invasion.
- \* In both plans, Congressional authorization for war can be circumvented by Presidential command and by twisting of words.
- \* In both plans, propaganda will claim that the invasion is benevolent, intended to free the population from a bad government.
- \* In both plans, the war is seen to be quick and easy to win, against a weakened national army defending an overly centralized government in the national capital.
- \* In both plans, there is contempt for the military abilities and valor of the defending national forces.
- \* In both plans, the US imagines that it can make a new government in the conquered country that will serve US interests.
- \* In both plans, a national militia army will be hired in order to cheaply save American soldiers from being bogged down in a protracted guerrilla war.
- \* In both plans, the conquered nation will pay the costs of this national militia.
- \* In both plans, this militia army is expected to be used by the US to control the national government for years into the future.

The current US plan for the invasion, occupation, and continuing control of Iraq is not new. It is almost 100 years old.

Thus, the core of the militarism that is endangering America and driving us into bankruptcy, disdain, and dishonor is not new. This shows that the fundamental causes of the Iraq war cannot be found in contemporary geopolitics nor in the personalities of the Bush administration, as most critics of the war claim. There is something wrong at

a much deeper level in American political culture. The American malady of militarism extends across decades, across generations, and is so deeply rooted in the American mind that attacking another nation seems to be the natural, spontaneous reaction of choice.

In fact, the USA is the least threatened nation on the planet. Its geographic, demographic, and economic size, and its location, give it far greater security than Russia, for example, or Holland or Hungary or France or Finland or Iraq or Iran. These nations are easily attacked from several sides, and in modern history have been attacked. These nations have reason to be fearful, but in fact are less fearful than is America. Certainly it is impossible for foreign forces to invade and occupy the USA even should the US have the most minimal defenses.

But Americans feel more threatened than most other people on the planet. The US military budget now exceeds that of all other nations combined. The US is now the only nation with two defense departments, one to defend the homeland and one to....to do what? To project "defense" of America outside of our borders into other nations? That is normally called "aggression."

Projection may be the key to marketing military projects in America. These may begin as "realpolitik" projects: emotionless, amoral schemes to take economic resources, for example, to increase trade or to control oil. Then we imagine that others are planning to do to us what we know we are planning to do to them. Sort of like the "Golden Rule" in reverse. It is classic, Freudian, psychopathic projection. And we feel fear. We believe we are realistic and rational because our plans and our actions fit the fear we have imagined. That is normally called "neurosis" or "insanity." We get into a feed-forward loop of our own belligerent plans projected into others, imagined to have similar belligerent plans against us, causing fear which further justifies our original belligerence. Thus we enter an accelerating cycle of belligerence and fear, each feeding the other and turning "aggression" into "defense". We imagined that Nicaragua's Sandinistas would invade Texas. We imagined that a socialist government

in Grenada would destabilize the Western Hemisphere. We imagined that Iraq would put nuclear bombs into New York subways. These are all comic claims, but no one in America laughed. Instead, we attacked these nations based on evidence from our imagination run wild.

In the 1935 testimony to Congress about the need for new air bases to attack Canada, a military expert explained that Canada has thousands of lakes, and each of these is a potential float plane base. He asked the Congressmen to imagine the fearful vision of the sky filled with bush-pilot float plans flying down from Canadian forests to bomb Boston and Baltimore:

"...the Creator has given countless operating bases within a radius of action of this country in the vast number of sheltered water areas that are available deep in Canada...from which pontoon-equipped aircraft could operate at will...There is no necessity for starting with an observation in order to know what they are going to bomb. They know now what they are going to bomb. They know where every railroad crosses every river. They know where every refinery lies. They know where every power plant is located. They know all about our water supply systems...Now they are dispersed widely out over this area. Their location is most difficult for us to learn, for our own air force to learn. We have to hunt them up. We have to find out where they are before we can attack them."<sup>34</sup>

In retrospect, this seems like a something from a comedy by Peter Sellers or John Candy. But no one in the hearings laughed at this. No one said that this is nuts. Instead, Congressman Wilcox complemented the speaker, Captain H. L. George, as "a mighty good teacher" and Congressman Hill said, "Captain, you made what to my mind is a very interesting, clear, and lucid statement."<sup>35</sup> No one asked Captain George how he knew with such certainty that Canada or Britain had located and targeted US railroad bridges, oil refineries, power plants and water systems. In fact, the US had located and targeted such facilities in Canada. For

example, in 1919, US Army Intelligence collected Canadian topographic maps, compiled information on Canadian railroads and highways near the border, located and measured Canadian canal locks, and in 1921, the US Army War College completed a report on Canadian airports, harbours, and even the location and call numbers of all Canadian radio stations.<sup>36</sup> Just weeks before this testimony, the Joint Board had dispatched a secret reconnaissance team to the wilds of Hudson Bay and Labrador to hunt for hidden Canadian float-plane facilities.<sup>37</sup> We imagine that others are planning to do to us what we know we are planning to do to them. Projected military imagination causes paranoia.

Congressman Kvale commented, "**All we are interested in is defense. Predicate your building of your bases on defense and not on offense,**" and Captain George responded that "**the best defense against air attack is offense against the places from which the air attack originates.**"<sup>38</sup> Even pre-emptive attack against nations imagined to threaten the US with unfindable weapons is not a new idea. The committee was persuaded, and on June 6, the House approved appropriations for the new air bases.<sup>39</sup> On August 10, the bill was signed into law by President Roosevelt.<sup>40</sup> No joke.

Perhaps the malady of American militarism can be understood, diagnosed, and eventually curbed or cured. Perhaps an international coalition of social scientists willing to focus their full attention on the history and the social and mental processes of American militarism can begin to understand how it is rooted in our psyche and political culture. Such a coalition should include historians, psychologists, psychiatrists, military strategists, and cultural anthropologists. Considering the large numbers of innocent people we kill when we act on our militarized imagination, considering the immense amount of money we waste building weapons and attacking other nations because our own imagination frightens us, it should be a national priority to understand what is happening, why we act as we do, and how we might stop doing it.

Collective neurosis is hard to notice in contemporary contexts. There are few

reference points for normality by which to see that our fears are unfounded. But in historical retrospect, it is easy to see how neurotic we were in our projected paranoia, and how wrong. America's historical war plans offer a rare opportunity for insight into the militarization of the American mind. We should take a look inside and try to learn.

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\*\* The CounterPunch version mistakenly stated that Douglas MacArthur II was General MacArthur's son. Joseph David Marshall discovered this error.

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