

Clinton Threatened Nukes in Gulf

Bill Weinberg

Amid all the media saturation about oral sex in the Oval Office, it went almost unnoticed that Bill Clinton considered use of nuclear weapons against Iraq to take out Saddam Hussein's underground complexes, or to retaliate for an Iraqi chemical or biological attack by issuing Presidential Policy Directive 60 (PPD 60).

Following a brief flicker of media coverage of this battlefield contingency order in early February, Russian President Boris Yeltsin warned that escalation in the Persian Gulf could lead to World War III. This was portrayed in the U.S. press as irresponsible alarmism. PPD 60 is already down the memory hole.

Detonating nuclear strikes to fight weapons of mass destruction is a concept straight out of Orwell. Hussein is not "this generation's Hitler." Like Noriega, he is a U.S.-groomed client gone bad. His gassing of the Kurds at Halabja in 1988, a clearly genocidal act, occurred when he was still a U.S. asset. (A Congressional bill calling for sanctions in the wake of that atrocity never made it out of Congress.)

True to the principles of doublethink, Americans remain blind to Desert Storm's 400,000 civilian casualties in 1991, or the fact that the holocaust of Schwartzkof & Co. dwarfed Iraqi atrocities and environmental terrorism in Kuwait.

Where are the voices pointing out that Clinton crossed a dangerous threshold—the normalization of nuclear warfare? Perhaps the citizens are more interested in sex scandals and sports as the world takes a step closer to its end. The war drive this time elicited neither jingoistic approval nor outraged protest. It provoked mostly our indifference—one more spectacular titillation in a world dominated by the media.

What was "unthinkable" during most of the Cold War—since it assumed a 20-minute nuclear war that would leave the Earth in cinders—has now become thinkable. Today's "tactical" nukes—the kind fitted onto a Cruise missile for use against an Iraqi bunker—deliver the kind of punch that wiped out Hiroshima. After use of tactical or battlefield nukes, the next threshold in the acceptable level of global violence is strategic nukes.

Clinton's nuclear threat brings us a step closer to the earth in cinders.



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Fifth Estate #351, Summer 1998

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