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## **Drunk with Power** **by Scott McPherson**

Following the inevitable victory of allied military power over Iraq's decrepit army, White House officials were hesitant to express too much jubilation, lest their reaction be thought to lack seemly restraint. As buildings burned and children died, apparently they saw wisdom in a muted celebration. "Administration officials steered clear of gloating about the success of their war plan" is how the *Washington Times* reported it on April 10. "There were no high-fives in the White House," said a senior administration official. "There are no gloaters in this building."

Instead, all the gloating was being done half a world away, at a press conference in Rome.

There, without any pretense toward humility, the U.S. undersecretary of state for arms control, John Bolton, outlined in more sincere detail the sentiments of the president through ominous warning to the governments of Iran, North Korea, and Syria, indicating what they can expect if they continue to pursue nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons programs in defiance of U.S. wishes. "We are hopeful that a number of regimes will draw the appropriate lesson from Iraq that the pursuit of weapons of mass destruction is not in their national interest," he told a group of reporters. Coming on the very day that American tanks were rolling down the streets of Baghdad, no one missed the implication.

The next day, Secretary of State Colin Powell added his own not-so-subtle hint to the din of threatening rhetoric. "We hope that as a result of what's happened in Iraq ... some of the nations that we have been in touch with and speaking to — Syria and Iran — will move in a new direction," he said in a Pakistani television interview. Not to be outdone, the U.S. ambassador to the Dominican Republic, Hans Hertell, took advantage of America's latest military conquest to flex a little muscle on his own Latin American turf. "I think what is happening in Iraq ... is a very good example for Cuba," he told Agence France-Presse.

Reveling in military glory and domination, those running our government are sending a calculated message to the world about the powers being assumed by its latest ruling empire. Simply translated: "If you behave in a way that offends us, you too will be bombed into

submission and your government replaced with one more amenable to our foreign-policy designs.”

Writing in his nationally syndicated column, David Limbaugh joined the cheerleading squad for global war by smugly describing President Bush as a man who “means what he says,” since “the United States has decimated the Iraqi forces in such astonishingly short order.” Well, if there was ever any doubt of that before, there certainly isn’t now. Still, Limbaugh should wipe that war-happy smile from his face: After all, history is replete with bullies who meant what they said and backed it up with military might — and it does not treat them kindly.

Worse, the reckless statements of people like John Bolton, Colin Powell, and Ambassador Hertell — obviously made at the behest of the president — make it painfully clear that broader plans are in the works. Riding on a euphoric wave of seeming invincibility, the U.S. government is announcing to a shocked and awestruck world that it will do precisely what it likes, when it likes, and to whom it likes, and for those who object, well, witness what we did to Iraq.

Though it isn’t what our public officials intended, there is definitely something to be learned from all of this hawkish revelry: with each new military victory comes more arrogance and more power — narcotics for those who see a world out there literally waiting to be conquered.

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