

By Jim Lobe

WASHINGTON (IPS) — With roughly 18 months left in office, the administration of Pres. George W. Bush appears once again to be moving in a more “realist” direction in its dealings with the rest of the world, including the Middle East.

The most obvious sign came during the recent regional meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, where Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice spent a 30-minute tête-a-tête with her Syrian counterpart, Walid al-Moallem, reportedly focused on securing greater cooperation from Damascus on sealing its border with Iraq.

It was the first bilateral cabinet-level encounter between the United States and Syria since the February 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, in protest of which Washington recalled its ambassador from Damascus.

While Rice later insisted that her meeting differed from last month’s controversial visit to Damascus by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-CA, because the discussion was both confined to Iraq and no photographers were present to record the occasion, most analysts here saw it as the latest — and potentially most significant — in a series of tentative steps toward implementing key recommendations of the Iraq Study Group (ISG), co-chaired by James Baker.

“Gee, all of a sudden meeting with the Syrian government is not an act of high treason,” wrote Juan Cole, a Middle East specialist at the University of Michigan on his influential blog, who noted that Rice had even sought Pelosi’s advice before setting out on her trip.

“I can only think that Condi’s meeting with Mouallem is a sign that [Vice Pres.] Dick Cheney’s grip on power inside the White House is slipping badly, and that Condi has Bush’s ear on the need to engage.”

Cheney, the leader of the administration’s hawks, had publicly condemned Pelosi’s visit to Damascus as “bad behavior,” while some of his neo-conservative allies outside the administration even called for her prosecution under a 200-year-old law that makes it a crime for individual citizens to communicate with hostile foreign governments to influence their behavior.

Cheney, who is still smarting from Bush’s approval — following a personal appeal by Rice

— of a controversial nuclear deal with North Korea in February, suffered another setback this week when the White House announced the resignation of Deputy National Security Adviser J.D. Crouch II, a veteran hardliner who has overseen the day-to-day management of the National Security Council (NSC) during Bush’s second term.

Crouch, who served first as assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs and then as ambassador to Romania during Bush’s first term, chaired the inter-agency deliberations that led to the adoption of Bush’s “surge” strategy to send some 30,000 more troops to Baghdad beginning in February.

He first worked for Cheney when he headed the Pentagon under former Pres. George H.W. Bush. In that capacity, Crouch, long a proponent of developing new nuclear weapons and missile defense systems, helped prepare the 1992 draft Defense Planning Guidance overseen by then-Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and the vice president’s future chief of staff, I. Lewis Libby, both of whom played key roles in Bush’s first term.

The announcement of Crouch’s departure was particularly remarkable given the widely reported — and as yet unsuccessful — search by his boss, National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley, for a so-called “war czar.”

Indeed, Hadley’s failure to recruit a candidate — at least four top retired military generals have reportedly rejected his entreaties to date — has added to the growing impression that the White House policymakers are increasingly in disarray, an impression compounded by the public observation by one of the generals, Gen. Jack Sheehan, that “they don’t know where the hell they’re going.”

That situation is particularly harmful for the hawks, who have watched their numbers within the administration decline steadily since the beginning of the second term.

They began losing their all-important Pentagon base with the departures in early 2005 of Wolfowitz and the neo-conservative under-secretary for policy, Douglas Feith. The replacement last November of Donald Rumsfeld by Robert Gates, a realist and Baker confidant, at the top of the Department of Defense eliminated yet another critical Cheney ally, while Rumsfeld’s powerful undersecretary for intelligence, Ste-

phen Cambone, and the assistant secretary for international security affairs, Peter Rodman, have also taken their leave.

At the State Department, meanwhile, the departures this year of former U.N. Ambassador John Bolton and former undersecretary for arms control and international security Robert Joseph have removed key members of the hawks’ network. This leaves Cheney’s office and the NSC, where neo-conservative Elliott Abrams — who reportedly encouraged Israel to attack Syria during the last summer’s war with Hezbollah — rules over Middle East policy, as the last redoubt of the hawks.

It is in that context that the State Department has been moving — if timidly, according to some analysts — to assert its more “realist” views on crisis areas, first North Korea, and increasingly in the Middle East, pursuant to the recommendations of the ISG of which Gates himself was a member until his nomination to take over the Pentagon.

Those moves have been encouraged as well by the aggressiveness of the new Democratic majorities in Congress since last November’s elections and the growing uneasiness of Republican lawmakers, particularly on Iraq, as the 2008 elections approach.

While Republicans have remained remarkably disciplined during the most recent legislative battle over the imposition of a deadline for the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops, most analysts here appear to agree that, absent measurable progress on the ground in stabilizing Iraq, they will begin deserting Bush in droves by September.

The regional environment in the Middle East is also forcing the administration to move in a more realist direction, particularly as Saudi Arabia has increasingly made clear its distaste for the hawks’ strategy of tensions in the region, particularly their hopes of further stoking tensions in Lebanon and provoking a new round of civil conflict between Hamas and Fatah in Palestine.

Indeed, Cheney himself is expected to get an earful when he travels to the region this weekend to meet with, among others, Saudi King Abdullah, who shocked the administration last month when he denounced the U.S. military presence in Iraq as an “illegitimate foreign occupation.”

The Vermont Guardian encourages readers to support these local restaurants that, in turn, support our local farmers.

## EAT.



FROM FARM TO TABLE

**Sugar Snap**

take-home meals • homemade soup • catering

www.sugarsnap.biz

652-5922 • 505 Riverside Avenue • Burlington

## GOOD.



**sauce**

A warm, casual farmhouse bistro serving lunch, dinner, and Sunday brunch.

985-2830 | www.bistrosauce.com

97 Falls Road, Shelburne

## LOCAL.



**Tantra Organic**

Serving **Thai Cuisine**  
on 169 (Lower) Church Street, Burlington

Eat Local, Eat Healthy, Cheers!!

Open for dinner 5-10pm every night  
Will open for lunch for party of 15 or more

651 9660 for table or take out • 863-togo for delivery service

www.TANTRAORGANIC.com

## FOOD.

According to a survey, Vermont Guardian readers:

- Dine out more than once a week
- Shop at a natural foods or health food store at least twice a week
- Enjoy gardening.

VERMONT FRESH NETWORK



FARM & CHEF PARTNERSHIP

These restaurants and food providers are part of the Vermont Fresh Network, which is dedicated to promoting and publicizing Vermont chefs and restaurants that use Vermont grown and produced foods. Chefs that purchase the products of our working landscape are helping to maintain this agricultural heritage and contribute to the future of Vermont’s farm economy. To learn more, go to the [www.vermontfresh.net](http://www.vermontfresh.net).

# Climate change: "A problem of lifestyles"

By Marwaan Macan-Markar

BANGKOK (IPS) — An eleventh hour intervention by the Indian delegation at a major UN climate change conference here pushed to center stage the need for a dramatic shift in lifestyles rather than dependence on green-friendly technology for solutions to global warming.

The call by the Indians to include lifestyle changes and behavior patterns to mitigate climate change was "welcomed across the board," said an observer at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a meeting that drew scientists, environmentalists, and government officials from more than 120 countries.

"There was no opposition; it was approved without question," added Catherine Pearce of the environmental lobby Friends of the Earth International after the close of the week-long meeting ending May 4, with the release of *Climate Change 2007: Mitigation of Climate Change*.

The more than 1,000 page document, which was the subject of heated debate, lasting well after midnight on three days, was the third such document circulated this year to address the dire consequences the world faces due to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the global response required.

"Changes in lifestyles and consumption patterns that emphasize resource conservation can contribute to developing a low-carbon economy that is both equitable and sustainable," stated the summary of the report for policy-makers that was approved by the ninth session of the IPCC Working Group III.

"Changes in occupant behavior, cultural patterns and consumer choice and use of technologies can result in considerable reduction in carbon dioxide emissions related to energy use in buildings," it added.

But this emphasis on shifts in individual behavior to help cool an overheating planet does not translate into a call for sacrifices in lifestyle, leading members of the IPCC declared. "We should not view it in terms of sacrifices," said Ogulande Davidson, co-chairman of the IPCC Working Group III, at the closing press conference.

"This is for a change of lifestyle without a change in comfort," added Rajendra Pachuri, chairman of the IPCC. "One has to try to accept a different threshold of comfort."

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that sat through the discussions interpreted this message that was included for the first time in an IPCC report differently. "It is a strong message sent to the citizens of the United States and Europe to reassess their personal carbon footprint and help the rest of the world to achieve a common goal," said Shailendra Yashwant, climate and energy team manager for the Southeast Asia office of Greenpeace.

According to the World Wildlife Fund, an average U.S. citizen requires 20.5 acres of the planet to support his or her lifestyle, while an average European needs about half of that. An average person in Africa, by contrast, draws on about 2.5 acres of the Earth's resources to live.

The case made by the Indians is due to receive attention in China that has emerged along with the U.S. as one of the leading producers of GHGs due to high dependency on fossil fuels. China is expected to top the list of GHG producers by 2009 and India is due to follow close behind in over a decade, given its projected increase in coal usage.

"When China adopted the open economy policy, we used the U.S. model, but now we need to change that by stressing efficient use of energy and consumption that uses less energy," said David Zhou, researcher at Beijing's Energy Research Institute and a member of the IPCC's body of experts. "We are trying to create new models by looking at some European countries."

The solutions for greener future made out in this report were aimed at preventing the Earth's temperature increasing by a further two degrees Celsius to avoid an environmental catastrophe. For that, carbon dioxide emissions, by far the largest contributor to global warming, need to drop between 50 and 85 percent by 2050, the report states.

The economic cost of that, according to the U.N. panel, that draws on the contributions of more than 2,000 scientists, would be only 0.12 percent of annual gross domestic product. And innovations in technology offered governments a way forward to achieve the urgently needed benchmarks, it adds.

Among the key mitigation technologies singled out in the blueprint for change were switching from coal to gas, nuclear power, hydropower, solar power, wind power, and in the future,

"advanced renewable energy, including tidal and waves energy."

"New energy infrastructure investments in developing countries, upgrades of energy infrastructure in industrialized countries and policies that promote energy security can, in many cases, create opportunities to achieve GHG emission reductions," the report notes.

Investment in such ventures, expected to total more than \$20 trillion between now and 2030, "will have long term impacts on GHG emissions," it adds pointing to "long life-times of energy plants and other infrastructure capital stock."

But the challenge that awaits governments to take a radical turn in their energy supply line is daunting, given that renewable energy accounts for only 13 percent of the world's primary energy demands, of which biomass is the largest alternative energy source.

According to Greenpeace, about 80 percent of primary energy supply still comes from fossil fuels, of which oil provides 36 percent of the world's fuel needs, while coal supplies 25 percent.

The first two reports by the IPCC that were released this year raised the alarm about the peril that current and future generations face if global warming continues at the current pace. For one, it could result in extreme weather patterns from hotter summers to warmer winters, a rise in sea levels, stronger storms and hurricanes, droughts, and melting of glaciers.

In fact, a rise in the global temperature by two degrees Celsius could result in the extinction of a third of the world's animal and plant species and the communities worst affected would be the world's poor, the previous reports warned.

"While governments have to take the lead in finding solutions, people also have to play their part in making changes to reduce GHG emissions," said Ismael Elgizouli, a mathematician at the Khartoum University, Sudan, and an African representative at the IPCC. "That is why changes in lifestyles are essential."

"If people only use what they need they can help save energy without any change in their comfort," he added. "But it must be voluntary."

*All rights reserved, IPS-Inter Press Service 2007. Total or partial publication, retransmission, or sale is forbidden.*

unpleasant  
difficult  
only-illustrative  
inside  
introspective  
insatiable  
irreverent  
investigative  
inalienable  
included  
impish  
indeed

**brattleboro.com**  
Citizen Journalism Since 2003

# The Album Station

WCLX 102.9



Bluesmen James Montgomery, David Malachowski, and Ernie Williams

**Celebrating our 7th Birthday!**  
*Underground Radio*

Don't miss The House of Blues Radio Hour with Elwood Blues every Friday night at 8PM.

Listen to us anywhere in the world  
**www.musicheads.us**