

**“We Only Want to Hurt the Westerners. Where can We Find them?”**

# Raid on the Saudi Oil Industry

BY PATRICK COCKBURN

*Baghdad*

It was the latest in a series of ruthless attacks on foreign workers in Saudi Arabia, targeting the employees of foreign oil companies. In each case the gunmen have aimed to slaughter as many non-Muslims as possible.

At 7.30 on Saturday morning, May 31, they chose the city of Khobar, an important hub of the Saudi oil industry. As many as seven gunmen wearing military-style uniforms opened fire at the Al-Khobar Petroleum Centre building, which houses offices of western oil companies in the Gulf city. They also sprayed with gunfire an oil industry compound containing offices and apartments of the Arab Petroleum Investment Corporation (Apicorp). Three of its employees and the son of another - a 10-year-old Egyptian boy on a school bus - were killed.

Michael Hamilton, a British manager at Apicorp, was shot dead in his black saloon. His mobile phone was left

on the front seat as his bloodied body was tied to a car by the gunmen and dragged through the streets before it was dumped near a bridge. It had chilling echoes of an incident at the beginning of the month when the body of an American was dragged through Yanbu, a Saudi city on the Red Sea, in an attack by five militants on a petrochemical facility. The events surrounding the initial attack in Khobar are confused. But if, as suspected, al-Qa'ida is involved then it has returned to the area where - a few miles away in Dhahran - in 1996 it set off bombs to destroy a US military compound, killing 19 American soldiers.

After the shootings at the two compounds the gunmen fled to the Oasis Residential Resorts. There, they seized between 45 and 60 hostages in a walled-off district which houses executives and is too expensive for ordinary oil workers to live in. It contains restaurants, an ice rink, spas, swimming pools a pastry shop and gardens. It also has 200 villas, 48 apartments, 195 studio apartments as well as a hotel and luxury apartments.

Security companies recommend foreigners to live in such places, which are considered more secure and where vehicles entering can be checked. But the existence of these compounds also provides convenient targets for groups that want to kill foreigners.

Once the gunmen had taken over Oasis, they started to hunt down non-Muslims to kill or take hostage. Abu Hashem, 45, an Iraqi-American engineer, was leaving for work when he heard the sound of gunfire. He went back home and took his wife and two children to a neighbour's house for safety. Abu Hashem noticed that there were blood stains on the floor of his house and went looking for security guards. Instead he found four Saudi men with short beards and whose ages he said were between 18 and 25.

A revealing conversation followed. Abu Hashem asked the men: "Are you guards?" They said they were and asked him if he was a Muslim. When he said he was they said: "Give us proof." Abu Hashem knew they could not be regular

security guards and took out his identity papers which showed he was a Muslim but also revealed that he was an American of Iraqi origins. When the gunmen said he was an American, Abu Hashem said this was true but he was an American Muslim. To his relief they said, "we do not kill Muslims" and politely apologised for breaking into his home. They then lectured him on Islam and told him: "We are defending our country and we want to take it from the non-believers" - probably a reference to the royal family of Saudi Arabia. Another Muslim resident, Salam al-Hakawati, 38, a Lebanese corporate finance official, hid with his wife and two-year-old son upstairs when they heard gunfire. He heard people searching rooms downstairs and saying "this is a Muslim house" when they saw Koranic verses. A man with a machine gun came upstairs and said to him in Arabic: "We only want to hurt Westerners and Americans. Can you tell us where we can find them here?"

By now gunmen had killed at least 16, including Mr Hamilton, an American and an Italian cook. The Saudi security forces stormed the Oasis compound, a walled complex, and surrounded the attackers on the sixth floor of a high-rise building. During the night they tried to rescue hostages but retreated when they found booby traps. At night the gunmen also started to kill hostages, who are by now said to have numbered 25.

One of those who survived, a Jordanian computer engineer, Nijar Hijazin, said: "The nine had their throats cut by the kidnappers when they tried to escape at night by the stairs."

At no time did the hostage-takers ask to negotiate according to Jamal Khashoggi, a media adviser to the Saudi Arabian ambassador to London. He said: "They didn't have any demands, they just started killing people." He said that the nine hostages who were killed were in addition to the 16. The Saudi authorities say it was the killing of hostages which led to the decision to storm the building. Saudi newspapers said that one

**(Oil Raid continued on page 6)**

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## *You Call This a Choice?*

# Kerry and Those Anti-Abortion Judges

BY BRANDY BAKER

On May 19, 2004, John Kerry told the Associated Press that he was open to the idea of appointing anti-abortion judges “as long as it doesn’t lead to the Supreme Court overturning *Roe v. Wade*”.

All hell would have broken loose if Ralph Nader said something like this. The leaders of the feminist movement were ready to tar, feather, and run Nader out of DC when he blundered and proposed that if *Roe v. Wade* were overturned, abortion would be protected because the decision would go back to the states.

But Elizabeth Cavendish, Interim President of NARAL Pro-Choice America has only this to say about Kerry’s statements: “There’s a huge difference between Bush and Kerry on choice and this is not going to undermine the pages-long documentation that Kerry is pro-choice.”

Yes, Nader was wrong to say what he said in 2000, and no, he is not perfect, but what many do not know (and what the mainstream feminist movement will not tell you) is that Ralph Nader signed to NOW’s platform of political, social, and economic rights for women. As of early June Kerry had not. And not long before Kerry told all of us that he was no redistribution Democrat, Nader spoke up for cleaning people: a segment of the workforce that is overrepresented by women and people of color. Cleaning people only are noticed if someone is unhappy with their work.

The problem is that we have a single issue women’s movement that is not equipped to address the collective oppression of women who are on the lower rungs of the economic ladder because the movement restrains itself with blind support for the Democratic Party. Ralph Nader knows that abortion is not the only concern of the majority of this country’s women, which is why he will stick up for those who clean the houses of the limousine liberals who are campaigning

the hardest for Kerry.

Despite the fact that we won *Roe v. Wade* under the anti-choice Nixon administration and we did not have abortion providers in over 85 per cent of all counties under Clinton, many see a Democratic Party presidency as vital to securing abortion rights.

Kerry’s statements killed the myth we are guaranteed pro-abortion judges if he becomes president; it also kills the other argument that the Anyone But Bush crowd has been promoting: the one that claims that we can build a movement after we get a Democrat in office and that Democrat will do all of the right stuff. John Kerry said that he would be

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open to appointing anti-abortion judges to the Supreme Court only 24 days after what many have said was one of the largest demonstrations in American history – the March for Women’s Lives. Movements work, but the two party system does not.

Like Nader, the feminist movement itself was once on the receiving end of invective about being splitters. In the summer of 1989, NOW delegates who were disgusted with the Democrats proposed an exploratory committee to discuss the possibility of launching a third party that would not only speak to specific women’s issues, but would address militarism, racism, and poverty. After the media, which usually ignored NOW, castigated them for daring to toy with such an idea, feminist leaders publicly

distanced themselves from the proposal. Again in 1992 NOW briefly considered the idea of forming a third party.

The Supreme Court passed *Roe v. Wade* in 1974 during the Nixon administration; the decision was written by Justice Harry Blackmun, a Nixon appointee. Nixon, an anti-choice right winger, was a war criminal, but when it came to domestic policy, he was this country’s last progressive president.

Now, Nixon was not a warm person known for his compassion but there was a movement that was on the ground, and it was not made up of politicians and lobbyists. It was comprised of people like the single women that the Democrats are trying to chase to the polls this November.

All of the present Republican and Democratic senators voted for Scalia (including John Kerry): 98 out of 100. The two absentees were Republicans. Eleven Democrats voted for Clarence Thomas (52-48) in a then-Democratically controlled Senate. California, under Governor Ronald Reagan, was the first state to have legal abortions. Public support for the death penalty dropped: that has been reflected in this current conservative Supreme Court’s decision to ban executions of retarded people. This conservative court also upheld affirmative action policies in college admission and overturned the law that made sodomy in Texas illegal.

If the definition of feminism is the end to sexism, then frankly, this mode of thinking is anti-feminist. If I divorce a man because he was taking my money and denying me my basic rights, I cannot see any of these women telling me to marry one of his brothers, yet after eight years of Clinton, that is what the mainstream feminist movement wanted us to do, and they want us to do it now in 2004. CP

*Brandy Baker lives in Baltimore. She is a contributor to CounterPunch’s forthcoming book, Dime’s Worth of Difference.*