

## CHAPTER 4

# The Unjust War in Iraq

### *Christianity is Bombing in Iraq*

*There is something almost comical about the prospect of George W. Bush waging war on another nation because that nation has defied international law. Since Bush came to office, the U.S. government has torn up more international treaties and disregarded more United Nations' conventions than the rest of the world has in 20 years. It has scuppered the biological weapons convention while experimenting, illegally, with biological weapons of its own. It has refused to grant chemical-weapons inspectors full access to its laboratories. It has ripped up the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, and appears to be ready to violate the nuclear test-ban treaty.*

—*The Guardian*, London, August 2002

As discussed in the preceding chapter, Bush deserves a grade of “F,” or at best an “I” for “incomplete,” regarding the war in Afghanistan. However, in every aspect of his war on Iraq, Bush deserves a grade much worse than an “F.” He deserves a grade of “W,” which is a new grade created out of necessity to reflect previously unimaginable levels of presidential failure, incompetence and wickedness.

*The Lancet* survey estimated, through July 2006, that 655,000 Iraqis had died as a consequence of the Iraq war.<sup>15</sup> The estimate range was 943,000 at the high end and 393,000 at the low end. The peer-reviewed survey, which was conducted by the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and published in *The Lancet* medical journal in October 2006, concluded that 601,000 of the 655,000 deaths (91%) “were due to violence, the most common cause being gunfire.” The study compared Iraqi mortality rates before and after the March 2003 invasion in 47 randomly chosen areas across Iraq, and it is the most thorough scientific survey to date. Surveyed family members produced death certificates in more than 90% of the cases.

- The 655,000 Iraqi deaths is an average of 16,375 deaths per month during the 40-month post-invasion study period (March 2003 to July 2006).

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<sup>15</sup> The 655,000 estimate is much higher than most other estimates, but it results from the most rigorous study to date. The Bush administration, which has said it doesn’t do “body counts,” would argue the total is only about one-tenth of the 655,000 figure. Other studies conclude *more than 1 million* died because of the Iraq war. We use the lower 655,000 number above.

- This means that Iraq suffered about 218 *9/11 equivalents* during the first 40 months of war—an average of more than five 9/11 equivalents each month.
- On a *per capita basis*, Iraq suffered, on average, the equivalent of 65 9/11s per month—or *one 9/11 every 11 hours*, around the clock, 24 hours a day.
- Iraq suffered, on average, the equivalent of 496 Virginia Tech massacres per month—or one Virginia Tech massacre every 90 minutes.
- On a *per capita basis*, Iraq suffered, on average, the equivalent of 5,952 Virginia Tech massacres per month—or *one Virginia Tech massacre every 7 minutes and 30 seconds*, around the clock, 24 hours a day.

### The 100 Imperial Orders

When Paul Bremer departed Iraq in haste on June 28, 2004, he left behind his infamous “100 Orders,” a host of imperial decrees and policies intended to remake Iraq into a rightwing economic paradise open for plundering by corporations and individuals well connected to the Bush regime and the GOP.

The 100 Orders fulfilled the wildest wet dreams and most extreme economic “wish list” of the neocons—reflected in their Project for the New American Century—and the rightwing of the GOP, including a U.S. Constitution-shredding America president—the GOP’s “unitary executive” wannabe—who wanted to free himself and his criminal regime from the constitutional checks and balances of America’s legislative and judicial branches of government. The orders included many laws that these dangerous gluttons could never have achieved lawfully in any western democracy, not even the United States. Although many Iraqis were initially hopeful and trusting regarding the occupation, they soon realized they had been royally screwed by an imperial power that pursued its own fantasies and cared not for them.

The 100 Orders were unilaterally imposed on Iraq and its citizens by the United States, acting through the U.S.-controlled Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). The will of the Iraqi people was irrelevant to the rightwing planners of what would become the Iraq Fiasco.

Well, almost irrelevant. Iraqis did retain the power to vote with bullets and bombs, which they increasingly did. Perhaps you would too if you were in their shoes. GOP crimes and incompetence do have consequences, including the Iraq civil war, ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Whether Bush and his key supporters are sincere when they talk about “freedom” for Iraq (and perhaps some are sincere), they intentionally use language that is misleading. When they talk about “freedom,” what they really mean is “corporate freedom,” or, more precisely, “freedom for huge, well-connected, at-the-public-trough corporations.”

Capitalism is not freedom. Democracy is freedom.

Although dunces at planning, the rightwingers in the Bush regime did in fact have a plan of sorts for Iraq, not a viable plan based on reality and what was best for the people of Iraq, but rather a simple, grandiose, magically self-executing, “free enterprise” plan that was based on what was best for the “Big Milkers”—an array of huge well-connected corporations like Halliburton and Bechtel—and the “Little Milkers”—a host of smaller well-connected businesses and individuals parasitically

attached to the teats of the Big Milkers. Their plan is better known as the “Plunderers’ Plan.”

“Free enterprise” is a wonderful, almost sacred, term, consisting as it does of two wonderful words, “free” and “enterprise,” which each has almost universal appeal. When one thinks of “free enterprise,” one thinks of thriving nimble enterprises competing fairly in an environment that exists *outside* of government regulation and funding. But such free enterprise is the *exact opposite* of the landscape in which the imperial rightwing GOPers and Bushies thrive. It is the *exact opposite* of the public-trough world so familiar to the designers and implementers of the “free enterprise” Plunderers’ Plan for Iraq, who live off government funds of the United States and, to a lesser extent, the public funds of Iraq, especially oil revenues.

The imperial GOPers and Bushies are public trough experts who know how to game the system and milk taxpayers. Their real vocabulary and tools of trade include: K Street and Wall Street (not Main Street); no-compete government contracts; bribes and influence peddling (whether illegal or perfectly legal); crony favoritism; government/contractor revolving door; cost-plus guaranteed-profit government contracts; of-by-and-for-the-rich legislation and regulation; elections by auction; plus America’s friendly corporate media.

The GOPers and Bushies are virtually clueless as to how to create valuable companies in any private competitive environment that exists outside of government largess and influence. They are like self-righteous individuals who rail against the evils of prostitution, but live and prosper in whorehouses.

Under Bremer and the 100 Orders, Iraq ironically *remained* a state-controlled economy, except that it is now run by the state primarily for the benefit of huge, crony-connected, multinational corporations, and not for the benefit of the majority of Iraqis—and Iraqis know this. The occupation and the 100 Orders gave the Big Milkers and the Little Milkers the *freedom* to pillage Iraqi resources (oil revenues, existing Iraqi industrial infrastructure, arms industry, and the like) as well as countless billions of dollars in American taxpayers’ money that most Americans incorrectly assumed would be used to benefit Iraq and Iraqis.

Many of the orders were absolutely mind boggling and staggeringly stupid. In total, they ultimately helped ensure the catastrophic destruction of Iraq and the deaths of thousands of American soldiers and countless hundreds of thousands of Iraqis.

Bremer’s first imperial order was to purge several hundred thousand Iraqi workers from the Iraqi government. He established a de-Baathification commission headed by Ahmed Chalabi, a Shiite and lackey for the Bush regime who carried out the purge with passion. The Bush regime, acting through Bremer, also disbanded the Iraqi army. These incredibly naïve actions put the insurgency on steroids, and efforts over the next several years to undo some of the cuts were ineffective in stopping the Iraq Civil War. Did Bush and Bremer really believe that a supernatural power—say the “free enterprise” system—would magically intervene and offer jobs to these newly unemployed?

Order No. 39 was intended to immediately transition Iraq from a planned economy to a “free enterprise” economy, all in the stroke of a magical pen. Among its provisions are the following:

- a) 100% foreign ownership of Iraqi businesses (a provision that is rarely accomplished in balanced negotiations);
- b) the privatization (i.e., “pirate-ization”) of Iraq’s state-owned businesses (about 200);
- c) the “national treatment” of foreign firms; and
- d) the tax-free, unrestricted, remittance of all profits and other funds out of Iraq.

Each of the provisions was a Christmas present for huge foreign corporations.

The “national treatment” provision of Order 37 meant that Iraqi workers and Iraqi companies could not be given preference in the reconstruction of their own country. This simply takes one’s breath away. The reality, however, was even worse, as the rightwing American incompetents running the CPA *did* give enormous preference to American Big Milkers like Halliburton. One might suppose that rightwing Christianist bureaucrats could hardly be expected to award contracts to Iraqi Muslims whom they didn’t understand or trust, or want to understand or trust.

Iraqis received only about 2% of the reconstruction contracts awarded by the CPA in 2003.

Under Order No. 37, foreign firms could buy Iraqi businesses, refuse to hire Iraqis, and transfer from Iraq their invested money and profits any time they wished, all tax-free. There was no requirement that any portion of the funds generated in Iraq stay in Iraq to help rebuild the nation.

Dozens and dozens of enterprises owned by Iraq’s government were immediately shut down, with most remaining that way.

Order No. 12 suspended all tariffs, customs duties, import taxes, licensing fees and similar surcharges for goods entering or leaving Iraq, thereby greatly reducing the new Iraqi government’s potential revenue stream.

Order No. 49 drastically cut to 15% the corporate tax rate, which previously had been as high as 40%. The personal income tax was reduced to a high of 15%.

Iraq had denominated its oil transactions in euros, and Bremer changed that back to dollars.

The 100 Orders covered more than economic matters. For example, a new rightwing constitution was imposed, and secular family law was replaced with religious law. The proper use of auto horns was even covered.

The occupation was supposed to end on June 28, 2004, with the handover of power from the U.S.-run CPA to the new Iraqi government, but the occupation continued, both militarily and economically. The 100 Orders also continued in effect, which surprised many observers, as they were handed over to Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, an exiled Iraqi closely tied to the CIA and the first in a succession of weak Iraqi figureheads. As for the advertised “handover” to Iraq, what transpired in reality was a handover and big handout to the foreign Big Milkers and Little Milkers.

Orders No. 57 and No. 77 operated to give the United States ongoing control in every ministry of the Iraqi government through the placement by the United States of inspector generals (with five-year terms) and a host of other appointees with broad powers, all to ensure that the 100 Orders would be carried out.

The intended thrust of these orders (Nos. 57 and 77) was not all bad. God knows there was a need for comprehensive accounting and auditing to ensure that contracts

were properly awarded and implemented, and that funds were properly disbursed. The orders rightly required this, as did commitments made by the United States to the United Nations.

However, Bremer and the Bush administration failed to hire qualified internal auditors and put adequate financial controls in place, thus violating America's commitment to the United Nations and the Iraqi people. As discussed later in this book, billions of dollars of actual cash were not accounted for.

Order No. 17 (which we will discuss in Chapter 7, "Private Military Contractors") gave full immunity from Iraqi law to foreign contractors, including out-of-control mercenaries like Blackwater. Iraqis have no recourse in their own country for damages suffered, or even death, due to foreign contractors. Welcome to Bush World. Welcome to GOP World. Welcome to the Iraq Civil War and the Iraq War of Liberation.

No book can do justice to the horrible suffering in Iraq. The bloody descent into Hell on Earth triggered by Bush's GOP administration continues, and—pray as one might—it just continues to get worse.

Similarly, there appears to be no bottom to the immoral cesspool known as the GOP. Just when we think GOP corruption and moral hypocrisy in Congress cannot get worse, it does. The hits just keep on coming, even though the GOP leadership, in Mafia fashion, did everything possible to protect its Culture of Corruption in Congress and to protect its party members from investigation and justice.

### **The One-Percent Solution for Iraq**

As for the chaos in Iraq, they are no good viable options for America. Bush and his GOP War Party have endangered and bloodied America by pushing it into a position where all viable options are terrible. America finds itself in the GOP Restaurant of Puke, where all menu items are expensive and toxic.

Bush's and the GOP's war on Iraq is a lost and immoral cause. Bush never had a plan for Iraq, and even after five years of chaos in Iraq, he refused to develop a viable plan. The GOP-controlled Congress abdicated its constitutional oversight role, never pushed for a viable plan, and shamefully provided cover for Bush and all his deeds and misdeeds.

When Bush trumpeted his new *surge* campaign for Baghdad in early 2007, it was simply more of the same old militarism, and far too little, far too late, in addition to being beyond the capability of a proud U.S. military that he misused, abused, and, in the words of some military experts, put in a "death spiral." In March 2007 retired Army Gen. Barry McCaffrey—after visits to Iraq and meetings with General David Petraeus, more than a dozen U.S. commanders in Iraq, and several Iraqi commanders—reported that the U.S. military was in "strategic peril."

Bush's only viable plan was his *personal cut and run plan*, which called for him to dump the bloody chaos into the lap of his successor, as he slithered out of the White House to pursue lucrative opportunities in his crony GOP network.

We propose here in passing, at the beginning of this chapter on Iraq, a plan that could possibly work if implemented, but which has zero chance of acceptance and implementation. We call it the *One-Percent Solution for Iraq*.

The *One-Percent* in the plan's name refers to the *military enlistment rate* America needs in order to field an occupation force for Iraq that is large enough to have a reasonable shot at simply maintaining the peace. Specifically, it refers to the percentage of Americans who voted for Bush in 2004 who need to enlist in order to provide an American occupation force large enough to do the job.

"Supporting our troops" should mean more to Republicans than displaying a bumper sticker, bashing gays and lesbians, and voting for humongous tax breaks and government largess for huge corporations and America's Super Rich.

"Supporting our troops" should mean more than applauding Bush's incredibly stupid, troop-endangering "bring them on" challenge to Iraqi militants.<sup>16</sup>

Here's a request to all such weak-kneed Bush supporters: Why not enlist now? America needs you to fight terrorists in Iraq. Fight "them" there (whoever "them" is) so you won't have to fight "them" in Kansas.

More than 62 million Americans voted for Bush in 2004. If just one percent of these patriotic Americans enlisted, America could field enough troops in Iraq to properly fight Bush's and the GOP's war. Before the Iraq invasion, America's best military minds argued for a force of several hundred thousand troops on the ground in Iraq. This requirement was consistent with professional military methodology applied by America's military war colleges. In an odd coincidence, neither Bush nor Cheney—nor any of their top dozen neocon advisors who advocated war—had ever served in the military.<sup>17</sup>

In any case, you get the idea. Among the supporters of Bush and his GOP War on Iraq, it would be nice to find more backbone and fewer bumper stickers, more courage and less hiding behind the flag. We call upon 620,000 Americans—just one percent of the 62,040,610 Americans who voted for Bush in 2004—to sign up now. We call upon bedwetting Cons to put themselves where their votes are.

We call upon bedwetting Cons to support their commander in chief and all of his "never-served," bedwetting *chickenhawk* neocons who got America into the Iraq mess.

Just for fun, here are a couple of riddles answered by America's Chickenhawk in Chief:

- "Why did the chicken cross the road?" To get to the Texas Air National Guard.
- "What's the difference between Vietnam and Iraq?" Bush had an exit strategy for Vietnam.

By the way, regarding Vietnam, the nonpartisan Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments in 2007 calculated that the cost of the Iraq war in inflation-adjusted dollars was expected to surpass the cost of the Vietnam War by the end of 2008.

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<sup>16</sup> Uttered July 3, 2003.

<sup>17</sup> Admittedly, the Bush-triggered Iraq Civil War does complicate matters and increase the current requirements, versus the force levels that would have been required if Bush had properly planned in the first place for the aftermath of the invasion. The need for force rotations would also further increase the total requirements.

As we said, the One-Percent Solution for Iraq won't happen. In Appendix B we do set forth a plan for Iraq, which is the best of rotten alternatives. It calls for the immediate withdrawal of America's forces from Iraq.

### **OIL (Operation Iraqi Liberation)—a Slippery Slope**

Afghanistan was an inconvenient side trip along the neocon superhighway to American imperialism and its New American Century. The central focus of the neocons' lust was Iraq—the blushing bride who would soon be theirs, theirs alone. They would bring Iraq into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and show the world how a Middle East country should be run. After all, “Iraq has oil,” which the neocons admiringly pointed out, and they predicted that Iraqi oil revenues would be more than enough to cover all the costs of reconstruction and nation building.

America's invasion of Iraq on March 19, 2003, was initially called Operation Iraqi Liberation by some Bush administration officials and supporters. But oops! Perhaps realizing that the acronym “OIL” was too close to the truth, the name for the invasion was changed to Operation Iraqi Freedom. The rest is history—America got “OIF,” not “OIL.”

Oil—peak oil—is the real *casus belli* for the GOP's War on Iraq.

#### **Number of Foreign Military Bases – By Nation**

<u>Nation</u>	<u>Foreign Military Bases</u>
<b>United States of America</b>	735
<b>America's Rivals and “Enemies”</b> (including communist nations):	
People's Republic of China (communist)	0 <sup>18</sup>
Russia	0
<i>Axis of Evil</i> Nations	
Iraq	0
Iran	0
North Korea (communist)	0
Cuba (communist)	0
Vietnam (communist)	0
France	(just kidding)

<sup>18</sup> The People's Republic of China occupies Tibet. For all practical purposes, the world has given up hope that Tibet will ever be a free independent nation. It is now permanently part of China.

According to *The New York Times*, long before the start of war the Bush administration had selected four sites in Iraq for several permanent American military bases. The invasion of Iraq was carved in stone, and 200,000 American troops were assembled in the region long before Bush made the so-called “final” decision to invade, and long before Bush gave Saddam a final 48-hour warning.

The Bush neocons wanted the United Nations and NATO to have no role in Iraq, since this would diminish American glory and control. They believe the United States, unlike all other nations, must never be subjected to the slightest hint of foreign control or influence. This is one of the great ironies of neocon policy, in view of the pervasive influence—both legitimate and illegitimate—that the United States exerts around the world, and considering the more than 700 foreign military bases it maintains in more than 125 nations around the globe, and considering the numerous times it has unilaterally invaded other nations.

But for the fact that the United States is a democracy that conducts elections, the Bush neocons would have had no need for the Bush League of Nations, also known by its misleading name, the Coalition of the Willing. The coalition was marketing fluff intended to mislead the American people.

The Bush neocons faced a major roadblock on their path to Baghdad—the truth. They could not get American and international support for their war on Iraq without a campaign of deception and lies. If they had told the truth, namely that:

- Saddam had nothing to do with 9/11, or bin Laden, or al Qaeda, or the Taliban, or the war on terrorism;
- Iraq had nothing to do with 9/11, or bin Laden, or al Qaeda, or the Taliban, or the war on terrorism;
- bin Laden viewed Saddam as his mortal enemy because Saddam ran a secular government and rejected radical Islamic goals and policies;
- there was no compelling evidence of WMDs, and that Bush neocons “fixed,” i.e., made up, intelligence regarding nonexistent WMDs;
- Saddam was already boxed in by UN sanctions and America’s military presence in no-fly zones in both northern and southern Iraq;
- Saddam’s military strength was a fraction of what it had been before the first Gulf War I in 1991;
- Saddam and Iraq were not a threat to the United States or any other nation;
- years before 9/11 the neocons planned to invade Iraq;
- Bush and the neocons wanted to invade and occupy Iraq unilaterally with no coalition other than the sham Bush League of Nations;
- the faith-based Bush regime failed to adequately plan for the invasion and its aftermath; and
- the invasion was not a *just war*;

then there would have been almost no support for the war on Iraq. In short, they needed *lies* to create their *casus belli* for this illegal war.

So they lied, expecting to get away with their war crimes, counting on the fog of war and their glorious victory to cause all sins to be forgiven. They counted on might to make right. The ends would justify the means. After all, even if all the stated justifications for war were lies, Saddam was an evil leader who had murdered tens of thousands of his own people, including members of his own family. Above all, the

liberated Iraqi people would all cheer Bush and cover him with flowers in countless victory parades throughout Iraq. Monuments to Bush would be built in Baghdad. This happy ending—the only scenario permitted by White House *groupthink*—would trump any truth inquiry.

The neocons believed a victory in Iraq would trump *everything* and make it a just war. They thus rejected centuries of Christian theology. They counted on enough Americans to be gullible, or too busy trying to make ends meet to pay attention.

But the Iraq war was not a just war, no matter what the outcome, any more than an invasion of Canada following 9/11 would have been, or an invasion of Sweden or Iraq would have been following the Oklahoma City bombing<sup>19</sup> by Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols (who murdered 168 innocents, including 19 children, on April 19, 1995.) The Bush administration intentionally made war on the wrong nation. But few dare call this treason.

Diplomacy is as foreign as French to the Bush regime, which looks to diplomacy only after all violent means have been exhausted.

Ironically, the world's only superpower should be capable of imposing its military will *anytime* on *any* country—and especially on a third-rate, crippled, neutered military power like Iraq—no matter how flawed and unjust the mission. The Mess in Mesopotamia painfully proves and exemplifies Bush's incompetence as president and commander in chief, as well as the incompetence of the do-nothing-good GOP Congress that rubber stamped his actions.

The UN Security Council correctly refused Bush's request to go to war against Iraq. Its inspectors had searched throughout Iraq without finding any weapons of mass destruction, and effective inspections were continuing. Its senior inspectors, including Hans Blix, determined before the 2003 invasion that Saddam was not a significant threat, and so informed the world. Additional arms inspectors handpicked by the Bush administration confirmed this.

A 400-member U.S. weapons inspection team sent to Iraq after the invasion withdrew quietly without any publicity in early 2004 after finding absolutely no evidence of weapons of mass destruction or even an active "weapons program."

A Carnegie Endowment study concluded, "administration officials systematically misrepresented the threat." As Jim Hightower puts it, "This is no matter of innocent little lies. Their lies are stained with blood."

There has been much discussion, but far less meaningful investigation, regarding shortcomings in U.S. intelligence activities before the Iraq invasion, and the manipulation thereof. Since much has been written about this, we won't revisit the issues in detail here. However, one central truth that has emerged is that the intelligence did not matter, because Bush and the neocons were going to invade Iraq regardless. In this sense, the issue of Iraqi intelligence is a red herring. Another certainty is that the administration lied, cherry picked, distorted, and carefully crafted messages that were intended to mislead and misinform.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The Oklahoma City bombing, which is the second worst terrorist attack perpetrated on American soil (the worst at the time), was fueled by poisonous Christian fundamentalism.

<sup>20</sup> Bush's lying and flip-flopping as to the reasons for invading Iraq bring to mind this humorous exchange from *Casablanca* (the best movie ever), with Bush playing Rick Blaine in this scene, and Baghdad replacing Casablanca, of course:

Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and Rice are the Book of Revelation's Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse—the *Looter*, the *Shooter*, the *Booter* and the *Hooter*—and are especially adept at this black art of lying. They frequently sprinkle disconnected hot-button words—such as “war on terrorism,” “Saddam,” “9/11,” “Iraq,” and “WMDs”—into one sentence to give the listener the impression they are all linked. In Massachusetts and North Dakota, this is called lying. In red areas of Texas and at GOP headquarters, it is called talking.

On September 6, 2006, Bush famously noted, “You know, one of the hardest parts of my job is to connect Iraq to the war on terror.”

If you are not outraged, you have not been paying attention.

The midterm congressional elections in November 2006 sent a shock wave of fresh air through America's corrupt GOP-controlled government, triggering the resignation or firing of Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defense on November 8, just one day after the elections, even though Bush just seven days earlier had given Rumsfeld job protection through the end of Bush's presidency. Referring at that time to Cheney and Rumsfeld, Bush oddly noted: “Both those men are doing fantastic jobs and I strongly support them.” “Fantastic?” One does wonder what words Bush would use to describe *excellent* job performance.

True to form, the Bush neocons and their supporters play the blame game, driven by two sacrosanct rules:

- 1) Bush and his GOP administration never make mistakes.
- 2) When something terrible happens, someone else is responsible.

The sign on Bush's desk says, “The Buck Does Not Stop Here.” Of course, when it comes to real bucks—millions of dollars in crony capitalism and influence peddling—Bush family bank accounts throughout the world are always open for deposits.

Even accepting as 100% true all of the lies, distortions and hype (as well as the few legitimate claims) of the Bush administration, it is truly amazing how miniscule the pile of so-called evidence is regarding alleged connections between Saddam's regime and Iraq, on one hand, and bin Laden, the Taliban and Afghanistan, on the other. Consider that Iraq and Afghanistan had numerous legitimate reasons to be in frequent contact with each other. Yet when you examine the “evidence” offered by the Bush regime, there is *nothing* there, other than a Bush League pile of bovine excrement.

The rightwing “analysis” of the Iraq “evidence” was nonsensical. Facts and tough questions were avoided. The GOP-controlled Congress and America's cheerleading press went along with the charade.

One meaningful analysis would have been to compare Iraq's alleged connections and culpability with that of other possible *targets* of the administration's wrath. In this regard, numerous other countries, including Saudi Arabia, had more contacts with bin Laden and the Taliban than did Iraq. As a matter of fact, so did Texas.

Captain Louis Renault: *What in heaven's name brought you to Baghdad?*

Rick Blaine [Bush]: *My health. I came to Baghdad for the waters.*

Captain Louis Renault: *The waters? What waters? We're in the desert.*

Rick Blaine [Bush]: *I was misinformed.*

One reasonable approach would have been to assess a potential target's "suspicious connections" to bin Laden/Taliban/Afghanistan and then place the resulting score on a "Culpability Scale" of zero to 10, with "0" being "no connection, no culpability," and "10" being a "slam-dunk bomb-em."<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, Saddam and Iraq would have rated either a "0" or a "1." But let's be generous and give Saddam and Iraq a "1," since "0" should be reserved for Antarctica. Saudi Arabia would have fallen somewhere between "4" and "7," although it is difficult to make an accurate assessment since Saudi Arabia has not cooperated with *any* 9/11 investigation, and the Bush administration has fully supported Saudi Arabia's stonewalling and cover up.

Even the state of Texas—or more accurately, that rotten rightwing red part of Texas known as "Bush Family&Cronies/Halliburton/Enron/Public-Trough-Companies/Two-Legged Skunks/Tom DeLay/Crooked Cons Club"—would get a higher score than Iraq, say a "3" or "4" on the Culpability Scale.<sup>22</sup> The Taliban itself sent official representatives to Texas to meet UNOCAL and Texas oil barons in the late 1990s to discuss how they could work together on oil deals, including building a pipeline across Afghanistan to carry oil from the Caspian Sea region. The nice Taliban folk received five-star, red carpet treatment from their salivating Texan cronies-in-waiting.

Can you imagine the neocon war cries if the Taliban—rather than sending its delegation to Texas—had sent it to Baghdad (which it never did)? Can you imagine the blood lust if Saddam had had even one-tenth the sleazy "perfectly legal" and "not so perfectly legal" business deals with bin Laden's family that the extended Bush Family has had?

But Bush bombed Baghdad, not Midland, Texas. Go figure.

No matter how trivial, preposterous or deceitful the Bush regime's justification du jour for war on Iraq, America's corporate media always gave it gravity and respect. If Bush had said, "Saddam has two trucks that drive around suspiciously," Big Media would gladly have accepted this statement as another God-given reason for war. Unlike the media, the patriots of Massachusetts and the many progressives of Texas know that some things are just plain cow poop and should be treated accordingly.

In this "six degrees of separation" world, everyone is connected to everyone, every nation is connected to every nation, and everything is connected to everything. This reality makes the intelligence function very difficult, and its manipulation by wicked wrongdoers<sup>23</sup> very easy.

The Bush administration's intentional abuse of intelligence regarding Iraq—lying, distorting and hyping in order to sell predestined illegal military action against Iraq—is much more culpable and destructive to America's democracy in the long run than anything Saddam ever did to America, or could have done.

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<sup>21</sup> Without any analysis, the neocons obviously gave Iraq a "10."

<sup>22</sup> We should be careful not to disparage all Texans. There are millions of Texans—a growing number, including lots of Dixie Chicks fans—who are ashamed of Bush, his policies, and the fact he is from Texas.

<sup>23</sup> "W" also stands for "wicked wrongdoer."

Colin Powell, in his February 5, 2003, presentation to the Security Council, dramatically hyped bogus information about Iraqi bio-warfare vehicles. He told the Security Council and the world that they were “one of the most worrisome things that emerges from the thick intelligence file we have on Iraq.” He said there were eyewitness accounts: “We have firsthand descriptions of biological weapons factories on wheels and on rails.” Powell presented diagrams showing how the vehicles were configured, misleadingly calling them “highly detailed and extremely accurate.” He then said the trucks could spray enough toxins (anthrax or botulinus) “in a single month to kill thousands upon thousands of people.”

Most of this bogus “intelligence” was based on highly suspicious information from a discredited Iraqi defector with the codename “Curveball.”<sup>24</sup> The U.S. government earlier had instructed and paid Chalabi to look for evidence supporting a theory that Saddam, in order to evade UN weapons inspectors, had built mobile germ factories. It turned out that Curveball—whom American officials had never met or talked with, and whose real name they never knew—was related to a key aide to Chalabi.

International and American inspectors who later searched the site specified by Powell, as well as countless other sites, found no evidence of what Powell was hyping, and it is believed that the vehicles in question were just everyday trucks and fire engines.

David Kay, the former head of the U.S. group looking for WMDs in Iraq, politely referred to Powell’s testimony as “disingenuous.” This is a polite diplomatic way of saying Powell lied. Kay noted, “If Powell had said to the Security Council: ‘It’s one source, we never actually talked to him, and we don’t know his name,’ as he’s describing this, I think people would have laughed us out of court.”

Powell himself as well as other State Department officials had objected to many of the allegations appearing in drafts of Powell’s UN speech regarding Iraq. According to *US News and World Report*, the first draft of Powell’s speech was prepared for him in late January 2003 by Cheney’s then chief of staff Lewis “Scooter” Libby (who in March 2007 was found guilty on four counts in a federal criminal case in connection with the Plame affair, which we discuss in Chapter 17, “Treason, Electoral Fraud—Anything to Maintain Power.”) Many of the unsupported allegations originated with the Office of Special Plans (OSP)—an extraordinary special unit set up by Paul Wolfowitz in the Pentagon to cherry pick and manufacture “intelligence.”

Intelligence analysts objected that Powell was being asked to give the most sinister of interpretations regarding intelligence information when other more plausible benign explanations existed. According to *US News and World Report*, when Powell read a draft of his speech given to him by Cheney’s office, he threw the draft in the air and yelled, “I’m not reading this. This is bullshit!” Nevertheless, many of the allegations survived and were in Powell’s final speech.

Powell, playing the good soldier, carried water for the neocons who ran the White House, and truth was the victim. Friends of Powell around the world felt sorry for him and how far he had fallen. Powell also regrets this low point in an otherwise

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<sup>24</sup> The term “Curveball” is suggestive of the deception pitched by the Bush Cons. “Curveball” could also be used to describe Bush himself, although “Screwball” is better.

stellar career. Eventually perhaps, he will straighten his spine, step forward and tell the truth about what really happened as America lost its way during Bush's watch.

### **SIDEBAR: General Petraeus or General Betray Us?**

In this sidebar we jump forward for a moment more than four years to the week of September 10, 2007, when another respected American military man, General David Petraeus, delivered a report on Iraq to Congress. Once again, an American general in uniform cooked the books for Bush and supported his failed warmongering policies.

At Petraeus' high level in the military chain of command, he necessarily wears two hats, one military and one political, but he pretended to be wearing only his military hat in September 2007 when he and U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker testified before Congress. In full military uniform, Petraeus obsequiously supported Bush's plans for Iraq, as Bush knew he would. Petraeus has a long history of painting a rosy picture of Iraq, perhaps because he is the architect of several military blunders in that nation. In late September 2004—conveniently just weeks before Bush's reelection—Petraeus wrote a rosy article for the *Washington Post* that gushed with praise of progress in Iraq and gave the impression that victory was just around the corner.

Three years later and once again serving as Bush's political advocate, Petraeus distorted events and cherry picked facts to paint a rosy picture of the so-called *troop surge*. Ignoring independent reports regarding the failure of the surge, he was anything but independent and balanced. Knowing his own testimony would not be credible, Bush counted on Petraeus to make the pitch for more of the same—no deadlines, no new strategy to end America's military involvement in Iraq, just stay the course and run out the clock, leaving the mess to Bush's successor. Petraeus delivered—again.

Two further comments regarding Petraeus should be made. First—and most unfortunately—Congress and Big Media went along with the charade that because Petraeus wore the uniform he would present his own independent views on Iraq, as if he operated in a *truth bubble* independent of policy, politics and Bush. This charade allowed Bush—who hid behind Petraeus' uniform—to decisively win that round. Second, there is a limit, a line, as to how far a senior military leader can go in playing politics, in making decisions inappropriate for the military to make, and in distorting reality—a line that should not be crossed—and history will judge whether General Petraeus is General Betray Us. The better view is that he did in fact cross that line.

Even counting the lies and distortions rampant in Powell's watershed UN speech in February 2003, it is truly amazing how little "evidence" was presented. "Is that all you have?" was a common reaction of professional intelligence officers.

Senior officials in the Bush regime pitched the Iraq war much like American tobacco companies hyped cigarettes. Here is a small sample of their lies and propaganda during the run-up to the invasion of Iraq:

- Cheney: “Stated simply, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction. There is no doubt he is amassing them to use against our friends, against our allies and against us.”
- Rumsfeld: “We know where they are.”
- Bush and Rice spoke frequently of “mushroom clouds” rising over the United States.
- Bush: “We have sources that tell us that Saddam recently authorized Iraqi field commanders to use chemical weapons—the very weapons the dictator tells us he does not have.”
- Richard Perle: “There will be dancing in the streets throughout Iraq if we liberate that country. The idea that it’s going to damage us in the Arab world is nonsense. We will be seen not as invaders but as liberators.”
- Sticking to GOP sound bites, Cheney: “We will be greeted as liberators ... the people of Iraq will welcome us as liberators.”
- Cheney: “[M]y belief is we will, in fact, be greeted as liberators ... I think it will go relatively quickly, ... (in) weeks rather than months.”
- Bush: “Intelligence ... leaves no doubt that the Iraqi regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised.”
- Powell: “Leaving Saddam Hussein in possession of weapons of mass destruction for a few more months or years is not an option.”
- Wolfowitz: According to Bob Woodward, Paul Wolfowitz predicted the war would last seven days and be relatively easy.
- Rumsfeld, when speaking to U.S. troops in Aviano, Italy, on February 7, 2003, said, “It is unknowable how long that conflict will last. It could last six days, six weeks. I doubt six months.”

Later, at a congressional hearing in early 2004, Wolfowitz was unable to say how many American troops had already died in Iraq.

Several months before the invasion, British leaders were aware of the Bush administration’s deceitful campaign to sell its war on Iraq. Consider for example the infamous “Downing Street Memo,” a classified British report (marked “SECRET AND STRICTLY PERSONAL - UK EYES ONLY”) dated July 23, 2002, regarding a senior British intelligence meeting in the White House. The secret report, which was published by *The Sunday Times* on May 1, 2005, makes it clear that Bush dragged America into war with “fixed” evidence and bogus claims concerning Saddam’s nonexistent WMDs. As for planning, the British report states there “was little discussion in Washington of the aftermath after military action.”

In an October 13, 2006, interview with *The Daily Mail*, the head of the British Army in Iraq, Chief of the General Staff Sir Richard Dannatt, effectively dropped a political bomb on Tony Blair’s foreign policy when he stated that the presence of British troops in Iraq “exacerbates the security problems” in Iraq and worldwide for Britain, and that British troops should “get out some time soon.” His comments favoring withdrawal were widely supported by retired British generals and throughout the British Army, and they contrasted sharply with the “stay-the-course,” “everything-is-wonderful” talking points coming from the White House and Downing Street.

The comments from Britain's top commander in Iraq were especially shocking because British military leaders generally keep their mouths shut about political matters. Gen. Dannatt, an evangelical Christian, also questioned the political goals and planning regarding the Iraq war. "I think history will show that the planning for what happened after the initial successful war fighting phase was poor, probably based more on optimism than sound planning."

Some of the sharpest criticism of the Bush neocons comes from traditional American conservatives who feel betrayed.

### **SIDEBAR: Pat Buchanan: The War Party and Anti-Semitism**

Ultraconservative Pat Buchanan, a frequent critic of the neocons' misguided transformation of the conservative cause, writes: "The conservative movement has been hijacked and turned into a globalist, interventionist, open borders ideology, which is not the conservative movement I grew up with."<sup>25</sup>

Even before the start of the Iraq war, Buchanan frequently referred to the neocon-controlled Republican Party as the War Party. "A neoconservative clique seeks to ensnare our country in a series of wars that are not in America's interest."

One of Buchanan's personal "mistakes" was to argue that the neocons are pursuing an Israeli agenda, specifically the destructive extreme right agenda pushed by Sharon and the Likud Party. Unfortunately, this exposed Buchanan to neocon hatchets. Instead of debating Buchanan on the merits, the neocons—many of whom are Jewish and *do* support the most extreme rightwing policies of the Likud Party—labeled him anti-Semitic. Buchanan wrote:

The neoconservatives are trying to fend off critics by assassinating their character and impugning their motives. Indeed, it is the charge of 'anti-Semitism' itself that is toxic. For this venerable slander is designed to nullify public discourse by smearing and intimidating foes and censoring and blacklisting them and any who would publish them. Neocons say we attack them because they are Jewish. We do not. We attack them because their warmongering threatens our country, even as it finds a reliable echo in Ariel Sharon.

Eight weeks into the Iraq war, which he opposed, Buchanan once again showed his usual backbone and independence. In an editorial of June 4, 2003, Buchanan listed several of the numerous lies told by the Bush Administration in the run-up to the war, and he then wrote:

Is it possible Iraq never had that vast arsenal of weapons that we were led to believe? Did the intelligence agencies fail us, or did someone 'cook the books' to meet the recipe for an imperial war? It is time Congress investigated the Office of Special Plans, set up in the Pentagon to sift and interpret all intelligence, and placed under neoconservative superhawk Paul Wolfowitz.

<sup>25</sup> *New York Times*, Sept. 8, 2002.

Unfortunately, it is off limits for America's corporate media to fairly discuss the neocons' connections to Israel and its most rightwing factions, or even the fact that most of the hardcore neocons are Jewish.

Of the hundreds of special interest groups that lobby the executive branch and Congress regarding America's foreign policy, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) is by far the most influential and *feared*. Its enormous clout, coupled with its willingness to kill the messenger if the message is not perceived as sufficiently pro-Israel, puts the fear of God in any American politician, whether Democrat or Republican, who wishes to be candid and rational regarding Middle East affairs. The result is that there is much less meaningful debate in the United States regarding anything affecting Israel than there is anywhere else in the developed Western world, including Israel itself.

In addition to compromising the war on terrorism, Bush's Middle East policies have made things worse for both Israel and the Palestinians, with increased deaths on both sides, and with no peace in sight. History will prove Bush to be one of Israel's worst enemies. Scornful of Clinton's efforts to help secure permanent Israeli/Palestinian peace, Bush did nothing "peaceful" other than to refer occasionally to that charade known as the "roadmap" for peace. He and the GOP have been AWOL. His violence-first policies have especially harmed the long-term strategic interests of Israel, America's most steadfast ally in the region, and jeopardized its very existence. When Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, it got nothing in return, definitely a Bush League bargain.

The sad truth is that Bush and the GOP are not honest brokers for peace between Israel and the Palestinians, or for peace in the broader Middle East, and the world knows this. As a result, Bush and his War Party are distrusted and worse than ineffective. They have in fact harmed Israel's strategic interests, while also making things much worse for the Palestinians.

#### **SIDEBAR: Carter and Clinton to the Rescue**

America should empower Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton to represent America in an international effort to seriously restart a peace process between Israel and the Palestinians, with the goal of a permanent lasting peace mutually agreeable to Israel and the Palestinians.

Nothing will promote peace more in the Middle East than for the United States to take a leadership role in brokering a permanent peace treaty between these two peoples. Yes, the road to peace in the Middle East goes through Jerusalem.

America's allies and friends would be encouraged if Carter and Clinton were empowered to help mediate a peace between the Palestinians and Israelis. In sharp contrast to Bush, both are respected world leaders who devoted enormous personal effort to the pursuit of peace between Israel and its neighbors, including the Palestinians.

Many observers believe that peace in the Middle East is impossible. We all hear people say something like, "The people in the Middle East just want to kill each other, and they've been doing it for centuries. There is nothing we can do." This pessimistic—and erroneous—point of view has a certain appeal, and at weak moments your author sometimes succumbs to it too. But at the end of the day, it is a point of view—based in rightwing propaganda—that conveniently justifies doing nothing, while it whitewashes misguided U.S. policies.

Notwithstanding the major setbacks under Bush's watch, there *have* been major achievements in the Middle East over the years, and America must not make the mistake of thinking the situation regarding Israel and the Palestinians is hopeless. Peace is possible. Carter and Clinton proved it.

But for the leadership and dedicated efforts of Carter and Clinton, there would not exist the lasting peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, and the lasting peace treaty between Israel and Jordan.

Consider Carter's enormous efforts. Imagine how much worse the situation would now be for Israel and the region if a permanent peace agreement had not been signed between Israel and Egypt in 1979. Carter worked tirelessly for that peace agreement, and it took strength, moral leadership and integrity on his part. In short, it took diplomacy, something missing from Bush's and the GOP's toolkit. Neither Egypt nor Israel has ever broken this peace agreement. At the same time, no one—no Jew, Muslim, or Christian—can truthfully say that Carter was not a strong supporter of Israel and its right to exist and live in peace with its neighbors. Carter—a Navy veteran, a strong Christian his entire life, and recipient of the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize—earned the respect and trust of both Israelis and Muslims.

What happened to the three heroes of the 1979 peace agreement between Egypt and Israel? For his efforts, Egyptian President Anwar Al Sadat was assassinated in 1981 by army personnel who were members of the extremist Egyptian Islamic Jihad. Israeli Prime Minister Menachen Begin died of natural causes in 1992. As for Jimmy Carter, we will discuss in Chapter 8—"The Religious Wrong"—some of his ongoing unflagging efforts for peace.

Consider Clinton's enormous efforts for peace in the Middle East. Imagine how much worse the situation would be for Israel and the region if a permanent peace agreement had not been signed, during Clinton's watch, between Israel and Jordan. The Israel-Jordan Treaty of Peace of October 26, 1994, ended the state of war that had existed between Israel and Jordan since the birth of modern Israel in 1948, and it normalized relations and settled all land disputes between them.

Upon becoming president, Bush immediately put the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the back burner and thereafter blindly supported the rightwing faction in Israel at every turn, thus encouraging the killing to escalate. As a result, not even “phase one” of the “road map” to peace was successfully implemented. This failure scored political points for Bush with America’s extreme Christian right, many of whom see the growing pools of Israeli and Palestinian blood as glorious signposts along the road to Armageddon and the Second Coming of Christ. (We discuss this extreme rightwing influence in Chapter 9, “Eschatology and the Book of Revelation.”)

The Bush presidency will be remembered as the wasted years.

When it comes to matters of peace and war, Bush and the GOP cannot be trusted. Democratic presidents Carter and Clinton believed in diplomacy, and that war is a last resort, not a first. They demonstrated “peace through strength.” Republican Bush believes in war as a first resort, and is clueless regarding diplomacy. He and his GOP achieved “weakness through war.”

In January 2005 Rice noted, “the time for diplomacy is now.” No, that was incorrect. The time for diplomacy regarding the Middle East, including the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, was the first day of the Bush regime.

A sad irony imbedded in the End Times prophecy of fundamentalist Christians is that *all* Jews and *all* Muslims will be slaughtered like cattle and burn in Hell forever,<sup>26</sup> while the beneficiaries—the chosen few among rightwing Christians—will go to Heaven to bask in the glory of their treatment of Jews and Muslims here on Earth.

This rightwing crusader theology, supported by a rightwing president who believes His Heavenly Father directs him, is doing more to radicalize Islam than 1,000 bin Ladens. In bin Laden’s wildest dreams, Allah could not have sent him a better lap dog and ally than George W. Bush—and by extension, the GOP Congress that looked the other way when evil was afoot.

The leadership of every major Christian denomination in the world, except for the Southern Baptists in America, opposed Bush’s war on Iraq because it clearly violated Christian theology. With unchristian chutzpah, Bush turned a deaf ear to reason and dissent, including that coming from his own United Methodist denomination, of which your author is an active and proud member.

Worldwide Christian leadership accurately warned Bush about the enormous negative consequences that were likely to result if he pursued his immoral war on Iraq. The hijacking of Christianity to promote a war on Iraq defamed Christianity and helped torpedo any prospect for a strong coalition.

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<sup>26</sup> Under some End Times interpretations, Jews and Muslims would have a last-chance opportunity to convert to Christianity before the Second Coming, but, of course, if they did, they would no longer be Jews and Muslims.

**SIDEBAR: “God Bless the World” and “God Bless Iraq”**

Never fans of *American exceptionalism* being used to justify American imperialism, America’s friends are especially amazed, at a time when American troops are at war in the Islamic world, to see the concept so exploited and twisted by America’s Religious Right, which ignores the biblical dictate that Christianity is a *world* community that transcends national boundaries.

Foreigners are both amused and disgusted with the chauvinistic claim that “America is the best country in the world,” a bromide believed most vociferously by Americans who have never been outside the United States.

On its face, “God Bless America” is a fine sentiment, but it contradicts Christ’s teachings when it implies that other peoples are not as worthy of God’s favor as Americans, or when it reflects blind support for American militarism, whether right or dead wrong. When America’s cause is right, religious jingoism is not needed.

WWJD—“What Would Jesus Do?” Suppose Jesus needed an automobile with a bumper sticker that said, “God Bless” something. He might choose “God Bless the World” for his hybrid. But suppose his Father playfully forced him to pick a particular nation. It’s a safe bet Jesus would prefer “God Bless Iraq” over “God Bless America,” for the simple reason that Iraqis are much more in need of blessings from God.

Yes, let’s keep those “God Bless America” stickers. But let’s also do “a tithe” of new stickers for “God Bless the World” and “God Bless Iraq.” Love America, yes, but love the rest of the world too. And for the truly daring, how about a few “God Bless France” signs too?

Whether Christian or Islamic, there is no constructive role in God’s world for exclusive or militant evangelism. It is especially destructive when pushed by the world’s only superpower. As he turned the White House into a crusading cockpit, Bush found it impossible to cobble together even a minor league coalition for his reckless Iraq adventure. He struck out with the bases loaded and found himself at the head of the willowy Bush League of Nations.

America’s ability to fight the war on terrorism has been severely crippled by numerous huge Bush blunders, including his occupation of Iraq and his policy of *doing nothing* to further peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Another major blunder is his coddling of nations that support terrorism, while he wages war on Iraq, a nation that had *nothing* to do with 9/11 or the war on terrorism.

If the Bush White House were serious about dealing with terrorism, it would—in addition to taking a hard look in the mirror—focus on autocratic governments with policies that promote terrorists and terrorism. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are high on this list, but Bush does little to promote revolutionary, progressive change in these two countries, other than mouth rhetoric intended for America’s gullible.

Bush and the GOP catastrophically transformed 9/11 into a green light for fascist leaders and fascist leader wannabes around the world—from Saudi Arabia to Paki-

stan, from Moscow to Beijing, from Washington, D.C. to Iran. They all rejoiced in the opportunity to consolidate power, restrict individual rights, smash political rivals, brutalize minorities, and destroy constitutional rights—all in the name of the “war on terrorism.”

The damage caused by America’s chief sociopathic nitwit is inestimable. When Bush campaigned for the presidency in 2000, he didn’t even know the name of the leader of either Pakistan or India, and he thought Greeks were called Grecians.

Much has been written about the decades-long cozy relationship between the Bush family and the ruling Saudi princes, although the true depth of this cesspool of oil and money will probably never be known. The Saudi princes, including relatives of bin Laden, have enjoyed an extraordinary amount of influence in the Bush White House, including sleepover rights. Although this may be in the best financial interests of the Bush family—which has pocketed tens of millions in Saudi money—it is in the worst interests of America.

As for the war on terror, Saudi Arabia has a strong history of directly and indirectly supporting global terrorism, perhaps more than any other nation. Also, its long robust relationship with the Bush family disproves Bush’ new assertion that he supports democracy and freedom throughout the Middle East, and it is no surprise that a huge supermajority of the world’s billion Muslims don’t trust him or his regime.

One of the best books that focuses on the financial and political ties of the Bush family to the extended Saud family that rules Saudi Arabia is Craig Unger’s *House of Bush, House of Saud: The Secret Relationship Between the World’s Two Most Powerful Dynasties*, which begins with the special royal treatment given to 140 Saudis within two days after 9/11, at a time when American airspace was severely restricted. The Bush administration authorized the immediate departure of these Saudis—many of whom are kin of bin Laden—and thus none of the Saudis were interrogated by American intelligence. Unger concludes, “Never before has an American president been so closely tied to a foreign power that harbors and supports our country’s mortal enemies.” If Bill Clinton had given the Saudis such special treatment, the GOP would have immediately started impeachment proceedings.

Curiously, there was no such evacuation by the nationals of any other nation, Muslim or not. Is it too bold—too unfair to Bush and his Saudi cronies—to ask, “What did bin Laden’s relatives and the other scaddadling Saudis know, and when did they know it?”

Curiously, it took almost two years for the Bush White House to even acknowledge that it *approved* the Saudi evacuation. This cover-up would have continued if Richard Clarke, following his departure from the Bush White House, had not focused needed sunlight on Bush’s secretive and paranoid inner circle. Clarke said he agreed to the evacuation plans on behalf of the White House because the FBI had apparently “determined” that the departing Saudis were not linked to terrorism. This fails the smell test. How could such a determination—that the Saudis were not linked to terrorism—be made in just a few hours after 9/11?

Consider how long it takes the Bush government to investigate anything. How could the departing members of bin Laden’s family be properly investigated and questioned by the FBI in just hours? They could not and were not. More telling, why would the White House during the precious hectic hours following 9/11 have even

taken the time to consider such an evacuation request? Why was protection of bin Laden's family a top priority?

The White House justified the evacuation by saying it was concerned about the Saudis' safety following 9/11. If safety was the real concern—say, as opposed to protecting the White House from embarrassing disclosures—why weren't the dozens of Saudis simply moved to a safe location in the United States where they could be properly questioned later?

Imagine the uproar in America's corporate media and in the GOP-controlled Congress if Bill Clinton or Al Gore had been president and had given cover to bin Laden's family as Bush did. Imagine the immediate calls for impeachment.

Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) demanded that the White House investigate the departure of dozens of Saudis in the days after 9/11, believing that the Saudis could have shed light on the 9/11 attacks. "It's almost as if we didn't want to find out what links existed." Exactly.

Rather than focusing on obvious major-league problems such as Saudi Arabia, the Bush administration had its eyes on Iraq. Chomping at the bit to control Iraq, and blinded by his childlike faith that only good things would happen, Bush from the comfort of his White House Bubble rushed into his Iraq war without adequate plans for the war or its aftermath.

## Blunders in Iraq and the Region

It took more than three years of war in Iraq for a clear majority of Americans to realize that Bush and the GOP never had a plan for Iraq and still don't.<sup>27</sup>

The final *New York Times*/CBS News survey before the November 2006 midterm elections asked this simple question: "So far, do you think George W. Bush has developed a clear plan for dealing with the situation in Iraq, or hasn't he developed one?" Sixty-nine percent of Americans answered "no," and 29% answered "yes." Unfortunately, the survey did not ask any follow up questions as to what the gullible 29% were thinking. For example, of the 29% who believed Bush had developed a clear plan, how many believed it would lead to success? How many even had the foggiest idea as to what the plan might be?

In the meantime, under its rudderless commander in chief and the civilian suits in the Pentagon and White House, the U.S. military is fighting blind in Iraq, never quite sure who the "evil doers" are, forced to rely upon unreliable Iraqi "intelligence," as various Iraqi factions manipulate and leverage U.S. military power to further their various personal and sectarian agendas.

Comprehensive planning shaped by reality has never been at home in a Bush League White House occupied by a gang of myopic incense swingers. These right-wing fools believed that it is the role of supreme powers to "create history," not be

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<sup>27</sup> The "planning phobia" of the Bush regime brings to mind this humorous exchange from *Casablanca*:

Yvonne: *Where were you last night?*

Rick Blaine: *That's so long ago, I don't remember.*

Yvonne: *Will I see you tonight?*

Rick Blaine: *I never make plans that far ahead.*

fettered by lessons it might teach. One history lesson they ignored, at America's peril, is that patriotic wars against imperial powers have occurred hundreds of times throughout world history, not only in America during its Revolutionary War but also numerous times in Iraq and throughout the Muslim world.

In the run-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the Bush neocons isolated and ignored the U.S. State Department's Intelligence and Research Bureau because it correctly expressed major-league skepticism about Iraq's alleged WMDs. In its "Future of Iraq" project (17 volumes), the State Department also correctly assessed the enormous complexity and difficulty of construction and reconstruction of Iraq, but the Bush regime also dismissed this expert work. It threw it on the trash pile.

November 27, 2006, won't be remembered as a sad milestone in Bush League imperialism and incompetence, but it should be. On that date Bush's war on Iraq became longer than America's participation in World War II.

Bob Woodward's book, *Plan of Attack*, provides much detail about the Bush neocons' rushed war plans for Iraq, as well as their cavalier attitude towards planning the reconstruction and winning the peace. Before the war, countless critics and experts said the reconstruction of Iraq would be much more difficult than the war, but the Bush neocons ignored this advice.

According to Woodward, General Tommy Franks called Douglas Feith "the fucking stupidest guy on the face of the earth." Feith—the number three civilian at the Pentagon after Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz—was Bush's key Iraq "reconstruction" official at the Pentagon and helped orchestrate the huge mess in Iraq. Unfortunately for America and Iraq, too much of Bush's "plan" for Iraq was either Feith-based or faith-based.

The Bush neocons believed a fairytale in which all Iraqis would be happy, even those without security, jobs, electricity, medical care, safe drinking water and their daily bread. Somehow the God of Capitalism would take care of everything. Woodward quotes Cheney as saying that the United States needed "to have a light hand in the postwar phase." Planning and hard work were thus not necessary.

Following the huge initial military successes, the Iraqi people eagerly desired and expected improvement in their lives. At that unique moment in history, America had an unprecedented opportunity to show it could deliver results. However, Bush and the Cons failed catastrophically, squandering the historic opportunity through lack of sensible and comprehensive planning for the peace, and through terrible execution.

- In less than one year after the GOP's invasion of Iraq, America went from *liberators* to *occupiers*—the enemy of a huge super majority of Iraqis.
- A May 2004 poll taken by the U.S.-controlled Coalition Provisional Authority found that only 2% of Iraqis viewed American forces as "liberators," while 92% of Iraqis saw them as "occupiers." (Although international law is ignored at will by Bush and the GOP, U.S. forces in Iraq *are* "occupiers" under international law, and as such are legally obligated to maintain the peace.)
- Like most Iraqis, American Muslims also were happy to see Saddam deposed, and many were initially optimistic about the prospects for their relatives and friends in Iraq. However, their support for Bush's policies rapidly plummeted as the Bush League failures mushroomed day by day in Iraq.

For example, the optimism of the Muslims of Dearborn, Michigan—the second largest Muslim community in America—quickly turned to disappointment within one year after the invasion.

- According to a Gallup poll in early 2004, about 80% of Iraq's citizens said they wanted the United States to leave within two months. Although many Iraqis were initially hopeful, they soon learned that Bush's GOP administration was uncaring and incompetent—anything but compassionate.
- One of the hugest Bush League blunders was the firing of several hundred thousand Iraqi soldiers, upon whom almost 20% of Iraq's families depended for support. The mass firing broke prewar promises made by the top echelons of America's military to their Iraqi military counterparts.
- Another huge blunder was the failure to secure hundreds of thousands of tons of munitions in hundreds of locations scattered around Iraq. Everyone knew Iraq was “one big ammo dump”—according to Robert Gates, who replaced Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defense in late 2006.
- A government audit released by the GAO in March 2007 revealed the Pentagon did not even create a program to manage and destroy conventional munitions until well *after* the declaration that major combat operations were over.
- The 2007 GAO report, released *four years* after the invasion, also revealed: (1) the United States still did not know how many stockpiles of weapons and munitions remained unsecured; (2) the unaccounted for munitions could range from “thousands to millions of tons;” and (3) most of the explosives used in IEDs to kill American troops had been plundered from unsecured stockpiles of munitions. The GAO report warned that the stockpiles could still be looted by terrorists and insurgents, and it recommended a nationwide survey to locate unsecured munitions, but Bush's overstretched Pentagon resisted this idea. The Bush regime in effect provided orders of magnitude more weaponry and explosives to Iraqi insurgents than Iran ever will.
- Iraq, which never had even a single one-room schoolhouse for terrorists, is now the central campus of Terrorist University, where the graduates who survive the tough final exams can find rewarding terrorist jobs throughout the world. As Terrorist University's founder and number one supporter, Bush was the perfect catalyst for turning non-terrorists into terrorists and creating countless new decentralized militant organizations, most with anti-America objectives.
- According to an extensive report released in January 2005 by the CIA's National Intelligence Council, Iraq has replaced Afghanistan as the recruitment, breeding and training ground for the next generation of “professionalized” Islamic terrorists.

**SIDEBAR: Grand Ayatollah Sistani and Other Powers Behind the Throne**

The Bush administration talks only with political leaders who genuflect before America's new emperor, a counterproductive policy that only magnifies cluelessness and incompetence in the Bush White House. Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani is the most prominent of about a dozen respected Iraqi clerics who neither have nor seek the ear of the Bush administration. Sistani has a huge following, in sharp contrast with the line of figurehead Iraqi prime ministers with whom the Bush administration occasionally deals.<sup>28</sup>

There is one certainty regarding America's withdrawal, namely that America will have nothing but hugely ugly alternatives to withdrawal when a key group of Iraqi clerics, including especially Sistani, tell America to leave.<sup>29</sup>

In the meantime, Bush and America's military are in effect working for Sistani and other Shiite clerics, helping kill their enemy in the Iraq Civil War, primarily but not exclusively Sunnis, and giving the Shiite forces time to consolidate power in Iraq's military and police. The vast majority of Iraqis being trained and equipped by America are Shiites and Kurds, not Sunnis, and many Shiite death squads, which are reminiscent of the death squads that killed tens of thousands during Reagan's secret illegal war in Central America in the 1980s, now operate within Iraq's U.S.-trained military and police.

Unfortunately, the ongoing bloody occupation has strengthened the hands of the most militant clerics, especially Muqtada al-Sadr, while undercutting and radicalizing "moderates" like Sistani.

Sistani, like Sadr, has distanced himself from Bush and America, knowing he will lose stature if he is even seen with the American imperialist. In contrast with Bush's uninformed outside perspective, Sistani does not need to meet with Bush in order to understand what is happening in Iraq.

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<sup>28</sup> Saddam Hussein was Iraq's republican prime minister until the fall of Baghdad in early 2003. No prime minister succeeded him until May 28, 2004, when Ayad Allawi became state prime minister. During the interim, Iraq was run by American bureaucrats, principally Paul Bremer. Allawi was succeeded by Ibrahim al-Jaafari on April 7, 2005, and Nouri al-Maliki on May 20, 2006.

<sup>29</sup> There was an ideal window of opportunity—in 2003 or 2004—for the United States to request an Iraqi referendum in which Iraqi citizens would decide the fate of the occupation, including its scale and duration, and including the opportunity to set a firm date for complete military withdrawal by the United States and its Bush League partners. Such a step would have exhibited *right intentions* and improved America's credibility. Although the ideal time for this referendum has passed, it should nevertheless be immediately pursued. Unfortunately, the Bush regime decreed that American forces would be in Iraq for many years, i.e., perpetually.

Sistani has never met with Bush, never sat with Laura Bush in any State of the Union photo op, and never even met with Bush administration officials. When Secretary of State Rice flew to Baghdad in May 2005 in a surprise visit, she was unable to meet with Sistani and other key power brokers and religious leaders of Iraq. Imagine that. A few days later, however, Sistani demonstrated chutzpah when he graciously met with the foreign minister of Iran, who had traveled from Tehran to Baghdad to meet with Sistani and other Iraqi leaders.

Sistani and other Iraqi clerics are biding their time, knowing that America eventually will voluntarily withdraw from Iraq or be kicked out. In the meantime American soldiers are dying helping fight the Shiite clerics' battles.

It was Sistani, over the objections of the Bush administration, who insisted on direct Iraqi elections, rather than the bizarre election alternatives pushed by Bush.

Like the February 2006 destruction of the dome of the Golden Mosque in Samarra, the assassination of Sistani or another prominent cleric—a foreseeable and even likely event—will further ratchet up the violence in Bush's Iraq.

Although events in Iraq have spiraled out of his or anyone's control, Sistani has shown incredible restraint as he plans for the new Iraq. The slaughter in Iraq would be much worse if he had risen to the bloodlust spawned by Bush's occupation. In late 2006 it was reported that Sistani—due to severe personal medical problems—had abandoned politics but would continue responding to religious questions. But let's not reserve a Nobel Peace Prize for him. Not a pacifist, Sistani is using the occupation forces for his own purposes, and no one should be surprised when he and other "docile" rightwing clerics turn loose their long knives at a time of their choosing.

- Although Congress allocated billions of dollars for reconstruction, Bush's unpopularity in Iraq soared. Even when playing Santa Claus, Bush could not inspire trust and friendship, largely because his regime's incompetence fed waste, nepotism, corruption and bloody chaos.
- The Bush neocons failed to prepare for the foreseeable likelihood that Iraqi insurgents would use guerrilla tactics, rather than getting slaughtered in conventional combat with U.S. forces. The neocons ignored military history, which teaches that guerrilla tactics and other expressions of asymmetrical warfare are commonly used against a superior occupying force—a principal reason why America's best military experts had recommended a much larger force in the first place.
- Bush greatly increased Iraqi unemployment, and thus poverty and animosity, by immediately firing not only the Iraqi military but also the Iraqi police force and countless other government workers, including even mid- and lower-level Baathist Party workers with expertise in running Iraq. These professionals were viewed as untrustworthy simply because they had worked for the Iraqi government. This was like firing all American military personnel, police, firemen and experienced administrators simply because they worked in Bush's administration or were members of the GOP.

**SIDEBAR: Looters in Iraq Could Learn from Bush and the GOP**

As part of a vast looting operation, more than 100 semi-trailers loaded with so-called “scrap” material cross the border into Jordan each day, according to a May 26, 2004, *New York Times* report. The scrap includes quantities of both old and new material, including components for utility plants and oilrigs, copper and aluminum ingots, as well as dismantled complexes of older buildings. Much of the scrap is in nearly mint condition.

Well, that covers just Jordan, only one of five nations bordering Iraq. In addition, large quantities of looted material never leave Iraq. Based on the satellite monitoring of hundreds of Iraqi military-industrial complexes, the International Atomic Energy Agency reported that entire buildings and sometimes entire complexes of buildings disappeared. The IAEA started this monitoring program in December 2003 after a uranium-contaminated steel vessel turned up in a scrap yard in the Netherlands.

On a positive note, the looting of Iraq is much smaller in scale than the looting of America by Bush’s cronies and America’s Super Rich milking class. Of course, there is much more to steal in America. Also, the looting in Iraq is typically done with crowbars and trucks, whereas in America the looting was done for the ruling class by the President, the GOP-controlled Congress, and hordes of lobbyists wearing expensive suits—most of which is, more or less, *perfectly legal*. WWJD—What would Jesus do? Jesus would give the moral high ground to the Iraqi looters who are simply trying to feed their families.

- Average Iraqi citizens quickly learned they would receive little or no benefit from America’s largess and the GOP-style *privatization* (i.e., looting) of Iraqi industry.
- Huge Iraqi contracts were granted to American oil companies by the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) without the consent of the people of Iraq.
- The CPA provided no proper accounting as to the use of Iraqi oil revenues, and Iraqis were entitled to assume the worst. Extraordinary efforts to ensure transparency and fairness were called for, but the Bush neocons were deaf and blind to Iraqi sensibilities. After all, whether in America or in Iraq, oversight and accountability interfere with opportunities for GOP corporate cronies to loot.
- By 2007 as much as one-half of Iraq’s oil production was being diverted into a complex black market, with some of the profits being used to fund Iraq’s insurgency.
- The U.S.-run CPA could not account for \$8.8 billion it transferred to various government ministries, according to a blistering report released in January 2005 by America’s Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction. The CPA’s reconstruction process was “open to fraud, kickbacks and mis-

appropriation of funds.” For example, one Iraqi ministry could account for only 602 of the 8,200 guards on its payroll.

- The Bush administration chose to work with many discredited Iraqis. At the top of this Bush League list of rogues is Ahmad Chalabi who was hand-picked by the Bush administration to be the new leader of Iraq, even though he had no credibility or following within Iraq. Before Chalabi entered Baghdad with American forces in early 2003, he had not been seen in that city in decades. He was widely and accurately viewed as an agent of the United States. Over several years the United States had paid Chalabi millions of dollars to provide *made-as-instructed* phony intelligence on Iraq.
- Bush’s “plan” for Iraq encouraged cronyism and nepotism just like in Bush’s America. Several Chalabi relatives received plum appointments with many perks, including the opportunity to get rich at the public trough, just like in GOP America. One of Chalabi’s nephews became Iraq’s finance minister. An uncle of Chalabi was picked as one of the judges to try Saddam. A Chalabi cousin was put in charge of Iraqi oil security. GOP and Bush Family rules applied.

#### **SIDEBAR: The Wrong Role Model**

As a possible role model for Iraq’s new government, the Bush administration is the antithesis of the *liberal, pluralistic, just, democratic government* that Iraq so desperately needs.

Iraq’s Shiite leaders, who represent a large supermajority of Iraq’s population, can legitimately claim a much stronger electoral mandate than that deceptively claimed by the gloating Bush following his two narrow presidential victories. Accordingly, why shouldn’t Iraq’s new leaders also brag about their *political capital* and then go *spend it*, pursuing a narrow poke-em-in-the-eye agenda that favors themselves, their supporters and their cronies.

An Islamic government in a Middle Eastern nation with a citizenry that is almost 100% Muslim would make more sense—and would have more legitimacy—than a *Christian* government in America, a nation whose birth, Constitution and greatness are anchored in religious freedom and the separation of church and state.

Notwithstanding the absence of any democracy in Iraq during the lifetime of any living Iraqi, and notwithstanding years of oppression by Saddam and *his* chosen cronies and neo-conservatives, the new majority in Iraq needs to take the high road, and, in sharp contrast to the low road taken by Bush and the GOP, represent their *entire* nation, uniting rather than dividing, working for the welfare of all Iraqis, and not favoring their own branch of Islam. In short, they must govern Iraq exactly *opposite* from the way Bush and the GOP misgovern America. But don’t bet on that.

Ironically, an Islamic government in Iraq led by Islamic clergy—whether or not democratic—is likely to cause a fairer distribution of Iraq’s public oil resources than would either a Bush League puppet regime in Baghdad, or an independent Iraqi government modeled after Bush’s GOP administration. Bush’s and the GOP’s public-trough approach to governance epitomizes the style made famous by that unholy trinity of rotten political parties:

- 1) Saddam’s Republican Guard Party,
- 2) Texas’ Republican Guard Party, and
- 3) Bush’s Confederate Party, formerly known as the Republican Party.

Iraqis should pray that their leaders reject Bush’s *enrich-the-rich* model, which involves the party apparatus funneling public revenues to its chosen few—to its cronies and coconspirators, to its donors and bribers, to its Enrons and Halliburtons, to its Chalabis and DeLays, and to its Blackwaters and a host of other public-trough slime balls.

The situation on the ground in Iraq would be more positive if the United Nations, or NATO, or the Arab League, or any *real* well-intentioned coalition not headed by Bush and the GOP, had been in charge of the Iraq mission. The problem is Bush and the GOP style of governance.

Corrupt governments, coupled with enormous meddling over several decades by outside powers, especially Britain and the United States, helped keep the Iraqi people under the boots of tyrants. The Iraqi people said “NO!” to Saddam, and they are shouting “NO!” to Bush and the GOP’s designs on Iraq.

Iraq’s best hope, however slim, is that the Iraqi people will recognize and leverage the long periods in their often glorious history when Iraq was peaceful, diverse and tolerant, and that—notwithstanding recent decades of wars, civil unrest, and external and internal repression—the Iraqi people will make their own way to a safer and more prosperous future.

- To Iraq’s detriment, the Bush regime planned for Iraq to leave OPEC. This will prove to be another neocon fantasy—an oily pipe dream.
- The supply of electricity in Iraq became so inadequate that by early 2006 there were discussions of having Iran supply electricity to Iraq via new transmission lines to be constructed.
- During the 2003 invasion, Bush’s armchair civilian commanders ordered U.S. soldiers to guard the Iraqi Oil Ministry in Baghdad with tanks and machine guns, while unguarded museums and hospitals were systematically looted.
- The Bush League incompetence and imperialism caused many unintended consequences, including violent attacks on Iraq’s Christian community. During Saddam’s reign, Christians were protected from Islamic extremists and could serve in government. They could even sell alcohol. Following the occupation there have been numerous attacks against Iraqi Christians, including torture, executions and church bombings, with Christian women also targeted. The Christian community has no militia to protect itself.

- Evidencing one small piece of the broader ethnic cleansing taking place in Bush's Iraq, many tens of thousands of Iraqi Christians fled Iraq after the 2003 invasion, with some estimates of this tragic exodus as high as 120,000 for the first three years. A majority of these Christians want to come to America, but that door is barred for all but a lucky handful.
- A 1987 Iraqi census placed Iraq's Christian population at 1.4 million, and subsequent rough estimates indicate it fell to 600,000 to 800,000 by 2007. The two largest Christian sects—Assyrian Christians and Chaldean Catholics—continue to worship in Aramaic, the language of Jesus.
- The small community of Iraqis who practice the pacifist, monotheistic Mandaean religion is also subject to severe repression in the neo-Iraq and is on a path to extinction. Thanks to murder, rape, forced conversion, and a massive exodus, Iraq's Mandaean community—estimated to number more than 60,000 in the early 1990s—had been reduced to about 7,000 by 2007.
- Even the puppet Iraqi Governing Council established by the United States was critical of Bush's policies. For example, the Council objected to the U.S.-controlled CPA favoring foreign firms over Iraqi firms in awarding reconstruction contracts. Rend Rahim Francke, the Council's designated ambassador to the United States, said in early 2004 that the occupation authority run by Paul Bremer is "opaque to Iraqis. It's still not transparent." She was appalled when American companies imported Asian laborers, while unemployed Iraqi citizens desperately sought work.
- Wanting time to implement its imperial designs for Iraq, the Bush regime fought rapid democratization in Iraq at virtually every turn. Bush opposed early local elections in 2003, while Shiite leaders including Sistani demanded a faster path to democracy.
- Under Rumsfeld's watch, tens of thousands of American troops in Iraq were given inferior and inadequate flak jackets and body armor. Many turned to eBay and family and friends to buy the equipment they needed. Reacting to public outcry, Congress later required the Department of Defense to reimburse the troops and their families and friends for their out-of-pocket expenses in purchasing the needed equipment on their own. However, as late as 2005, the Rumsfeld-mismanaged Department of Defense, which was responsible for the inadequate equipment in the first place, failed to comply.
- In March 2007 *USA Today* reported that the Air Force had lost about 40% of the unmanned Predator aircraft used in Iraq and that it lacked sufficient trained crews to handle the demand for battlefield surveillance in Afghanistan and Iraq. American military patrols and convoys are dependent on Predators for surveillance and firepower, especially in the daily battle against IEDs, the number one killer of U.S. personnel.
- Bush's failure in Iraq is likely to destroy or cripple the prospect of America having favored access to oil in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East. A democratic Iraq, whether or not under the control of rightwing religious leaders—theirs, not ours—is unlikely to cater to either America or America's oil industry.

- Because of the escalating sectarian violence, school attendance rates dropped dramatically in Iraq. According to Iraq's Ministry of Education, only 30% of Iraq's 3.5 million students were attending school at the start of the 2006-07 school year, compared with 75% the prior year, and almost 100% at the time of the U.S. invasion in 2003. Attendance rates were particularly low in more violent districts in Baghdad, as well as in the Sunni-dominated Anbar province and in Kirkuk in the north. The Ministry reported in October 2006 that 310 teachers were killed during the preceding year.
- Large numbers of Iraq's educated and professional class—including businessmen, doctors, lawyers, journalists and teachers—left Iraq because of the chaos and because they are insurgent targets.
- About 2,000 Iraqi doctors were killed in the first four years of Bush's occupation, and the medical system is in extreme chaos. One-fourth of Iraq's 18,000 doctors left Iraq by October 2005, according to Iraq's Health Ministry, and many more leave each month. Sunnis who go to Baghdad hospitals put their lives at risk, because Shiite militia from time to time enter these hospitals, even in broad daylight, to torture and kill Sunni patients.
- Hundreds of Iraqi professors and teachers have been killed, and thousands have quit. Murderers target women for "honor crimes."
- In October 2006, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that up to 1.6 million Iraqis had already fled their homes in Iraq "in a steady, silent exodus" for other nations as a result of the Iraq war and resulting sectarian violence. The UN report noted that about 100,000 more Iraqis were fleeing each month. Other estimates also place the exodus at about 2 million through the end of 2006.
- This flood of two million refugees constitutes almost 8% of Iraq's population. On a per capita basis, this is equivalent to more than 23 million Americans fleeing the United States, or about eight times the entire population of Iowa.
- According to Syrian security officials, about one million of the Iraqi refugees live in Damascus, a city of three million, and Jordanian officials report that more than 750,000 are in or near Amman, a city of 2.5 million.
- A report of Refugees International in late 2006 stated that the "displacement of Iraqis from Iraq is now the fastest-growing refugee crisis in the world."
- According to the same UN report of October 2006, the Iraqi government and UNHCR estimate that an *additional* total of more than 1.5 million Iraqis were displaced *within* Iraq since the war started, including "more than 365,000 newly displaced who have fled their homes and communities" in the preceding seven months. On a per capita basis, this additional flood of 1.5 million internally displaced Iraqis is equivalent to about 18 million Americans, or six times the population of Iowa, and the number is increasing.
- UNHCR declared in October 2006 that the enormous scale and difficulty of the problem place it "practically beyond the capacity of humanitarian agen-

cies, including UNHCR.” UNHCR later estimated that about 500,000 Iraqis were displaced in 2006.

- Estimates of unemployment in the greater Baghdad area in 2006 and 2007 typically ranged from 40 to 60%, with a high level of underemployment. Staying alive is the most important occupation.
- Iraqis are being killed at a much higher rate during Bush’s occupation than during that of Saddam before the invasion. Also, thanks to Bush, the worst likely lies ahead, as the Iraq Civil War and genocide are not yet full-blown, and regional warfare has not yet broken out.
- Bush and the GOP tried to use America’s military might to “shock and awe” Iraq and the world, but instead they exposed their own *shocking and awful* incompetence. Under grade “W” leadership, America’s *A Team* became bogged down in a wrong war, and the fault rests entirely with Bush and the GOP, not with America’s troops.
- The Bush regime did an even worse job controlling Iraq’s borders than it does controlling America’s own borders.
- The “new Iraq”—whether it remains intact, or fragments into three or more nations, or evolves into a soft confederation of three or more regions—will greatly expand its military capability at some point, including possibly the development of weapons of mass destruction. In the future, Iraq’s perspective on WMD development could mimic that of Iran, where, thanks to Bush and his warmongering neocons, the vast majority of Iranians—including millions of Iranians opposed to their theocratic dictators—now believes Iran needs its own nuclear weapons.
- The Iraqi forces trained by the United States and Britain have increasingly been infiltrated by militia forces and death squads loyal not to Iraq, but rather to powerful Shiite clerics and their private sectarian forces, such as Muqtada al-Sadr and his Mahdi Army.
- By arming and training Kurds and Shiites who control the Iraqi government, Bush has unwittingly picked sides in Iraq’s Civil War. As the Shredder in Chief of the U.S. Constitution, Bush is the worst possible American leader to counsel Iraq on its form of government and the essentials of an Iraqi constitution to protect all minorities, including especially the Sunnis.
- By late 2007 Bush had begun also arming, and paying the monthly salaries of, tens of thousands of Sunnis who previously had fought America’s troops and may do so again in the future, and who someday may attempt to march on the Green Zone and seize control of Iraq’s government.
- Even *excluding* the thousands of insurgent and sectarian bombings and attacks since the 2003 invasion, Bush’s Iraq has a much higher crime rate than Saddam’s Iraq.
- Having seen every justification for the Iraq war fall by the wayside, Bush supporters have been reduced to asserting that Iraqis are “better off” with Saddam dead. (It is good that Saddam is dead, but Iraqis are not “better off” with him dead.) Such desperate “better than Saddam” arguments on Bush’s behalf are like a desperate suitor making his last pitch to the beautiful lady he is unsuccessfully courting: “You really should marry me. I’m not as bru-

tal as Jack the Ripper, and I'm not as crooked as my many Texan buddies like Tom DeLay." Now *that's* desperate.

- Notwithstanding Bush's numerous claims that the training of Iraqi security forces is going well, America's top two military commanders in the region—General George Casey and General John Abizaid—in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee on September 29, 2005, said that of the approximately 100 Iraqi battalions, only *one* was able to operate independently of U.S. forces, down from the previous grand total of *three*.
- In the same hearing, General Casey also noted that reducing American forces in Iraq would "take away one of the elements that fuels the insurgency, that of the coalition forces as an occupying force."
- Before Bush's 2003 invasion there were *zero* foreign militants operating in those areas of Iraq controlled by Saddam.

#### **SIDEBAR: How to Immediately Reduce the Foreign Militants in Iraq by 98%**

The Bush regime frequently lies about the source, number and role of *foreign militants* in Iraq, never pointing out that there were no such militants in Saddam-controlled Iraq before Bush's 2003 invasion. Supported by America's corporate media, White House spinmeisters painted a picture of foreign militants being the heart, soul and backbone of the Iraqi insurgency. In late 2005 the Center for Strategic International Studies, based in Washington D.C., estimated that foreign militants constituted only 4 to 10% of an estimated 30,000 insurgency militants in Iraq. Even using the higher 10% figure, there are no more than 3,000 such foreign militants in Iraq.

But that 3,000 figure for the number of foreign militants ignores approximately 175,000 other foreign troops in Iraq, namely:

- 160,000 U.S. troops, plus
- 15,000 other non-U.S. coalition troops (most of whom remain in secure locations and do no fighting, but let's count them anyway.)

The withdrawal by the United States and the rest of the Bush League coalition therefore would cause the number of foreign troops in Iraq to be reduced from 178,000 down to 3,000—a drop of more than 98%.

Ironically, while foreign fighters constitute only a very small portion of the insurgents in Iraq, foreign fighters (i.e., American troops) constitute the vast majority of the fighters doing the heavy work against the insurgency. On both counts, this is exactly *backwards* from what Bush would like you to believe.

- According to screening reports by the Pentagon for the period from 2003 into 2005, 28% of returning U.S. troops required mental health or medical care. The figures are higher for reserve and National Guard troops than for active-duty troops, and higher for females.

Kicked in the teeth by reality, the Bushies gradually downsized their military expectations in Iraq. Their fantasy started with:

- *victory with flowers* ... which declined to
- *victory with exploding flowers* ... which declined further to
- *occupation with animosity (and exploding flowers)* ... followed by
- *no failure* ... which morphed into
- *no appearance of failure* ... which slithered into
- *run out the clock and pass the mess to Bush's successor* ... just so Bush could disclaim his inevitable legacy, which is:
- *the defeat of his and the GOP's Bush League imperialism*—coupled with America finally recognizing what the rest of the world long knew, that W is America's *worst president* and *worst commander in chief* ever.

Rather than focusing on rebuilding Afghanistan and having one success, Bush invaded Iraq and put America on the road to two failures.

### **America's Chief Flip-Flopper**

The Bush administration's rush to invade Iraq without a comprehensive plan created an environment that encouraged flip-flopping. Without a comprehensive plan, decisions were made on the fly and frequently reversed. Without a plan containing milestones and a compass, there was motion without direction. Without accountability and oversight, inherent GOP incompetence and corruption were greatly magnified.

By 2006 Iraq had dropped to a tie for second-to-last in the Global/World Corruption Report, a composite index that is based on multiple expert opinion surveys of public sector corruption in 163 nations. Accordingly, Iraq in 2006 was tied for 162nd place regarding public corruption, with only Haiti seen as more corrupt. Along the way, the United States itself dropped three more positions in the 2006 index to 20<sup>th</sup> position.

One of the enormous ironies of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century is that George W. Bush and the GOP—a man and a political party who do not believe in government or nation building—voluntarily put themselves in charge of Iraq. No one should be surprised with the resulting mess, the catastrophic death and destruction. No one should be surprised with the GOP-style corruption.

The Bush administration has “turned the corner” so many times in Iraq that no one counts anymore how many times it has staggered around the block.

A hallmark strategy of every Bush election campaign—from Texas through both of his campaigns for the White House—has been to lie about his opponents and, regardless of the facts, arbitrarily pin them with negative labels such as “coward” and “flip-flopper.” Ironically, Bush in Iraq has become America's Chief Flip-Flopper.

Here are just a few of the Bush League flip-flops in Iraq:

- **Flip-flop:** The Bush neocons planned that many members of the Iraqi Governing Council were going to serve in the new Iraqi government formed on June 30, 2004. They didn't. Flip flopping wildly, the neocons again and again tried to handpick Iraqi puppets who would somehow have popular support in Iraq. This proved impossible because Bush and his Iraqi bed-mates were radioactive.

- Flip-flop: Shortly after Saddam was deposed, the Bush administration—acting through Bremer and his 100 Orders—decreed that members of Saddam’s Baathist Party and senior Iraqi military leaders could not serve in the new government. In April 2004 Bush reversed course and began rehiring some former Baathists. Ahmed Chalabi, the former darling-for-hire of the neocons, declared that this was like returning Nazis to power in Germany. The Bushies and a succession of Iraqi puppet governments wrestled for years with the slaughter caused by de-Baathification, and after five years of war they still had not settled on a viable plan to rehire former government workers.
- Flip-flop: Thousands of professors and teachers with Baathist connections also were fired. The neocons later reversed this foolish policy, but it was too late as too many hearts and minds had been lost.
- Having rushed to war unprepared, Bush flip-flopped repeatedly regarding various Iraqi militia factions—first declaring them illegal and attacking them in cities and towns like Fallujah and Najaf; then not attacking them; then ceding them control; then vowing to crush them militarily; then trying to kiss and make up by welcoming them into the political process; then threatening them again; and so forth. As of late 2007, Bush was providing arms, bundles of American cash, and photo-op handshakes to Sunni leaders who previously had killed American troops—and who will again when it suits them.
- Even the basic justification for the Iraq war flip-flopped repeatedly as reality set in and lies were exposed. As one justification after another proved false, the Bush administration more or less settled on “democracy” and removal of the tyrant Saddam, which noble goals, had they been used by Bush from the beginning as the justification for war, would not have been enough for the American people to support the war.

To be clear, Bush has *not* flip-flopped in the one policy area where he has unrelenting laser focus—namely, doing everything possible for the Super Rich, even at the cost of bankrupting America.

In every aspect of the Iraq quagmire, Bush League flip-floppers have taken the agenda every direction but forward. American soldiers die one day while fighting Sadr’s militia, but the next day are ordered to disengage, allowing Sadr’s militia to survive and regroup. One day there’s an arrest warrant for Sadr, and the next day he is asked to run for office, and the next day, well, Bush has no clue. One day in 2006 they cordon off Sadr City in Baghdad in attempts to restore order and recover a captured American soldier, and a few days later the flip-floppers relent to Sadr’s demands and lift the restrictions, leaving behind an American soldier.

Although Bush was as eager as Cheney, Rumsfeld and the other neocons to invade Iraq without cause, it is Bush who must shoulder the blame. In the final analysis, America’s president never questioned the justification for his war, and he allowed the war to proceed without comprehensive planning. Incapable of being a strong effective commander in chief, Bush lazily morphed into a flip-flopping puppet when he handed his strings to Cheney and other handpicked civilian hacks.

## America's King Who Is Wearing No Clothes

The Bush administration formed the Bush League of Nations to create the appearance of broad international support for the invasion. It was their pitiful attempt to create a fig leaf, but most of the world saw the ugly naked truth: America's King George, W, was wearing no clothes. He gave "www" a new meaning: "Witless Without Wardrobe."

On September 29, 2005, Lt. Gen. William Odom, Director of the National Security Agency under Reagan, declared Bush's invasion of Iraq to be the "greatest strategic disaster in United States history."

It is instructive that so many handpicked senior Bush administration officials resigned or left their positions in utter disappointment with Bush, his militant unilateralist policies, and especially the broken decision making process, which is controlled by a tight circle of *groupthink* neocons cocooned from reality.

In March 2007 Matthew Dowd, Bush's former chief campaign strategist, became the first member of Bush's tightest inner circle to publicly break with him when he urged withdrawal from Iraq, calling the president "secluded and bubbled in." Profoundly disappointed in Bush's leadership, Dowd, who helped Bush win reelection in 2004 by painting John Kerry as a weak flip flopper on Iraq, now asserts that Kerry was right.

Especially instructive and troubling during this time of war is that so many senior military officers have criticized the policies of this sitting president. The intensity of the criticism is unprecedented in modern American history, and never has the criticism been more deserved. Despite a strong reluctance to criticize a wartime president, these truth-telling patriots are speaking out because the Bush administration is so profoundly out of touch with reality.

Among the many former senior military leaders of America who have criticized the invasion and occupation of Iraq are: Army Chief of Staff Eric Shinseki; NATO Commander Wesley Clark; CENTCOM Commander Norman Schwarzkopf, who was Commander of Operations of Desert Shield and Desert Storm in Gulf War I; General and National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft; and CENTCOM Commander Anthony Zinni, who followed General Schwarzkopf in that position. The list goes on. By the time you read this, many more of America's finest will have stepped forward.

As Commander in Chief of the United States Central Command from 1997 to 2000, Retired General Zinni was in charge of all American troops in the Middle East. Following his retirement from the Marine Corps, the Bush administration appointed him to one of its most important diplomatic posts—special envoy to the Middle East. General Zinni later co-authored *Battle Ready* with Tom Clancy and Tony Koltz. The book is a blistering indictment of the Pentagon's conduct of the Iraq war, a war that the civilians wanted, but the generals didn't. General Zinni appeared on *Sixty Minutes* on May 23, 2004 ("They've Screwed Up"). Here are just a few highlights:

- Before the Iraq invasion, Zinni said it was "the wrong war, at the wrong time—with the wrong strategy." He told Congress, "This is, in my view, the worst time to take this on." The situation in Iraq was contained, and the focus had to be on what was already on the plate—Afghanistan, the war on terror, fighting al Qaeda, and other threats.

- As Commander in Chief at CENTCOM, Zinni developed a plan for the invasion of Iraq, and it was based on the widely respected doctrine that the United States should only enter battle with overwhelming force, also known as the Powell Doctrine. However, civilian Rumsfeld overrode America's senior military officers and decided the job could be accomplished with high-tech weapons and far fewer troops.
- This "on the cheap" approach of Rumsfeld was widely criticized, both before and after the war. Both Zinni and General Shinseki believed that more than 300,000 troops would be needed, and both saw this level of commitment as critical in the aftermath.<sup>30</sup>
- Zinni writes: "In the lead up to the Iraq war and its later conduct, I saw, at a minimum, true dereliction, negligence and irresponsibility; at worst, lying, incompetence and corruption."
- Although Rumsfeld was surprised at the level of violence that continued a year after the war began, Zinni said Rumsfeld should not have been. Before the war began, many generals, diplomats and other friends of America in the international community understood the situation, believed strongly that the problems were being underestimated, and gave warnings. But the civilians in the Pentagon did what they wanted and relied on inflated intelligence from Iraqi exiles with doubtful credibility who told them what they wanted to hear.
- As for the senior civilian officials at the Pentagon who are guilty of dereliction of duty, negligence and lying, Zinni asserts that it "should be evident to everybody that they've screwed up. And whose heads are rolling on this? That's what bothers me most."
- Zinni places blame directly on Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and a tight group of neocon policymakers—political ideologues—who hijacked American policy in Iraq. "I think it's the worst kept secret in Washington. That everybody—everybody I talk to in Washington—has known and fully knows what their agenda was and what they were trying to do." Zinni includes in that group: Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz; Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith; Vice President Cheney's chief of staff, Lewis "Scooter" Libby; Former Defense Policy Board member Richard Perle; and National Security Council member Elliott Abrams.
- "We are now being viewed as the modern crusaders, as the modern colonial power in this part of the world," says Zinni.

The Bush administration and their cheerleaders in the media claim it is unpatriotic to speak out when our nation is at war. Zinni believes this is an absurd proposition. "Imagine if we put troops in combat with a faulty rifle, and that rifle was malfunctioning, and troops were dying as a result. I can't think anyone would allow that to happen, that would not speak up. Well, what's the difference between a faulty plan

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<sup>30</sup> However, the Bush civilians settled on only 160,000 troops, a number that Franks apparently did not want to go below. Rumsfeld took the position that fewer than 100,000 would be needed.

and strategy that's getting just as many troops killed? It's leading down a path where we're not succeeding and accomplishing the missions we've set out to do."

Smacked in the chops by *reality* in Iraq, the Bush neocons never recognized what hit them. "Reality? Never heard of that!" Their dumbfounded surprise was palpable.

We must never forget the central goal of Bush and the neocons—a permanent imperial U.S. military occupation of Iraq and the control of its oil and the region through a vassal Iraqi government, all a central pillar of The Project for the New American Century. We must never forget the neocons' promise to America and its troops that this war would be short and sweet.

Yes, reality came knocking. Finding themselves mired in a policy cesspool of their own making, the neocons desperately sought to extricate themselves in any way possible.

Confounded because their *groupthink* fantasy was not unfolding as they *knew* it must, the drowning neocons grasped for straws, seizing upon this or that event in Iraq—*any* event—as a divine sign that they were succeeding, that it must be only a short distance to Mission Accomplished. But America's Ship of Fools had arrived not at Mission Accomplished, but at Mission Impossible.

Time will tell whether the several promising elections in Iraq are significant milestones on the road to a better Iraq—stirring exercises in courage by Iraqis who want to control their own future and not be under the boot of *either* Butcher Saddam *or* Imperialist Bush—or whether they are just mirages, in a long line of mirages, on the neocons' meandering road in fantasyland.

In any case, the road for the Iraqi people will be long and difficult, and when and if a successful progressive democratic Iraq emerges, which now appears distant at best, it will be the Iraqi people themselves who deserve all the credit, plus a huge portion of extra credit because they will have achieved their *Iraqi* "mission accomplished" *in spite of* the unnecessary bloody setbacks inflicted on them by Bush and his GOP accomplices.

In the next part of this book we'll turn our attention to the Bush League of Nations itself, that sham lynchpin in the Bush administration's propaganda campaign to achieve its imperial goals in Iraq.