

CHAPTER 6

Members of the Bush League of Nations

Lost in the Wilderness—A Leader Without Followers

A Profile in Courage: The policies we are now asked to advance are incompatible not only with American values but also with American interests. Our fervent pursuit of war with Iraq is driving us to squander the international legitimacy that has been America's most potent weapon of both offense and defense since the days of Woodrow Wilson. We have begun to dismantle the largest and most effective web of international relationships the world has ever known. Our current course will bring instability and danger, not security.

—John Brady Kiesling, an American career Foreign Service officer in Athens, Greece (from his resignation letter dated February 24, 2003, to Secretary of State Colin Powell, on the eve of the invasion of Iraq.)

We turn our attention now to each of the more than 50 nations that have been claimed, at one time or another, by the Bush neocons and their cheerleaders in America's rightwing media to be "members" of the so-called Coalition of the Willing, i.e., the Bush League of Nations.

First, an important clarification needs to be made. This book—as is the case with virtually all media—frequently uses the name of a *nation* as a shorthand reference to its *ruling government*, typically its executive branch. It is cumbersome to do otherwise. For, example, we might state that "Britain" decided to send troops to Iraq, as shorthand for "the ruling government of Britain" or "Prime Minister Tony Blair" having decided to send troops to Iraq. Also, in many cases it would be more accurate to refer to the "dictator" or "ruling junta" of a nation as having taken some action, rather than using only the nation's name.

The point here is that the shorthand use of a nation's name does not imply that the people of that nation so acted, or even tacitly agreed with the action. In fact, regarding Bush's Iraq war and the Bush League of Nations, the *opposite* is always true. Specifically, in *no case* did the people of any coalition partner of America vote to support Bush's war on Iraq, or otherwise broadly support the decision of its leader to join the Bush League of Nations and invade Iraq. The reader is thus asked to remember and consider the relevant context in which a particular country name is used.

Afghanistan: Surprisingly, Afghanistan appeared in early 2003 on the original list of 30 nations in the coalition. What were the Bush neocons thinking? Perhaps they read their own rosy press releases, concluding that there was no more work to be done in secure and peaceful Afghanistan—Bush’s first huge “mission unaccomplished”—and that the “freed up” Afghan forces could be shifted to Iraq, joining the American forces that Bush had already foolishly transferred there. Or perhaps they thought that Afghanistan’s contribution would be the countless Afghan citizens who would answer Bush’s invitation to “bring them on” and travel to Iraq to fight *against* the coalition? In any case, Afghanistan was soon unceremoniously cut from the team. One odd note: When the Bush administration disclosed in early 2003 the first list of coalition members, it announced that Afghanistan “may” open its airspace to coalition military flights. “May?”

Albania: Albania, a member of the Vilnius Group of countries seeking NATO membership, was included in the first coalition list of 30 countries, and it remains one of the more vocal supporters of Bush’s Iraq war. “We’re the most pro-U.S. nation in Europe,” said Satos Tarisa, its U.S. ambassador. Albanians are grateful that, under the leadership of President Clinton, the U.S.-led NATO bombing campaign in Serbia and Kosovo in 1999 saved countless Kosovo Albanians from massacres and ethnic cleansing at the hands of Slobodan Milosevic and the Serbs. Although Albania announced plans to almost triple its troop levels in Iraq—to a grand total of 200 non-combat troops—its participation remains largely symbolic. It also agreed to American use of its bases and airspace. Unfortunately, Bush was unable, perhaps unwilling, to leverage to America’s advantage in the Muslim world the goodwill created by Clinton when he acted boldly to save the Muslims in Kosovo. By the end of 2006, Albania had reduced its force level to 120.

SIDEBAR: Vilnius Group

The Vilnius Group—which derives its name from the historic city of Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, where the group first met—was created in May 2000 by a group of nine primarily Eastern European countries seeking membership in NATO. Croatia joined the group in May 2001, making it ten, and the group is thus sometimes referred to as V10. The ten member countries are: Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

For decades the countries in the Vilnius Group have had strong positive attitudes towards the United States and Americans. This is quite understandable, since the United States and NATO played a key role in the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent birth of democracy in Eastern Europe.

In pursuing the war on terrorism Bush was able to tap into the deep reservoir of goodwill towards America among the people of the Vilnius Group. Given this goodwill—all of which Bush inherited—and considering the Vilnius Group’s desire not to offend the Bush administration and thus possibly jeopardize the group’s goal of attaining NATO membership, it is no surprise that some members of the group supported Bush’s war in Iraq, at least with words, albeit not with significant combat troops.

Unfortunately, through lies and incompetence, Bush squandered the goodwill, just like he squandered the budget surpluses and the strong military he inherited from Bill Clinton.

On February 5, 2003, that dark day in American diplomacy when Colin Powell made his infamous presentation to the UN Security Council regarding Iraq, the Vilnius Group issued “The Statement of the Vilnius Group Countries on Iraq.” It included the following justification and foundation for the group’s position:

Earlier today, the United States presented compelling evidence to the United Nations Security Council detailing Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction programs, its active efforts to deceive UN inspectors, and its links to international terrorism.

However, the so-called “compelling evidence” was nonexistent, and the world knew it. More telling, the Vilnius group’s decision to issue the statement had been made *prior* to Powell’s presentation.

In any case, the ten nations in the Vilnius Group were shanghaied into Bush’s coalition, notwithstanding their lack of meaningful support for the war on Iraq. Two of them, Croatia and Slovenia, objected officially and immediately to their inclusion, and they were quickly dropped from the list, without the fanfare that typically accompanied the announcement of new members.

Angola: Angola was one of six swing votes—the “Middle Six”—on the UN Security Council during its early 2003 debate of a Bush-backed resolution to end the effective weapons inspections program in Iraq and authorize war against Iraq. Notwithstanding Washington’s campaign of bribes and threats of retaliation, Angola withstood the pressure and refused to vote for Bush’s war. Angola simply did not believe Bush’s claim that he wanted to liberate Iraq. Also, the illegal campaign crafted by the U.S. National Security Agency to spy on Angola’s UN delegation did not help matters. It is noteworthy that more than 500,000 people were killed in Angola’s 27-year civil war that ended in 2002, a war prolonged by the rightwing intervention of the United States and apartheid South Africa. Because Angola seeks America’s help in rebuilding and developing its substantial oil resources, it had a big incentive to play ball in the Bush League. However, Angola stuck with its principles and moral values, and opposed Bush’s war. Oddly, Angola was among the 50 coalition members identified in the March 27, 2003, resolution of the U.S. Senate. Although Angola said at one point that Iraq was a threat, Angola provided no troops and no money for the coalition, in addition to not supporting the United States at the United Nations. Its inclusion in the coalition demonstrated the Bush administration’s fundamental dishonesty.

Armenia: Having provided so-called “political support,” Armenia appeared on at least one early list of coalition members, but the cold feet of the Armenian government made its membership uncertain. In September 2004 (six months after the invasion of Iraq) Armenia announced it would send 50 non-combat troops to Iraq for humanitarian purposes under a “security cooperation agreement” signed by the presidents of Armenia and Poland. The planned deployment, which was to be under the Polish Multi-National Force, raised concerns both within Armenia and within Armenian communities in Iraq and other Arab nations, and the Armenian prime minister later suggested that the deployment might not take place, citing a change in conditions since the pledge of troops just one month earlier. Passing the hot potato, the prime minister emphasized that the deployment decision would be made by Armenia’s parliament and constitutional court, even though the president had pledged the troops. Prime Minister Andranik Margarian explained, “There’s deep concern in Armenia too since our country will become a target for international terrorism in case of Armenian servicemen’s participation in antiterrorist actions.” He also stressed the need to learn more about the situation in Iraq. In October 2004 Armenia appeared on the State Department’s coalition list, but not on the Multi-National Force list, demonstrating that the Bush regime could not even agree with itself on the official Bush League roster. Armenia had 46 medics, engineers and drivers in Iraq as of early 2007.

Australia: As discussed in the previous chapter, the United States and Great Britain provided almost all of the combat troops for the invasion of Iraq. The combat troop contributions from the rest of the coalition can best be described as *token* or *nonexistent*, and made for diplomatic and propaganda purposes, not for military reasons. Australia and Poland are most frequently cited as nations that provided some combat troops for the invasion, but neither contribution was significant (with Poland contributing fewer than Australia.) Although Australia sent a well-trained, elite force of 2,000 troops to the region, along with fighter aircraft and warships, the majority of these troops were stationed outside Iraq. Also, their rules of engagement limited the risk of casualties, and in fact no Australian troops were killed during the invasion. In the geopolitical poker game, Australia’s contribution was more than a joker but far less than a full deck. Nevertheless, it was “mission accomplished,” i.e., Bush could claim Australian support and continue dealing from the bottom of the deck back home. Rising above the Bush League sleaze of 2003, however, is the central fact that Australian and American forces have fought side by side many times over the last century—including in World War I, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Gulf War I, and Somalia—and that there will always be great friendship between Australians and Americans.

SIDEBAR: Geopolitics and Diplomatic Language—From Down Under

The decision of Australia to join the coalition was made unilaterally by the conservative government of John Howard, notwithstanding the opposition of the Australian legislature and 75% of the Australian people. Approximately one million Australians protested against the war on February 15, 2003, and many Australians called Bush's charade the "coalition of the silly." Howard also suffered an embarrassing "no confidence" vote in the Australian Senate at that time, the first such vote by Australia's upper house in its 102-year history. However, Australians realized the political game that Howard was playing—offering enough to give Bush a fig leaf, but not so much as to upset Australian voters or other nations, especially Muslim nations in Southeast Asia, plus setting policies that would minimize the risk of Australian casualties. Most of Australia's troops were located outside of Iraq in the Persian Gulf area, and none died during the invasion. As a result, the Iraq war was not the most important issue in Australia's elections in October 2004, and Howard was reelected to a fourth term. Nevertheless, the Iraq war still divides Australia. Howard's challenger from the Labor Party, Mark Latham, used Aussie diplomatic language when he described Howard, Bush and other leaders that sent soldiers to invade Iraq as "a conga line of suck-holes."

In another diplomatic faux pas, Bush in June 2004 supported Howard in the upcoming September election in Australia as Bush spoke at a White House press conference following a meeting with Howard, thus violating an informal rule of diplomacy that the leader of one nation (except for the United States apparently) does not interfere in the domestic affairs and politics of another nation. Bush's comments were widely criticized in Australia. Bob Brown, the leader of Australia's Green Party, diplomatically noted:

How dare this popinjay of a president interfere in Australian affairs—Australian domestic political affairs? He should pull his head in. ... [W]e don't need President Bush, from his biased and quite small-minded point of view in Washington, telling the Australian people what they should think or what they should do.

After the so-called "combat phase" ended in early 2003, Australia quickly withdrew more than half its forces from Iraq and the region. Also, by October 2004, only 300 of the remaining 900 Australian troops were actually in Iraq, the rest being on warships in the Persian Gulf or at air support locations in the region. None of the remaining troops have combat roles, and much of their effort is focused on protecting themselves and other Australian personnel. In October 2004, Australia refused a request from the United Nations to send additional forces to Iraq to help protect UN representatives, although it did agree to train Fijian forces for this purpose. By early 2007 Australia's forces had been reduced by more than 70%, to 550.

Azerbaijan: Azerbaijan, another nation with a token non-combat force in Iraq, had many reasons to suck up to Bush and especially his oil cronies from Texas. This former Soviet republic has major-league oil reserves and looks to America for continued aid and goodwill, as well as possible protection in a dangerous part of the world. With Russia on its northern border and Iran to the south, Azerbaijan and the bordering Caspian Sea offer transit routes for narcotics, terrorists and black-market weapons. Also, it is involved in a border conflict with Armenia, which occupies about 20% of its territory. Azerbaijan draws a parallel between this Armenian occupation and Iraq's occupation of Kuwait. Azerbaijan thus joined the coalition as one of the first 30 members, offering "political support" and post-war humanitarian aid. As one of the few predominantly Muslim (93%, mostly Shiite) nations in the coalition, its forces protected Iraq's holiest Shiite sites, located in Najaf and Karbala. It had 150 troops in Iraq in 2004 but reneged on a plan to add 250 troops to that total.

Bosnia & Herzegovina: The people of Bosnia & Herzegovina suffered greatly during the civil war and genocide that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia, and the experience gained in disposing of landmines and other explosives is being put to beneficial use in Iraq by 37 troops well trained in the disposal of unexploded IEDs and other ordinance. Their efforts are undoubtedly saving lives in Iraq.

Bulgaria: As an inducement for Bulgaria to send 480 troops to the Iraq region, the Bush regime promised to buy \$1.7 billion in debt Iraq owed Bulgaria. This pencils out to \$3.5 million in U.S. tax dollars for each "rented" non-combat Bulgarian soldier, and it thus was an attractive business transaction for Bulgaria, notwithstanding the collection risk of being stiffed later by the Bush administration. Bulgaria, a former Warsaw Pact nation, also wanted to curry favor in order to be admitted to NATO, and in 2004 it became a NATO member. An additional inducement for Bulgaria was the prospect of sharing in the spoils of war, namely billions in reconstruction contracts. Initially wanting to be an *anonymous* member of the coalition, Bulgaria flipped back and forth before officially opting in, and its peacekeeping participation began five months after the invasion. Although its troops were skilled in handling non-conventional biological and chemical attacks, Bulgaria refused to provide combat troops. It also provided the United States with over-fly privileges and the use of an airbase on the Black Sea. When deciding later not to completely withdraw its troops from Iraq, Bulgaria oddly allowed any of its troops who wanted to go home to do so. As of April 2004, more than 60 of its troops had so chosen to leave Iraq.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ The following is for Casablanca movie fans only: In this scene Annina, who is desperate to escape Casablanca, has been weighing Captain Louis Renault's proposal of sex for exit visas for herself and her husband. She seeks the advice of Rick Blaine:

Annina: *Oh, monsieur, you are a man. If someone loved you very much, so that your happiness was the only thing that she wanted in the world, but she did a bad thing to make certain of it, could you forgive her?*

Rick Blaine: *Nobody ever loved me that much.*

Annina: *And he never knew, and the girl kept this bad thing locked in her heart? That would be all right, wouldn't it?*

Rick: *You want my advice?*

Also, for safety reasons its diplomats moved from Baghdad to Amman, Jordan, in October 2003. According to a mid-2004 survey, about 80% of Bulgarians believe Bulgaria's role in Iraq could cause a terrorist attack on Bulgaria. In the run-up to the Iraq war, Bulgaria, a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, was aggressively courted by the United States, and it was in the minority on the Security Council that sided with the United States. Notwithstanding this support, Bulgaria was one of five Security Council members targeted for illegal espionage by the Bush administration, which instructed the National Security Agency (NSA) to ask Great Britain for help in the illegal bugging. This was just another strand in the wicked web of international distrust woven by Bush. By early 2007 Bulgaria had reduced its non-combat forces in Iraq by more than two-thirds, to 155.

Colombia: Colombia, one of the world's most dangerous places, was included on the original State Department list of 30 coalition members. Because Colombia depends heavily on American aid and military assistance to fight its anti-drugs war and FARC rebel forces, Colombia was willing to play ball to the extent of perhaps offering "political support." Like many other coalition members, it did nothing to help the coalition and was quickly and quietly dropped from the list. Perhaps the United States and Colombia should team up to show Afghanistan how not to win its war against drugs.

Costa Rica: This nation is one of a half dozen *unarmed* countries that appeared on propaganda lists distributed by the Bush administration in early 2003. It was later dropped unceremoniously from the Bush League. That's only fair, since its citizens broadly opposed Bush's war, plus Costa Rica *asked* in September 2004 to be taken off the list.

Croatia: Like many other "members" of the Bush League, Croatia appeared on a few early lists hyping the coalition's size, including that of the Heritage Foundation, a rightwing "think tank" and shill for the Iraq war that was part of the White House's coordinated propaganda campaign to sell its illegal war. On March 19, 2003, just hours after Bush gave his 48-hour ultimatum to Saddam, the Heritage Foundation released its article, "'Coalition of the Willing' Already Larger than the 1991 Gulf War coalition." The U.S. Senate's resolution of March 27, 2003, which "drafted" 50 members into the coalition, identified Croatia as one of the countries providing "diplomatic and strategic support." However, the Bush administration soon dropped Croatia, and Washington's bullying threats regarding Croatia's flagging support caused relations between America and this bully-target country of 4.4 million to deteriorate. Croatia never provided a single soldier—combat or non-combat—to Iraq, and it stated that its airports and airspace would be open only to *civilian* transport aircraft.

Annina: *Oh, yes, please.*

Rick: *Go back to Bulgaria.*

Czech Republic: Although the Czech Republic refused to participate in Bush's invasion of Iraq, it did provide humanitarian aid in the form of a field hospital. In late 2003 its hospital personnel were replaced by a contingent of military police. By late 2004 Czech support for Bush's Iraq war had dropped to 10%, and various plans to withdraw Czech troops were floated. Nevertheless, troop levels have been evenly maintained at 100, the maximum approved by the Czech government, with rotations occurring every three months. The expectation of reconstruction contracts for dozens of Czech companies—another Bush League mirage—was a key reason the Czech Republic allowed itself to be suckered into Iraq in the first place.

SIDEBAR: Leaving on a Jet Plane

The Czech government was embarrassed in January 2003, shortly before the start of the Iraq invasion, when the Czech Defense Minister, who was in Kuwait visiting a Czech anti-chemical unit deployed there, made a symbolic offer to his troops—anyone who wanted to go home before the invasion could do so. At least 27 of the 250 troops decided to leave, with seven of them leaving immediately on the Defense Minister's jet and the rest following later. They weren't supposed to do that! Many military experts were amazed, with Jane's *Defence Weekly* saying it was "certainly a unique approach" to troop morale.

Denmark: Notwithstanding strong opposition from the Danish people and from all opposition political parties, the rightwing government of this NATO nation was one of the truly voluntary contributors to the coalition, although the level of its support was lukewarm. Denmark's government gave its support voluntarily without evidence of coercion or bribes, although rightwing geopolitics was probably part of the mix. Denmark's contribution included a submarine intended to monitor Iraqi intelligence, other ships, and medical personnel. However, its 470 troops did not include troops for ground combat, and requests for additional troops were refused. During Bush's ballyhooed *surge* of U.S. troops in 2007, Denmark *de-surged* its troops, withdrawing all of them by September 2007.

Dominican Republic: Spain's withdrawal of its troops in April 2004 provided the Dominican Republic with a convenient excuse to do likewise, which it did in May 2004, while citing increasing domestic opposition. As part of the Ultra Plus Brigade led by Spain, the Dominican Republic depended upon Spain for logistical support. It was one of the 15 infamous "unwilling to be named" nations trumpeted by the State Department in March 2003. The MNF-I (Multi-National Force-Iraq) website as of October 2004 erroneously still listed the Dominican Republic as a member, although its flag had been removed. The Dominican Republic is one of several Latin American countries with a history of rightwing American military intervention, including a bloody history of American-supported death squads that rivaled those of Saddam.

Dominican personnel were frequently subjected to mortar attacks, but they had no casualties.

El Salvador: The 380 personnel from El Salvador are mostly engineers and medical personnel assigned to civil reconstruction and the training of Iraqi forces. El Salvador is the only remaining member of the Ultra Plus Brigade, which consisted of five Spanish-speaking nations led by Spain. Spain, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic and Honduras all withdrew from Iraq in 2004. In June 2004 Salvadoran President Elias Antonio Saca said that El Salvador's troops would relocate to "a safer place" until their mission ended.

Eritrea: The inclusion of Eritrea on the State Department's March 18, 2003, list of 30 coalition members was greeted with disbelief and derisive commentary. Eritrea is an extremely poor country plagued by famine and decades of war with neighboring Ethiopia, and its current president, a dictator, refuses to implement the constitution approved by the people in 1997. UN peacekeepers still patrol the border between Eritrea and Ethiopia under a 2000 peace agreement, and each country seeks America's help in resolving the ongoing border dispute in its favor (even though it is unlikely Bush could identify either nation on a map of Africa.) The dictators of these two human-rights-deprived countries raced each other to be the first to suck up to Bush by proclaiming that Saddam was a bad dude, thus "joining" the coalition. This is Bush League at its best. Without explanation, Eritrea was soon dropped from the coalition list.

Estonia: Wanting to join NATO and get in line for military and economic benefits from America, Estonia offered a token force of 31 non-combat troops—enough to fill one mid-sized bus—to help in "postwar" reconstruction. It became a NATO member in 2004. Estonia had 34 non-combat personnel in Iraq in 2007, down from a peak of 55.

Ethiopia: As noted above, Ethiopia competed against Eritrea in a suck-up race to join the Bush League of Nations, with both countries seeking America's help in their boundary dispute. Ethiopia's government, a totalitarian regime with little regard for human rights or freedom of the press, disingenuously offered "moral support," and Washington shamelessly included it in its first list of 30 coalition members. Like so many other members of the Bush League, Ethiopia's total contributions to the war effort exactly equaled that of the extended Bush family: nothing. But Ethiopia was in no position to help, given that it was devastated by decades of war, famine and corrupt brutal government. In sharp contrast to the fanfare when Ethiopia "joined" the coalition, Ethiopia was soon quietly removed from the coalition roster.

Georgia: This former Soviet Republic, which wishes to remain in the good graces of the United States, has been in the coalition from the beginning. It first sent troops to Iraq in August 2003. As of 2007, Georgia had 300 troops in Iraq, down from a peak of 500 in 2003, and it suffered zero casualties.

Great Britain: When the Iraq coalition was formed a large majority of the British people opposed the war, believing that the case for war had not been made and that the United States and Britain should not act unilaterally. An anti-Iraq war protest in London on February 15, 2003, was the largest protest in British history. The subsequent unraveling of the many lies used to justify the war further strengthened the opposition. Prime Minister Tony Blair took a beating because of his unquestioning support for Bush, with more than half of all Brits believing it was accurate to characterize Blair as Bush's *poodle*, a lapdog serving at Bush's beck and call. Blair's respect and love for America and his appreciation of Britain's special long-term relationship with America outweighed his substantial doubts about Bush, and ultimately led him down the wrong path. Not expecting much from Bush, Blair may have calculated that if Bush could rise to the occasion and offer just one-third the competence, integrity and leadership of Bill Clinton, then everything would turn out fine. It did not. Bush severely damaged the goodwill between America and Britain, and intense negative views of him are found in all British political parties and throughout Britain. In September 2004 the British ambassador to Italy, Ivor Roberts, while speaking at a conference in Tuscany, stated that Bush is "the best recruiting sergeant ever for al Qaeda." Blair, foolishly following Bush's lead, stuck too long to discredited positions on weapons of mass destruction and other lies and justifications for the war, further exasperating British voters. According to former chief UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter, "Blair's discredited comments only underscore the sad fact that the issue of Iraqi WMD, and the entire concept of disarmament, has become a public joke." Even as late as December 2003 Blair claimed that "massive evidence" of Saddam's illegal weapons activity had been uncovered. Rather than simply admitting he and Bush had lied—thus taking the moral high road—Blair did a song and dance as he shifted the justification for war to the removal of Saddam from power. By shirking his share of the responsibility for mistakes made, Blair undercut both his own moral authority and Britain's influence in the world.

SIDEBAR: Blair, Unlike Bush, Acknowledges the Problem

Although Tony Blair is reluctant to take responsibility for major mistakes in judgment and policy in Iraq, it is to his credit that he was willing early in the game to at least articulate some of the problems created by the Anglo-American invasion and occupation of Iraq. In the prime minister's annual foreign policy speech to the Lord Mayor of London's banquet in November 2003 Blair admitted there was broad opposition to the war in Britain, in the Middle East, and throughout the world. He said that what ultimately happens in Iraq will greatly affect the future of world politics because

it will test the validity of the view of those whose protest goes far wider than merely condemnation of the war in Iraq and extends to the whole of American and UK foreign policy. For this large body of people, the coalition is an army of occupation; its purpose is to suppress the Muslim population of Iraq; we are out to steal Iraq's oil; and, even if they abhor the methods of those causing terror in Iraq, they will say we've brought it on ourselves. Their view is: you should never have been there, and get out now. That is the view of parts of the Arab and Muslim street and a significant part of western opinion and certainly of the developing world. More than that, these people say: the whole episode of Iraq is the epitome of the way the US/UK treat the Arab and Muslim world. It is a form of colonialism, that seeks to impose its culture, its rules and its beliefs on its unwilling victims.

Blair's hope of course was to prove this view incorrect, but events on the ground in Iraq, as well as the coalition's inept leadership, dashed his hopes.

Blair must have taken some comfort in knowing, or at least hoping, that Bush had a host of competent advisors, including especially Colin Powell, to hold his hand. Unfortunately, Blair "misunderestimated" the weaknesses of Bush, as well as the degree of control exerted by the Bush neocons, especially plantation boss Cheney. Given Blair's experience in foreign affairs and Britain's special relationship with America, Blair also reasonably expected to have a large measure of influence in the relationship, perhaps even as an equal. Blair was disappointed on all accounts, and one cannot help but feel a measure of sympathy towards him. Largely because of voter anger over the Iraq war, including doubts about Blair's truthfulness and judgment, Blair's Labour Party was soundly beaten in Britain's midterm local elections in June 2004. It received only 26% of the votes and fell to third place. The most prominent winner in Blair's Labour Party was London Mayor Ken Livingstone, who opposed the Iraq war, calling Bush "the greatest threat to life on this planet." In the European Union elections the same month, Blair's party received less than 23%. Blair left office in 2007.

SIDEBAR: Less Than a Full Measure

Although Britain is America's strongest ally in the coalition—and the only ally that made a meaningful contribution to the war effort—its level of military support was only a fraction of what was required. Britain committed 46,000 military personnel, plus warships and aircraft, to the Iraq invasion, but by May 2004 it had only 8,600 troops in Iraq, with an additional 3,500 in theater.

As the war dragged on, Britain further reduced its presence in Iraq, even though more coalition troops, not fewer, were needed. During Bush's troop *surge* in 2007, Britain in fact "de-surged" its troops by about 2,200. In October 2007 Britain's new prime minister, Gordon Brown, announced Britain would halve to 2,500 its remaining force of 5,000 by the spring of 2008, and other British officials said there was no guarantee that any British troops would remain in Iraq after 2008.

UK Military Personnel in Iraq:

Peak during major combat (March/April 2003):	46,000
End of May 2003:	18,000
End of May 2004:	8,600
January 2007:	7,200
January 2008:	5,000
April 2008 (est.):	2,500
Soon:	0

Extra credit: Britain's contribution to Bush's *surge*: (minus 2,200)

Ignoring for the moment that the coalition from the beginning needed far more troops from both America and Britain, as well as other nations—at least 300,000 more according to America's best military experts—let's nevertheless take the 46,000 troop level to define what a true "full measure" from Britain would have been to maintain security in Iraq. By this conservative measure, the 7,200 British troops in Iraq at the beginning of 2007 represented about a "15% measure," which is like ordering a pint of ale at an English pub but getting served less than three ounces in the bottom of your glass. No one in his right mind—or even in his intoxicated mind—who received such a partial measure would be happy with the bartender—Bartender Blair in this case.

Compounding the shortfall, British troops took part in fewer offensive actions against Iraqi insurgents as the war dragged on, and minimization of British casualties became a preeminent goal.

The British forces were headquartered in the Iraqi city of Basra, in an area in southern Iraq that is more peaceful than the Sunni Triangle and other hot spots. From time to time the Blair government entertained proposals to redeploy some of these forces to areas of greater violence, but political unrest for Blair back home was an obstacle.

In November 2004 Britain did send 850 Black Watch soldiers from Basra to the "triangle of death" area near Baghdad to free up American soldiers for the taking of Fallujah. Five of these British soldiers were killed within days after their redeployment, causing a political backlash in Britain.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ These five deaths increased to 74 the number of British troops killed in Iraq. By 2007 the number of British deaths had increased 127. Many Americans, including your author, if ever faced with a life-or-death situation and having to jump into a two-man foxhole with an American ally of his or her choice, would pick a Brit.

To be clear, those five British soldiers gave the full measure to Britain. Doing their duty when called, they deserve our ultimate respect and gratitude. Likewise, every coalition soldier individually deserves our respect and gratitude—a full measure. No fault lies with them, but rather the fault rests entirely on the shoulders of Bush and Blair, and is due to their lies, half measures, and arrogant incompetence. Our soldiers deserved better. The Iraqi people deserved better.

As Bush scrounged for additional troops for his ballyhooed *surge* in Baghdad in early 2007, neither Britain nor any other coalition member answered the call.

Britain's military operations in Iraq are conducted under Operation TELIC, as part of the MNF-I run by the United States. Britain provides the headquarters for the Multi-National Division South East, which includes the southern city of Basra and is one of six MNF-I geographical areas. Its focus shifted from direct anti-insurgency action to training Iraq's security forces, most of whom are Shiites friendly to Iran and unfriendly to the United States.

In 2007 Britain retreated from Basra, turned its bases over to the Iraqi government, and confined its troops to the Basra airport.

Senior retired British military personnel sharply criticize Bush's Iraq policies, especially the failure to do post-invasion planning. On August 31, 2007, British Major General Sir Mike Jackson, who headed the British army in Iraq in 2003, said America's approach in Iraq was "intellectually bankrupt" and that Rumsfeld's claim that America's forces "don't do nation-building" was "nonsensical."

British Major General Tim Cross, the deputy head of the coalition's Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance, added his criticism, saying Bush's policies were "fatally flawed" and that Rumsfeld dismissed his warnings about the lack of planning detail, the troops levels needed to maintain security, and the need to involve the United Nations. "The US had already convinced themselves that Iraq would emerge reasonably quickly as a stable democracy. ... Anybody who tried to tell them anything that challenged that idea – they simply shut it out."

In a February 2004 flip flop, Britain dropped charges against Katharine Gun, a 29-year-old linguist who admitted she leaked a top secret request from the U.S. National Security Agency for Britain's help in bugging several members of the UN Security Council during its debate on Iraq in early 2003. The targeted members of the 15-member Security Council were Angola, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Chile and Pakistan. Gun said, "I felt that the British intelligence services were being asked to do something which would undermine the whole United Nations democratic process."

Guatemala: This Central American nation was briefly on a coalition list. Following the Madrid bombing and the anticipated withdrawal of Spain and the Ultra Plus Brigade, Guatemala's President Oscar Berger decided Guatemala would not send any troops to Iraq, in spite of earlier commitments.

Honduras: By May 2004 Honduras had pulled all of its 370 troops out of Iraq, pointing out that its troops had been sent to Iraq for reconstruction, not combat. However, the MNF-I website (as of October 2004) still incorrectly listed Honduras as a member of the coalition. As a participant in the Ultra Plus Brigade, Honduras depended on Spain for logistical support and followed its lead in pulling out of the coalition. Honduras was among the 15 original coalition members “unwilling to be named.” It is among several Central American countries with a history of American military intervention and Saddam-style death squads.

Hungary: Hungary’s 300 non-combat troops withdrew from Iraq by May 2005. This strongly pro-American ally had deployed a transportation group of 300 non-combat troops south of Baghdad, notwithstanding the fact that more than 80% of Hungarians opposed the Iraq war. Hungary, a member of NATO since 1999, has a profound sense of gratitude towards America because of its role in helping Hungary gain its independence from the Soviet Union. Hungary’s desire to support any American president, even Bush, was thus understandable. However, the Hungarian goodwill towards America was soon shattered by the lies, unilateralist policies, refusal to admit errors, and rightwing propaganda spilling out of the Bush White House. The abuses at the Abu Ghraib prison also increased domestic calls for Hungary to withdraw its support. In one of many debacles involving the Bush neocons’ favorite conman, Ahmed Chalabi, and his Iraqi National Congress, Hungary agreed before the start of the Iraq war to provide a base where the United States could train 3,000 Iraqi exiles—Chalabi’s infamous *Free Iraqi Forces*—to serve as guides and interpreters for American troops and as Iraqi administrators after the war. Several hundred U.S. army trainers went to Hungary’s Taszar airbase to establish the training facilities, but the program was quickly dismantled after only about 100 Iraqis had been trained, apparently due to a shortage of Iraqi volunteers and also because of questions about the scope of the training. Oddly, Hungary had approved the training program on the condition that there would be no combat training.

SIDEBAR: A Hungarian Spanking of Boy George

On October 16, 2004, the newly elected Prime Minister of Hungary, Ferenc Gyurcsany, delivered a diplomatic spanking to Bush when he declared that he did not believe in preemptive war. “Personally, as the father of four children, as a young man, as a working Hungarian who trusts in the future, and as head of government, I believe not in preventive war but in policies which prevent conflicts,” Gyurcsany declared. “Those who believe in the power of violence will fail.”⁴⁹

Iceland: The Bush administration included Iceland on its list of the first 30 coalition members, then later dropped it from the list, and then reinserted it, and then dropped

⁴⁹ Reported in the Associated Press, October 17, 2004.

it. You should check with flip-flopper Bush to determine the latest. This nation of 294,000 has *no* military and is defended by the U.S.-manned Icelandic Defense Force. As one of several Bush League “members” with no military, it obviously contributed no military forces and certainly was never a member.

SIDEBAR: Pointy Heads in Bush Administration Seek Pointy Helmets

According to *The Washington Post*: “Asked if Iceland would be supplying troops, ambassador Helgi Agustsson gave a hearty Scandinavian guffaw. ‘Of course not—we have no military,’ he said. ‘That is a good one, yes.’ In fact, Agustsson added, ‘we laid down weapons sometime in the 14th century,’ when the Icelandic military consisted largely of Vikings in pointy helmets.”

Italy: Italy withdrew completely from Iraq in November 2006. The conservative government of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi decided to join the coalition notwithstanding widespread opposition to the war at home. However, weak-kneed Berlusconi offered no troops for the invasion and sent 3,085 troops only *after* Baghdad had fallen. More than 80% of Italians opposed Italy’s military involvement, and the government’s efforts in the war on terror also got poor marks in Italy. Surveys show that Italians believe the risks of terrorism have greatly increased since 9/11. In the European Union elections in June 2004 support for Berlusconi and his party, Forza Italia, fell to 22.5%. His rightwing coalition includes neo-Mussolinist and neo-fascist extreme rightwingers that have much in common with the Bush neocons and the Bush family. Berlusconi, Italy’s richest person and its most powerful media tycoon, ruthlessly uses his media domination for personal and propaganda purposes and to counter corruption charges. In September 2004 Italy reportedly paid a ransom of at least \$1 million to secure the release of two female Italian charity workers who had been kidnapped in Iraq and held for 21 days. In May 2006 Berlusconi narrowly lost his reelection bid to Romano Prodi.

Japan: “For a century and a half now, America and Japan have formed one of the great and enduring alliances of modern times,” noted Bush, while in Tokyo on February 18, 2002. A century and a half? Before each meeting with America’s “Buffoon in a Bubble,” foreign leaders must pop pills that suppress snickers and guffaws. Although Japan is a nation that loves baseball and America, it refused to send combat troops to Iraq, whether for the invasion or for subsequent use. The government of Junichiro Koizumi “joined” the coalition simply by declaring that Iraq was a threat. Although Japan’s pacifist post-WWII constitution prohibits the use of Japanese forces outside of Japan to settle international disputes, this posture has been changing in the post-Cold War environment as Japan considers how to use its substantial military power, including the second or third strongest navy in the world, to counter terrorism and other new threats, and to protect Japanese corporate interests. Special legislation in 2003 paved the way for Japan’s Self Defense Forces to do reconstruc-

tion work in Iraq and elsewhere. Koizumi obtained parliamentary approval to send up to 1,000 non-combat troops to Iraq, which reflects a policy of *tokenism*, given the enormous capabilities of Japan and also the security umbrella provided Japan by the U.S. military. However, in late 2003 Koizumi postponed their deployment because of the worsening security situation in Iraq, and eventually deployed only 550 non-combat troops in Iraq. Japan pledged \$5 billion in reconstruction funds and agreed to forgive most of the \$4 billion owed it by Iraq. Japan withdrew completely from Iraq in July 2006.

SIDEBAR: Ten Billion Yen in Japanese Bribes to Protect Japanese Soldiers and Japanese Oil Interests

Japan paid 10 billion yen (\$95 million) in bribes to several tribal leaders in early 2004 for the stated purpose of protecting Japan's troops stationed in Samawa in southern Iraq. Because most Japanese opposed the deployment, the Japanese government was obsessed with keeping its troops out of harm's way. The scheduled deployment of its troops to Nasiriya was suddenly halted because suicide bombings made that deployment too dangerous. The troops were later redeployed to Samawa, a relatively peaceful city with few security concerns. One might have assumed, wrongly, that Japanese soldiers had been sent to Iraq to protect Iraqis—to the contrary, Japan paid Iraqi tribal leaders to protect Japanese troops in an area of low security concerns.

The payment of \$95 million works out to \$172,000 in protective services for *each* of the 550 Japanese soldiers deployed in Iraq.

Of course, the \$95 million *greasing* of palms had objectives beyond force protection. A principal purpose of the grease was to help ensure Japan's lucrative role in the reconstruction of Iraq. In particular, Japan, which imports more than 99% of its oil, wanted to resurrect its plan to help develop the huge Al Ghavraf oil field, which is conveniently located only 40 miles from Japan's military base in Samawa, Iraq.

Kazakhstan: Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev opposed Bush's invasion of Iraq, saying that Iraq should be handled "only within the framework" of the United Nations. Along with the vast majority of UN members, NATO, and the entire world, Kazakhstan was "UN-willing." Six former Soviet Republics,⁵⁰ including Kazakhstan, condemned Bush's military action, saying it was "counter to the principles and norms of international law." However, Kazakhstan later played the Bush League game perfectly when it decided to send a token force of 29 non-combat military engineers to Iraq. This decision was made shortly before Wolfowitz decreed on December 5, 2003, that only coalition members would be allowed to compete for \$18 billion in prime contracts in Iraq. Kazakhstan's token contribution put it on the "A

⁵⁰ The five other former Soviet Republics are Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan.

List” of contractors, opened friendly doors in Washington, and gave the Bush neo-cons the propaganda boost they desired—the claim of another coalition member. The subsequent displays of phony gratitude by America’s General John Abizaid and others towards Kazakhstan were truly shameful. When the Iraqi insurrection became more heated in the spring of 2004, Kazakhstan confined its troops to their camp in Kut and threatened to withdraw them from Iraq.

Kuwait: Although Kuwait was included in the U.S. Senate’s resolution of March 27, 2003, that identified 50 members in the coalition,⁵¹ it was soon dropped from the Bush League roster. Before being dropped, Kuwait was the only Middle Eastern country in the coalition (other than Turkey, which also was promptly removed). Muslim nations in the Middle East are ashamed to be associated with Bush and his Bush League for many reasons, including the fact that an overwhelming majority of the citizenry in these nations despises Bush and his policies. In fact, Kuwait functions as a large American military base, with about 60% of its total area available for such use, and most of America’s troops and equipment in Iraq passed through Kuwait. This important accommodation is the minimum amount Kuwait could do, given that the United States led the coalition in 1991—a real coalition—that rightly liberated Kuwait from Saddam. However, Kuwait provided zero troops for Bush’s war on Iraq and does not want to be included in the Bush League.

Latvia: Seeking NATO membership and Iraq reconstruction contracts, Latvia’s parliament authorized a small non-combat force for Iraq, which stood at 120 in early 2007. Even though the contribution of non-combat troops by Latvia is window dressing, 80% of Latvians opposed their deployment. Latvia became a NATO member in 2004.

Lithuania: Seeking NATO membership and wishing to curry favor with the United States, Lithuania offered some humanitarian help for Iraq, including doctors, which it provided in the token form of 105 non-combat troops, later reduced to 50 by early 2007. Lithuania officially joined NATO in 2004.

Macedonia: Macedonia joined the coalition to have closer relations with the United States, obtain American help in collecting Iraqi debts, and share in the expected feeding frenzy surrounding reconstruction contracts. It also wanted to demonstrate its commitment to NATO in order to gain support for its NATO accession bid. Macedonia has a small group of 33 non-combat troops in Iraq—less than one busload. While awarding medals to Macedonia soldiers at an October 2004 ceremony, Rumsfeld said the United States supported Macedonia’s eventual membership in NATO. Later that same month it was disclosed that three kidnapped Macedonian construction workers for an American company had been executed in Iraq, two by beheading. Angry family members blamed Rumsfeld’s photo-op medal ceremony and the Macedonian government for their ghastly deaths. Notwithstanding these killings, Mace-

⁵¹ As was the case for dozens of other nations, Kuwait was included simply because it had declared that Iraq was a threat.

donia declared it would not withdraw its troops from Iraq. However, other Macedonian workers for the U.S. construction company soon left Iraq.

Marshall Islands: The Marshall Islands is among the many former coalition members that Bush could not locate on a map. This nation has no military, and its contribution to the coalition is, or was, merely words and a flag. As a former Pacific Trust Territory, it is heavily dependent on the United States for economic assistance, and it follows the U.S. lead at the United Nations. Since citizens of the Marshall Islands may serve in the U.S. military, it is possible that some may become casualties in Iraq. This nation is located about half way between Hawaii and Australia, and its 57,000 citizens live on atolls and reefs scattered across several hundred thousand square miles of the Pacific Ocean.

Micronesia: Like the Marshall Islands, this nation is a former U.S. Pacific Trust Territory heavily dependent on the United States. It has no military, but 400 to 600 of its citizens are on active duty in the U.S. military. Through September 2004 at least three soldiers from the broader Micronesia region died while serving with the U.S. military in Iraq, and we honor their service. The Marshall Islands is no longer on the coalition list.

Moldova: In 2004 Moldova reduced the number of its troops in Iraq to 12, from 24. Yes, that's 12, not 12 thousand or 12 hundred, or even 12 dozen. In January 2007 it withdrew the remaining dozen.

Mongolia: Situated between China and Russia—two historically dangerous neighbors—the democratic nation of Mongolia, with a population of only 2.8 million, needs any international friends it can find. Genuinely pro-American and eager to play ball, Mongolia offered troops for the coalition apparently without being asked. After the end of the so-called “major combat operations” phase in 2003, Mongolia sent 180 all-volunteer non-combat soldiers to Iraq to work on construction projects and guard oil pipelines. At a February 2003 ceremony at the White House, Bush thanked Mongolia's president, Natsagiyn Bagabandi, for joining the coalition. Two months later Mongolia requested a favor in return, a free-trade agreement.

SIDEBAR: Mongolian Peacekeepers Arrive: “Better 745 Years Late than Never”

Baghdad was a commercial and cultural center of the Islamic world until February 10, 1258, when the Mongols under General Hulagu Khan, a grandson of Genghis Khan, sacked the city, slaughtering 800,000 people, including the Abbasid Caliph, over a period of 40 days and destroying most of what had been the largest Arab city in the world. For good measure the Mongols in 1401, this time under Tamerlane, again sacked the city.

May the Mongolians who arrived in 2003 succeed in their peaceful mission and be better appreciated by the local citizenry than their 13th and 15th century ancestors.

Speaking of invaders, Bush visited Mongolia in November 2005 to praise its gigantic contribution of 160 non-combat soldiers to the coalition. In return, the United States gave Mongolia a bribe—well, aid—of \$11 million in military assistance. This works out to \$68,750 per soldier, which is a multiple of what Iraqi soldiers are paid annually. By 2007 Mongolia had reduced its deployment to 100.

Netherlands: With a peak of 1,400 troops in Iraq, the Netherlands was one of only five coalition members (other than the U.S.) with more than 1,000 troops in Iraq. It is apparently one of the very few nations that joined the coalition willingly without undue bullying or bribes. But enough is enough. It withdrew all its troops by March 2005.

New Zealand: New Zealand appeared on the MNF-I coalition list during part of 2004, even though its government stated it *never* joined the coalition, and even though its troops were deployed in Iraq at the request of the United Nations. New Zealand had only 61 military engineers in Iraq, and it withdrew all of them in September 2004, notwithstanding the fear that Bush would retaliate with vindictive trade policies.

Nicaragua: On the State Department's original list of 30 members, Nicaragua withdrew all 230 of its non-combat soldiers in February 2004. They served in the Spanish-led Ultra Plus Brigade, which consisted of soldiers from five Spanish-speaking nations. Spain's withdrawal from Iraq gave Nicaragua the excuse to leave also.

Norway: Norway is another coalition dropout that was never really in the coalition. In 2003 Norway's Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik declared that Norway opposed the war, but wanted to help rebuild Iraq. Although Norway withdrew all of its 150 military engineers in September 2005, the Bush administration continued to list Norway as a coalition member for several months.

Palau: Palau appeared on early-2003 Bush League rosters showing more than 45 coalition members. Palau later dropped out, perhaps because of embarrassing satire regarding its possible role in Iraq. This Pacific Ocean nation of 20,000 people has *no* military, is defended by the United States, and is known for its scuba diving and tapioca. Curiously, Palau's president offered its airfields and ports to the Iraqi effort—perhaps he suspected that Bush believed Iraq was located in the Pacific Ocean. It is possible that Palau's contribution was to be coconuts, which would explain that multi-billion dollar no-bid contract received by Halliburton for giant slingshots. Except for those coconuts, Palau is unarmed.

Panama: Like many coalition "members," Panama provided nothing of value to the coalition and is no longer listed as a member. It was included in the group of coali-

tion nations “unwilling to be named,” as well as in the GOP-controlled Senate’s resolution of March 27, 2003, that deceitfully identified 50 coalition members. Panama merely offered “political support” by issuing a “made-as-instructed” declaration that Iraq was a threat.

Philippines: During a hostage situation in July 2004 the Philippines government announced that it would withdraw all its troops (approximately 80) from Iraq by their scheduled departure date in August 2004, which it did. When the Philippines dropped from the coalition, many Filipinos were surprised to learn it was ever included.

Poland: Polish leaders in October 2004 announced they would withdraw all of Poland’s 2,500 non-combat troops from Iraq by the end of 2005, as the Iraq war had become increasingly unpopular, with 73% of Poles opposed to the deployment of their troops in Iraq, according to a poll released in August 2004 by the CBOS governmental polling agency. An even larger majority said that Poland could experience retaliatory terrorist attacks. In fact, “only” 1,600 withdrew, leaving a reduced force of 900. Poland requested lots of military aid as it considered whether to keep any troops in Iraq. Poland leads and provides the headquarters for one of the coalition’s six geographical areas, the Multi-National Division Central South. By 2006 the number of coalition members participating in this division had shrunk to 12, with a total troop level of only 2,500, or slightly more than a paltry 200 per nation. Only three countries (the United States, Great Britain and Italy) sent more troops than Poland to Iraq, although the Polish total was not huge. When Poland first appeared on the coalition list, it requested that its name not be used for propaganda purposes. In spite of Bush, the Polish people are among the most pro-American in the world. Notwithstanding Poland’s withdrawal of most of its troops, Bush frequently praised Poland for being such a steadfast ally. Through 2006, 18 Polish soldiers and several civilians had died in Iraq. Although Poland said its troops would play only a non-combat role, some of its commandos did covertly participate in the initial attack, which the Polish government acknowledged only after Reuters released photos of masked Polish commandos in action. Poland expected many financial benefits by participating in the coalition, including: (1) recovery of a debt of \$560 million owed by Iraq, (2) reconstruction contracts for more than 100 Polish companies, including more than 20 firms under contract with a Halliburton subsidiary to rebuild Iraq’s oil infrastructure, (3) payments of more than \$250 million by the United States to cover some of Poland’s military costs in Iraq, (4) the participation of Poland’s Bank Millennium in a consortium of banks that would run Iraq’s trade banking, (5) and loans from the United States. Poland’s foreign minister, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, characterized direct access to crude oil as its “final goal.”

SIDEBAR: “Taken For a Ride”

Bush’s position as least trusted leader of all NATO leaders is secure. In March 2004—about the time of the first anniversary of the invasion—Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski said, “They deceived us about the weapons of mass destruction, that’s true. We were taken for a ride.”

Portugal: The rightwing Portuguese government of former Prime Minister Durão Barroso sent 128 gendarmes (national guard) and modest funds to Iraq for development and training projects. Many in Portugal’s rightwing ruling elite—who fondly remember Portugal’s imperial days and regret the way Portugal gave up its colonial empire—were content to be a small part of America’s imperial efforts. In a 2004 poll of Portuguese citizens however, about three-quarters said they wanted their forces to be pulled out of Iraq, and in April of that year its interior minister said Portugal might pull out if the fighting worsened. Portugal withdrew completely in February 2005. On a happier note, Iraq’s soccer team on August 12, 2004, shocked favored Portugal 4-2 in Iraq’s first match of the 2004 Olympics.

Romania: Romania is one of many *rent-a-state* coalition members that provided no combat troops for the invasion of Iraq, although it agreed to participate in reconstruction and security efforts after “organized hostilities” ended. When cobbling the coalition together, the United States agreed to buy the substantial debt owed Romania by Iraq. Hoping to be admitted to NATO, Romania sent 700 troops to Iraq, and in 2004 it became a NATO member. In early 2006 the United States and Romania announced that America’s first permanent military presence in a former Warsaw Pact nation would be established at a Romanian air force base on the Black Sea, with the base to serve as headquarters of the U.S. Eastern European Task Force. By 2007 Romania had reduced its troops in Iraq to 600 from a maximum of 865.

Rwanda: More than 800,000 Rwandans, mostly Tutsis, were slaughtered in the 1994 genocide, and millions more fled the country or were internally displaced. This country of 8 million people continues to be in desperate need of international aid and cooperation. Its people are unable and unwilling to contribute to America’s occupation of Iraq. The Bush administration acknowledged that Rwanda provided only “moral support” to the coalition, and its inclusion in the Bush League roster for several months was shameful.

Singapore: Singapore also is no longer in the coalition. By March 2005 Singapore had withdrawn all 192 of its forces, most of whom had been in a unit that trained Iraqi police.

Slovakia: Slovakia withdrew completely from the Iraq coalition in January 2007. Formerly part of Czechoslovakia and under the thumb of the Soviet Union, the de-

mocratic Slovak Republic was established in 1993. Its 105 non-combat support troops in Iraq were specialized in chemical warfare decontamination and worked to clear mines. Slovakia also authorized flyover privileges and the use of its bases. Grateful to be a free nation and desiring NATO membership as part of the Vilnius Group, Slovakia has several hundred skilled personnel deployed worldwide in various UN and NATO peace support operations. Slovakia was admitted to NATO in 2004. The right-center government of Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda, who lost his reelection bid in 2006, had strongly supported Bush in Iraq. Robert Fico, the new prime minister who had campaigned hard on a withdrawal from Iraq, declared, "Slovak soldiers can start packing their stuff, because they have to be home in February 2007. With this, the government is fulfilling its promise."

Slovenia: Slovenia was caught by surprise when the U.S. Senate passed its resolution of March 27, 2003, identifying Slovenia as one of 50 coalition members. The Slovenian embassy in Washington had previously advised the White House not to include it in the war coalition. Opposition parties in Slovenia threatened an extraordinary parliamentary session if the government did not clarify its stand, and there was a call for the prime minister to resign. Prime Minister Anton Rop reiterated the government's position that Slovenia was *not* in the coalition. A related controversy concerned the Slovenian government's "mistaken" impression that the United States was going to pay it \$4.5 million as a reward for supporting the war.

Solomon Islands: The unilateral inclusion of the Solomon Islands in the coalition highlighted the propaganda efforts of the Bush propaganda machine. Upon hearing reports in March 2003 that his nation was on the coalition list, Prime Minister Allan Kemakeza stated, "The government is completely unaware of such statements being made, and therefore wishes to disassociate itself from the report." The Solomon Islands was *dragooned* and *shanghaied* into the coalition of, well, the unwilling, and this unarmed, almost-bankrupt nation with no independent military should never have been included.

South Korea: South Korea, a key long-term American ally dependent upon the United States for aid and security, joined the coalition early, although its hopes to get something significant in return were soon dashed. In particular, it wanted America to help South Korea negotiate directly with North Korea. Unfortunately, *poke-em-in-the-eye* Bush treated South Korea's leaders with scorn, the same way he treated North Korea's dictator. South Korean polls show that South Koreans intensely dislike Bush and believe the United States to be a greater threat to peace than North Korea, which is a member of Bush's infamous Axis of Evil. South Korea initially offered to send to Iraq an engineering battalion, as well as aid for war refugees. It later offered to send a total of 5,000 troops, subsequently scaled back to 3,700. Security for its personnel was a central issue, complicated by widespread opposition in South Korea to their deployment, as well as the beheading in Iraq of a Korean hostage. During his acceptance speech at the 2004 Republican Party convention Bush expressly named and thanked eight coalition nations, but he unwittingly failed to mention South Korea, even though only the United States and Great Britain contrib-

uted more troops to Iraq than South Korea. By 2007 Korea had reduced its troops in Iraq to 2,300 from a peak of 3,700.

Spain: This nation, which had provided the eighth greatest number of troops (1,300 non-combat troops) to the Bush League, withdrew all its troops in April 2004, thus fulfilling a campaign pledge of its newly elected Prime Minister, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero. The previous Spanish government, the right-center government of Jose Maria Aznar, was second only to Tony Blair in its support of Bush's invasion of Iraq, even though it had been opposed by 90% of Spain's citizens, an incredibly high percentage. Imagine what it would take to get 90% of Americans to agree on anything. Thus the Spanish people were *never* willingly part of Bush's so-called Coalition of the Willing.

SIDEBAR: 3/11 in Madrid

Exactly 2 ½ years after the 9/11 attacks, ten terrorist bombs exploded on commuter trains in Madrid, killing more than 200 people and wounding thousands more. Pulling a page from the Bush/GOP playbook, Jose Maria Aznar's ruling party, the Popular Party, quickly lied and pointed the finger of responsibility at a politically-convenient target, the Basque separatist group known as ETA. Why? Because Spain's rulers feared the Spanish people would focus their anger on them if al Qaeda, and not the ETA, was responsible for the bombings.

Why would Aznar's ruling party be so deceitful, especially since the truth about the bombers would ultimately be known? Well, Spain's general elections were only two days away, and with skillful management of the news the ruling party, which was expected to easily win the elections, could get through the campaign and remain in power.

But the deception backfired. Unfortunately for Spain's ruling party, it did not have America's rightwing Big Media to shill for it. Fortunately for truth and democracy, early evidence including videotape immediately fingered al Qaeda as the responsible terrorist group, and in an astonishing upset in the general elections, Spanish voters ousted the ruling party. The voter turnout was strong, 77%, which compared with a turnout of only 55% in the general elections four years earlier.

The large majority of Spain's citizens believed the Bush regime had deceitfully rushed to war against a nation that posed no threat to the United States, Spain, or any other country.

It is surprising that the Spanish electorate, just two days after "Madrid's 9/11," did not overwhelmingly stick with their ruling party as a demonstration of their anger and patriotism. Somehow the understandable human desire for revenge did not prevail, and the ruling party was held accountable. The Spanish people understood that Bush's war on Iraq had spawned terrorists and made the world less safe.

The new Spanish leader said that one nation cannot bomb another nation "just in case" and that wars should not be started on the basis of lies.

Prior to its withdrawal, Spain commanded the troops of Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras and the Dominican Republic under the umbrella of the Ultra Plus Brigade.

Taiwan: When the Bush administration was asked why it included Taiwan in an early list of coalition members, the answer was that Taiwan had made its airspace open to American military aircraft, a “rationale” that deserved and received widespread ridicule. Perhaps Bush’s handlers calculated that, with the assistance of America’s Big Media, they could slip it by a geographically challenged president and his geographically challenged supporters. In any case, Taiwan was quickly dropped from the coalition list for other reasons discussed below. Later, in 2004, when Bush was searching for chumps to clean up the mess he created, rightwing Representatives Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) and Jim Ryan (R-KS) proposed that the United States ask Taiwan to send 5,000 marines to Iraq to fight alongside American soldiers. This made some sense since Taiwan is not only a democracy but also a longtime American ally dependent upon the United States to protect it from Beijing. However, the Bush administration immediately declared it would neither seek nor welcome Taiwan’s troops in Iraq, the justification being its desire not to ruffle the feathers of the dictatorship in Beijing. The proposal to send Taiwanese troops to Iraq was also rejected by Taiwan’s president, Chen Shui-bian, as well as an overwhelming majority of Taiwan’s citizens, including especially its small Muslim community of 50,000.

Thailand: Thailand withdrew all its troops from Iraq in August 2004 at the end of its one-year humanitarian commitment and was removed from the roster of coalition members. From the beginning Thailand declared itself to be *neutral* in Bush’s war against Iraq. It later agreed to a humanitarian mission involving 451 non-combat engineering and medical troops. An April 2004 poll showed that the majority of Thais wanted their 451 troops in Iraq to be withdrawn and only 22% wanted them to stay. The war was especially unpopular among Thailand’s minority Muslim population. Thailand’s prime minister stated that the nation’s troops would be withdrawn if any of them got hurt. In fact, the deteriorating security situation caused them to remain in their camp in Iraq until their withdrawal in 2004.

SIDEBAR: A Few Enlightening Questions

Question 1: Why would the Bush administration proudly list Thailand in its so-called Coalition of the Willing when in fact Thailand had declared itself a *neutral* in Bush’s war, and a vast majority of Thais opposed it?

Question 2: Why would the Bush administration proudly count Thai personnel in its total of coalition troops when in fact these troops went to Iraq solely for non-combat humanitarian purposes without any intention of killing Iraqis or anyone else?⁵²

⁵² This same point applies to the large majority of other countries in the Coalition of the Willing.

Question 3: If Bush truly wants to bring democracy and freedom to Muslims in Iraq and elsewhere, why are Muslims in Thailand and throughout the world so adamantly opposed to his efforts?

HINT: The following should appear prominently in your answers: “oil,” “charade,” “Bush League,” “America’s Corporate Media,” “gullible American voters in red states,” “duplicity, deceit and deception,” “lazy not-too-bright pretend-cowboy,” “incompetent uninformed untrustworthy leader,” “liar,” “panderer to the Religious Wrong,” “Armageddon,” and “Crusader for Upside-Down Christianity and the Super Rich.” Extra credit for “lying scumbags.”

Tonga: In March 2003 the Bush administration proudly announced that this small nation of 106,000 people (the last of the South Pacific Polynesian kingdoms, located about one-third of the way from New Zealand to Hawaii) was the 49th member of the coalition. Because the United States protected Tonga in World War II, Tonga felt bound by honor to support the coalition. Bush the Father never asked Tonga for assistance during Gulf War I. In fact, George the Son’s “request” for military assistance was the first such request since World War II. In July 2004 Tonga deployed 45 royal marines—enough for one large war canoe—to Iraq as peacekeepers, but they withdrew completely by the end of the year. U.S. government sources disagreed with themselves as to whether Tonga was ever in the coalition.

Turkey: The Bush regime foolishly rushed to put Turkey on their initial roster of 30 coalition members, but Turkey did not remain there long. In another huge misjudgment and diplomatic blunder, the Bushies assumed that this American ally and NATO member would play ball in the Bush League. It did not, choosing instead to actively *obstruct* American military plans to invade Iraq, although it did eventually reluctantly allow the use of its air space. The Bushies planned to use Turkey—which shares a 218-mile border with Iraq—as a staging area for 60,000 American troops scheduled to invade northern Iraq under Operation Iraqi Freedom war plans. The Bushies haggled with the Turkish government as to the size of the bribe—euphemistically called economic aid—to be paid Turkey in return for this favor. Turkey wanted about \$30 billion, preferably in cash since it did not trust Bush League promises. The Bush administration initially offered \$6 billion in “special economic assistance” if Turkey’s parliament approved the use of its territory for the invasion, and it eventually upped the proposed bribe to \$20 billion in grants and guaranteed loans, but it was still not enough. In a panic to try to close the elusive deal, the Bush regime offered major “OK, you can screw the Kurds” concessions to Turkey.

SIDEBAR: Selling Out the Kurds

In duplicitously attempting to sell out Iraq's Kurds—who have longed for a separate state in northern Iraq for decades—the Bush regime thought it had closed the deal with Turkey by promising the Turkish military that it could invade Iraqi Kurdistan, a virtually autonomous quasi-state in northern Iraq since 1991, which had been protected under the northern No-Fly Zone created by the United States and Great Britain in the aftermath of Gulf War I. The Bush neocons acquiesced to Turkey's demands that the four million Iraqi Kurds would not be allowed to form their own nation, which Turkey feared would further aggravate the long-voiced demands of the 12 million Kurds in Turkey for their own independence. As part of this attempted sell-out, the Bush neocons gave Turkey the green light to send tens of thousands of troops into northern Iraq, under the pretense that they were needed to protect the small Turkmen population and Turkish interests in oil-rich northern Iraq. Such a move by the Turkish military was vehemently opposed by the Iraqi Kurds—America's most loyal allies and friends in Iraq—and would have led to war between them and Turkey.

The unfortunate Kurdish people, who number about 30 million, have no homeland or nation, just the mythical Kurdistan (the land of the Kurds), which is spread throughout a large unfriendly region of the world that includes parts of Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran. The Kurdish language ranks about fortieth among the world's several thousand languages, based on the number of native speakers.

Even the tyrant Saddam—who gassed thousands of civilian Kurds—treated his Iraqi Kurds better than Turkey treated its Turkish Kurds. For decades Turkey suppressed Kurdish history, language and culture, and countless Turkish Kurds were slaughtered, and hundreds of thousands displaced, during the 15-year PKK (Kurdish Workers Party) insurrection in Turkey that temporarily ended in 1999. Kurds throughout the region are quite familiar with the lesson afforded by Turkey's genocide of Armenian Christians in the early part of the 20th century, a genocide in which between one and two million Armenian Christians were killed and millions more were forced from their homeland.

Bush rewarded the Iraqi Kurds for their loyal support of American policy in Iraq by trying to stick a Bush League dagger in their back. Of course, the Kurds have been betrayed in the past by the United States, both in 1975 and 1991, on the latter occasion when Bush the Father encouraged Kurdish uprisings against Baghdad, but then failed to follow through with promised support.⁵³ In the end, Bush's proposed deal in 2003 with Turkey—built on Bush League bribes and betrayal—fell apart because the Turkish parliament refused to play ball, and Turkish troops thus quite fortunately did not enter Iraq in any significant numbers during the invasion.

⁵³ For on-line accounts of the ongoing betrayal of the Iraqi Kurds by the United States, you should read "Kurd Sellout Watch," by Timothy Noah, who writes "Chatterbox" for *Slate*.

If Iraq's Kurds emerge from Bush's Iraq quagmire without getting screwed, it will be in spite of the Bush neocons, who would sacrifice them in a heartbeat if it served some perceived interest in the neocons' fantasies. The Iraqi Kurds' best hope with respect to Turkey—other than counting on themselves and their own substantial armed forces—is that Turkey, under European pressure and influence, will further moderate its policies against the Kurds as it seeks to integrate itself into the European Union. But don't count on it.

The breakdown of the “You Can Screw the Kurds” deal offered to Turkey on the eve of the invasion was a great embarrassment and surprise to the Bush neocons, although it should not have been, given the enormous opposition of the Turkish people to Bush's war on Iraq. When Turkey pulled the welcome mat out from under the tens of thousands of American troops waiting on warships in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, the Bushies had to hurriedly rewrite their war plans, with increased risk to American troops. Unable to deploy through Turkey, these troops had to redeploy via a much longer route, which eventually took most of them to Kuwait. Fortuitously, the Turkish obstructionism did not greatly compromise the military campaign. Nevertheless, with “friendly” Bush League teams like Turkey, who needs enemies? It is mind boggling that Turkey was ever called a coalition member, given its outright obstruction and opposition to the war. Even though other NATO members agreed to defend Turkey from Iraqi missiles, the vast majority of the Turkish people—more than 90%—strongly opposed Bush's invasion of Iraq. With a long history of problems on its long border with Iraq, Turkey could have been among the strongest, most important coalition members, but the Turkish people and its government did not trust Bush and his war party. As a final note, in September 2003, after the “combat phase” of the war had ended, Turkey “considered” sending 10,000 troops into Iraq, and in return it actually received \$8.5 billion in loan guarantees. Turkey then turned around and decided not to send any troops. Halliburton could not have played the game better.

SIDEBAR: No French Fries or Turkey for Thanksgiving

In order to give the finger to the French government and all French people, countless Bush League supporters gleefully refused to eat French fries unless they were called “freedom fries.” Given Turkey's bold rejection of Bush's bribes and war plans—and in the interest of geopolitical and gastrointestinal consistency—these Bush League nitwits should also boycott turkey. Specifically, they should eat chicken instead of turkey for Thanksgiving, plus generous portions of crow and humble pie, and definitely no French fries. Vive la France!

Uganda: Although Uganda provided no troops, no civilians, and nothing else for the coalition, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni said Uganda would remain a member. Perhaps he wanted this status in order to more effectively criticize Bush and his Bush League policies. On October 12, 2004, Museveni noted that:

- he had blindly supported the war;
- he joined because Bush claimed Saddam had WMDs and because Saddam was a friend of Sudan's president Omar el-Bashir, "who was my enemy;"
- Bush pursued interests in Iraq that were not disclosed to coalition partners before the invasion;
- the strategic mistakes made by the Bush administration in Iraq had forced him to regret his support;
- he regretted that the United States had appointed Paul Bremer as governor of Iraq, and that Bremer subsequently demobilized 1,000,000 Iraqi troops;
- the bloody Iraqi insurgency was caused by U.S. "arrogance" and the mis-handling of relations between American troops and Iraqi civilians;
- the Bush administration did not invest much in building civilian confidence and support in Iraq, which are essential for success; and
- the Bush administration had no interest in his opinion, even though he was a member of the coalition.

For some reason the White House dropped Uganda from the coalition. In joining the coalition in March 2003, Museveni offered to "assist in any way possible," which is Bush League diplomatic language for "no assistance." Uganda, a country with continuing human rights violations, has a long history of brutal dictators, civil wars, wars with neighboring nations, genocide under Idi Amin, massive poverty, drought, starvation, and disease, including the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Ukraine: Before joining the growing list of Bush League dropouts, Ukraine had about 1,600 non-combat mechanized infantry troops in a peacekeeping brigade in Iraq in 2004, making it only one of six nations (including the United States) with more than 1,000 troops involved. A key reason for Ukraine joining the coalition was the desire of its corrupt regime to buy some friendship in Washington and soften U.S. claims that Ukraine had circumvented UN sanctions imposed on Saddam. In January 2005 outgoing President Leonid Kuchma ordered the withdrawal of all Ukrainian troops from Iraq in the first half of 2005. He apparently wanted to steal the credit for the withdrawal from Ukraine's new president-elect, Viktor Yushchenko, who had made withdrawal a campaign issue. The decision to leave Iraq was strengthened when a huge explosion in southern Iraq killed eight Ukrainian soldiers and one from Kazakhstan. In Ukraine, it's not just the old Republican Guard-style dictators and the newly democratically elected leaders who oppose the Bush League—the Ukrainian people also overwhelmingly oppose Bush's war on Iraq. All Ukrainian troops departed Iraq by the end of 2005.

United States: "The Coalition is US." Even including all the non-combat troops of other coalition members, the United States provided almost 90% of the troops for Bush's war. This means that if Bush had increased America's troop levels in Iraq by only about 10% at the beginning, he could have efficiently dispensed with all other

coalition members and avoided all the coalition nonsense. This would have allowed him complete freedom, versus 99.9 % freedom, to run his own unilateral American war. Bush did increase American troop levels by about 10% in late 2004 and early 2005—and again in 2007 as part of his so-called *surge*—as security in Iraq worsened. Of course, Bush also had “cut and run” plans in place from time to time. In mid-2004 there were plans in place to reduce the number of American troops in Iraq to 115,000 over several months, from a level of 140,000. However, intense Iraqi resistance to Bush’s occupation caused him to cancel those withdrawals. Earlier, in January 2004, the Bush White House said it hoped that U.S. forces could be reduced to 50,000 by the end of 2005. Although the strategy of “cutting and running” was perfected by Reagan after 241 American troops were killed in the suicide bombing of the U.S. Marines barracks in Beirut on October 23, 1983, it is politically incorrect for America’s corporate media to use that term to describe actions by GOP presidents.

Uzbekistan: Although Uzbekistan, the most populous nation in Central Asia, was quietly dropped from the coalition in 2004, Bush should be ashamed that this right-wing despotic regime was ever considered on the team. President Islam Karimov is a ruthless dictator who suppresses all freedom of speech, assembly and religion, and uses the “war against terror” to justify his brutality. This justification for attacking civil liberties should be familiar to Americans. Many Uzbek Muslims have been jailed simply for having a beard in this primarily Sunni Muslim nation. Countless political opponents and other innocents have been tortured to death, and there is no independent judicial system. Karimov’s cozy relationship with members of the Bush regime goes back to the 1990s when Bush was governor of Texas, and ruthless Karimov has been an honored guest in the Bush White House. Although Uzbekistan was listed as an early coalition member and received hundreds of millions of dollars from the Bush regime, it never provided any troops for Iraq. During the run-up to the war in neighboring Afghanistan, Uzbekistan allowed U.S. forces to use its Soviet-era airbases.

SIDEBAR: In and Out of Bed ... a Tortured Marriage

Uzbekistan is a favorite torture destination in the Bush regime’s illegal and immoral *extraordinary rendition* program, under which suspects around the world are kidnapped and transported to various rightwing nations for outsourced torture.

Although there was substantial public discussion in 2007 regarding illegal torture conducted directly by the CIA—especially during the congressional nomination hearings regarding Bush’s appointment of Michael Mukasey to replace the criminal Alberto Gonzales as attorney general, with Mukasey carefully dancing around the torture technique known as waterboarding in order to protect Bush and other war criminals in his administration from subsequent prosecution for war crimes—there is virtually no public discussion of even more horrific torture techniques committed in America’s name at rendition sites around the world.

A principal source of information regarding the Uzbekistan connection is Craig Murray, the British ambassador to Uzbekistan from 2002 to 2004, who was fired by Britain after he blew the whistle on the CIA's extraordinary renditions to Uzbekistan and the resulting torture of rendered suspects by Uzbek security forces acting on behalf of America. The sunlight of truth is a wonderful disinfectant.

In addition to dropping Uzbekistan from the coalition, the Bush State Department in 2004 "decertified" Uzbekistan (under U.S. law requiring the State Department to certify annually that governments receiving American aid adequately support human rights), thus effectively cutting off most American aid. Nevertheless, numerous other dictatorships continue to routinely receive positive human rights certifications, in spite of their routine violation of human rights, and notwithstanding the objections of numerous international organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Congressional pressure and special legislation in 2003 to take action against Uzbekistan also helped change the Bush regime's policies toward Uzbekistan, although its broader practice of outsourced torture continues.

Other "Almost Shanghaied" Nations: Believe it or not, in addition to the long list of nations just discussed, there are several more nations that Bush supporters tried to slip into the coalition. Because their attempts to shanghai these nations were especially fleeting and feeble, we list here these additional *nonmembers*—the "almost shanghaied"—simply for the sake of completeness. They are: Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Fiji, Finland, France—yes, even France!—Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, and the United Arab Emirates.

There is a large army working for the United States in Iraq that does not appear on the long list above, one that rivals the entire coalition in size. It is the *shadow army* of mercenaries fielded by a host of unleashed, for-profit companies that are making a killing in Iraq. Their presence, together with the rightwing worldview that placed them there in the first, is a central reason why Bush and the GOP lost their "little war" in Iraq. These mercenary companies are the subject of the next chapter.