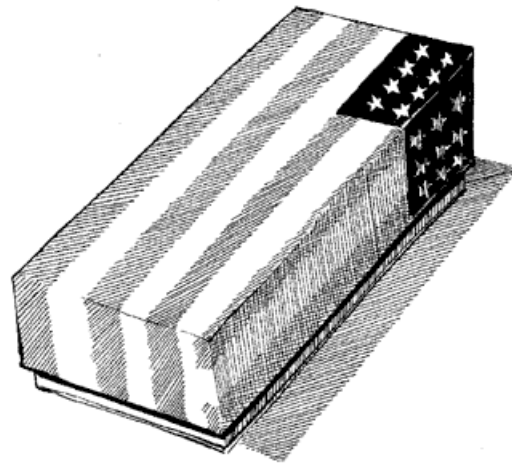


GI SPECIAL 4L13:

THE WHITE HOUSE PLAN
FOR BRINGING HOME
THE TROOPS

ONE AT
A TIME



THE
BIG DATE ©/US
SOUNDAL: TROOPER
COPLEY ARCHIVE SOURCE

[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, who sent this in.]

**Soldier In Iraq Says This
War Cannot Be Won!
“Morale Of The Platoon At An
All-Time Low”
“He Has No Faith In The
Politicians Who Sent Him
There”**

[Thanks to Elaine Brower, The Military Project, who sent this in.]

December 04, 2006, Letters To The Editor, The Oregonian

To the Editor:

I have a son in Iraq: the 1st Armored Division of the Army, stationed at a remote outpost near the hotbed Ramadi.

Last week his platoon lost two to injuries -- one a result of shrapnel to the testicles, the other a leg wound from small arms fire.

They're down to 15 in the platoon. Nearly every day they're out on patrol, generally by foot. Every day, they're vulnerable, their lives held open to the potential of death or injury.

Two weeks ago he called by satellite phone, awakening Amy and me in the dead of the night. Machine gun fire was all around him, the sound of war filling our ears and hearts with grief and fear of loss.

He wanted to tell us that he loves us, that he was on a dangerous patrol and that if anything happened to his life, he would take his love for us to his death and beyond.

He made it through that day and night. As this is written, he is still here with us. His tour was to end the first week in November but he was extended until next February.

He said that the morale of the platoon was at an all-time low.

He said that the war is creating more insurgency, rather than less.

He says that he cannot trust anyone in an Iraqi military uniform.

He said that most of the Iraq people do not want us there.

He says that this war cannot be won!

He has no faith in the politicians who sent him there.

Question, America: Whom would you listen to, the soldier in the field or the padded politician in office in reference to how this war is really going?

LARRY TURNER, Malin

53% Of U.S. Citizens Say “The US Did Not Have An Obligation To Killed Or

Wounded American Soldiers To Remain In Iraq”

12/14/06 By Al Jazeera

A poll by NBC News and the Wall Street Journal that found that less than one in four Americans approves of George Bush's administration's handling of the conflict in Iraq.

Nearly seven in 10 respondents said they felt less confident the war would come to a successful conclusion, NBC said.

Fifty three per cent said the US did not have an obligation to killed or wounded American soldiers to remain in Iraq.

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward GI Special along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, at home and inside the armed services. Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Project, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Two Marines Killed In Al Anbar Province

Dec. 15, 2006 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20061215-02

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq: One Marine assigned to Regimental Combat Team 5 and one Marine assigned to Regimental Combat Team 7 died Thursday from wounds sustained due to enemy action while operating in Al Anbar Province.

U.S. Soldier Killed, Two Wounded In Ninewah

12.15.06 Reuters

A U.S. soldier was killed on Tuesday while conducting security operations in the northern province of Ninewa, the U.S. military said on Friday. Two other soldiers were also wounded, it said.

Amarillo Soldier Dies In Iraq



Pvt. Troy Dale Cooper (AP Photo/Amarillo Globe News)

12-05-06 KAMR

News about a fallen soldier from Amarillo tonight. According to his family, 21-year-old Army Private Troy Dale Cooper was killed by a roadside bomb in Iraq.

According the Department of Defense, Troy died on Sunday when an explosive detonated near the vehicle he was in.

Troy went to River Road High School and Rolling Hills Elementary. Andy Nies the River Road High School principal remembers him well. "The same kid that we had in elementary, carried over into high school. Nice, respectful, yes sir, no sir kind of kid...he got along with all the students, didn't have any problems with any of the other students, he (was) never in trouble."

Principal Nies says Troy worked hard while at River Road. He was a member of DECA, where he was able to earn school credits while juggling a job at the same time. "Troy was a good kid. Very respectful, do anything you asked him to, a neat kid to be around. He was just a good kid."

Though many of the upperclassmen at River Road are too young to have remembered Troy, principal Nies says they all would have liked him.

"It's a horrible, horrible loss to River Road High School...he grew up in this community, and his family are a part of the community, and it's a loss for the whole community." No word yet on when there will be a memorial service for Troy.

Del. Soldier Killed By Road Bomb In Iraq



December 7, 2006 By ANDREW TANGEL, The News Journal

A Townsend-area man killed when a roadside bomb blew up last week became the 14th soldier from Delaware to die in Iraq.

The bomb detonated near a vehicle carrying Army Sgt. Keith E. Fiscus, 26, in Baghdad on Saturday, the Pentagon announced Wednesday.

In Delaware and Hawaii, where his unit is based, and on personal Internet pages, friends and relatives were mourning Fiscus on Wednesday and planning to honor him.

Fiscus had phoned home the day before he died and "was doing fine," said Dena Archer, his older sister.

"It was an extreme shock. Nobody wanted it to come," she said. "My parents just talked to him the day before, so it still just doesn't seem real."

Fiscus played with GI Joe action figures as a boy, Archer said, though she didn't recall that it was her brother's dream to join the Army.

After graduating Glasgow High School in 1998, Fiscus, the second oldest of four children, worked in the produce department of a supermarket and later as a customer service representative for Discover Card, said Archer, 28.

Fiscus then enlisted in the Army, following his grandfathers' example of serving in the armed forces, she said. He finished boot camp in 2002 and served his first tour in Iraq.

Fiscus was killed in the middle of his second tour, which began in August. He had been assigned to the 25th Infantry Division based at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

Fiscus and a fellow soldier were apparently going to clear a roadside bomb -- or improvised explosive device -- when their Hummer triggered another bomb, said Alicia

Dove of Honolulu. Dove said she knew Fiscus through her husband, Fiscus' Army buddy.

Archer said her brother was to have come home in February.

As family members in Delaware arranged services for Fiscus, his friends planned a memorial service Tuesday in Hawaii, said Dove, who created a tribute for Fiscus on the social-networking Web site MySpace.com.

"He really liked being in Iraq because he didn't have to deal with the day-to-day" issues of life in the United States, Dove, 21, said.

And, she added, he enjoyed having the close camaraderie found in combat. "He liked being around people who always had his back," she said.

She and her husband, Devin Dove, described Fiscus as loyal, trustworthy, intelligent, witty, and a good soldier.

And despite his rough exterior -- tattoos that he joked would scare children and an affinity for hard rock music -- Fiscus was also the "most caring, most sensitive, most hopeless romantic," Alicia Dove said.

While his friends reminisced about Fiscus, they also take comfort in knowing the man who seemed to always try to better himself died honorably.

"If I had to die," Devin Dove quoted his friend as saying, "I would like for it to be in war."

Iraq Police Kill American After Mercenaries Open Fire Near Zubayr, Kill Cops; Two Wounded

ZUBAYR, Iraq, Nov 17 (Reuters)

Iraqi police said they killed an American in civilian clothes and wounded another on Friday near the southern town of Zubayr in a clash that a British military spokesman said wounded a British civilian.

Captain Tane Dunlop said the British civilian security contractor was wounded in the clash between a civilian convoy and Iraqi security forces in the Zubayr area, but he could not confirm if there were any other casualties.

A police officer in Zubayr, in south Iraq, told Reuters customs police stopped a U.S.-made four-wheel drive vehicle in the late morning on suspicion it had entered Iraq illegally.

The occupants turned out to be Americans and opened fire, killing two policemen, he said.

Dunlop said British forces had gone to investigate after the clash and had evacuated the wounded British private security contractor to a military hospital. He declined to identify the man.

Spackenkill Man Wounded In Iraq Explosion

December 15, 2006 Poughkeepsie Journal

Army Sgt. James Milano Jr is recovering from injuries he sustained from a land mine explosion in Iraq.

Sgt. Milano, a forward observer with the 82nd Airborne, was in an Army Humvee with two other soldiers on Dec. 8 when the vehicle struck the mine, said his father, Spackenkill school board President James Milano.

Milano said Friday his son sustained lacerations to his right leg and some damage to one of his eyes. He said his son had telephoned him several hours after the injury.

"As of the last phone call, he told me the doctors had done all they could for the eye injury in Iraq and if it needed further treatment, they'd send him to a specialist," Milano said.

He said his son was serving his first tour of duty in Iraq, arriving there about six months ago.

Milano's 16-year-old son Mark died Oct. 7 after he was injured while playing in a varsity football game for Spackenkill High School.

***Great Moments In U.S. Military
History:***
**Stupid Criminals In Command Of
U.S. Forces Order Attacks On Iraqi
Version Of Red Cross & Burning
Of Their Building And Vehicles**



The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is composed of the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Dec 15 By Stephanie Nebehay, Reuters

The Iraqi Red Crescent accused U.S. forces on Friday of carrying out a spate of attacks on its offices over the last three years during operations to flush out suspected militants.

Jamal Al Karbouli, vice-president of the Iraqi Red Crescent, said that in the latest incident, U.S. forces had occupied and nearly destroyed its Falluja office, held staff for hours, and burned two cars clearly marked with its neutral symbol.

The only Iraqi aid agency working in all 18 provinces, its 1,000 staff and 200,000 volunteers already face extremely difficult conditions because of the growing sectarian violence, he said.

"The main difficulties we are facing, first of all, is the presence of MNF, the multinational forces, which sometimes gives us a hard time. They are attacking some offices and detaining some volunteers," Karbouli told a news conference in Geneva.

"The last example was about seven days ago in Falluja. We had our offices attacked by American forces, they detained the volunteers and staff more than two hours and they burned the cars and even the building which belonged to us," he added.

Karbouli said U.S. forces had attacked its Baghdad headquarters a number of times since the overthrow of former President Saddam Hussein in 2003. In most of the incidents, the Americans claimed to have received "information."

"Four to five times they have attacked the headquarters, they break doors and windows, just to see. And they didn't find anything and they left," he said.

"We don't know the reason behind it, is it to scare us or decrease our work or another reason, as they mention, fear of terrorists? We don't know."

"The Iraqi Red Crescent is the only Iraqi body working all over Iraq. Because of this, they are suspicious," Karbouli said.

Karbouli said the agency faced pressure from militant groups in Iraq, where insurgents from the minority Sunni community and militias from the majority Shi'ites are accused of atrocities against civilians.

"They try to work with us many times. We say 'No, we want to keep neutral'," he told reporters.

"Fortunately we have a good reputation with Iraqis on both sides. Both of them respect us and trust us as a neutral organization," Karbouli said.

The Iraqi Red Crescent is providing vital medicines and other supplies to hospitals and vulnerable civilians, including some of the 100,000 uprooted families who have fled bloodshed. It also distributes messages from detainees to their families.

MORE:

What The Dishonorable Cowards In U.S. Command Pay No Attention To: Minimum Appropriate Response: Arrest, Court-Martial & Apply Condign Punishment

Chapter IV, Article 24 Of The 1949 Geneva Conventions.

Art. 24. Medical personnel exclusively engaged in the search for, or the collection, transport or treatment of the wounded or sick, or in the prevention of disease, staff exclusively engaged in the administration of medical units and establishments, as well as chaplains attached to the armed forces, shall be respected and protected in all circumstances.



An Iraqi Red Crescent worker attaches a Red Crescent flag in front of a truck in Baghdad March 20, 2006. The Iraqi Red Crescent on Friday accused U.S. forces of carrying out a spate of attacks on its offices over the last three years. (Namir Noor-Eldeen/Reuters)

REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



U.S. soldiers from the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team patrol a street in Baghdad, October 27, 2006. REUTERS/Mahmoud Raouf Mahmoud

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Occupation Soldier Wounded In Paktia; Nationality Not Announced

Dec 15 By Terry Friel, Reuters & 12/15/06 Press Democrat

A car bomber killed two Afghan soldiers and injured at least one NATO soldier in an attack on a convoy in the restive southeastern province of Paktia, police said.

A male bomber dressed in a burqa -- the all-covering dress worn by some Islamic women -- wounded two Afghan soldiers in Paktika province.

A bomber detonated his explosives in the center of a busy shopping street in the town of Qalat in southern Afghanistan on Thursday. "The attack occurred around noon today, when a highway police car was driving by in the bazaar," said the police chief, Gen. Noor Mohammad Paktin. He said that two policemen were among the wounded.

***This Is Not Satire:* Warlord To Turn Osama's Hideout Into Tourist Attraction**

December 18, 2006 Army Times

In what some might consider a sign of increased stability in Afghanistan, a former warlord and now governor is planning to turn the Tora Bora caves once used as a hideout by al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden into a tourist attraction, complete with hotels, restaurants and cave tours.

"Tora Bora is world-famous, but we want it to be known for tourism, not terrorism," said Gul Agha Sherzai, in an interview with reporters.

[There will no doubt be special rates for U.S. politicians and generals, and very special tour guides selected just for them. Have a nice day.]

TROOP NEWS

**THIS IS HOW BUSH BRINGS THE TROOPS HOME:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE**



The ashes of Army Sgt. Keith Fiscus, of Townsend, Del., at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va., Dec. 14, 2006. Fiscus was killed by a roadside bomb in Iraq. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

Sgt. Sues Army, Wins; Now DoD Must Pay His Legal Bills: The Sneaks In Command Tried To Deploy Him While His Case Was Under Review

December 18, 2006 Army Times

The Army must pay more than \$12,000 in attorney fees to cover the legal bills of a conscientious objector from the 10th Mountain Division who successfully sued the Army to prevent his deployment to Afghanistan, a federal judge ruled Dec. 3.

Sgt. Corey Martin, 24, applied for a conscientious-objector discharge in December 2005. While the Fort Drum, N.Y., soldier's application was pending, the Army ordered Martin to deploy in March.

A court restraining order blocked Martin's deployment until the Conscientious Objector Review Board could review Martin's application, which was ultimately approved in April. He was honorably discharged May 18.

The Army has 60 days to appeal the ruling that it must pay \$12,352.50 to Martin's attorneys.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

WELCOME TO RAMADI; HAVE A NICE DAY



Armed insurgents guard an intersection in downtown Ramadi December 8, 2006.
REUTERS/Stringer (IRAQ)

Sadr Movement Demands U.S., British Embassies In Iraq Be Closed; Calls On Government To “Provide Proper Security Atmosphere For Professors And Students”

Dec 15, (VOI) & AP

The political committee in al-Shaheed al-Sadr's office urged the Iraqi government to close down the U.S. and British embassies in Baghdad and expel the two ambassadors.

"We demand the parliament to compel the Iraqi government to draw up a reasonable timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the country," the committee said in a statement received by the independent news agency Voices of Iraq (VOI) on Thursday.

The statement indicated that the Iraqi government has assaulted the rights of parliament as to prolong the presence of U.S. forces in Iraq although the parliament is the only legislative body that should take such decisions having direct impact on the lives of Iraqis.

"Efforts should be exerted to realize the independence of Iraq and restore its full sovereignty through legislations enacted by parliament," the statement added.

It also urged the government to play a major role to protect universities, provide proper security atmosphere for professors and students and stop forced displacements in Iraq in general and the capital Baghdad in particular.

The political committee in Sadr's office is one of many set up after the occupation of Iraq and conducts studies and provide political consultation to the Sadrists politicians

A cleric called for U.S. forces to leave the country and warned the "bloodshed will continue" if they do not.

The comments by Sheik Abdul-Hadi al-Mohammadawi came during his Friday sermon in Sadr City.

Assorted Resistance Action

Dec 15, (VOI) & (AP) & Reuters

Guerrillas killed a tribal sheik linked to British forces in a drive-by shooting Friday and two of his guards in the southern city of Basra. Muhsin al-Kanan, was a member of the provisional council in Iraq's second-largest city, 340 miles southeast of Baghdad, and had good relations with British forces in the area, police said.

Two policemen were wounded in the northern Iraqi town of Kirkuk when an explosive charge went off downtown, a police source said

An Iraqi policeman was killed in Mosul, a security source in Ninawa said.

Insurgents killed a member of the Iraqi intelligence agency in Diwaniya, south of Baghdad. A guard for an oil company was also killed in the attack, police said.

<p>IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION</p>

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

WHY



From: Mike Hastie
To: Thomas F Barton
Cc: psychstu@voyager.net ; fchampagne@asis.com ; pbognar@juno.com ;
coxschueler@igc.org ; mmullane7@hotmail.com
Sent: Friday, December 15, 2006 7:38 AM
Subject: WHY

WHY

"My worst moment in Vietnam?"

"After a major operation and casualties at Charlie Med, when the excitement was over, my buddy Bob and I surveyed the helicopter pad. The dead Marines (forty-nine by our count) were laid out along the pad.

"We looked at each face. Only five or six needed a shave. The whole group were pinned down under fire for two days. They were so young. A few looked to be in their twenties..."

"Bob and I said nothing, looked at each other, and cried..."

**Tom Comiskey
Vietnam 1965-66**

58,000 Americans were killed in Vietnam.

**Their average age was 19.
From the senior prom to Vietnam.**

**Mike Hastie
Vietnam Veteran**

Photo from the I-R-A-Q (I Remember Another Quagmire) portfolio of Mike Hastie, US Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71. (For more of his outstanding work, contact at: hastiemike@earthlink.net) T)

Democracy

From: Dennis Serdel
To: GI Special
Sent: December 15, 2006
Subject: Democracy

By Dennis Serdel, Vietnam 1967-68 (one tour) Light Infantry, Americal Div. 11th Brigade, purple heart, Veterans For Peace 50 Michigan, Vietnam Veterans Against The War, United Auto Workers GM Retiree, in Perry, Michigan

Democracy

**The Shiites told the Sunnis
we like Democracy
it allows a majority like us
to suppress a minority like you.
When Tim, a black soldier wounded
is flying in the air back to America
he thinks this is the country
where the whites hate the blacks
and vote against them
to keep them in ghettos.
Juan is flying too
flying in the air
although shot up with drugs
is thinking he is a Mexican American
or is he an American Mexican.
In Democracy, a politician promises
to help the people but when he is in
he forgets all his promises.
Big problem with Democracy
is when Corporations give millions
to a politician for TV ads
flying around the country.
So when he wins**

the Corporations want him
to vote their way instead of the people.
It is Democrazy
that is causing all the violence
in Iraq and now Bush and his gang
want a strong man to reign
they haven't hung Saddam yet.

Soldiers Write From Battlefield To Thank Citizens For Demanding Immediate Withdrawal; “Of Course The Rest Of the Platoon Feel As We Do”

[Thanks to Dennis Serdel, Vietnam Veterans, who sent this in.

[The 1966 letter below was printed by Veterans For Peace In Vietnam in their flyer announcing the March 25, 1967 march against the Vietnam War in Chicago, Illinois. Note that opposition to the war among the troops was already widespread in 1966. T]

‘You Voted For Us’ GIs Hail Antiwar Vote In Dearborn

In the November [1966] elections, a referendum on the war in Vietnam was held in Dearborn, Mich.

The referendum called for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam.

While the referendum lost, 40 percent, or 14,124 voted for withdrawal.

Dearborn Mayor Orville Hubbard supported the referendum.

The Detroit Ad Hoc Committee for the April 1 Mobilization has released the following letter from soldiers in Vietnam to Mayor Hubbard.

Tuy Hoa, South Vietnam
Monday, Nov. 21, 1966

Dear Mr. Hubbard:

Read the article that appeared in The Detroit News Nov. 9, 1966.

Myself and my entire squad (3rd squad A3/12) agree with you and would like to thank you for your concern over the matter.

After being out in the field for over a month, and then reading the article about the vote, you can imagine how mad we were!

Speaking for the infantry, we are the ones who go out and risk our lives. We don't sit back in a base camp nor are we stationed 15 or 20 miles off at sea.

In short, we are the slaves who hump hills with 40 lbs. of equipment on our backs and then eat C-rations, pull guard all night, get up the next morning and move out again. This of course is not that bad. Getting shot at does not appeal to me in the least either,

But, the economic war goes on and on.

We fight in a miserable primitive land while others talk, argue, and sometimes vote to keep us here.

All in favor of you, and the 14,124 citizens of Dearborn who voted for us, thank you.

(Signed) Sgt. K. Lewandowski, Hamtramck, Mich.; Sgt. L. King, Willard, Ohio; Pfc. J. Robatchka, Allen Park, Mich.; Pfc. R. Scott, Allen Park, Mich.; Pfc. W. Pitts, River Rouge, Mich.; Pfc. G. Bojarski, Detroit, Mich.; Pvt. G. Brown, S. Amboy, N.J.; Pfc. A. Ricci, Lincoln Park, Mich.; Pfc. E. McGregor, Lincoln Park, Mich.; Pfc. F. Rogers, Watertown, N.Y.; Pfc. R. Rush, Allen Park, Mich. Pfc.. R. Hopkins, Alexandria, Ky.; Sp. 4 R. Tipton, Newport, Ky.; Pfc. R. Stulz, Newport, Ky.

Of course the rest of the platoon feel as we do, but I am just a representative of my squad writing our thanks to you for your effort.

(Signed) Sincerely, Plc. George J. Bojarski (US 55864877).

***The U.S. Occupation Of Iraq:
Act III Of A Tragedy In Many
Parts;***

“The Democrats Fail To Pose Any Real Challenge To The War” “When People Speak Out And Organize, They Can Deter Even The Most Powerful And Reckless Government”

From: Anthony Arrove
To: GI Special
Sent: December 16, 2006
Subject: The U.S. Occupation Of Iraq

December 16, 2006, By ANTHONY ARNOVE

Anthony Arrove is on the editorial boards of Haymarket Books and International Socialist Review. This article appears in the January–February issue of the ISR (isreview.org) He is the author of Iraq: The Logic of Withdrawal, just published in an updated paperback edition, in the American Empire Project (Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt) (americanempireproject.com/bookpage.asp?ISBN=0805082727).

THE TRAGEDY unleashed by the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq defies description. According to the most recent findings of the Lancet medical journal, the number of “excess deaths” in Iraq since the U.S. invasion is more than 650,000. “Iraq is the fastest-growing refugee crisis in the world,” according to Refugee International: nearly two million Iraqis have fled the country entirely, while at least another 500,000 are internally displaced.

Basic foods and necessities are beyond the reach of ordinary Iraqis because of massive inflation. “A gallon of gasoline cost as little as 4 cents in November. Now, after the International Monetary Fund pushed the Oil Ministry to cut its subsidies, the official price is about 67 cents,” the New York Times notes. “The spike has come as a shock to Iraqis, who make only about \$150 a month on average — if they have jobs,” an important proviso, since unemployment is roughly 60–70 percent nationally.

October 2006 proved to be the bloodiest month of the entire occupation, with more than six thousand civilians killed in Iraq, most in Baghdad, where thousands of additional U.S. troops have been sent since August with the claim they would restore order and stability in the city, but instead only sparked more violence.

United Nations special investigator Manfred Nowak notes that torture “is totally out of hand” in Iraq. “The situation is so bad many people say it is worse than it has been in the times of Saddam Hussein.”

The number of U.S. soldiers dead is now more than 2,900, with more than 21,000 wounded, many severely.

The underlying trend is clear: each day the occupation continues, life gets worse for most Iraqis. Rather than stemming civil war or sectarian conflict, the occupation is spurring it. Rather than being a source of stability, the occupation is the major source of instability and chaos.

All of the reasons being offered for why the United States cannot withdraw troops from Iraq are false.

The reality is, the troops are staying in Iraq for much different reasons than the ones being touted by political elites and a still subservient establishment press.

They are staying to save face for a U.S. political elite that cares nothing for the lives of Iraqis or U.S. soldiers; to pursue the futile goal of turning Iraq into a reliable client state strategically located near the major energy resources and shipping routes of the Middle East, home to two-thirds of world oil reserves, and Western and Central Asia; to serve as a base for the projection of U.S. military power in the region, particularly in the growing conflict between the United States and Iran; and to maintain the legitimacy of U.S. imperialism, which needs the pretext of a global war on terror to justify further military intervention, expanded military budgets, concentration of executive power, and restrictions on civil liberties.

The U.S. military did not invade and occupy Iraq to spread democracy, check the spread of weapons of mass destruction, rebuild the country, or stop civil war.

In fact, the troops remain in Iraq today to deny self-determination and genuine democracy to the Iraqi people, who have made it abundantly clear, whether they are Shiite or Sunni, that they want U.S. troops to leave Iraq immediately; feel less safe as a result of the occupation; think the occupation is spurring not suppressing sectarian strife; and support armed attacks on occupying troops and Iraqi security forces, who are seen not as independent but as collaborating with the occupation.

It is not only the Iraqi people who oppose the occupation of their country and want to see the troops leave.

A clear majority of people in the United States have expressed the same sentiment in major opinion polls and in the mid-term Congressional elections, which swing both houses of Congress and the majority of state governorships to the Democrats, in a clear vote against the imperial arrogance of Bush’s “stay the course” approach to the disaster in Iraq.

The public did not vote for more money for the Pentagon (as incoming Senate majority leader Harry Reid of Nevada immediately promised, announcing a plan to give \$75 billion more to the Pentagon), for more “oversight” of the war (the main Democratic Party

buzzword these days), or for more troops (as Texas Democrat Representative Silvestre Reyes, the incoming chair of the House Intelligence Committee, has demanded), but to begin bringing the troops home.

A clear majority of active-duty U.S. troops want the same thing, as a much-ignored Zogby International poll found in early 2005, with 72 percent saying they wanted to be out of Iraq by the end of 2006.

But Bush's response to the groundswell of opposition to the war, which has led not only to his setbacks in the midterm elections but to even further erosion in his already abysmal approval ratings (with approval of his handling of the war reaching a new low of 27 percent), is to insist that the sun still revolves around the earth.

"Absolutely, we're winning," Bush told reporters. "I know there's a lot of speculation that these reports in Washington mean there's going to be some kind of graceful exit from Iraq," Bush said. "This business about a graceful exit just simply has no realism to it whatsoever," he added.

"We're going to stay in Iraq to get the job done."

In a similar vein, Vice President Cheney said, "I know what the President thinks. I know what I think. And we're not looking for an exist strategy. We're looking for victory."

After the midterm elections Bush was forced to jettison his deeply unpopular defense secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, but nominated in his place someone who is unlikely to oversee any fundamental shift in U.S. strategy. Robert Gates, an old CIA hand, is a dedicated Cold Warrior who advocated, among other enlightened policies, the bombing of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua for daring to challenge the corrupt order of death squad dictatorships in Latin America. Bush also dropped UN ambassador John Bolton, a man who embodies everything that the world hates about U.S. foreign policy today.

Perhaps most significantly, though, in the face of the failures in Iraq, Congress resorted to the old strategy of bringing in the "wise men" to repackage a failing war, convening the Iraq Study Group (ISG), with Bush family fixer James Baker III, former Indiana representative Lee Hamilton, and other foreign policy establishment figures with little or no knowledge of Iraq.

The commission was never going to advocate any radical reversal of U.S. policy in Iraq, but even so, Bush has hedged his bets from the outset, setting up two different internal military review committees to make suggestions to the White House about the next steps in Iraq (much as he had overseen a separate intelligence operation to create the evidence that would be used to sell the invasion in the first place).

Indeed, when the report's findings were made public on December 6, Bush immediately distanced himself from its highly limited recommendations.

As the New York Sun noted, "Barely 24 hours old, the bipartisan report has been placed on a high shelf to gather dust, its principle function having been to take the heat off the president for a time while allowing him to gather his resolve to press on" with the same course as before.

Bush immediately rejected the report's call to negotiate with Iran and Syria, the Wall Street Journal reported: "A senior administration official said the White House doesn't feel bound by the report and is unlikely to implement many of its recommendations, especially regarding calls for diplomatic outreach to U.S. foes Syria and Iran." In addition, "The White House has rejected mounting calls for a course correction in Iraq, insisting it would maintain the current number of U.S. military personnel in Iraq indefinitely."

But even if the Bush administration sought to immediately implement every recommendation of the Iraq Study Group report, it would only be a recipe for more death, displacement, and despair.

The ISG report explicitly rejects setting any deadline or timetable for withdrawal, asserts the need for a "considerable military presence in the region, with our still significant force in Iraq and with our powerful air, ground, and naval deployments in Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar, as well as an increased presence in Afghanistan" for years to come, and basically repackages the Bush Doctrine of "as the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down," that is "Iraqization" of the conflict, much as "Vietnamization" was presented as the solution in Vietnam.

It is worth briefly reviewing the various options now being considered by the Bush administration, none of which offers any real alternative:

Sending In More Troops In The Short Term

The idea that sending in more troops would provide stability and improve the situation in Iraq ignores the fact that the U.S. is the main source of violence and instability. More troops breed both more opposition and more sectarian violence.

Observes Michael Schwartz, "Instead of entering a violent city and restoring order, (U.S. forces) enter a relatively peaceful city and create violence. The accurate portrait of this situation...is that the most hostile anti-American cities like Tal Afar and Ramadi have generally been reasonably peaceful when U.S. troops are not there." Even the ISG notes that Operation Together Forward II, which redeployed thousands of U.S. troops to Baghdad in August 2006, achieved the opposite of its stated goal: "Violence in Baghdad, already at high levels, jumped more than 43 percent between the summer and October 2006."

Schwartz also explains the way in which the higher presence of U.S. combat troops exacerbates sectarian violence:

"American patrols in Shia neighborhoods immobilize the local defenses and make the community vulnerable to jihadist attack; while American invasions of Sunni communities are even more damaging. They not only immobilize the local defense forces, but almost always involve the introduction of Iraqi Army units, made up mainly of Shia soldiers (since the army being stood up by the Americans is largely a Shia one).

“What results is violence in the form of battles between a Shia military (as well as militia-infiltrated Shia police forces) and Sunni resistance fighters defending their communities. These attacks generate immense bitterness among Sunni, who see them as part of a Shia attempt to use the American military to conquer and pacify Sunni cities. The result is a wealth of new jihadists anxious to retaliate by sacrificing their lives in terrorist or death-squad-style attacks on Shia communities—which, in their turn, energize the Shia death squads in an escalating cycle of brutalizing violence.”

The U.S., in addition, cannot add more troops without straining an already badly overtaxed military and relying on greater use of backdoor draft measures that are provoking more opposition at home and within the military to the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, another failing occupation.

We'll Stand Down As They Stand Up

The idea that training Iraqi troops can be improved, a major recommendation of the ISG report, suggests that there's a technical solution that the U.S. faces in Iraq.

But the root of resistance to U.S. occupation is political.

As long as the U.S. remains an occupying power, the police and military will continue to be seen as collaborators and illegitimate.

Resistance groups in Iraq, meanwhile, face no such training problems, and are carrying out increasingly sophisticated operations, including direct military battles with U.S. troops, because their fighters are politically motivated and have a defined goal that has widespread support.

Engage Iran and Syria

The idea behind this strategy, another major thrust of the ISG report, is that the root of resistance to U.S. occupation in Iraq is foreign, rather than indigenous, much as we were told that the popular resistance of the Vietnamese to U.S. state terrorism was directed by Moscow and Beijing.

In this delusional worldview, Iran and Syria, and groups such as al-Qaeda and Hezbollah, are the sources of violence in Iraq. This baseless theory then leads to the equally baseless idea that the U.S. will somehow stabilize Iraq through talks with two governments it is committed to overthrowing.

As the Financial Times observes, there is little reason to think Bush “would be willing to follow advice that contradicts his deeply held belief that the U.S. should not talk to... Iran and Syria” because doing so would “reward bad behavior.” Bush has repeatedly said that a precondition for talking to Iran is a suspension of the country's legal nuclear enrichment program, something that Iran has no reason to agree to in advance of negotiations.

At any rate, even if talks do take place, Iran and Syria are not the masters of events in Iraq, which are driven by the internal politics and the dynamics of the U.S. occupation.

Gradual Withdrawal

Proposals for gradual withdrawal with no timetable are a recipe for pursuing an infinitely receding horizon. The idea behind gradual withdrawal was put accurately, if cynically, by Donald Rumsfeld in a secret leaked memo, written November 6, just a few days before his resignation: “Recast the U.S. military mission and U.S. goals (how we talk about them)—go minimalist.”

In other words, change the rhetoric while lowering expectations, but pursue the same goals. “Announce that whatever new approach the U.S. decides on, the U.S. is doing so on a trial basis. This will give us the ability to readjust and move to another course, if necessary, and therefore not ‘lose.’”

Redeployment

A frequent buzzword in discussions of the occupation of Iraq today, especially among Democrats, is redeployment. On November 14, 2006, Senator Russ Feingold, the Wisconsin Democrat considered to be at the extreme left end of the party’s elected officials, introduced a bill “requiring U.S. forces to redeploy from Iraq by July 1, 2007.”

But the plan itself calls for keeping troops in Iraq.

“My legislation would allow for a minimal level of U.S. forces to remain in Iraq for targeted counterterrorism activities, training of Iraqi security forces, and the protection of U.S. infrastructure and personnel.”

In other words, redeployment envisions U.S. bases, U.S. troops, and U.S. occupation, while merely shifting some personnel to other military bases in the region — where they can be quickly mobilized to strike when necessary — and most likely shifting to greater reliance on air power in Iraq and in the region to pursue U.S. imperial objectives.

Partition

One plan that the ISG did not recommend, and which Bush has also criticized, but which remains a real possibility as the crisis in Iraq unfolds, is partition. The deteriorating situation on the ground has encouraged some analysts and politicians, including incoming Democrat Joseph Biden, the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee chair, to call for the breakup of Iraq into three independent countries or three relatively autonomous territories within a loosely federated state.

Such a division of Iraq, however, could only be accomplished by massive ethnic cleansing. The largest urban concentration of Kurds in Iraq is not in the northern zone

that would likely make up a future Kurdish enclave or state, but in Baghdad. Most cities described by reporters as “Sunni strongholds” or “Shiite townships” have mixed populations with significant minorities of Sunni, Shiite, Turkmen, Kurds, or Assyrians. In addition, any predominantly Sunni state in central and western Iraq that emerged from a tripartite division of the country would be significantly impoverished compared to its oil-rich southern and northern neighbors.

The Iron Fist

Another option, one with a long history in Iraq and the Middle East, remains support for a new “iron fist.” Eliot A. Cohen, Robert E. Osgood Professor of Strategic Studies at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies, suggests that “A junta of military modernizers might be the only hope of a country whose democratic culture is weak, whose politicians are either corrupt or incapable,” a narrative that is gaining much more popularity in the establishment press and among pundits and politicians seeking an explanation for the disaster in Iraq that avoids looking at its real roots.

This is a refurbishing of an old idea: a Saddam-style regime without Saddam that became impossible as soon as the Bremer administration in Iraq dismantled the army and the Baath party, the only political and administrative basis on which such a dictatorship could have been established.

Expansion

Despite the ISG’s recommendations of direct talks with Iran and Syria, and the caution of Robert Gates and others about the pitfalls of pursuing Iran militarily, the threat of the U.S. expanding the war in Iraq remains very real. In summer 2006, Washington sponsored the disastrous and bloody Israeli invasion of Lebanon, hoping to gain some tactical advantage in the region and hence in Iraq. The gamble failed miserably, but some feel another such gamble is necessary. As Seymour Hersh writes in the New Yorker, “many in the White House and the Pentagon insist that getting tough with Iran is the only way to salvage Iraq. ‘It’s a case of “failure forward,”’ a Pentagon consultant said. ‘They believe that by tipping over Iran they would recover their losses in Iraq, like doubling your bet.’”

Whatever Bush’s new plan for Iraq may be, a major clash of expectations is likely to come about as the Democrats fail to pose any real challenge to the war.

Incoming House Speaker Nancy Pelosi stressed “bipartisanship” the moment the results were announced, adding that impeachment of Bush was “off the table.”

Pelosi and the new Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid also said they would take off the table the greatest power the Democrats have in Congress, the ability to cut off funds for prolonging the occupation.

As Alexander Cockburn wrote in the Nation: “It’s...the role of elections in properly run western democracies to remind people that things won’t really change at all.

Certainly not for the better. You can set your watch by the speed with which the new crowd lowers expectations and announces **What is Not To Be Done.**"

Out Now

Indeed, the one option that remains truly off the table in Iraq is the only sensible one: complete and unconditional immediate withdrawal, followed by reparations to the Iraqi people for the massive harm the occupation — and before that the sanctions, the Gulf and Iran-Iran Wars, and years of supporting the dictatorship — have caused.

According to the New York Times, "In the cacophony of competing plans about how to deal with Iraq, one reality now appears clear: despite the Democrats' victory...in an election viewed as a referendum on the war, the idea of rapid American troop withdrawal is fast receding as a viable option."

The debate today in Washington remains one largely over tactics, not strategy or principles.

In fact, the one debate over principles that is taking place is a racist one: more and more "experts" now question whether Bush's folly was in thinking he could bring democracy to Arab or Muslim people, who, we are told, "have no tradition of democracy," are from a "sick society," a "broken society."

In a much-lauded speech, Barack Obama, the great hope of the Democrats, couched his criticism of the Bush administration's policy by saying there should be "No more coddling" of the Iraqi government: the United States "is not going to hold together this country indefinitely," he explained, adding that "we should be more modest in our belief that we can impose democracy."

Richard Perle, former chair of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board Advisory Committee, one of the main neoconservative enthusiasts of the invasion of Iraq, in explaining why things had gone so contrary to his glorious predictions, now says he "underestimated the depravity" of the Iraqis.

And the ISG report chides that "the Iraqi people and their leaders have been slow to demonstrate their capacity or will to act," and therefore the U.S. "must not make an open-ended commitment" to them. In other words, blame the victim.

As Sharon Smith wrote on Counterpunch, "Within a few short weeks, the Washington 'consensus' has rewritten the history of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, as if Iraqis invited the U.S. to invade their sovereign nation in 2003 and now have failed to live up to their end of the bargain."

As the crisis in Iraq unfolds, we can expect these arguments to gain even wider traction, providing more cover for the real U.S. objectives in the Middle East.

The tragedy unfolding in Iraq is still far from over.

In Act I of the tragedy, we were told that Washington would invade Iraq, quickly topple the dictatorship, install a stable client government, and then, having radically changed the balance of power in the Middle East, march on from Baghdad to confront the regimes of Iran and Syria.

With that dream in tatters, the United States commenced Act II: the manipulation of sectarian divisions in Iraq to form a Shiite and Kurdish coalition government that would isolate the Sunnis (though it would seek to co-opt as much of their political leadership as possible) and serve the intended client role, if less effectively than Washington had hoped, allowing the U.S. to gain at least some foothold in Iraq and claim victory.

By mid-2006, the failures of this strategy could no longer be ignored, however.

Having invaded Iraq intending to weaken Iran and Syria, to strengthen its position and that of Israel and its Arab allies in the region, the United States instead achieved the opposite.

(Of course, all of this ignores the many stages of the tragedy authored by the United States before the March 2003 invasion, through its support of the Baath Party and Saddam Hussein, its nefarious role in the Iran-Iraq War and then the 1991 Gulf War, and the more than twelve years of sanctions and bombing that followed.)

Acts I and II in the tragedy of the Iraq occupation have now come to a close.

But Act III has only just begun. All the signs suggest that the endgame in Iraq is likely to be long and very bloody. Iraq and the Middle East are so strategically important to the United States that neither party is willing to withdraw and admit defeat; such an outcome would be more disastrous for the United States than its defeat in Vietnam.

But there is one factor in the Iraq tragedy that we should not discount. The question of how long this war lasts, whether it will expand to Iran and Syria, whether more troops will be sent to needlessly kill and be killed for profit and power, does not only depend on the decisions and internal conflicts of the ruling class.

It also depends on the level of public opposition in Iraq, at home, and within the military itself.

Groups like Iraq Veterans Against the War are already playing a leading role in the struggle to end the occupation. But we are still only at the beginning of organizing the kind of opposition we need to affect the course of the war decisively.

The U.S. war against Vietnam was lost by 1968, if not sooner, but continued for years after, with millions of lives lost as a consequence.

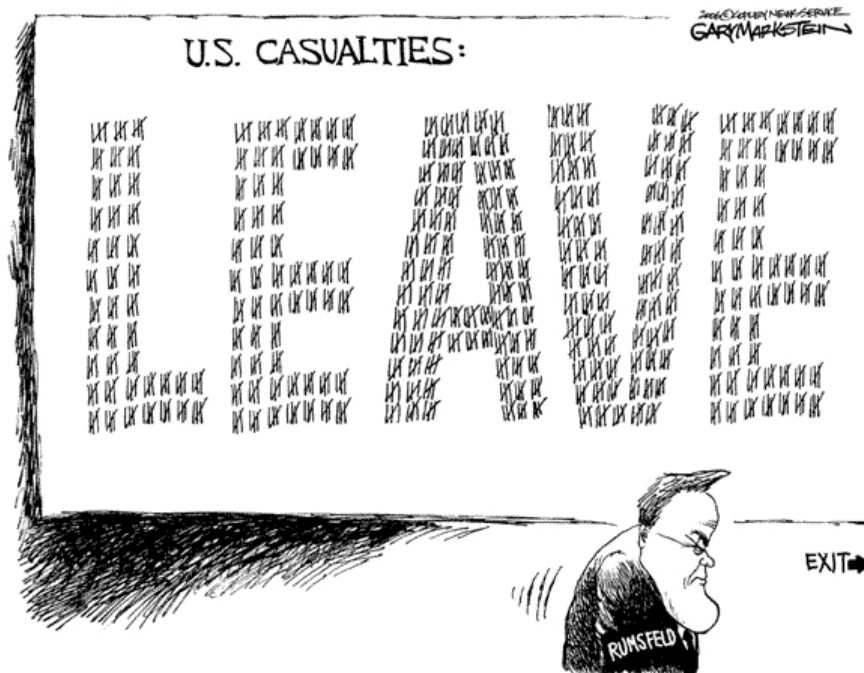
We cannot allow a repeat of that tragic history.

The Vietnam War, though, also has another lesson to teach us: that when people speak out and organize, they can deter even the most powerful and reckless government.

The war against the people of Indochina would certainly have lasted even longer, and might have spread even farther, had concerted opposition at home and internationally not forced the United States to retreat.

That is a lesson we badly need to relearn — and put into practice — today.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, who sent this in.]

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