

The Global War On Terror - Where We Stand

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One of the things casual observers of the presidential debates might remember is that John Kerry said of the war in Iraq, "Wrong War, Wrong Place, Wrong Time."

Senator Kerry and the media are heavily invested in questioning President Bush's handling of the war in Iraq. It's a 'death by a thousand paper cuts' strategy that focuses on a car bombing here and a beheading there, as proof of a situation out of control. The problem with this type of news cycle driven coverage is that it offers no perspective on the challenges faced and the obstacles overcome since 9/11, by way of the implementation of the Bush Doctrine.

The Global War On Terror series was written to recap what has, and has not, been accomplished by the Bush administration since 9/11. We encourage you to view the online version (published October 25, 2004) where you can participate in the discussion of this report. The main post is - <http://wizbangblog.com/archives/004079.php>

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INTRODUCTION

On September 11, 2001, we were forced to view the world in a new light. Most of us realized two things. First, we realized that Islamic fanatics were now willing to die in an organized effort to exact their punishment on the United States of America and that America could never win the "hearts and minds" of these Islamofacists without changing the culture that created them. Second, we realized that there were only two ways to change the culture that created the hate.

1. We could relent to the Islamofacists' demands and seek their approval for all future foreign policies.
2. We could fundamentally alter the landscape of hate by eliminating the terrorists AND replace the regimes that continue to harbor, fund and assist the terrorists.

We could have pulled a "Clinton" and attempted to merely eliminate the terrorists responsible for 9/11. That strategy in dealing with terrorists (employed by Carter, Reagan, Bush Sr., and Clinton in previous terrorist strikes) had the fatal weakness of leaving the culture that created them, the regimes that harbored them, and the leaders who funded them alive to fight another day. Most Americans now understand that the next terrorist strike could be utterly devastating to the United States.

So, President Bush acted nearly immediately. Within days of the attack, the president put the world on notice that the United States was no longer going to look the other way while regimes continued to fund, harbor and assist terrorist organizations. In the aftermath of this ultimatum, a significant amount of terrorist funds have been frozen worldwide, operatives have been arrested in countries which never before had made concerted efforts and many terrorists have been forced into hiding.

And, within 26 days of 9/11, the Bush administration moved a massive number of troops into position, pulled over 40 nations into a coalition, negotiated extraordinary concessions from Pakistani President Pervez Musharef, including flyover and basing rights, planned humanitarian efforts to avoid human catastrophe and commenced the air war to remove al Qaeda and the Taliban from Afghanistan. All within 26 days of 9/11.

BACKGROUND ON IRAQ, WMD AND THE U.N.

A little background is necessary to understand the decision to topple Saddam. Immediately after the first Gulf War, the United Nations imposed heavy sanctions against Saddam's regime. These sanctions were devastating and, according to the Duelfer report, Saddam was on the verge of losing power. Iraqis were on the cusp of revolt against the dictator responsible for their misery.

But, in 1996, Europe came to the rescue by offering the vaunted "Oil for Food" program. Bill Clinton succumbed to enormous European pressure and, against everyone's better judgment, agreed to the program. This gave Saddam new life, allowing him to provide for his citizens and illegally siphon off billions to rebuild his regime and his grip on Iraq.

All the while, Saddam thumbed his nose at more than a dozen years of U.N. Security Council resolutions, he bugged the phones and rooms of weapons inspectors, he forbade weapons inspectors to privately interview scientists, he had armed "minders" escort the inspectors 24/7 and he blocked the U.N. from entering dozens of sites they wished to inspect. He had also kicked the inspectors out multiple times before finally in 1998, after the inspectors located Saddam's stash of deadly VX, the U.N. was kicked out for good. And, from 1998 to 2002, the U.N. inspectors were never allowed to return.

So, the last thing we knew, the inspectors had found the deadliest chemical to date, VX, and had not been able to destroy the stockpile before being escorted out of the country. Meanwhile, Saddam was busy bribing France, Russia and China (each of which are able to single handedly veto any Security Council resolution) to keep the U.N out and fight for the end of all sanctions against his regime.

By September of 2001, all attempts to renegotiate U.N. re-entry had failed and there was a major push by, you guessed it, France, Russia and China to lift ALL sanctions against the non-compliant Saddam. The Duelfer report stated that, if sanctions had been lifted, Saddam would have been in a position to restart his WMD programs and certainly would have done so.

THE DECISION TO TOPPLE SADDAM

A lot has been made that the ONLY reason Bush gave for his invasion of Iraq was weapons of mass destruction. Although this was a big part of the reason, it most certainly was not the only reason. There are two factors you need to understand in order to fully appreciate Bush's rationale.

First, whether you agree with it or not, President Bush set out a policy to topple the Taliban, work with countries willing to help on the war on terror, freeze terrorists' assets and replace regimes that continue to support terrorism. In his stirring State of the Union speech, he identified the top culprits, Iraq, Iran and North Korea.

Secondly, you might find it interesting to reread Bush's speech in Cincinnati which outlined the Iraqi threat. This was THE speech justifying the invasion of Iraq. Many on the left would have you believe that the only justification President Bush gave was WMD. That's why it is so important that you reread the transcript. This speech is so long that I will not excerpt it in earnest here, but here is the link to the speech. You would be well served to [reread it](#).

WMD was indeed a large part of the speech, but you have to remember that the last time inspectors were allowed in Iraq, they had just located deadly VX and had not had the opportunity to destroy the stockpiles. Additionally, the CIA, Britain, Russia and Jordan all said that intelligence confirmed that Saddam still had WMD stockpiles and the programs to create more. The intelligence was overwhelming.

But when you reread the Cincinnati speech, you will see that possession of WMD was not the only reason Bush gave for invasion of Iraq.

1. Saddam used chemical weapons against his own citizens and in his war against Iran.
2. Saddam launched unprovoked wars against both Iran and Kuwait in a diabolical effort to dominate the Middle East.
3. Saddam possessed ballistic missiles which were banned by the U.N. and which we subsequently DID find.
4. Saddam was harboring Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Although the president does not name him by name, he clearly states that "Some al Qaeda leaders who fled Afghanistan went to Iraq. These include one very senior al Qaeda leader who received medical treatment in Baghdad this year, and who has been associated with planning for chemical and biological attacks." This could only be a reference to Zarqawi.
5. Saddam harbored world-renowned terrorists Abu Abbas and Abu Nidal.
6. Saddam's regime gleefully celebrated the 9/11 attacks on our country.
7. Saddam was scamming the U.N. mandated Oil for Food program and side-stepping sanctions.
8. In 2002 alone, the Iraqi military had fired on American and British pilots enforcing the U.N.'s no-fly zone over 750 times.

9. "On Saddam Hussein's orders, opponents have been decapitated, wives and mothers of political opponents have been systematically raped as a method of intimidation, and political prisoners have been forced to watch their own children being tortured."
10. Saddam continued to fund terrorists organizations and even rewarded the families of Palestinian homicide bombers by sending each family \$25,000 for their son or daughter's act of terrorism.

In order to fully appreciate the Iraq rationale, you have to remember that Bush, after 9/11, had put the world on notice that the United States was no longer going to look the other way while regimes continued to fund, harbor and assist terrorists and their organizations. Saddam continued to do all three. He was a loose cannon ready to explode as soon as France, Russia and China could manage to get U.N. sanctions dropped.

What President Bush understands, that neither Senator Kerry nor the loony left seems to, is the same thing President Kennedy understood in October of 1962, "Neither the United States of America, nor the world community of nations can tolerate deliberate deception and offensive threats on the part of any nation, large or small. We no longer live in a world where only the actual firing of weapons represents a sufficient challenge to a nations security to constitute maximum peril."

SO WHY NOT IRAN OR NORTH KOREA?

Unlike Saddam Hussein and Iraq,

1. Neither Iran nor North Korea had a 12 year track record of ignoring and defying U.N. Security Council resolutions.
2. Neither Iran nor North Korea had, in recent history, invaded their neighbors for regional domination.
3. Neither Iran nor North Korea had a history of utilizing chemical weapons.
4. Leaders of Iran and North Korea have a vital interest in self-preservation (Saddam wants to become an historical icon).
5. The world is currently involved in negotiations with both Iran and North Korea.
6. Invading Iran with madman Saddam next door would have been entirely too unpredictable.
7. Invading Iran, visually on a world map, would have made it look like America was on the march right across the Middle East. From Afghanistan to Iran... Where next, Iraq? It would have appeared to be a crusade.

MAKING THE DIFFICULT CHOICE

Even if President Bush wasn't completely certain that Saddam had WMDs at the time he made the choice to topple Saddam, he was certainly behooved to err on the side of caution. Prior to 9/11, erring on the side of caution might have meant redoubling diplomatic efforts and looking the other way while France, Russia and China all undermined the sanctions designed to keep Saddam in containment.

After 9/11, however, with a regime guilty of mass-murdering hundreds of thousands of its oppressed citizens, utilizing banned chemical weapons, harboring known terrorists, funding terrorist organizations and homicide bombers, invading two neighboring countries and defying countless U.N. resolutions, erring on the side of caution may indeed involve regime change and military action. In fact, after 9/11, I would regard a president who chose not to act in this situation as a traitor and completely derelict in his duties.

That's the difference for President Bush between 9/10 and 9/12, that we can no longer look the other way while threats gather. Something tells me that if you were to ask Senator Kerry "What's the difference between 9/10 and 9/12" he would respond "48 hours."

BLUEPRINT FOR AN INVASION

On the lead up to war, the plan was hatched to drive the 4th Infantry Division in from Turkey on Iraq's northern border and the 3rd Infantry Division in from Kuwait on Iraq's southern border. The 4th ID and the 3rd ID would drive to Baghdad and cordon off the city. If and when the decision was made to take over Baghdad, there would have been two mechanized divisions right in the heart of the capital.

With assurances from both Turkey and Kuwait, we commenced the build up. Unfortunately, a little more than a week from the target invasion date, Turkey's parliament surprisingly voted to deny U.S. invasion of Iraq from their territory. Even if our administration could have foreseen this problem, what could have possibly be done about it?

There's no way we could have gotten basing rights from other neighboring Muslim country like Iran, Syria or Jordan. So, basically, we had three choices:

1. We could have called off the invasion, further emboldening Saddam and our terrorist enemies worldwide.
2. We could have postponed the invasion for more than a month while we moved the 4th ID to Kuwait for a joint invasion from southern Iraq. However, this would have been one of the biggest military blunders in the history of war. Giving your enemy an additional month of preparation, leaving the 3rd ID in northern Kuwait for a month as sitting ducks and then invading through a bottleneck (a relatively small border with Kuwait) would have been a disaster.
3. We could have done what we did. Begin the war on time with the 3rd ID and the Marines, followed by the Brits to hold southern land while the Americans continued their advancement toward Baghdad. At the same time, the 4th ID would be in the process of moving to Kuwait to be in position to follow behind the 3rd ID within a few weeks.

Because we were forced to enter the country with half of the mechanized force we had planned for, military commanders decided to drive forcefully, but quickly, toward the Baghdad Airport. Once the airport and surrounding area was clear, we would be able to transport additional forces into the heart of Iraq. Additionally, we transported and inserted a smaller force than we wanted into northern Iraq to keep the Iraqi military from retaliating against the Kurds.

On the drive up from Kuwait and the follow-up by the 4th ID, much of southern Iraq was quickly tamed. For the most part, the Shiites were happy to see us. The same was true in the north where the Kurds had been brutalized by Saddam and our insertion force there was welcomed enthusiastically. So, we had a small force in the north and had swept up most of the south, but no troops had worked with any authority in the area between the Kurdish north and Baghdad.

This area, known as the Sunni Triangle, generally extends from Tikrit, to Samarra, to northern Baghdad and on to Fallujah and contained most of Saddam's most loyal followers. Naturally, this is the area where all of our enemies fled to avoid destruction. By now, you can see where I'm going with this, but more about the insurgency later.

THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH

Although many lefties would have you believe that we were not greeted as liberators, we were indeed greeted as such in the Kurdish north. The Shiites in the south, although not as enthusiastic, were relieved to be liberated from the torment of Saddam and quickly returned to their daily lives. And save a peacefully resolved conflict with Muqtada al Sadr's Mehdi Army in Najaf, most of southern Iraq has been calm and quiet for a majority of the past year. Additionally, the Kurdish areas of Iraq have been calm and quiet since the beginning of the war. That's a full three-quarters of the country in relative normalcy.

However, once the 3rd ID captured and secured the Baghdad airport, we noticed that just about everyone in power positions within the old regime had fled Baghdad, creating a rather large power vacuum. We had to move and move quickly to take significant positions within the city before the city deteriorated into chaos. That's just what the 3rd ID did.

So, in the several weeks that the 4th ID was mopping up southern Iraq, the 3rd ID was attempting to maintain a reasonable amount of calm in a city liberated from a murderous tyrant for the first time in over 30 years. Sure, there was considerable looting, but certainly not the type of chaos one could have expected.

This feat was all the more incredible since Saddam had released all of his most violent criminals from their prison cells just prior to the start of the war in an attempt to make the coalition's mission even more difficult. Honestly, I'm surprised the entire city was not burned to the ground. But our men and women in uniform are true professionals. They performed heroically in managing to maintain at least a modicum of order in the aftermath of Baghdad's capture.

THE IMPACT OF INSURGENCY

In the year and a half since the initial invasion, we have experienced a total of two insurgencies. One led by Muqtada al-Sadr and one led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. If anyone honestly expected anything less, they're just not rational human beings. I honestly expected a lot more resistance.

Do you realize that there are currently more than 100 active gangs and 30,000 hardcore gang members in the Chicago, Illinois area alone? Also, consider this... in the past 19 months we have been at war, a few more than 1,100 Americans have perished in Iraq. During this same time period, more than 950 Americans were murdered in Chicago.

Obviously the toll on Iraqis has been much greater, but I wanted to give you a little context before moving on.

Contrary to the beliefs of many of those on the left (and some on the right), there is NOT a general insurrection in Iraq. Three-quarters of Iraq is relatively stable and a strong majority of Iraqis want the liberty we are offering them.

So, what are these insurgencies? Generally speaking Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian, is responsible for much of the unrest in the Sunni Triangle: Fallujah, Ramadi, Barqubah, Hit and, until recently, Samarra. The Sunni triangle is a relative small area of Iraq, north of Baghdad, and roughly comparable to the size of the Dallas-Fort Worth area in Texas. Although Zarqawi's goons often travel to Baghdad and other high profile spots in Iraq to get maximum TV coverage of his antics, Zarqawi's sphere of influence is not very large. In fact, it is rumored that the locals in the Sunni Triangle are rapidly tiring of this foreigner and the grief he has brought upon

them.

Zarqawi is the terrorist who operated training camps in Afghanistan before being harbored by Saddam. He is also the one responsible for the beheadings and most of the car bombings.

Because of the decision of the Turkish parliament and the resulting necessary redeployment of the 4th ID to Kuwait, we never had the opportunity to properly neutralize the area immediately north of Baghdad and south of the Kurds in northern Iraq. Unfortunately this allowed Zarqawi an opportunity to gain a foothold and develop a following in a foreign land. Had the 4th ID been able to swoop down from the north, much of the Sunni Triangle would have been neutralized and Zarqawi more than likely would have been captured or killed.

Unlike Zarqawi, Muqtada al-Sadr is a local, descended from a powerful line of religious leaders. Sadr's stronghold is in the Baghdad neighborhood of Sadr City. This neighborhood makes up roughly 25% (the northeast quadrant) of Baghdad. Over the past several months, Sadr has led a group of militants called the Mehdi Army. In addition to the general level of unrest in Sadr City with mortar rounds, some car bombs and medium to light arms, the Mehdi Militia and Sadr were responsible to laying siege to the Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf, the holiest shrine to the Shiites and the second holiest site in all of Islam.

COMBATING THE INSURGENCY

The insurgencies started to become a more noticeable problem about 6 months ago. Toward the middle of June, right before the hand-over of Iraq to new Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, the insurgencies became more organized trying to disrupt the transfer of power to Iraqis. However, it was ultimately more important to put an Iraqi face on the new government than it was to immediately deal with the 2 insurgent organizations.

In an absolutely brilliant move, the United States relinquished control of Iraq to Allawi several days early, catching the insurgents by surprise and avoiding any potential attacks timed to coincide with the transfer of power. Incredibly brilliant.

Soon after the transfer, the insurgency became increasingly more organized and we knew we had to eliminate the threat from both Sadr and Zarqawi. The order in which they would be neutralized became apparent at the beginning of August when Sadr and the Mehdi Army laid siege to the Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf. Because of the holy nature of this shrine, the way we handled this crisis had the potential to become a very serious international incident.

In a masterful display of crisis resolution, the Bush administration was able to combine the U.S. Military with the Iraqi National Guard and bring Prime Minister Allawi, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and Sadr together to negotiate a peaceful resolution to the potentially inflammatory incident. Could you imagine Kerry bringing the U.N. in to negotiate? I could. And I'm sure that would have impressed Sadr.

Since the resolution, Najaf has returned to normal, Iraqi police/National Guard are patrolling the city and we, here in the U.S., are hearing absolutely nothing from the mainstream media (MSM) about Najaf. That's because it is an incredible success story.

In a final push to completely neutralize Sadr and the Mehdi Army, Allawi and the Bush administration negotiated a 'weapons for cash' program which has, in the past few weeks, resulted in collecting more than 18,000 weapons, explosives and mines from the teeming slum of 2.5 million people and beyond as others traveled to Sadr City to exchange their arms for money.

It must be working marvelously, because I have heard nothing, save the weapons-for-cash program, from Sadr City or about Sadr himself in the past few weeks from the MSM. If the program was failing, the MSM would surely be there covering it.

Zarqawi is next and he knows it. In fact, he has already lost a small but significant battle with the U.S. and Iraqis. In what was described as a resounding success, Iraqi forces, backed up by U.S. forces, combined in a swift operation to wrest control of Samarra from insurgents loyal to Zarqawi. It was such a resounding success that the MSM reported about it for one day and we have heard absolutely nothing from Samarra since. I'm beginning to detect a pattern here.

In Fallujah, where Zarqawi himself is thought to be hiding, there are currently negotiations underway, not with Zarqawi, but with the elders and leaders of Fallujah. The very people I stated earlier that were tiring of the foreigner and his thuggish gang. It seems as though either the city elders/leaders can not or will not hand over Zarqawi. But, when we have to act militarily, it can not be said that we did not attempt to stave off the incursion peacefully.

Additionally, by working with the locals, we are gaining valuable intelligence from those evacuating the city. As soon as we get this intelligence, we are acting immediately. Just yesterday (Friday October 22, 2004), we captured 6 Zarqawi loyalists, including a recently promoted senior leader in his terror movement. This captured leader had risen in rank as other Zarqawi associates had been killed in U.S. attacks on Fallujah.

There is still a great deal to do. With the insurgency, everything is not rosy. Neither is it sheer chaos as the left would have you believe. As the election draws near and Zarqawi's fate becomes more clear to him, the attacks will come more frequently and become more deadly. Attacks have reportedly risen by 25% since the beginning of Ramadan last weekend. But one thing is for certain, with the Sadr movement nearly quelled, the U.S. and Iraqi military will be working furiously over the next month to dislodge Zarqawi from Fallujah and the surrounding areas ahead of the January elections.

DISASTERS THE ADMINISTRATION AVOIDED

It is extraordinarily easy to look at the week or so of looting in parts of Baghdad, the growing incidence and media coverage of Zarqawi's insurgency and the unfortunate loss of American heroes and say, "Oh my God. What a disaster! It's a freakin' nightmare." Although the loss of any American life is tragic, this view, the view shared by most on the left, is overly simplistic and completely unfair.

This is war, not Tiddlywinks. Yes, the bombs and the beheadings get all of the press coverage. But the good news coming from Iraq fades just as quickly as it is first reported. And the doomsday warnings of a veritable slew of hyperventilating media experts before invading Iraq never materialized.

We heard of pending humanitarian disasters like mass starvation, disease and a refugee crisis the likes of which never before seen. We were warned of potential attacks on Israel, Turkey, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. We were warned of an impending war between the Kurds in the north and their tenuous neighbor Turkey. We heard the impending doom of urban warfare and thousands of dead Americans lining the streets of Baghdad because of our inability to fight in urban settings. Iraqis were going to destroy bridges and dams which would impede the American attack and drown hundreds of thousands of Iraqis.

If people are going to crucify the Bush administration for failing to plan for a week or so of looting and Zarqawi's insurgency, they should also give Bush credit for a superb plan which avoided hundreds of thousands of Iraqi deaths due to starvation and disease. Bush's plan also

avoided a refugee crisis of epoch proportions. These Monday morning quarterbacks should also credit Bush for a masterful plan to eliminate attacks on neighbors Israel, Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Bush should also get credit for limiting attacks on Kuwait to just a couple of minor incidents. The Bush administration should be credited for their artful diplomacy between the Kurds and Turkey. Americans should be thankful that Bush's military leaders properly planned for and trained for urban warfare, avoiding the thousands of deaths in the streets of Baghdad that were predicted. And Bush should be praised for the plan that kept dams and bridges from being destroyed, avoiding a massive human tragedy.

THE HISTORY OF RECONSTRUCTION & WINNING THE PEACE

Most of the information I use in this section comes from the independent organization [U.S. Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#) which is responsible for reconstruction and is the international development arm of the State Department.

The latest attacks on the President by his challenger Senator Kerry have claimed that the winning of the war was brilliant, but Bush failed to plan for winning the peace. I already discussed parts of winning the peace in prior parts of this article. However, at least part of this argument blames Bush for the supposed "slow" pace of reconstruction. This argument is nothing less than unreasonable.

Let me take a quick survey. Everyone who believes that Germany was completely rebuilt within 19 months of the end of World War II, raise your hands. From where I sit, behind my computer screen, I see no hands. And neither of mine are up.

Some of the doubters discuss problems with electricity, but take a quick look at NATO and Bill Clinton's war - Kosovo. In his [otherwise glowing five year assessment](#), U.S. Aid's Kosovo Managing Director lamented that KEK (Kosovo's electric company) is "frustrating everyone with its poor delivery of electricity the past few years." This is after five years of reconstruction.

Some of the doubters discuss the high unemployment in Iraq, but again take a look at Kosovo after 5 years, "...the economy is still not producing enough jobs and steady incomes. Europe's youngest population experiences massive unemployment..."

So, Germany was not rebuilt in 19 months nor was Kosovo. People have to be reasonable in their assessment of progress in Iraq.

In 19 short months, over 3 million children under five and 700,000 pregnant women have received vaccinations. Some 2,500 primary health care providers and 700 physicians have received skills training and 2,000 health educators, teachers, religious leaders and youth have been trained to mobilize communities on hygiene, diarrhea, breastfeeding, nutrition and immunization issues. More than 100 primary health care centers have been rehabilitated.

More than 2,400 schools have been rehabilitated, 8.7 million revised math and science textbooks for grades 1 through 12 have been printed, 33,000 teachers and education administrative workers have been trained, nearly all secondary and primary schools are now open along with the country's 43 technical colleges and 22 universities.

A major wastewater treatment plant in Baghdad began operating in June of 2004. This is the first major plant in the country to operate in over 12 years. In July, August and September 2004 electricity was being generated above pre-war levels. The 833,000 pre-war telephone subscribers has now grown to 1.753 million. There are now 10 times as many Internet subscribers than before the invasion. Over 83% of vital irrigation canals requiring clearing have been cleared.

The food distribution system was activated within 30 days of the invasion avoiding a humanitarian disaster and now 480,000 metric tons of food is being delivered each month. Dredging at the port has been completed to allow access to all 21 berths and now up to 50 ships offload cargo at the port every month. The grainreceiving facility at the port was renovated and can now process 600 metric tons of grain an hour. Additionally, the Baghdad airport has been rehabilitated and now there are 45 commercial (non-military) flights arriving and departing daily.

Additionally, some 200 independent newspapers and magazines have emerged. Election rules are being created and an election public information campaign has begun. More than 70 political parties have been formed. There is an Iraqi governing council, a president and a prime minister running the country. A staggering 745 local governing councils, including 16 governorate councils, 90 district councils, 194 city or sub-district councils, and 445 neighborhood councils, have been established. Iraq touts a fully functioning judiciary. In an August 2004 poll, 88% of Iraqis stated that they planned to vote in the upcoming elections and three-quarters believe the outcome will reflect the will of the Iraqi people.

New Iraqi currency, the new Dinar, was introduced and is stabilizing, which is more than can be said of most Central and South American countries. The Iraq Stock Exchange is up and running and 3.6 billion Iraqi dinars (\$2.4 million USD) in shares were traded in the first day. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been awarded to local councils for projects they deem important for their communities.

You know, if we were just interested in completing reconstruction quickly to score political points here in the U.S., we could have just done it all ourselves. But, the true goal is to educate, train and finance Iraqis, local governments and national Ministries to do it themselves. And they're being trained to do it right, not the way they were trained to do it for 30 years under the corrupt Saddam Hussein regime. The Ministries have all been rehabilitated and are actively running the infrastructure of Iraq.

For example, USAID and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have been working with Ministry of Electricity (ME) plant managers to identify components of plants for rehabilitation and providing technical and management assistance to ME (Iraqi) maintenance forces for the rehabilitation. If the Bush administration was just concerned with doing it quickly and not concerned with long-term success, we could have sent scores of Army Corps of Engineers and private contractors into Iraq to perform all of the repairs.

More often than not, the easiest and fastest route is not the correct route. Instead of repairing and upgrading all of the electrical infrastructure ourselves, we started by refurbishing and restaffing the Ministry of Electricity. We then allowed the ministry to hire Iraqis to work in the electrical plants and substations around the country. Then we helped train the new employees to properly identify problems in the electrical systems themselves and taught them how to requisition the parts from the Ministry of Electricity. Once the parts were received, the Corps helped the employees make the necessary repairs.

This isn't reconstructing Iraq, this is teaching Iraqis how to succeed! Remember the old adage... "Give a man a fish, he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime."

And the Iraqis are, for the most part, being extraordinarily patient but some are understandably a little frustrated. For example, some families pick up donated food items everyday. But these Iraqis don't know that the port has been dredged to allow for shipments. They don't realize that the grainreceiving facilities have been renovated to allow for greater capacity. They don't realize that additional humanitarian aid is coming through the rehabilitated Baghdad International Airport. And, frankly, they don't care how it gets to them.

Sounds a little familiar, doesn't it? Because many Americans are suffering from the same tunnel vision with regard to Iraqi reconstruction. Americans don't see any Iraqis starving, no malnourished children, but they don't see the dredging, the refurbishing, the renovating, the incoming freighters and cargo planes. And many Americans don't see the massive amount of planning that went into that very small slice of reconstruction. It really is a pity.

THE CONCLUSION

Regardless of whether or not there were WMDs, I believe it was not only desirable, but necessary to confront the regime guilty of mass-murdering hundreds of thousands of its oppressed citizens, guilty of utilizing banned chemical weapons, guilty of harboring known terrorists, guilty of funding terrorist organizations and homicide bombers, guilty of invading two neighboring countries for no reason but regional domination, guilty of defying countless U.N. resolutions and guilty of constantly harassing and expelling U.N. weapons inspectors. After 9/11, it would have been a dereliction of duty for the president to look the other way.

The invasion plan was brilliant and had the Turkish parliament not balked at the eleventh hour, many of the issues with which we are now dealing may never have materialized. But there is a saying in military planning that no plan ever survives the first shot. Battle plans are going to change based upon battlefield realities. So the true test of Bush's performance in Iraq is not why did things not work out as planned, but how did he manage to overcome the challenges presented by the changing situation.

Given the surprise decision by the Turks, he made the only sound decision he could have. He didn't call off the invasion, emboldening Saddam and our terrorist enemies. He didn't bottleneck our troops up on the southern border and give the enemy another month to prepare. He invaded with the 3rd ID, Marines and Brits from the south to be followed by the 4th ID for mop up operations. Given the alternatives, Bush made the right choice.

Although this change in plans led to a week or so of looting in Baghdad and the inability to clear out the Sunni Triangle as anticipated, Bush managed, with his plan but only half the mechanized force that he had imagined, to avoid mass starvation and disease, to avoid an epoch refugee crisis, to avoid potentially deadly attacks on Iraq's neighbors, to avoid a war between the Turks and Kurds, to avoid thousands of American casualties in bloody urban warfare and to avoid the drowning of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis from Saddam's threatened destruction of dams. And given that any of these potential humanitarian or international calamities would have been disastrous, I think a week or so of looting was small potatoes in comparison.

Could more troops have alleviated the looting? Sure, but remember, the problem at the time wasn't the number of troops, it was, thanks to the Turks, where the 4th ID was and the real-time battlefield decisions that had to be made to compensate for their repositioning. Choices had to be made and ultimately it was more important to secure the dams and bridges, strengthen supply lines for delivery of humanitarian aid, eliminate the threat of attacks on Iraq's neighbors, avoid a refugee crisis, keep the Turks and Kurds on their respective sides of the border and avoid potentially bloody urban conflict than it was to get bogged down in trying to stop several thousand Iraqis from looting. Bush acted to protect human life over protecting comparatively inconsequential possessions.

There is no doubt that our inability to clear out the Sunni Triangle in the initial invasion has led to a more effective insurgency. This insurgency has three goals. First, insurgents wanted to stop the transfer of power to Iraqis. Second, I believe insurgents would like to affect the U.S. presidential race. Third, the insurgents want to make it impossible to have elections in January. Before taking on the insurgents, Bush wanted to put an Iraqi face on the government and so the U.S. brilliantly transferred power 2 days early, avoiding any potential attacks timed

to coincide with the transfer.

Since the transfer, we and the new Iraqi government have taken a potential international incident and peacefully resolved Muqtada al-Sadr's seizure of the Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf. Additionally, we orchestrated a seemingly successful weapons-for-cash program to disarm a good part of Sadr's Mehdi Army. We have also normalized and started reconstruction in Najaf, Samarra, Karbala and Hillah. We are currently negotiating with local leaders in Fallujah for the hand over of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. We are also receiving and acting upon intelligence gathered from Iraqis fleeing Fallujah who are eager to help us dislodge the foreign terrorist from their city.

It was vitally important to put an Iraqi face on the government and that initially took precedence over defeating the insurgency. And Bush's decision to boldly follow through on the transfer of power actually aided us in our negotiations with one of the two insurgencies. Do you think that, we alone, could have talked Sadr and the Mehdi Army into peacefully disarming and relinquishing control of the holy shrine in Najaf? Again, because Bush made the right choices, the holiest Shiite shrine was saved and Sadr's followers have largely ceased their attacks and turned in their arms.

Now there's Zarqawi. Over the past 4 or 5 months, we have made several incursions into Fallujah, but never felt like we were in a position to take the city. We needed more intelligence and to weaken the insurgency prior to the final assault. Over the past few months, while attending to the resolution of the Sadr insurgency, we have been gaining intelligence from the weary residents and softening the targets with precision strikes aimed at thinning out the insurgency, disrupting their ability to organize and destroying potentially deadly weapons caches.

Being patient enough to gather better intelligence and soften the resistance has probably saved many American lives. Zarqawi is not stupid and he is receiving help from non-Iraqi sources, maybe al Qaeda. Zarqawi is attempting to draw us into an urban trap where he can make the doomsday pundits' warnings come true. Is the way to fight a stubborn urban insurgency flooding the area with more troops? Only if you want mass casualties. The way to battle an urban insurgency is to do exactly what the Bush administration decided to do, gain intelligence, negotiate with local leaders and soften the targets with precision air strikes before a ground assault.

Once the assault on Fallujah is complete and Zarqawi and his followers are neutralized, most of the deadly attacks will cease and the major insurgencies of both Sadr and Zarqawi will have been either marginalized or defeated.

Meanwhile, reconstruction continues in a way that ensures a successful Iraqi civilization for years to come. We're not doing for them, we are training and helping them to do for themselves. Although it has slowed recently due to the insurgency, what has been accomplished so far is nothing short of amazing. We're basically rebuilding a country from scratch. And once the insurgency is quashed, the rapid pace of reconstruction will resume.

When making your final decision, please remember, Zarqawi wanted to stop the transfer of power, Bush brilliantly succeeded and Zarqawi failed. Zarqawi wanted to start a civil war between the Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds, so far he has a limited following of Sunnis and the Shiites and Kurds are busy rebuilding their sections of Iraq, looking forward to January elections and are extremely optimistic about their future in a liberated Iraq. So far Bush has succeeded and Zarqawi has failed. Zarqawi has targeted Iraqi police and Iraqi military in an effort to quash recruitment. The recruiting lines are just as long as they have ever been and the success of the Iraqi military in Samarra has sent morale through the roof. So far, Bush has succeeded and Zarqawi has failed.

Zarqawi also wants to affect the U.S. presidential election and whether he succeeds or fails is entirely up to us. Regardless of whether Bush or Kerry will be tougher on terrorism and/or more committed to success in Iraq, causing Americans to fire the man who began the war on terror would be a major symbolic win for Zarqawi, Usama bin Laden, Iran and North Korea.

ERRATA - THE KERRY QUESTION

For those who have turned toward Senator Kerry out of frustration at the lack of perceived progress in Iraq, let's examine how John Kerry (from what we know of him to this point) might have performed were he in the President's shoes.

Let's assume that a Kerry administration had decided to confront Iraq and upon recommendation of his generals, Kerry had amassed troops along Iraq's borders with Kuwait and Turkey.

How would Kerry have decided to proceed after the last minute decision of the Turkish parliament? With the absence of the 4th ID, would he have ACTED to save the dams, expedite humanitarian aid, keep the peace between the Turks and Kurds, eliminate the threat of attacks against Iraq's neighbors and avoid an epoch refugee crisis? Or would Kerry have dropped everything else and REACTED to the news on the T.V. and tried to stop the looting in Baghdad?

How would a Kerry administration have handled the transfer of power at a time the insurgency was strengthening and dedicated to keep the transfer from happening? Would he have seen the wisdom of putting an Iraqi face on the government or would he have delayed the transfer while dealing with the insurgency? And would Kerry have been creative enough to transfer early to avoid attacks to coincide with the hand over?

Would Kerry have been able to peacefully resolve the standoff at the Imam Ali mosque in Najaf and worked out a deal to encourage the Mehdi Army to exchange their weapons for cash?

Kerry is on record as saying we didn't have enough troops in Iraq to handle the insurgency, to win the peace. Would Kerry have seen the wisdom in patience, gaining more and better intelligence and softening the resistance before beginning a ground assault? Or is it his contention that the way to engage in urban warfare is to send in a huge number of troops and incur massive casualties to take Fallujah back at any cost?

And I'm afraid we wouldn't have to ask how Kerry would have handled reconstruction. It is clear that, under a Kerry administration, the U.N. would be in charge of the effort. The U.N.'s record of developing fledgling democracies and rebuilding countries is the epitome of waste, fraud and bureaucracy.

I am not going to ask you to vote for Bush. That's a decision you have to make. If you decide to vote for Kerry, at least I can feel comfortable that you will be doing so with the full knowledge of both sides of the story.