

# Voice Of The Left

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## The Truth about Iraq

Four years after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, the Bush Administration continues its senseless and wasteful policy of attempting to police a Muslim civil war. The costs are staggering – 3,400 killed, 26,000 wounded, and \$400 billion spent.

And for what?

Iraq is more violent than when the occupation began. As for the president's "surge" strategy (remember, this is not to be confused with an "escalation"), thousands more U.S. troops have been carelessly placed in harms way.

While the Republican leadership clicks their glasses as the Dow Jones hits record highs, the death toll is mounting.

In referring to U.S. casualties suffered since the President's surge policy was initiated three weeks ago, a UPI report released on May 23 of this year had this to say, "The current death rate of U.S. troops in Iraq therefore is worse than it has been for any comparable three-week period in the last two years." The report went on to add, "The latest heavy level of casualty figures appear to reflect the continued increased exposure of US forces made necessary by the 'surge' strategy, coupled with the inability of the increased U.S. forces to inflict significant attrition on the Sunni insurgents who continue to target them."

It's really pretty simple. The United States military is not trained to be a Muslim police force. Most importantly, our young people are too precious to be forced to go door to door in a part of the world where the very sight of an American instills rage. Then again, the \$300 million a day we are spending in Iraq could be spent providing true Homeland Security, such as securing our borders, protecting our harbors, airports, nuclear power and chemical plants.

And what is it doing to our military?

For starters, raw recruits are now being rushed into battle with just *nine weeks training* due to the severe manpower shortages in our all volunteer force. Lawrence Korb, a former Pentagon personnel chief, said this in a recent interview, "They should be giving our young soldiers more training, not less." U.S. Army advisor Andrew Krepinevich echoed the same sentiments when he said, "This is the first time we've had a volunteer Army on an extended deployment. A lot of canaries are dropping dead in the mine." Even our old friend Colin Powell said in an interview last December, "The active Army is about broken." Perhaps most pertinent of all were the comments of John Abizaid, the

outgoing Army general who commanded U.S. troops in Afghanistan and Iraq for the past three years. In speaking before a Harvard audience last fall, Abizaid said, "This is not an Army that was built to sustain a long war."

Of course, the President loves to echo the refrain that "we cannot allow Al-Qaeda to gain a foothold in Iraq." If that is true, perhaps we should have left Saddam in power. More to the point, Al-Qaeda has footholds all over the Middle East. Is the President suggesting that we occupy 23 Muslim nations? A more prudent strategy would be to force the oligarchs in "Hatred's Kingdom" (a.k.a. Saudi Arabia) to quit funding the madrassas that spread their message of Evil. And by the way, where are most of these hate-spewing madrassas located? In case you're on a game show, it's Pakistan, where an estimated 1,000,000 "students" are currently enrolled.

Think it's time to have a talk with that so-called "ally" on the War Against Terror?

OK...Back to the main point at hand. Let's talk about the troops. How do they feel about the war? Contrary to the Goebbels-like comments of our president, a poll taken last December by the independent *Army Times* vividly revealed the true sentiments of those with "boots on the ground." According to the poll, only 35% of the troops approved of the President's handling of the war and just 50% believed that victory (whatever this is) was likely.

The suicide rate might also be saying something about morale – it's up 80% over the past 12 months. As for the desertion rate, it's climbing steadily as well. In fact, over 8,000 members of the U.S. military have deserted since the Iraq war began. (*USA Today* 3/7/06)

So how is the Army coping to meet its recruiting goals? That's easy – by cutting its standards. Nearly twice as many convicted felons were given waivers by Army recruiters in 2006 than in 2003 Pentagon data shows, and nearly 20% of all Army recruits did not have high school diplomas. (For the record, this is double the drop-out rate suggested by the Pentagon.)

The time for rhetoric has long since past. Just as we had to do a generation ago, the Left must lead us out of this senseless conflict. For over four years, George Bush has refused to listen to anything with regard to the direction of the war. (Remember the bipartisan Iraq Study Group?) Right up until the last congressional elections, we were assured repeatedly by the administration that "we were winning the war in Iraq," that "the media was giving us a distorted view of the situation," and that "the insurgency was in its last throws."

The truth is now clear for all to see. Because of countless mistakes in strategy on the part of our military and political leadership, and the complete unwillingness of the so-called Iraqi government to take serious measures to quell the violence, Iraq is hopelessly out of control. To put it succinctly, there is no American/British military solution other than to get out. Our boys have done more than their fair share to remove a ruthless dictator from

power and lay the groundwork for a democracy. It is now up to the Iraqi people to solve their own problems.

America has made enough of a sacrifice.

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