

"You know, when I campaigned in 2000, I said, I want to be a war president. No one wants to be a war president, but I am one."

— GEORGE W, October 26, 2006

Edited by Jim Hightower and Phillip Frazer ♦ Vol. 9 No. 5 ♦ May 2007

- 3,300 American troops and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis are dead
- Rumsfeld said the Iraq attack would cost \$50 billion. The tab so far exceeds \$500 billion
- Almost two million Iraqis have fled the country and only 30% of kids can go to school

Yet the war goes on...

ON EASTER MORNING, GEORGE W MADE another of his periodic shows of Standing With The Troops. He attended church services in the chapel at Fort Hood in Killeen, Texas, after which he offered to the assembled media this pious little announcement: "I had a chance to reflect on the great sacrifice that our military and their families are making. I prayed for their safety. I prayed for their strength and comfort. And I pray for peace."

He prayed for our troops' safety? How clueless is he? George, you have the troops stuck in another country's vicious civil war. They're under attack from every direction by every faction, every hour of every day, hit by car bombs, roadside bombs, chlorine bombs, IEDs, suicide bombs, rocket fire, mortar rounds, snipers, and assassins. There is no safety in Iraq.

He prayed for peace? George, YOU made this war. Don't put it on God! The ONLY reason that America is in Iraq is because you, "Buckshot" Cheney, Rummy, and the rest rode us into an invasion and occupation on a pack of lies. God didn't do this. YOU did. Praying won't get it done. God helps those who help themselves. You have peace in your own hands.

Yet the war goes on

Only three days after George the Pious told us about his prayers for safety, strength, comfort, and peace, his Pentagon chief, Robert Gates, announced that all active-duty soldiers already in Iraq or going there will have their tours of duty extended

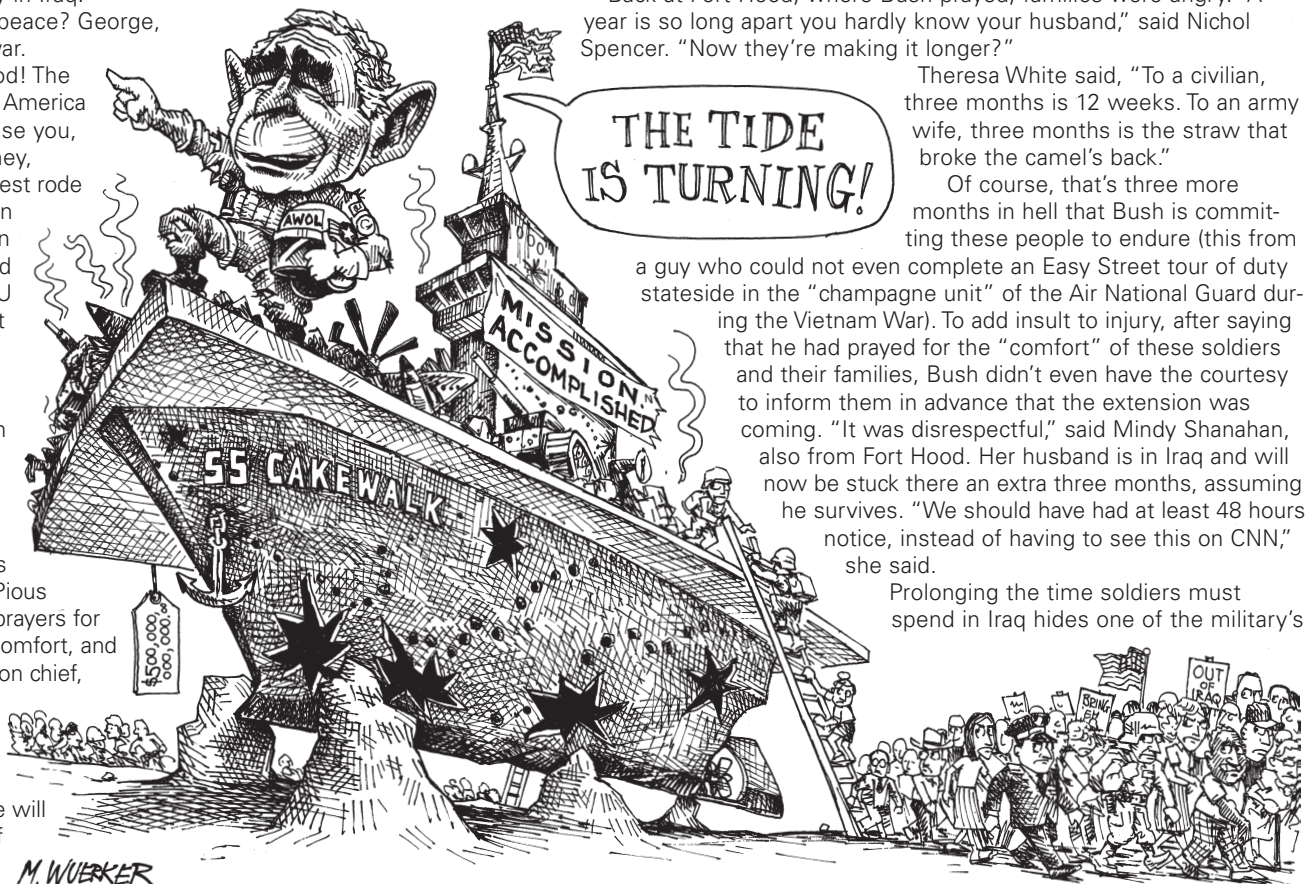
from 12 months to 15. "Our forces are stretched," Gates admitted, but he said that this added burden is "necessary" in order to carry out Bush's latest war strategy, his "surge" scheme. The extension order affects 100,000 soldiers. Plus their families. Bear in mind that many of these families have already gone through two or three tours in Iraq.

Back at Fort Hood, where Bush prayed, families were angry. "A year is so long apart you hardly know your husband," said Nichol Spencer. "Now they're making it longer?"

Theresa White said, "To a civilian, three months is 12 weeks. To an army wife, three months is the straw that broke the camel's back."

Of course, that's three more months in hell that Bush is committing these people to endure (this from a guy who could not even complete an Easy Street tour of duty stateside in the "champagne unit" of the Air National Guard during the Vietnam War). To add insult to injury, after saying that he had prayed for the "comfort" of these soldiers and their families, Bush didn't even have the courtesy to inform them in advance that the extension was coming. "It was disrespectful," said Mindy Shanahan, also from Fort Hood. Her husband is in Iraq and will now be stuck there an extra three months, assuming he survives. "We should have had at least 48 hours notice, instead of having to see this on CNN," she said.

Prolonging the time soldiers must spend in Iraq hides one of the military's



Bees are dying. Dying all across America. Lots and lots of bees.

Starting in Florida last fall, the great bee die-off has spread to 24 states. Whole colonies are dying. In western states, commercial beekeepers report up to a 60 percent loss of their bees, with losses at 70 percent in Texas and on the east coast. It's unprecedented.

Who cares? Well, few people realize that many of America's food crops—from almonds to watermelon—rely heavily on commercial honeybees for pollination. No bees, no fruit.

Another little known fact is that bee pollination is increasingly a highly concentrated industry. Rather than a dispersed system of local hives, a few commercial operators now haul tens of billions of bees from coast to coast, trucking their hives in 18-wheelers.

"Colony Collapse Disorder" or CCD, as it's now called, could be the result of this industrialized model of pollination. First, the bees themselves have been bred into single-purpose super-pollinators, rather than bees with multiple functions (make honey, feed the queen, maintain the hives, and extend the species). The industrial bees have lost the diversity and natural traits of wild bees.

Second, constant trucking puts stress on the bees, suppressing their immune systems and making them vulnerable to viruses, mites, and diseases. Also as part of their forced migration, the bees are fed a limited diet of high fructose corn syrup—about as healthy as humans trying to live on Cokes. There is evidence that pesticides and genetically altered organisms that have been artificially spliced into many field crops are a cause of CCD.

It's not just bees and

—continued on page 3

other little problems: Very few Americans want to join Bush's war. Not even those young Republicans who say they so enthusiastically support the war are willing to bet *their* lives on it. So, in a country of 300 million citizens, recruiters are straining to meet a quota of roughly 80,000 new soldiers a year, much less find more troops to cycle into Bush's surge. The military has already raised the maximum enlistment age from 35 to 42, which means that if you and your wife had kids when you were 20 and you're now 40, the whole family could go to war. Wow—the Brady Bunch does Iraq!

Despite doubling the number of felons permitted to enlist and lowering the minimum standards so more high-school dropouts and people with low mental-aptitude scores can be taken, the Pentagon still is not getting enough volunteers. Even recent West Point graduates, the Army's elite, are saying "no thanks" to Iraq, choosing to leave active-duty service at the highest rate in more than three decades.

Yet, the war goes on

Bush's war, now in its fifth year, has already lasted longer than World War II. On Easter Sunday, as George was saying his prayers, the number of American military deaths in Iraq was approaching 3,300. And now, with his surge, the rate of U.S. deaths is on the rise. All this killing has prompted more eloquence from the commander-in-chief: "Make no mistake about it. I understand how tough it is. I talk to families who die."

Then there are some 24,000 soldiers who haven't died but instead have come home maimed and traumatized, including more than 1,300 who've lost arms and/or legs, and more than 4,600 who've suffered severe head or brain injuries. Many of them have been sent to the "comfort" of Walter Reed Army Medical Center, just a short hop from Bush's hangout at the White

House. There they have been greeted with horrific conditions and cold indifference.

When news of this scandal broke, Bush feigned surprise and expressed obligatory outrage. But, wait, George—you're the president, you're in charge of this disgrace! It's your Pentagon budget (now above half-a-trillion dollars a year) that has been lavishing money on favored contractors while quietly snipping away at funding for Walter Reed. A review panel concluded last month that your Pentagon was aware of this neglect, yet it still cut funds even as the hospital was being inundated with thousands of severely maimed soldiers returning from Iraq. The panel said the hospital is now beyond repair.

It's not just Walter Reed, either. The nationwide VA system is overwhelmed with patients and experiencing crucial shortages in staff and facilities. As of January, there was a backlog of 600,000 vets awaiting care—nearly a third of whom have been waiting six months or longer. All this on your watch, George—while you've been demanding that war critics "support our troops." Meanwhile, your current budget proposal reduces funding for veterans' care in 2009 and 2010—just when the military expects that the influx of wounded will peak.

Yet, the war goes on

Asked in January 2003 what the price tag was for the Bushites' upcoming Iraq attack and occupation, Donny Rumsfeld said that the budget office forecast "a number that's something under \$50 billion."

Not quite right. Iraq is now costing us \$6 billion a month (the surge will be extra), and total direct costs through this year will top \$500 billion. Included in that is \$12 billion that was airlifted in 2003 to the interim Iraqi government in shrink-wrapped stacks of \$100 bills (the load weighed 363 tons) and

promptly disappeared. Poof...gone!

Add in such indirect costs as veterans' long-term health care and replacement of the military hardware consumed by the war, and the tab runs to \$1.2 trillion or more. David Leonhardt, a *New York Times* economic analyst, has itemized some other things we could've bought with that sum instead of the mess in Iraq. His list includes:

- **TEN YEARS** of universal health care, covering every American who is now without it.
- **DOUBLING** the cancer research budget.
- **GLOBAL IMMUNIZATION** of the world's children against measles, whooping cough, tetanus, TB, polio, and diphtheria.
- **UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL** for every 3- and 4-year-old child in America.
- **RECONSTRUCTION** of New Orleans.
- **IMPLEMENTATION** of all of the 9/11 Commission's recommendations.

Yet, the war goes on

Being positive is one thing, but George W has gone from positive to delusional. Last year, in a rhetorical reach to claim that things were looking up in Iraq, he offered this: "I think—tide turning. See, as I remember—I was raised in the desert, but tides kind of—it's easy to see the tide turn."

He might ask the Iraqi people about tide-turning progress in his war. Outside of Baghdad's four-square-mile fortress known as the Green Zone, where the U.S. brass and Iraqi political elite reside, life is miserable. Violence erupts constantly and unpredictably, fear is everyone's companion, jobs are scarce, going anywhere is dangerous, basic services are practically nonexistent, and distrust, frustration, and anger rule.

An official UN count puts last year's death toll of innocent Iraqi civilians at 34,452—three times higher than the U.S. had admitted. Another 36,685 were wounded. One analysis puts the civilian death toll much higher—a total of 655,000 since the invasion.

Some 2 million Iraqis (16% of the population) have fled the country, including 40% of professionals (one third of doctors fled, 2,000 have been murdered). Three thousand people a day are fleeing—so many that Saudi Arabia (Bush's superrich ally in his war) is building a 560-mile fence to keep them out. By the way, the U.S. allowed only

DoSomething!

Here are some groups who are strategizing, organizing, and mobilizing against the Iraq war:

- **Oil Change International**
www.priceofoil.org
212-518-9029
- **Code Pink**
www.codepink4peace.org
310-827-4320
- **Peace Action**
www.peace-action.org
301-565-4050
- **Veterans for Peace**
www.veteransforpeace.org
314-725-6005
- **Military Families Speak Out**
www.mfso.org
617-983-0710
- **United for Peace and Justice**
www.unitedforpeace.org
212-868-5545
- **Veterans Against the Iraq War**
www.vaiw.org
201-876-0430
- **True Majority**
www.truemajority.org
802-860-6858

Wanted: War Czar

An odd help-wanted ad has come out of Washington. It reads: WANTED: Fulltime turnaround specialist to take charge of large empire-building enterprise. Duties include development of a plan, coordination of outsized egos, 24/7 damage control, and refurbishment of the institution's image. Requires experience at correcting past errors, multi-tasking ability, crisis-management skills, and a strong stomach. Send resumes to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

The Bushites, in a move that would be comic were it not so tragically pathetic, are looking for a "war czar." This person is to oversee the war in Iraq and have the authority to issue directions to the Pentagon, the State Department, and all other relevant agencies. Presumably, that would include the CIA, the Department of Halliburton, and the bunker of Dick Cheney.

Of course, when the Founders wrote the Constitution, they provided for a war czar, whom they called "the president" and designated as the commander-in-chief. Apparently, by trying to create a new czar, the White House is finally admitting that George W just isn't up to the job of coordinating his own appointees, including the secretaries of defense, state, and so on.

However, the performance of our self-proclaimed "war president" has been so disastrous that the Bushites are having a hard time finding anyone willing to take the czar job. Three retired four-star generals have already turned down the offer. As one of them, retired Marine General Jack Sheehan, said, "The very fundamental issue is, they don't know where the hell they're going."

Bush & Company don't need a czar—they need a clue! From the start, their war policy was wrong, incompetently run, and a moral stain on our country, and it is being prolonged as a flailing act of political desperation. Forget managing the war—get out of it.

of Bush's rationales for his war (WMDs! al Qaeda connections! Democracy for the people!), Iraq sits atop the world's second-largest oil reserve. The proven reserves are 112 billion barrels, with a probable pool in excess of 400 billion barrels. At current prices, that's about \$25 trillion worth of crude.

When certain outrageous commentators (like me) suggested at the start of the war's build-up that an oil grab could be involved, Rumsfeld barked to the media, "It has nothing to do with oil, literally nothing to do with oil." Could that have been another Bushite lie?

Yes. Big Oil has long wanted to get its hands on Iraq's vast reserves. In a 1998 speech, Chevron's CEO said, "I'd love Chevron to have access." Big Oil's wish is Bush's command, and as early as December 2002, just before the invasion, the state department's oil-and-energy working group was saying that Iraq "should be opened to international oil companies as quickly as possible after the war."

In 2004 Bush & Company drafted a secret legislative proposal to deliver this national treasure to the oil giants. This February, the proposal was introduced to the Iraqi parliament, and now the Bushites, oil lobbyists, and a handful of Iraqi pols are urgently trying to pass it.

This law would transform Iraq's oil reserves from a nationally owned resource to a privatization model, opening two thirds of the known oil fields (and all fields discovered in the future) to control by Big Oil. Instead of having Iraq's parliament make the major decisions over oil, an unelected authority called the Federal Oil and Gas Council would take charge. And guess who would have seats

Nature that these food industrialists are messing with—it's our food supply.

ROMNEY GOES HUNTING...FOR VOTES

When George Romney ran for president in 1968, he opposed the war in Vietnam. When it came out that he'd earlier supported the war, he blamed that on having been "brain-washed." At the time, Senator Gene McCarthy, noting that Romney wasn't known for being too bright, commented that brain-washing him wouldn't have been necessary, since "I would have thought a light rinse would be sufficient."

Now comes a chip off the old block, George's son, Mitt Romney, presently running for president. Mitt's a Republican, so he's trying to show the extreme-right-wing in his party that he's one of them. Abortion? Agin it! But, oops, running for office in Massachusetts, Mitt was pro choice. Gay Marriage? No way, says Mitt. But, oops again, he previously embraced gay rights.

The most fun, however, is Romney's claim that he's "been a hunter pretty much all my life." This is important because he wants the National Rifle Association to endorse him. But—oops—his campaign had to admit that, well...he'd actually gone hunting only twice in his life.

He later made this blunder worse by saying: "I've always been a rodent and rabbit hunter. Small varmints, if you will." Rodents? And, "if you will?" What NRA member talks like that? Still, Mitt brags that he's an NRA member. Yeah—he joined eight months ago. And, in Massachusetts, he supported gun control laws the NRA hates.

Well, he declared this year, "I have a gun of my own." Uh...not exactly.

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202 Iraqi refugees into our country last year.

Another 1.6 million Iraqis are displaced within their country, forced from their homes by various factions in the civil/religious war. Many of these are children. Only 30% of Iraqi children attended school last year (pre-war, nearly 100% percent were in school). Children routinely witness violence and killings that are often gruesome, including seeing family and friend die. A recent study of 2,500 grade school children in Baghdad found that 70% showed symptoms of trauma.

While Bush brags that his war

has liberated women, in reality there has been an explosion of violence against them, including widespread abductions, public beatings, rapes, "honor killings," torture, beheadings, and public hangings. The president of the Iraqi National Council of Women goes nowhere without a bodyguard. "I started with 6," she said, "then I increased to 12, and then to 20, and then to 30." One of the women in Iraq's parliament said bluntly, "This is the worst time ever in Iraqi women's lives."

Yet the war goes on

Lest we forget in the foggy mist

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Mitt—your son owns a gun, not you. Still, he claims that he keeps his son’s gun in his home. Which one? He owns homes in three states—just like your typical NRA hunter-guy, huh?

Worse than a flip-flopper, Mitt Romney simply can’t shoot straight with the American people.

CIRCUIT CITY’S “WAGE MANAGEMENT”

Corporations keep inventing newspeak to disguise the nastiness of their job cuts. Instead of saying “fired,” the latest fad is for companies to say they have “eliminated redundancies in the human resources area.” That makes the fired workers feel much better.

Circuit City, however, has figured out a whole new way to eliminate those “redundancies.” The giant electronics retailer says that it is simply doing away with the jobs of 3,400 of its most-experienced, highest-paid hourly workers. Are they fired? Technically, no. Circuit City says that those jobs no longer exist, so the jobs were eliminated, not the employees. But Circuit City says 3,400 new jobs will be created—for doing the exact same work. Only, at lower pay. Those out of work salesclerks will be allowed to apply for the new low-pay jobs.

Wouldn’t that be a demotion? Tut-tut, corporate America no longer uses such a tacky word, preferring to substitute the term, “negative advancement.” In other words, down is up—though it pays less.

Who’s the genius managing this backwards initiative? The company’s CEO is Philip Schoonover and his salary, bonus, and other compensation added up to \$8.5 million last year—right after he’d presided over a 21 percent drop in his corporation’s stock price.

on the council? The major oil corporations!

This autocratic group would then decide who gets the contracts to extract the nation’s oil. That means Big Oil would be approving its own bids! Also, the corporations would not have to hire Iraqis, reinvest profits in Iraq, or share new technologies. Foreign interests would even be allowed to divvy up the territory now, hold their pieces of the action until after the current civil war settles down, and then move in to grab profits.

Yet the war goes on

If you think that maybe our self-anointed “war president” is in over his head, ponder this bit of strategic insight from George: “No question that the enemy has tried to spread sectarian violence. They use violence as a tool to do that.”

Uh, yeah...and it seems to be working. Bush’s surge strategy is intended to concentrate our forces in Baghdad to rid the capital of violence. But since the surge began, residents have not noticed any lull in the carnage, instead experiencing a record number of car bombings. On April 12, the Green Zone itself got a wake-up call when a suicide bomber detonated himself in the parliament’s cafeteria, killing three lawmakers and five others.

Meanwhile, knowing that the U.S. surge was coming and would last for only a few months, the deadly Shiite militias based in Baghdad have simply stood down to wait out Bush. With U.S. and Iraqi forces surging in Baghdad, the bloodshed has spread to the countryside. In late March, for example, two massive truck bombs ripped through the town market in Tal Afar, killing 48. In response, Shiite militia

went on a revenge spree against Sunni residents, killing some 60 of them.

Then there’s the Kurdish zone in the north, which had been rather calm...until now. The Iraqi constitution cobbled together by the Bushites a couple of years ago contains a provision requiring a referendum on the future of the region’s capital city, Kirkuk. Now, because two sides want to control this wealthy city, a new front has opened in the Iraq war.

On one side are the Kurds, who have set up their own essentially autonomous government in the north and have well-armed, battle-seasoned militias ready to fight for the land they claim as their own. Opposing them are the Arabs, who were moved into the Kurdish zone by Saddam Hussein years ago but now consider it to be theirs. They are also heavily armed and—follow the bouncing ball here—they are backed by the government of neighboring Turkey, which is fighting a Kurdish independence movement inside its own borders.

Literally underlying this explosive ethnic imbroglio is one of the world’s largest oil reserves, which means Big Oil also has a keen interest in “winning”—whatever that involves. To add to the nasty potential, Iran cares very much about this fight and has deployed security forces to the border it shares with the Kurdish zone.

The government in Baghdad, under enormous pressure (aka blackmail) from Kurdish legislators, has just decided to back the Kurds’ claim—and the Arab side in Kirkuk is already setting off bombs in Kurdish neighborhoods.

Yet the war goes on

In a tragi-comic bit of presiden-

tial posturing, Bush assembled a dozen or so veterans, soldiers, and family members in the Diplomatic Reception Room of the White House for a media show on March 23. With these human “stage props” lined up behind him, George lashed out at congressional Democrats for passing a bill requiring withdrawal from Iraq next year. Without even a smile of irony, Bush called the Democrats’ effort “an act of political theater.”

Well, this particular withdrawal bill won’t get the job done, but it’s a reflection of the broad public demand to stop this horrible folly. Roughly two thirds of Americans want out of Iraq by next year, and 54% support a cutoff of funds for Bush’s surge. Even the troops in Iraq want a withdrawal, for only 35% of those polled by *Military Times* last December said that they approve of George W’s handling of the war.

Still, some progressives despair. They say that last year’s elections were a clear mandate for withdrawal, but the Democrats have been weak and the killing continues, so what’s the use? That’s right on the facts, but totally wrong on the attitude. We made great strides last year, and we’ve changed the national debate on the war. Yes, Bush and Cheney are boneheads, and the Democratic leadership has Jello in its spine, but what did you expect? Popular movements have always had to muster the tenacity to overcome disappointments—and ours is no different. Come on—we’ve got ‘em on the run! Far from being down, take energy from the gains we’ve made—and keep pushing on. No one is going to stop the war but us.

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