

"So?"

— VP CHENEY
to ABC News, 2008,
when asked about
recent polls that show
two-thirds of Americans
say the fight in
Iraq is not worth it.

What 8 years of BushCheney have done to the world



WOW, HAS IT REALLY BEEN FIVE YEARS since "Mission Accomplished?" It seems like only yesterday that our Glorious Leader was strutting around in a top-gun outfit, cockadoodling about American prominence in the world and wallowing in job-approval ratings of 28%.

Now, after all his lies, all the lives and blood he cost us, all the money wasted and debt accumulated, all the opportunities squandered, all the credibility and

respect drained, the little banty rooster has sunk to a public-approval rating lower than that of several major diseases.

In this issue, part 2 of the *Lowdown's* factual accounting of the Bush legacy, we put the numbers to his regime's performance on international matters. This record helps explain why 81% of the American people presently say that our country is headed in the wrong direction.

Are we safe yet?

BUSHCHENEY'S military munificence

Amount of total world military spending by U.S.	47%
BushCheney request for military spending in 2009	\$600-700 billion
Military spending of 10 next top-spending countries combined	\$446 billion



American Lives

ON TOP OF THE 4,037 U.S. MILITARY-PERSONNEL DEATHS, around 1,200 employees of Halliburton, Blackwater, and other corporate contractors **have died**. Plus 309 members of other nations in the "multinational force." Plus 491 U.S. military fatalities in Afghanistan. Plus an unknown number of Afghans. [<http://www.democracysarsenal.org/2008/02/contractordeat.html>]

In May 2007 the **Dept. of Labor** reported at least 12,000 contractors have filed claims for disabling wounds.

According to *USAToday*, there are more "contractors" working for the U.S. in Iraq than U.S. troops—180,000 versus 158,000 troops. Who are these guys? 53% are Iraqi, 17% American, and 30% "other."

COST IN LIVES:

The body count in Iraq	2003	2008
U.S. deaths at time of "Mission Accomplished" speech, and today	139	4,037
Estimated Iraqi deaths	7,409 <i>(up to 5/1/03)*</i>	1.03 million*
U.S. wounded at time of "Mission Accomplished" speech, and today	542	28,661

*From iraqbodycount.org which counts only deaths reported by two media outlets.

** See "Cost in Iraqi lives" below

AL QAEDA IN IRAQ

2003: There was no organized al-Qaeda in Iraq. Osama bin Laden himself was disdainful of the country's none-too-religious dictator, calling Saddam's Iraq an "apostate regime."

2008: The Congressional Research Service says that attacks from al-Qaeda-in-Iraq are less than two percent of the violence in Iraq. The State Dept. estimates that al-Qaeda-in-Iraq has fewer than 1,000 members, most of them from other countries. [*Wikipedia 08*]

This doesn't stop Sen. "Senior-Moment" McCain from routinely asserting it's us versus al-Qaeda in Iraq.

Cost in Iraqi lives

SINCE DONALD RUMSFELD TOLD FOX NEWS back in November 2003 that "we don't do body counts on other people," lots of other people have been counting bodies.

A new World Health Organization/ Iraqi government survey estimates that 151,000 Iraqis died from violence in the three years following the U.S.-led invasion of the country.

Over 2.4 million Iraqis have fled their homes for safer areas within Iraq, another 1.5 million are living in Syria, and more than 1 million refugees have fled to Jordan, Iran, Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, and the Gulf States.

Opinion Research Business, a British polling agency, just completed a survey asking 2,106 Iraqis, "How many members of your household have died as a result of the conflict in Iraq since 2003?"

According to the responses, **over 21% had lost at least one** household member, which extrapolates to **1,033,239 deaths since 2003**.

What 8 years of Bush Cheney and the neocons have done to the world



<http://www.hightowerlowdown.org>

The Iraq disaster

BUSHCHENEY, who predicted in 2003 the whole Iraq venture would cost about \$50 billion, concede that the tab is over **\$600 billion** and running. But the latest and most exhaustive accounting is by **Joseph Stiglitz** and **Linda Bilmes** (he's a Nobel-winning economist at Columbia University; she's at Harvard). **They came up with \$3 trillion** (\$5,000 a second). They include the cost of treating our tens of thousands of wounded troops AND replacing the staggering amount of military gear used or lost.

W's war on terror

NUMBER OF SERIOUS TERRORIST ATTACKS ON U.S. SOIL FOILED SINCE 2001: NONE

NUMBER OF ACTIVE-DUTY ARMY DIVISIONS RATED AT THE HIGHEST READINESS LEVELS IN 2001: ALL.

NUMBER OF ACTIVE-DUTY OR RESERVE BRIGADES IN THE U.S. CONSIDERED FULLY COMBAT READY TODAY: 0 [*Speaker of the House Pelosi, 11/07*]

In April 2006, the administration's own director of national intelligence found that "the Iraq conflict has become the 'cause celebre' for jihadists" and was "shaping a new generation of terrorist leaders and operatives."

WHAT 9/11 HAD TO DO WITH IRAQ

2001: NOTHING. "The Intelligence Community has no credible information that Baghdad had foreknowledge of the 11 September attacks or any other al-Qaeda strike." [*CIA report to Congress, January 2003*]

2008: NOTHING. "We could never verify that there was any Iraqi authority, direction and control, complicity with al-Qaeda for 9/11 or any operational act against America, period." [former Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet on 60 Minutes, 4/29/07]



M. WIEBER

COALITION OF THE INCREASINGLY UNWILLING:

THE ORIGINAL "COALITION OF THE WILLING" in 2003 included **Australia, El Salvador, Georgia, Poland, Romania, South Korea, U.S., UK**, plus **14 nations** with fewer than 100 personnel each in Iraq.

Nations which have now *withdrawn* their troops: **Australia** (withdrawing in June), **Dominican Republic, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Philippines, Portugal, Singapore, Slovakia, Spain, Thailand, Tonga.**

Of the 168,000 troops in the "coalition" today, 158,000 are American.

GLOBAL WARMING:

THE ONLY GOAL BUSH HAS SET for the USA is to reduce the growth of our greenhouse-gas emissions by 18% by 2012. That's reducing the growth.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SAYS: At the most recent global conference on climate change in Bali, the U.S. was "principally responsible for obstructing progress."

Oil: the fuel behind the fire

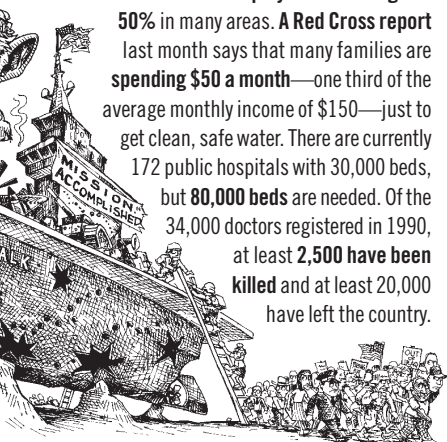
"I'm saddened that it is politically inconvenient to acknowledge what everyone knows: The Iraq war is largely about oil."

— ALAN GREENSPAN, in his memoir *The Age of Turbulence*, 2007.

EVEN THOUGH DICK CHENEY has always produced an especially nasty sneer at the idea that the occupation of Iraq was for the oil, the battle for control over oil has been waged in lockstep with the battle for Baghdad.

Daily life for Iraqis

ELECTRICITY IN BAGHDAD REMAINS BELOW PRE-WAR LEVELS and unemployment is as high as 50% in many areas. A Red Cross report last month says that many families are spending \$50 a month—one third of the average monthly income of \$150—just to get clean, safe water. There are currently 172 public hospitals with 30,000 beds, but 80,000 beds are needed. Of the 34,000 doctors registered in 1990, at least 2,500 have been killed and at least 20,000 have left the country.



PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR BUSH'S MILITARY ACTION IN IRAQ:

	2003	2008
Americans who believe it was worth going to war over the situation in Iraq: [CNN 4/08]	68%	36%
Americans who approve of the way Bush is handling the situation in Iraq: [CBS 4/08]	71%	33%
Americans who think the U.S. should withdraw from Iraq within a year: [Rasmussen Reports national telephone survey 4/08]		65%
U.S. military families who disapprove of Bush's handling of Iraq and say that the war in Iraq was not worth the cost: [LATimes/Bloomberg poll 12/07]		60%
U.S. military families who want the troops home within a year or sooner: [LATimes/Bloomberg poll 12/07]		58%
Americans who believe the Iraq adventure is responsible for our economic distress: (67% said "a lot" and 22% said "some") [CBS 4/08]		89%

Food

OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS, THE WORLD PRICE OF RICE—a food staple for three billion people—has tripled to about \$700 a ton.

A major reason is the Bush administration's 2005 mandate to blend 35 billion U.S. gallons of ethanol into gasoline per year by 2017. Ethanol processing now consumes a third of the U.S. corn crop and might eventually use it all to achieve that mandate.

Since the U.S. accounts for 40% of global trade in corn, the detour to biofuels pushes prices up everywhere.

Because agribusiness fattens much of the world's livestock on corn, the demand for this crop is soaring and farmers are switching to it from wheat. At the same time, the cost of fertilizer made from oil is exploding. As a result, we have a global food crisis: riots over the price of pasta in Italy, over corn in Mexico and Indonesia, and over any food at all in Haiti.

But isn't all this in a good cause—replacing greenhouse-gas producing fuels with clean biofuel? Maybe, if you make the ethanol from sugar cane as the Brazilians do, but starting with corn winds up using as much energy as it produces, and as much greenhouse gas as oil does.

This "alternative" fuel push, and the global food-price explosion, is brought to us courtesy of the powerful U.S. corn and sugar lobbies, their friends in Congress, and the White House. And by our fossil-fuel economy, which would rather promote a "new oil"—such as ethanol—than retool our society around conservation and renewables.

Global money

2001: Bush's solution to the dot.com-bust recession was to give a huge tax break to the richest citizens and cut interest rates to 1%, hoping that American industry would invest in production and we'd all get booming.

2002-2006: Industry didn't invest, at least not in the USA. But banks grabbed the low-cost money and offered easy-entry mortgages, which induced homeowners to borrow and spend.

2008: Wall Street geniuses had bundled all those shaky mortgages with more valuable IOUs and sold these bundles around the world. Banks and mortgage lenders in dozens of countries discovered that billions, perhaps trillions, of the U.S.-originated IOUs they hold are worth bupkus.

WHILE WALL STREET was exporting those poisoned security packages, Bush & Co. were financing the Iraq adventure on credit. They increased the federal government's debt, which stood at \$5.7 trillion when Bush took office, to a staggering \$9.4 trillion.

Over half of this sum is owed to individuals, corporations, and foreign governments.

The rest is owed by the government to itself, most of it to Social Security and other trust funds, which have been running surpluses. (Bush, like previous presidents, says Social Security is broke! That's because they spent the money.)

Meanwhile, largely on account of the war, the cost of a barrel of oil has gone from \$25 in 2003 to \$117 today.

Now oil countries and Asian nations flush with greenbacks are buying chunks of American companies.

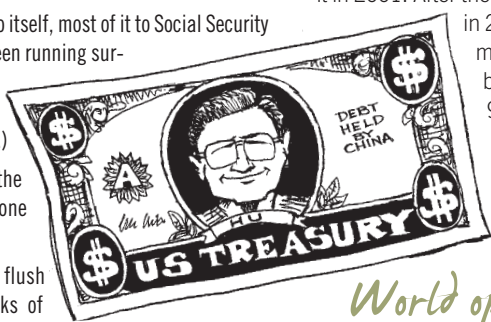
BUSHCHENEY'S AFGHANISTAN OCCUPATION:

BUSH SAYS: "A nation that was once a safe haven for al Qaeda is now a young democracy." [SOTU '08]

RETIRED LT. GEN. DAVID BARNO, FORMER U.S. COMMANDER IN AFGHANISTAN, SAYS: [The enemy] "is unquestionably a much stronger force than the enemy we faced in 2004." [Talk Radio News Service 1/08]

REUTERS NEWS AGENCY SAYS: The Taliban controls 54% of the country as of November 2007. [Reuters 1/08]

Afghanistan has long been the world's largest producer of opium, except when the Taliban government banned it in 2001. After the U.S.-led invasion in 2001, poppies made a major comeback and yielded 95% of global heroin. [NYTimes 11/07]



World opinion

BUSHCHENEY LOSE world's hearts and minds

	2003	2007
Number of people abroad who view America favorably	58.3%	39.2%
Number of people in Great Britain who view America favorably	83%	51%
Number of people in Indonesia who view America favorably	75%	29%
Number of people in Germany who view America favorably	78%	30%
Number of people in Argentina who view America favorably	50%	16%

[Pew Research Center]

WHAT WE STAND FOR:

LAST MONTH WE LEARNED that Secretary of State Condi Rice chaired White House discussions about which torture techniques should be used on prisoners.

These talks "were so detailed" that "some of the interrogation sessions were almost choreographed—down to the number of times CIA agents could use a specific tactic," said ABC News.

Others in these how-to meetings included Cheney, Rumsfeld, Tenet, Colin Powell, and then-Attorney General John Ashcroft (who said "history will not judge this kindly"). In other words, abusive techniques at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib were not isolated incidents by a few "bad apples," but the policy dictates of the best and brightest in the Bush administration.

THE SURGE

THE SURGE BEGAN IN JANUARY 2007, sending 25,000 more U.S. troops to beat back sectarian violence.

This was accompanied by a drive to sign up Sunnis who get \$300/month if they promise to talk to U.S. military forces instead of killing them. So far, 80,000 Sunnis have signed up to be "concerned local citizens" (our term), calling themselves "Sons of Iraq."

This buy-off of Sunnis, and the ceasefire called by Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, account for most of the surge's supposed success in reducing U.S. and Iraqi casualties.

Now the latest draft law on Iraq's oil industry is nearing a vote in that country's normally dysfunctional parliament.

Our mainstream press tells us that this legislation is all about how the \$10 trillion worth of oil reserves will be shared among Shiite, Sunni, Kurd, and Turkmen communities—but the real key is that regardless of how the division of oil proceeds winds up, Western oil giants Exxon-Mobil, Chevron, Eni, Total, and the rest will get the long-term deals for Iraq's oil, and they will sit at the table with Iraqi officials to make all the decisions on the fate of the world's second-largest oil fields. BushCheney insist that this wasn't the goal, but it sure is the prize.

AL NEEDS A JOB

Poor Al—he's all resumé, no job. Sort of a yuppified version of "All hat, no cattle."

And what a resumé he has: graduate of Harvard law school; chief lawyer for the president of the United States; and then U.S. attorney general, America's top lawyer.

Alberto Gonzales can't get a job. Having been forced to resign as attorney general, the Texan who flowered in the manure of George W's corporate-financed rise to power has been putting out feelers to the very corporate law firms that fueled his rise to the legal heights. They are not returning his phone calls.

Gonzales confused personal loyalty to the Bush regime with public responsibility. Legalize torture? He'd find a way. Use the Justice Department as a political hit squad? He was okay with that. Go before Congress and play a dummy? Hey, count on Al.

Unfortunately, this tail-wagging loyalty to the Bushites caused Gonzales to be seen as, let's say, less than truthful, even to Republican lawmakers. Plus, he's facing possible criminal charges for his prevarications.

FENCING OFF OUR DEMOCRACY

It's bad enough that the BushCheney regime keeps usurping power to build an imperial presidency, but it's far worse that our Congress critters have been weaker than Canadian hot sauce at exercising their own constitutional power.

Take "The Fence," the 40-foot-high wall being built along 700 miles of our border with Mexico. This partition is monstrous, but even more monstrous is the unprecedented dicta-

torial authority that Congress handed to the Homeland Security czar Michael Chertoff to erect it. In 2005, our legislators gave him carte blanche to—get this—override any of our laws that he thinks might interfere with building this border barrier. Environmental law, labor law, property law—you name it—all can be voided on the unilateral say-so of Chertoff. Even Cheney, who claims to be his own branch of government, can't do that.

To make Chertoff's power absolute, Congress also took the astonishing step of banning federal courts from reviewing his decisions. And the czar has not been modest about asserting his superpower, having already suspended more than 30 of our laws.

Two environmental groups have taken a challenge to this madness to the Supreme Court, which has never upheld such a wholesale delegation of power. Yes, Congress itself surrendered its power, but as Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote in a similar case, "Abdication of responsibility is not part of the constitutional design."

Learn more from Sierra Club at 415-977-5500 or www.sierraclub.org.

BREAK FOR CORPORATE CRIME

Corporate executives and their lawyers like to claim that a corporation is a "person" with all of the rights of an actual human being. Yet when one of these outfits gets caught violating laws, its lawyers

argue that while this entity might be fined, it can't be put in jail or given a death sentence because...well, because it's a financial structure, not a human.

Embracing this game of now-you-see-us/now-you-don't, the Bushites have devised a neat way to go soft on corporate criminals. Called "deferred prosecution agreements"—or "DPAs"—this ploy says that corporations and banks that are charged with everything from robbery to bribery can have a get-out-of-jail-free card. Monsanto, Merrill Lynch, and some 50 other corporations have recently been allowed to pay a relatively cheap fine and agree to certain internal reforms rather than be prosecuted for their crimes. Even the big mortgage hucksters

who have wrecked our housing market could end up writing a check and walking away.

DPAs were originally meant to help real people (usually first offenders) get a second chance, but they've become the favorite wrist-slap of Bush prosecutors and corporate violators. They argue that full prosecution could be "a corporate death sentence" with "catastrophic collateral consequences," so these criminals shouldn't be treated like mere people.

NUMBERS: Many folks have asked for sources for all those numbers in last month's Lowdown, on the economy. Most of the citations are in a box titled Sources at www.hightowerlowdown.org. One number we got wrong is the net worth of the wealthiest 1% of Americans: it's not \$816 billion—*more like \$19 trillion!*

GET THE LOWDOWN!

YES! I want to receive a full year of *The Hightower Lowdown* — 12 issues in all—for an unbelievably ridiculous, low, low price.

- Send me one year of *The Hightower Lowdown* for just \$15. (Seniors & students—\$12.)
- Send me two years of the *Lowdown* for \$27. (Seniors & students—\$22.)

To give a gift of the *Lowdown*, enter the recipient's name and address below and include your name and address on a separate sheet.

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____ STATE _____
 ZIP _____

Mail this coupon with your payment to:

The Hightower Lowdown, P.O. Box 20596, New York, NY 10011 05/08

The Hightower LOWDOWN

EDITORS: Jim Hightower, Phillip Frazer
RESEARCH: Laura Ehrlich **CIRCULATION:** John Ernst
COPY WIZ: Gwenda Blair **ARTISTE:** Matt Wuerker
LAYOUT: Sahu Barron **INTERWEB EMISSARY:** Deanna Zandt
PUBLISHER: Phillip Frazer

The Hightower Lowdown (ISSN 1524-4881) is published monthly by Public Intelligence Inc., 375 South End Ave #14P New York NY 10280. ©2008 in the United States. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY. Subscriptions: 1 year, \$15; 2 years, \$27. Add \$8/year for Mexico or Canada; add \$12/year for overseas airmail. Back issues \$2 postpaid. Allow 4-6 weeks for receipt of first issue and for all subscription transactions. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: *The Hightower Lowdown*, P.O. Box 20596, New York, NY 10011.

Moving? Missed an issue? Call our subscription folks toll-free at (866) 271-4900 or write lowdown@pipeline.com. Send us fan mail or hate mail at: P.O. Box 20596, New York, NY 10011 or editors@hightowerlowdown.org. Printed with 100% union labor on 100% recycled paper.

You can comment on stories in the Lowdown on the new and improved website

hightowerlowdown.org

PERIODICALS CLASS Postage Paid at New York, NY

The Hightower Lowdown
P.O. Box 20596
New York, NY 10011

Moving? Missed an issue?

Please call or write us at:
The Hightower Lowdown
P.O. Box 20596
New York, NY 10011
lowdown@pipeline.com
Subscribers' toll-free number: (866) 271-4900

10:5 May 2008

WHAT 8 YEARS OF BUSHCHENEY HAVE DONE TO THE WORLD

4 Al needs a job
Fencing off our democracy
Break for corporate crime