

Al Qaeda in Iraq: Bush's Creation

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President George W. Bush's political capital is about as low as it can go, with only dead-end Bushists clinging to his failed regime. The erosion of support, however, can actually make the madman even more isolated from reality, arrogant and impetuous.

The final 18 months of his presidency will be an increasingly dangerous time for the world. Bush is wrapping himself in his messianic blanket, still bound to convince the infidels at home and abroad that he is a gifted visionary who can reshape the Middle East.

Vice President Dick Cheney makes Dr. Strangelove seem like Gandhi. Cheney operates above the Congress, the Constitution, the law and human decency — at times, above the presidency. He does as he pleases and is answerable to no one.

Bush is not nearly clever enough to sort through or keep up with Cheney's Machiavellian machinations. The president is so lazy and incurious, he's more than willing to let Cheney do his dirty work. Whether it is approving torture, illegal wiretapping, concentration camps and kidnappings, or coddling corporate polluters, Cheney is ready to nod OK.

The poll numbers are encouraging, as Americans see through the lies and conclude — tragically, too late — what a mess we are in. The percentage of Americans who believe the war in Iraq was a mistake is at an all-time high, as is the percentage of those who say continued U.S. military action there is not morally justified.

A CBS/New York Times poll shows 23 percent of Americans believe the war is going well, 76 percent say the war is going "badly." The critical question politicians carefully watch: "Do you believe the country is heading in the right direction?" The nation is on the wrong track, according to 72 percent of respondents. That's the highest number since the poll started asking that question in 1983.

The numbers show people are generally gaining a better understanding of the disastrous course our nation is on and the serial failures of the Bush administration. There are exceptions, which seem baffling at first but find explanation in the administration's talking points — invariably lies and distortions — dutifully echoed in the mainstream media.

A "Newsweek" magazine poll conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International posed the question, "Do you think Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq was directly involved in planning, financing, or carrying out the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001?"

A staggering 41 percent answered yes. That's actually a 5 percentage point increase over the same question asked in 2004. It's hard to image that 4 out of 10 Americans could be

that uninformed or flat-out stupid. Another poll shows 3 out of 10 Americans still approve of Bush's job performance and his handling of the war in Iraq.

The growth in the number of sorry souls buying the Saddam-Sept. 11 lie may be the result of the word games the White House and Pentagon use to sell the failed surge and the futile occupation of Iraq.

When people hear "al-Qaeda," it's natural that they think of Osama bin Laden and the Sept. 11 attacks. The insurgency, sectarian violence and opposition to the U.S. occupation in Iraq are not about fighting al-Qaeda, but that's how Bush's fiasco there is being branded.

McClatchy Newspapers' Baghdad correspondent Mike Drummond exposed the sinister rhetorical shift, noting in a recent report, "U.S. forces continue to battle Shiite militia in the south, as well as Shiite militia and Sunni insurgents in Baghdad. Yet America's most wanted enemy at the moment is Sunni al-Qaeda in Iraq. The Bush administration's recent shift toward calling the enemy in Iraq 'al-Qaeda' rather than an insurgency may reflect the difficulty in maintaining support for the war at home more than it does the nature of the enemy in Iraq."

In a major speech at the National War College last week, Bush mentioned al-Qaeda 27 times. McClatchy's Jonathan Landley reports, "Bush called al-Qaeda in Iraq the perpetrator of the worst violence racking that country and said it was the same group that carried out the 9/11 attacks."

Pure crap. Al-Qaeda has become a generic name, in many cases a self-proclaimed label for foes of the U.S. invasion. Since some of the Iraqi Sunnis started calling themselves "al-Qaeda in Iraq" or "al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia," the Bush propaganda ministry saw an opportunity to conflate the invasion of Iraq with the Sept. 11 attacks.

Bush went on to claim, "Al-Qaeda is the main enemy for Shia, Sunni and Kurds alike. Al-Qaeda is responsible for the most sensational killings in Iraq. They're responsible for the sensational killings on U.S. soil." Those are demonstrable lies. Bush hardly mentioned sectarian violence. U.S. military intelligence even disputes Bush's wild claims. All of this is intentional and meant to deceive and distort.

The Iraq Study Group and intelligence estimates placed the number of Iraqi insurgent forces at approximately 20,000 combatants. At most, 5 percent of that number are foreigners fighting in Iraq, nearly all going there in response to the U.S. invasion. Some are Iranians supporting Shiites; others Sunnis from Syria and Saudi Arabia supporting Iraqi Sunnis. Nearly all come from nations with strategic interests in the region and want to help their ethnic or religious comrades.

The lightning rod for these expeditionary forces is the presence of U.S. forces in the heart of Islam. Bin Laden, hiding in the mountains of northern Pakistan, just sits back and relaxes, enjoying the bloody spectacle and the gift to radical Islam Bush brought him.

The true ties involving Iraq, deadly chemical weapons and the United States rarely get a mention. Saddam's allies in killings tens of thousands of Kurds included Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, Robert Gates and others. Reagan as president, Bush as vice president, Rumsfeld as special envoy to the Middle East and Gates as a senior CIA officer all provided help and support for Saddam's murderous assaults on his own people.

The Iraqi Special Tribunal has sentenced Saddam's cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid to death. Known as "Chemical Ali," he was the point-man in using chemical weapons first on Iranian troops during the Iraq-Iran war, and then later on Iraqi Kurds supporting the Iranians.

On the Smirking Chimp Web site, Barry Lando described how, when Ali's sentence was read on June 24, "all the key players in the media were there to capture the dramatic courtroom scene. What none of the reporters mentioned, however, was that when Saddam and Chemical Ali and the rest of the Saddam killers were doing their worst, the U.S. governments of Ronald Reagan and later George Bush Senior were their de facto allies, providing them with vital satellite intelligence, weapons and financing, while shielding them from U.N. investigations or efforts by the U.S. Congress to impose trade sanctions for their depredations."

Robert Parry, who broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for AP, wrote, "Hussein's silence was golden for the international arms dealers who supplied his regime and the foreign officials who facilitated the shipments." So when the "brutal dictator" — as George W. liked to call him — was sent to the gallows, Bush the Elder, Rumsfeld and Gates "were among those who could breathe a little easier after the hangman's noose had choked the life out of Hussein," Parry concluded.

Bin Laden never had any kind of relationship with Saddam, but many intimates of our president did. So far, they have been able to choke the life out of that truth.

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