

George W. Bush's Ides of March

A warning to Julius Caesar of an impending danger...

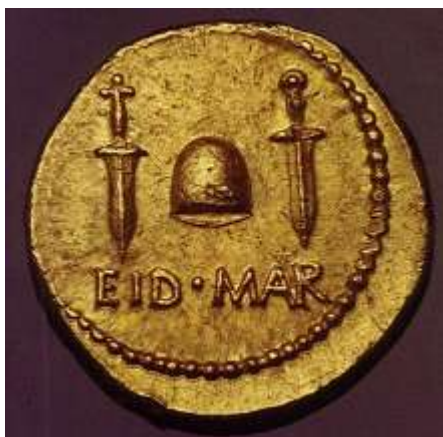
By [Felicity Arbuthnot](#)

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Brutus and the Ides of March

'Beware the Ides of March', is said as a warning of impending and certain danger. Since it is from Plutarch, referring to a warning to Julius Caesar, it is unlikely to have influenced George W. Bush's 'shock and awe' decision to invade Iraq in March, since literature is not his forte. (Unless you count 'My Pet Goat').



Plutarch

For Iraq though, March brings not alone the fourth anniversary of the illegal US led invasion, monumental destruction of life, all societal structures, history, the National Museum, libraries of ancient manuscripts, all records from educational qualifications to medical reports, births, deaths and marriages and never ending death and trauma beyond imagination, but the memory of the 1991 'turkey shoot' on the Basra Road and the US encouraged uprisings in the south and north – then bloodily put down – with US assistance. March marked the beginning of the forty day period of mourning for the thousands of retreating conscripts and civilian families incinerated in their vehicles, when B52's bombed the front and back of the sixty mile convoy, then relentlessly bombed the rest 'like sitting ducks', as one pilot explained.

At least 'fifteen hundred tanks, armored vehicles, jeeps, water and fuel tankers, ambulances, fire trucks, tractor trailers, buses and civilian vehicles and passenger cars ... some flying white flags' were 'pounded for hours' with anti-personnel bombs 'and finally finished off with devastating B52 bombing runs'. It is thought that thousands were crushed,

or incinerated in their vehicles. Windscreens and humanity melted. As the William Tell overture and the Lone Ranger theme, blasted out on the USS Ranger, 'planes reloaded and reloaded, returning to hit the convoy again and again, dropping everything from cluster bombs to five hundred pound bombs 'like sharks in a feeding frenzy'.

US Air Force planes from Saudi Arabia 'raced north to join in the fun'. There was so much air traffic involved in the 'frenzy' that the 'killing box' had to be divided up by air traffic controllers to prevent aircraft colliding. 'I think we're past the point of letting (Hussein) get in his tanks and drive them back to Iraq' a US pilot said, adding: 'I feel fairly punitive about it.' Saddam Hussein, in whose name the United Nations denied medicines, food, pencils and even blackboards since he would personally misuse them, was now apparently capable of driving sixty miles of vehicles, single handedly.

'It's a slaughter', Jordanian businessman Zaki Ayoubi said: 'You are going to slaughter one hundred thousand young men who belong to one hundred thousand families. We're not talking abstract artillery and machinery.' President Bush senior, cared, not about indescribable carnage, but semantics. 'Saddam's most recent speech' (saying Iraq was withdrawing from Kuwait, which they did) 'is an outrage ... his forces are retreating.' Vice President Dan Quayle (over whom, stories abound regarding string pulling in order to avoid service in Viet Nam) chimed in saying that a lasting peace and Saddam were incompatible. Thus was bloodbath justified.

Admitting 'massive casualties', those not vaporized were buried in mass graves in the desert. Soldiers cleaning up 'said they were satisfied justice had been done.' Bush senior was asked in beautiful Martinique whether he had any thoughts that the carnage had got out of hand and replied: 'No, none at all'. Much was made of the fact that many of the vehicles contained 'looted' items - toys, silverware, vacuum cleaners, soap, even underwear, as some kind of justification for the massacre. Even in the casual world of US justice, looting does not carry the death penalty (if it did, there would be even more dead US and British soldiers in Iraq currently) and whilst there was indeed looting, Iraqis and Kuwaitis intermarried and many were fleeing with personal belongings from a home they had now had to leave. Then as now there were also many fleeing Palestinians. (See: 'Desert Mirage', Martin Yant, Prometheus Books.)

White House spokesman, Marlin Fitzwater had given a commitment that US and coalition forces would not attack Iraqi forces leaving Kuwait. Yet: 'Even in Viet Nam, I didn't see anything like this. It's pathetic', stated Major Bob Nugent of US Army Intelligence. (War Crimes. Ramsey Clark and others, Maisonneuve Press.)

Writer Malcom Lagache, points out that there seems to have been more than one commitment by Fitzwater guaranteeing the safety of withdrawing Iraqis: 'On 22nd February 1991, here's what Fitzwater said: "The United States and its coalition partners reiterate that their forces will not attack retreating Iraqi forces."' 'Lagache adds presciently: 'Notice that he used the word "reiterate" in the sense that this was a repeat of a promise previously stated.'

Marlin Fitzwater .

The Iraqi pull out from Kuwait began on 26th February 1991, the ceasefire was signed on the 28th February. On 2nd March 1991, the US 24th Mechanized Division slaughtered thousands more Iraqi soldiers, an action approved by General Norman Schwarzkopf (who famously remarked: 'no one left to kill'. His autobiography is 'It doesn't take a Hero'. Indeed.) 'We really waxed them', said one Commander. Another American was recorded saying 'Say hello to Allah', as his Hellfire missile obliterated a vehicle. 'Yee-hah', said another voice. There was an attempt to cover up the carnage of another vehicle strewn road, since: '...it didn't look good coming after the ceasefire.' (Ramsey Clark, The Fire this Time, Thunder's Mouth Press.)

Lagauche adds: 'The March 2nd incident should go down as one of the most shameful occurrences in history. Eight thousand Iraqis (men, women and children) were burnt to a crisp. General Barry McCaffrey called it "absolutely one of the most astounding goddamned operations ever seen in the history of military science." ' Further : ' The following day, a U.S. sergeant inspected the area and said : " I stopped as a familiar smell wafted through the air ... It was the smell of a cookout on a warm summer day, the smell of seared steak." ' McCaffrey, who has the blood of tens of thousands on his hands, was promoted , received another star, was not tried as a war criminal and was then assigned to a US Cabinet post as 'US Drug Czar.

The then US Ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, had told Saddam Hussein that America had 'no view on Arab-Arab conflicts.' Hussein had consulted her on the possible invasion. Iraq accused Kuwait of slant-drilling into their Rumaila oil field across Kuwait's border, destabilizing Iraq's currency and moving Kuwaiti settlements well into Iraqi territory.

One conscript who survived the horrors of the Basra Road, with the remnants of his unit, told me how they had walked the five hundred and fifty kilometers, through the destruction, by the body parts, home, to carpet bombed Baghdad, none knowing whether family or house had survived: 'We wanted to cry, but we had no tears left.' Eighty eight thousand five hundred tons of bombs had fallen on ancient Mesopotamia, which brought the world all we call civilized.



Basra Road, 1991

As the wickedness of George W. Bush and his war criminal Administration are marked, four years on from the illegal invasion and destruction of the 'cradle of civilization', another George Bush and other criminal acts should also be remembered. He may have taken to crying publicly over his son, he should also look in the mirror.



And on this March day, another Minister in Iraq's legitimate government ('sovereignty and territorial integrity', guaranteed by the United Nations) is hanged at dawn, taking civilisation back five hundred years, under the blood-lust watch of America and Britain, in a further act of barbarism.

The unspeakable sins of the son and his Whitehall lackey, are being perpetrated in our name.

Felicity Arbuthnot is a frequent contributor to Global Research. Her carefully documented

reports on the history of the Iraqi war have not only provided evidence of the war crimes committed by occupying forces, they reveal the ongoing humanitarian crisis and plight of an entire nation and its people.

Author's Note: I am indebted to Malcom Lagauche for generously sharing his research, for his upcoming book, after reading my original article and adding to evidence of a crime, as he says, of historical enormity. Since people are still sought and being tried for Nazi war crimes sixty years later, there seems no reason why the same rules should not apply to more recent ones

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