

# The War in Iraq: Apathy is our greatest enemy

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Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

In-depth Report: [IRAQ REPORT](#)

What does it take us to shock us into action these days? An Opinion Business Research (ORB) survey of Iraqi families indicates as many as 1.2 million Iraqi civilians may have died as a result of the war. That's five times more than the death toll wrought by Fat Man and Little Boy in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

It's also the equivalent of killing every Arab-American as per the 2000 census or every man, woman and child in, say, Amsterdam. And just why were those people's lives sacrificed again?

Former US Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, a committed Republican who served four American presidents, says it was all about oil, which most of us who were against the war from day one knew all along. Yet when we mentioned the "O" word, we were invariably targeted as crazed conspiracy theorists.

Unfortunately for Bush, Greenspan — the man who held the US economy in his hands for nearly 20 years — cannot be written off as easily. Even Fox News can't accuse him of being a pea-brained, tree-hugging liberal.

If the bottom line is oil, then all the talk about fighting terrorism and sprinkling democracy dust is nothing more than peripheral chatter strewn around in the hope the distracted, the terminally apathetic, the intellectually-challenged and the misguided "patriots" among us will buy into the game.

It's certainly true that many Americans have wizened up since the early rah-rah days. Very few are genuflecting at the altar of US Commander in Iraq General David Petraeus, referred to in a Move On.Org advertisement in the New York Times as "General Betray us".

That may have been harsh but let's face it, he's a military man with a chain of command and a commander-in-chief called George W. Bush. It's not surprising that presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton thought his pearls of wisdom as to the current state of Iraq required the "willing suspension of disbelief".

If Greenspan is right — and he probably is — then why aren't we outraged? Why aren't we spilling out onto the streets in protest? Are we prepared to accept the death of 1.2 million innocent individuals just so we can fill our tanks with cheap fuel?

What if 1.2 million Americans or 1.2 million Britons had been sacrificed for the same goal? Would they have been acceptable collateral damage?

Let's put this into context, folks. A photogenic 4-year-old British girl goes missing in Portugal

and she's 24/7 news for months. Her parents get to meet the pope and their mission is endorsed by David Beckham, Richard Branson and dozens of other celebrities.

By contrast, how many of you have ever heard of a 5-year-old Iraqi boy called Yousuf, who masked men doused with petrol before setting fire to him? His once beautiful face is now disfigured beyond recognition.

Yet, he is luckier than most because CNN fleetingly took up his story — in comparison to the coverage of Madeleine McCann — and he is now in Los Angeles receiving treatment thanks to the Children's Burn Foundation.

Many children who fell victim to unexploded cluster bombs or who were born with abnormalities caused by depleted uranium are left to the vagaries of a poorly manned and rudimentally equipped Iraqi health system.

### **Malnourished**

Last year, UNICEF reported that one in every four Iraqi children under 5-years-old is chronically malnourished and one in eight doesn't survive long enough to enjoy their fifth birthday.

Thousands of children have not been immunised and 30 per cent do not attend school. The United Nations has estimated that over 40,000 Iraqi children now live in orphanages; some have been discovered starving and abused.

If Greenspan spoke the truth concerning the motives of those ruthless people he once considered friends, then the war is surely a shameful obscenity. It is tantamount to larceny on a grand scale.

Even as I write, the Iraqi government is coming under severe pressure to sign-up to an oil law that will concede a large proportion of the country's prime resource to foreign oil companies for decades to come.

Democratic presidential candidate Dennis Kucinich says, "The administration has been relentless in trying to force the Iraqi government to enact a so-called hydrocarbon law that will, in fact, enable multi-national oil and energy corporations to gain control of 200 billion to 300 billion barrels of Iraq's oil with a market value of around \$20 trillion".

"And to facilitate and protect that scheme," he says, "he [George Bush] is willing to continue the occupation, keep our brave men and women in the line of fire, and risk an escalation of violence and regional stability".

That's right. The US occupation of Iraq is due to continue in some form for decades. Why else would the US have built the largest embassy complex in the world, along with permanent bases?

But those who thirst for governance of the world's precious resources aren't content with the black gold of Iraq. There may be another war for oil in the pipeline and more millions will die or be left maimed.

Unless we wake up long enough to put our pretty toys aside, stare at the ugly face of reality and scream "not in our name" the burden of our apathy will be our legacy for generations to

come.

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