

Commentary

The true objective in Iraq

By Bill Burkett

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August 13, 2004—Wow. Did I fall asleep in the middle of a bad dream, or what?

Senator Kerry keeps stepping in it on Iraq. He's trying to ride the fence so that he doesn't offend special constituencies; and in doing so, he's not leveling with the American people and is coming across as not having a distinct alternative. Or has he developed a special agenda of his own?

Everyone wants to "out" someone in this election. It's gotcha politics of a new generation.

So why aren't we just reading the obvious; doing the obvious homework and developing the logical inferences and conclusions about Iraq and international policy since everyone seems to get it, but the US voting public. Or maybe they do, too?

Most Americans want to know when the troops will be home. That's their criteria for measuring the success of a candidate in regard to Iraqi policy and this election. Are they asking this loaded question in order to "out," or expose the known fact; that the Bush plan creates a permanent footprint in Iraq?

We don't have to go far to find the root of this idea. The [PNAC](#) (Project for a New American Century) documentation serves as the architectural plan for the Bush doctrines from "Preemptive War" to "Peace in the Middle East". Yet, the doctrines all have a single lynch pin: hardened military bases in the Middle East that can strike momentarily at any target that endangers any Israeli peace.

If we can get over the fear of the Jewish vote that keeps John Kerry from talking about Iraqi policy and answering the obvious question of when the troops are coming home, we then only need to look at satellite photos, maps and mission logs of our occupying forces in Iraq. Just talk with the commanders who are coming home from Iraq. The captains and sergeants will tell you.

Reconstruction efforts completed over this past year have been mostly limited to the construction of several hardened permanent military bases throughout Iraq. American combat engineers have almost exclusively turned to base construction. Kellogg, Brown & Root (KBR) has almost exclusively worked on building up these hardened facilities that will be totally self-contained; able to receive aerial logistical support, largely independent of the power grid problems in Iraq.

In other words, the first priority of our forces has been to harden and improve our own defenses and capabilities rather than to win the peace.

That's a tactically sound approach. It is reminiscent of the security of Berlin, for example. But it confirms the long-range plan for occupation of Iraq, which we have denied internationally and to the American people. The Iraqi citizenry haven't bought the line and see it for what it is. They want us out.

Our leaders say they don't want us to take on the role of an "occupying force," or imperialistic society. Yet, regardless how you camouflage it, the PNAC documents that are the foundation to the Bush policies describe both the method and intent—and it is unquestionably just that—"occupying" and "imperialistic".

I've developed a pretty good feedback channel to men and women who have been assigned to Iraq. These facts aren't lost on them. For example, there's a sergeant whose Bradley was part of an ongoing mission structure to provide convoy support for the KBR convoys North to South. He saw firsthand the cargo, the origination and destination of cargo and formed his own opinion. His opinion made a lasting impression on me and was part of my reason for betting that PNAC was far more than a theoretical document.

None of this has been lost on the Iraqi citizenry.

The Iraqis at this point want peace and stability in their lives. They want to be able to walk down their streets without gunfire or fear of being picked up and locked up. When we read the journals of Iraqis we hear this dual-edged cry for peace; not continued violence. Most are resistant to make their final observation known for fear of retaliation from one side or the other. They don't want to openly convey that they feel less secure now, than they did before the US decided to help them by attacking and displacing Saddam. For many, the faces have changed, but not the culture.

So it should be of no surprise to stateside Americans as they go about their daily lives and watch the version of events on the scripted evening, "sound bite" news that Iraqis are developing a real thing for Americans. Many feel that America stands between them and their real objective which is to just live their lives without more instability, bloodshed and fear.

When we really get down to it, most Americans only want to live their lives without interference from their government. They want to make decisions about their children; their careers, their homes and their dreams and futures without interference of any kind. We call it freedom.

Iraqis see it that way too. But both sides are being duped.

We don't think in terms of our soldiers and airmen being in Iraq for the next 15 or 20 years. We don't think in terms of our sons or daughters being "stationed" in Iraq as they would have previously been stationed in Germany or Korea.

No, we were led to believe that this was a short-term intervention. The justifications have been proven false; but now the premise must certainly be disrobed as well.

The objective was laid out clearly by the PNAC, but the PNAC documents have not been widely distributed, nor understood. A lot of the reason for that was that the concepts are so "out of the box" that they seem unreal, unmanageable, and unworkable.

But they are real. They are the new Bush/Cheney doctrine.

John Kerry and John Edwards know this. Certainly, they don't want to have to confront it because they will be put on the spot with pro-Israeli groups and lobbyists, even though there are strong arguments that should be made by those who support Israeli positions, despite international community that sees it as the most dangerous policy to true Israeli security. The Bush doctrine directly creates bastions of incubators for the very terrorism focused toward Israel that it purports to eliminate. The debate should not be viewed as one-sided, yet it is perceived that way. But that's a debate no one wants to have.

Politically, this is a 'bear trap' placed in front of Kerry/Edwards. It has been placed there in order to channel the Kerry/Edwards response and therefore isolate Kerry; making him appear weak on clear policy alternatives in regard to Iraq. And it brings the spotlight to the "flip-flopper" campaign being waged as the Karl Rove centerpiece on Kerry.

Americans will get through the gotchas of the preemptive strike from the Republican swift boat crews who want to elevate obviously flimsy charges in order to immunize Americans from more Bush assaults. The Bush assaults are rumored to finally close the issue of Bush's disappearance from his Air National Guard

duty in Alabama; efforts and methods to falsify and cover up Bush problems in his files; and the obvious disciplinary actions that led to his grounding from flying. Both sides will count on the electorate to sicken of this style and leave the real meat on the table untouched.

As documented in most recent polls, the real issues of Iraq have already required enough Maalox for most Americans. Most Americans don't like war. They are rapidly moving their focus to their domestic issues of jobs, healthcare and education.

But don't lose sight that most Americans also don't like high gasoline prices. And this will be the next point of leverage to regain positive favor for the current Bush policy in Iraq. The policy will never be debated by Americans in this election, unless John Kerry steps up and takes charge. The Bush Team will use the innocuous 'consumer' issues to frame the debate negatively and attempt to paint Kerry as weak and against the needs of Americans both in Iraq and domestically.

We may have actually heard the last of the "un-American" charges and countercharges in this campaign. That term has served its useful life. For once, Bush is right. The concept which underlies the debate on Iraq and currently only scratches the surface, also underlies this election and the near future objectives of the United States, both foreign and domestic.

On one side, we have those who speak clearly of "barren" international policy, but fail to point out that in order to sink roots, one must first till the soil. On the other side, we have uses of Bush's rendition of "terrorism" as the turbocharger for his intertwined political, security, and economic policy.

Specifically, John Kerry has alluded to the truth in generalizations only. And he has failed to communicate the message that America did not till the soil by exhausting our efforts with weapons inspectors before launching shock and awe war; that America did not till the soil by having a succinct plan for winning the war or the peace and developing stakeholder coalitions that could accomplish both objectives and stand not only the direct cost; but also the face of a required short-term occupation.

John Kerry hasn't communicated why the Bush doctrine didn't want to till the soil in order to accomplish the international objectives. Why did we go it alone? Because we needed to be alone to control the political, policy and economic factors that would result from the overthrow of the Iraqi government. The military action supported the clandestine objectives of the CIA rather than vice versa.

PNAC clearly indicates the Bush objective. The objective had nothing to do with weapons of mass destruction, or failure to meet the terms of sanctions, or retaliation against false links to 9/11. The Bush objective was not solely about oil, though oil is both an underlying political factor and a public and private economic reward. Kerry is willing to let those rumors abound so he doesn't have to confront the obvious question.

Iraq as the centerpiece of the Bush doctrine had nothing to do with terrorism. Terrorism was simply the justification. The terrorism front was in Afghanistan, not Iraq. But the center of gravity of the long-term Bush plan for the Middle East lies in the American occupation of Iraq through hardened military sites spread throughout Iraq. It directly answers a part of the question of American dependency on a shrinking pool of world oil supplies and the security and economic scenario this prominent issue casts. It answers the personal guarantees of Bush to Sharon and remains consistent with the post-Zinni discussions between the Palestinians and Israelis. It provides a new launch site for our world preparedness. It geographically dissects the Arab threat that continues to evolve and seems to be organizing. And it robs the perceived growing Arab organization of one of its potentially strongest societies from the perspective of 'economic potential.'

With most Americans, the success criteria has now boiled down to "when do the troops come home and when do we begin spending limited dollars building schools in Minneapolis rather than Mosul?" But politically, the issue is far greater. Senator Joseph Biden and Senator Chuck Hagel have talked informally about this on national shows. But this debate is of far more significance than can be resolved on *Face the Nation* or *Meet the Press*. It has to come onto the floor of the US Senate.

But in a Senate controlled by Bush lackey Senator Bill Frist, the debate will not occur. So, it is left to the Internet and the "conspiracy theorists" to again play the role of "crazed Paul Reveres." The Bush Team will discredit the issue as "noise" due to its origin, while the "legitimate" major media continue to look the other way.

Once again, in the Middle East, the ticking time bomb is counting down. And Americans remains oblivious to the ultimate casualties.

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