

# Who is lying about Iraq?

By Cal Thomas

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The Bush administration is partly responsible for declining poll numbers and the growing public disapproval of the war in Iraq.

Instead of responding immediately to questions concerning the reasons for the war and the honesty of top-level members of the administration, it allowed these allegations to fester until they became accepted, in many quarters, as fact.

This led to an escalation in calls for troop withdrawals and exit timetables that the president and members of his administration wanted to avoid, for fear it would give our enemy the perception of a weak America with no stomach for protracted warfare.

The "insurgents" are not the only reason the war is difficult. The United States is forced to fight differently from the terrorists. The insurgents use torture, beheadings and "suicide bombings" that take the lives of noncombatants. But when someone charged that the United States uses intense, or unusual (whatever that means) techniques to pry information from a captive that could save lives, war critics and the media go wild and suggest the U.S. military is replicating Saddam Hussein's torture chambers. Terrorists are also winning the psychological warfare, partly because the jihadists are unified behind a goal and we often are not. They want territory and they want to kill "infidels." American leftists want "peace," without realizing that peace is a byproduct of defeating evil. The left also wants to use the war for partisan political gain and will seek to deprive President Bush of any credit for victory because it could benefit him politically. How sick is that?

Terrorists also gain because too many of us do not agree on which side is good and which is evil. Specifically, the left has reversed the political polarity: it sees the United States as evil and if it does not necessarily see the jihadists as good, it views "evil America" as the cause of jihadism. The war's difficulty is compounded by nations that offer sanctuary to terrorists. The United States cannot easily root out training camps and hiding places because of international accords and agreements. The American judicial system is behind the new realities of this global war. In the United States and Britain, there may be information about people who

are not yet breaking the law, but whom authorities believe intend to. They can only be monitored until they act. By then it may be too late.

Iraq is a sanctuary among sanctuaries. Losing this war would guarantee Iraq out does Afghanistan under the Taliban as a recruiting and training center, exporting terror worldwide. There is no turning back. This is what too many critics refuse to see. They indulge in fantasies like "Bush lied" about weapons of mass destruction and began the war under false pretenses.

In the December issue of Commentary magazine, Norman Podhoretz - in an article entitled "Who Is Lying About Iraq?" - demolishes that myth. He lists the numerous individuals, nations and intelligence agencies worldwide that reached identical conclusions about Saddam Hussein's weapons. They include Hans Blix, who headed the UN weapons inspection team that tried to learn whether Saddam had complied with Security Council demands that he destroy weapons of mass destruction he was known to have had and used in the past. A few months before the invasion, Blix wrote of a "relatively new bunker" of 122-mm chemical rocket warheads 170 km southwest of Baghdad. He said, "They could be . the tip of a submerged iceberg." Blix noted the discovery of those rockets "does not resolve but rather points to the issue of several thousands of chemical rockets that are unaccounted for."

President Clinton's National Security Adviser, Sandy Berger, stated flatly, "(Saddam) will use those weapons of mass destruction again, as he has 10 times since 1983." Clinton's Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, said the "risk" that a "rogue state will use nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons against us or our allies is the greatest security threat we face." President Clinton, who now keeps company with war critics, said in 1998, "If Saddam rejects peace and we have to use force, our purpose is clear. We want to seriously diminish the threat posed by Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program."

The Podhoretz article is full of quotes from Democrats and others who were once gung-ho to topple Saddam. It also contains facts from bipartisan investigations that have looked into WMD and the run-up to the invasion. It exposes some liars, but President Bush and Vice President Cheney are not among them.

The Bush administration has finally started to reply to these modern "summer soldiers and sunshine patriots." They had better persuade more of the public, or risk losing a war that we must win.

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