OMNI NEWSLETTER ON IRAQ WAR #11, February 9, 2012. BUILDING A CULTURE OF PEACE TO REPLACE THE CULTURE OF WAR and EMPIRE, Dick Bennett, Editor. (We seek a new editor.) (#10, October 18, 2011; #9 August 8, 2011; #8 March 19, 2011; #7, April 29, 2010; #6 March 17, 2010, # 5 June 1, 2008; #4 April 3, 2008; #3 March 24, 2008, #2 Jan. 16, 2008, #1 Nov. 2, 2007.)

MARCH 19 ANNIVERSARY OF US INVASION OF IRAQ 2003

This is the url for the newsletters page:

http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/: Part of OMNI’s foundation in knowledge.

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Support the Lee Bill
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Hedges and Al-Arian on Killing Innocents
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HADITHA ATROCITY
FEATURE FILM

1. Battle for Haditha (film) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
   You +1’d this publicly. Undo
   Battle for Haditha is a 2007 drama film directed by British director Nick Broomfield loosely based on the Haditha killings. Dramatising real events using a ...
   Plot - Production - Cast - Film festivals

2. Director Nick Broomfield on 'Battle for Haditha' - Features - Film...
   You +1’d this publicly. Undo
   Feb 16, 2011 – Broomfield’s new film is 'Battle for Haditha', which he has been filming in Jordan since the beginning of March. Controversial as ever, it's a ...

   You +1’d this publicly. Undo
   Rating: 7.0/10 - 3,743 votes
   An investigation of the massacre of 24 men, women and children in Haditha, Iraq ... In Theaters; Coming Soon; Top Movies; Showtimes & Tickets; Trailers ...
   Directed by Nick Broomfield. Starring Matthew Knoll, Elliot Ruiz.

4. Film4 Search results for Battle For Haditha
   You +1’d this publicly. Undo
   Results 1 - 6 of 6 – Matching Films and People. battle_for_haditha_2007_01 review Battle For Haditha (2007) - Film Review from Film4 ...

5. Download BATTLE FOR HADITHA Movie Film - Cook's Illustrated
   You +1’d this publicly. Undo
   1 post - 1 author - Jan 1
download Battle for Haditha film Battle for Haditha movie premiere the whole Battle for
Haditha movie download the film the Battle for Haditha ...

Get more discussion results

6. Variety Reviews - Battle for Haditha - Film Reviews - Toronto ...

www.variety.com/review/VE1117934755?refcatid=31 Cached
You +1’d this publicly. Undo
Sep 17, 2007 – Nick Broomfield's recent stride into narrative filmmaking continues with "Battle for Haditha."

FRONTLINE “RULES OF ENGAGEMENT” 2-7-12
Explores the ambiguities surrounding the killing of two dozen Iraqi men, women, and children, if the testimonies of the soldiers are believable and the ineptness of the prosecution recognized. To buy the video: 1-800-PLAYPBS.

“Remember Haditha” by Robert Dreyfuss
8 marines killed “these innocent people,” according to the prosecution and Rep. John Murtha, yet charges against six were dropped, one was acquitted, and Sgt. Wuterich was lightly punished. “Along with Abu Ghraib, the Haditha massacre [is] a lasting monument to the folly and brutality of George W. bush’s illegal and misguided invasion.” The Nation (Feb. 20, 2012) p.5.

IVAW WINTER SOLDIER FILM
CONTACT YOUR PBS STATION TO SEE IF IT PRESENTED THE FILM

--- On Mon, 12/12/11, Displaced Films <adam@sirnosir.com> wrote:

From: Displaced Films <adam@sirnosir.com>
Subject: Urgent! PBS broadcast of This is Where We Take Our Stand
To: humjeff@yahoo.com
Date: Monday, December 12, 2011, 12:16 PM

Dear Friends,

I have good news and bad news.

The good news is that This is Where We Take Our Stand, the film about the Iraq Veterans Against the War Winter Soldier/Iraq & Afghanistan Investigation, has now been distributed to every PBS station in the country for broadcast in January and February. Funded by the Independent Television Service (ITVS) and distributed by the National
Educational Television Association (NETA), the film finally has the chance to be seen by people all across the country.

The bad news is that every individual PBS station can choose whether or not they will air the film. And in today's political climate, we know that many, even most stations will not want to touch this compelling, vital film about the reality of America's wars in the Middle East. **We need your help to convince them that they must show this film.**

**THIS IS AN URGENT SITUATION.** Over the next two weeks, PBS stations will be setting their programming for January. Call and email your local station and urge them to broadcast *This is Where We Take Our Stand* and allow these veterans' voices to be heard.

Also, please forward this email to your list and to everyone you know.

As we wrote in a letter to PBS programmers,

*These aren't political or theoretical arguments, but the eyewitness accounts of men and women who thought they were fighting for their country and learned that, as Jason Washburn, a Marine veteran with three tours in Iraq put it, "We were on the bully's team, and that's not what I signed up for." It is a wrenching, painful, and necessary story.*

*This film reminds us that nothing is over. And it asks us to question what has changed. Certainly not the war in Afghanistan, which has expanded in the past three years, and not the killing and misery in Iraq, unleashed by 8 years of military occupation.*

*This is Where We Take Our Stand is the story of hundreds of Iraq War veterans who risked everything to publicly tell their stories of killings of civilians, torture, and the widespread degradation and destruction of Iraq that was brought on by the policies of their government. And it is a story that needs to be told especially today. These brave soldiers and veterans are challenging a complacency that runs very deep underscoring a willingness to accept unspeakable horrors committed in our name—as long as we don't know about them.*

Go to [http://www.thisiswherewetakeourstand.com](http://www.thisiswherewetakeourstand.com) to watch episodes of the web series that the film is based on, and [http://ivaw.org](http://ivaw.org) for information about Winter Soldier.

Thank you for your help. In the coming weeks we will send out
announcements of where and when *This is Where We Take Our Stand* will be broadcast.

David Zeiger and Bestor Cram
Co-Producers

The following articles came from Historians Against War HAW 2011-12

"Iraq: Remembering Those Responsible"
http://www.truth-out.org/iraq-remember-those-responsible/1325433300
By Stephen Zunes, TruthOut.org, posted January 1

"The United States as a Global Power: New World Disorder"
http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/dec/28/us-global-power-new-world-disorder
Editorial in *The Guardian*, posted December 29

"Prospects for Peace on Earth"
http://warisacrime.org/content/prospects-peace-earth
By David Swanson, War Is a Crime.org, posted December 22

"Iraq: No Comfort in Being Right"
http://original.antiwar.com/vlahos/2011/12/12/iraq-no-comfort-in-being-right/
By Kelly B. Vlahos, antiwar.com, posted December 12
Analysis of the Iraq occupation

[LEAVING IRAQ: IMPUNITY FOR ATROCITIES THE CRUCIAL ISSUE BUT WE LEAVE IN “VICTORY” SAY PENTAGON and PRESIDENT. Dick]

"Debacle: How Two Wars in the Greater Middle East Revealed the Weakness of the Global Superpower"  By Tom Engelhardt, TomDispatch.com, January 3, 2012
http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/175484

Tomgram: Engelhardt, **Lessons from Lost Wars in 2012**

[Note for TomDispatch Readers: We’re back, ready to do our best to keep up with what’s certain to be a tumultuous 2012, starting with an assessment of America’s lost wars in the Greater Middle East. By the way, I made an appearance on Marwan Bishara’s show “Empire” on Al-Jazeera as last year ended. If you’re interested, you can check it out by clicking here.

Finally, let me thank all of you who sent in a contribution to TomDispatch in 2011 Anyone who meant to donate but didn’t last year can still do so and get a signed copy of my new book,
The *United States of Fear*, by visiting our donation page and making a contribution of $75 or more. Again, many thanks to you all! Tom.
https://npo.networkforgood.org/Donate/Donate.aspx?npoSubscriptionId=7730

Debacle!

How Two Wars in the Greater Middle East Revealed the Weakness of the Global Superpower  By Tom Engelhardt

It was to be the war that would establish empire as an American fact. It would result in a thousand-year Pax Americana. It was to be “mission accomplished” all the way. And then, of course, it wasn’t. And then, almost nine dismal years later, it was over (sorta).

It was the Iraq War, and we were the uninvited guests who didn’t want to go home. To the last second, despite President Obama’s repeated promise that all American troops were leaving, despite an agreement the Iraqi government had signed with George W. Bush’s administration in 2008, America’s military commanders continued to lobby and Washington continued to negotiate for 10,000 to 20,000 U.S. troops to remain in-country as advisors and trainers. Only when the Iraqis simply refused to guarantee those troops immunity from local law did the last Americans begin to cross the border into Kuwait. It was only then that our top officials began to hail the thing they had never wanted, the end of the American military presence in Iraq, as marking an era of “accomplishment.” They also began praising their own “decision” to leave as a triumph, and proclaimed that the troops were departing with -- as the president put it -- “their heads held high.”

In a final flag-lowering ceremony in Baghdad, clearly meant for U.S. domestic consumption and well attended by the American press corps but not by Iraqi officials or the local media, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta spoke glowingly of having achieved “ultimate success.” He assured the departing troops that they had been a “driving force for remarkable progress” and that they could proudly leave the country “secure in knowing that your sacrifice has helped the Iraqi people begin a new chapter in history, free from tyranny and full of hope for prosperity and peace.”  Later on his trip to the Middle East, speaking of the human cost of the war, he added, “I think the price has been worth it.”

And then the last of those troops really did “come home” -- if you define “home” broadly enough to include not just bases in the U.S. but also garrisons in Kuwait, elsewhere in the Persian Gulf, and sooner or later in Afghanistan.

On December 14th at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, the president and his wife gave returning war veterans from the 82nd Airborne Division and other units a rousing welcome. With some in picturesque maroon berets, they picturesquely hooahed the man who had once called their war " dumb." Undoubtedly looking toward his 2012 campaign, President Obama, too, now spoke stirringly of “success” in Iraq, of “gains,” of his pride in the troops, of the country’s “gratitude” to them, of the spectacular accomplishments achieved as well as the hard times endured by “the finest fighting force in the history of the world,” and of the sacrifices made by our “wounded warriors” and “fallen heroes.”

He praised “an extraordinary achievement nine years in the making,” framing their departure this way: “Indeed, everything that American troops have done in Iraq -- all the fighting and all the dying, the bleeding and the building, and the training and the partnering -- all of it has led to this moment of success... [W]e’re leaving behind a sovereign, stable and self-reliant Iraq, with a representative government that was elected by its people.”
And these themes -- including the “gains” and the “successes,” as well as the pride and gratitude, which Americans were assumed to feel for the troops -- were picked up by the media and various pundits. At the same time, other news reports were highlighting the possibility that Iraq was descending into a new sectarian hell, fueled by an American-built but largely Shiite military, in a land in which oil revenues barely exceeded the levels of the Saddam Hussein era, in a capital city which still had only a few hours of electricity a day, and that was promptly hit by a string of bombings and suicide attacks from an al-Qaeda affiliated group (nonexistent before the invasion of 2003), even as the influence of Iran grew and Washington quietly fretted.

MORE http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/175484/tomgram%3A_engelhardt_2C_lessons_from_lost_wars_in_2012/#more

US SHOULD NOT HAVE INVADED IRAQ

The lesson of recent events is not that the U.S. left Iraq too soon, writes USA Today in an editorial. It is that there are limits to U.S. military power, and they are too easily overlooked in a rush to war.

“Too Fast To Get Out Of Iraq? No, Too Quick To Go In”

Editorial, USA Today, December 26, 2011


Well, that didn't take long.

Just nine days after the departure of U.S. forces, Iraq is looking more like its old self - divided, angry and threatened by civil war and dictatorship - than like the self-reliant democracy President Obama described as the troops came home.

[...]

The obvious conclusion is that the U.S. pulled out before the Iraqi army and police were fully prepared to guarantee security and before the American-built political system could fully take root. That much is surely true. The Iraqis weren't ready to take the handoff. But it is also true
that the Iraqis wanted control now. The withdrawal date was set in a treaty negotiated with the
Bush administration in 2008, and al-Maliki rejected repeated U.S. attempts to extend it so that
a contingent of trainers and counter-terrorism forces could stay.

Left with a choice between staying as an occupier or withdrawing, Obama exercised the only
sensible option. Not that the outcome leaves Iraq any less of a mess. But the lesson is not
that the U.S. left Iraq too soon. It is that there are limits to U.S. military power, and they are
too easily overlooked in a rush to war.

The United States had ample power to rout Saddam Hussein. Eventually, it even found the
means to suppress the sectarian warfare set off by its post-invasion blunders. But in the end,
the U.S. had no more chance of ending Iraq's ancient enmities than it had of defeating a
popular revolution in Vietnam or winning a fight against China in Korea.

The charitable interpretation of the Iraq War is that it was a misguided but idealistic bid to
establish a democratic beachhead in the Middle East. The less charitable one is that the war
was the product of cynical manipulation by men who sought an imperial U.S. role in the post-
9/11 world. Both interpretations contain elements of truth. But either way, the war was a tragic
mistake, waged at the cost of nearly 4,500 American troops, tens of thousands of severe
injuries, and more than $1 trillion.

The official rationale for the war was invalidated long ago. There were no weapons of mass
destruction. There was no alliance between Saddam and al-Qaeda.

[...]

But regardless, the lesson Americans should take from Iraq is one of realism and humility. The
United States should go to war only as a last resort and only then with total commitment to an
attainable objective.

The Iraq War never fit that description. With U.S. intervention or without, Iraq was destined to
remain what it has been since its creation: a splintered nation beset by sectarian and tribal
conflict. With help, it might in time find peace through democracy, or it might revert to
dictatorship or civil war. The difference is important to U.S. interests - just not important
enough to invest more American lives.

Other reasons for leaving Iraq and Afghanistan: Killing innocent civilians, US
incompetent aid programs. See below Collateral Damage and We Meant Well.
Justice for Casey and the Rest

| Cindy Sheehan's Soapbox via uark.edu to jbennet

Cindy@cindysheehanssoapbox.com

To view as a Webpage, click here

21/10/2011

Cindy Sheehan's Statement about the Withdrawal of "all" US Troops from Iraq

Justice for Casey Sheehan and hundreds of thousands of others

NOT JUST A NUMBER

It was with great sorrow and fear that my family watched the insane and inexplicable rush of our nation to invade two countries that had absolutely nothing to do with the events on September 11, 2001.

It was with greater sorrow and fear that my family watched one of our indispensable members, Casey, march off to one of those immoral occupations in Iraq.

Our lives were shattered when he came home in a cardboard box, shortly after he was killed there on April 04, 2004. We picked Casey's body up from the airport in San Francisco for the final time at a United Airlines loading dock, where his cardboard box was unceremoniously loaded into the hearse for his last ride home. (And the longest ride of my life).

Andy Sheehan kisses the coffin of his brother

Along with the rest of our family, Casey was opposed to these wars of aggression and before he left for Iraq, Casey, a Humvee mechanic, told everyone that he wouldn't be able to "kill anyone."

Well, one president, thousands of American deaths, over a million Iraqi deaths, and almost nine years later, Barack Obama has announced that all US troops would be leaving Iraq by the end of this year. I'd like to remind everyone that Barack Obama stated that ending the war in Iraq would be the "first thing" he did as President--and we could even "take it to the bank," (probably one of the failed ones) and that this withdrawal is something Bush-Maliki scheduled back at the end of 2008.

I would like to send my deepest apologies to the Injured Iraqi Girls--our children, too! people of Iraq for what my country has done there, but also my congratulations (no matter
how reserved) because this is something that the people of Iraq have been fighting for and I am happy for them that US troops finally will be vacating their country.

However, did Obama just forget about the heavily fortified 104 acre US Embassy in Baghdad that employs 3000, or the enormous US consulates in Basra and Erbil, that will eventually employ about another 3000 people--or the thousands of paid mercenaries that will remain after the end of this year?

I didn't hear Obama talk about the destruction of infrastructure and lives for the people of Iraq—or the high increases in cancer rates and birth defects from the usage of depleted uranium coated munitions.

The two most important things, though, that I did not hear Obama say are these: prosecuting members of the Bush regime for the hundreds of lies it told about Iraq, and paying reparations to the people of Iraq.

I can only hope that when US troops do pull out that the US puppet government pulls out of there, too, and the people of Iraq can finally and completely have their country back and with full and unfettered access to the natural resources that belong to the people. Unfortunately, with thousands of Americans, mercenary troops and foreign oil companies, I don't think the struggle is over.

Also, which war will Obama send these troops that are leaving Iraq to? Pakistan? Afghanistan? Uganda? Iran? Or somewhere else that we can only imagine?

These wars have cost my family dearly and have sucked at least three trillion dollars out of our economy.

We will never get Casey back and no amount of death/destruction will make his “sacrifice” “worth it”—the only thing that could bring comfort to our family now is accountability and an end to war as the first go-to tool in the box of US foreign policy.

RIP, Casey Austin Sheehan and so many others who are dead for absolutely no reason other
than profit for the few.

CINDY SHEEHAN CAN BE REACHED AT: CINDY@CINDYSHEEHANSSOAPBOX.COM

U.S. Troops Leaving Iraq, But U.S. Presence There Just Ramping Up
5500 MERCENARIES TO PROTECT US FORTRESSES IN IRAQ

WAR RESISTERS LEAGUE ON FUTURE OF IRAQ
War Resisters League wrl@warresisters.org via uark.edu
10:45 AM (13 minutes ago) 12-16-11 to jbennet

All That Remains
As the Obama administration announces the official end of the war on Iraq, it is an ideal moment to reflect on the brutal legacy of that eight-and-a-half-year occupation, as well as learn how Iraqis are working to liberate themselves.

Thousands of U.S. private military contractors will remain in Iraq, and the business interests that aim to privatize much of Iraq’s economy will still be there trying to maintain U.S. influence. This is in addition to a severely damaged infrastructure that was already struggling as a result of the crushing U.S. sanctions of the 90s, and the indescribable trauma of hundreds of thousands killed.

The strength, however, of Iraqi civil society and their vision of true sovereignty continues to assert itself.

The War Resisters League Blog has been posting regular reports on Iraqi organizing and movement building. They have featured accounts of the work of organizations such as The Popular Movement to Save Iraq, Federation of Workers Councils and Unions in Iraq, The Great Iraqi Revolution and the Organization of Women’s Freedom in Iraq; groups that from the beginning opposed the U.S. invasion and also work against the sectarianism and privatization pursued by the U.S.-installed Iraqi government. Below are quotes from articles about their work. http://warresisters.wordpress.com/iraq-reports-analysis-and-interviews-on-movement-building-now/

"The People Want the Downfall of the Regime!"
Since February 25th, 2011 an Iraqi protest movement inspired by the year’s remarkable Arab uprisings blossomed and led to mass demonstrations in Iraq’s Tahrir Square, acts of civil disobedience including a general strike in Mosul, as well as the resignation of dozens of governors and mayors. This nonviolent movement was met with mass arrests and sometimes lethal violence. Here is a video interview with organizer and brother of legendary shoe-thrower, Uday al-Zaidi, describing the Iraqi pro-democracy movement. http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/1806/iraq-after-malikis-100-days_an-interview-with-iraq

Hawija in Crisis and the Legacy of US Bases
"In late August, The Organization of Women’s Freedom in Iraq released a damning exposé about major environmental and human harm being caused by a U.S. military base in the Iraqi town of Hawija (30 miles south of Kirkuk). Their vitally important report, entitled U.S. Army Base Transforms the Town of Hawijah into a Crisis Zone, describes how “in a town of 109,000 people there is a generation of children who are suffering from [ . . . ] paralysis and cases of brain damage or atrophy. [ . . . ] The U.S. government is responsible for the radiation [ . . . ] merely one and a half kilometers away from a residential neighborhood, with no wall or a fence to prevent civilians, children, and shepherds from entering.” OWFI is now leading a campaign to assist Hawija and bring the U.S. and Iraqi officials responsible to account. http://warresisters.wordpress.com/iraq-reports-analysis-and-interviews-on-movement-building-now/owfi-report-hawijah-in-crisis-and-the-legacy-of-us-bases/

"The Friday of Occupation’s Defeat“: Celebration, Vigilance, and a New Front

And finally a statement from the Popular Movement to Save Iraq looking forward: “The day of the U.S. military occupation’s defeat by the great Iraqi people and its resistance draws near, and Iraqis have been preparing themselves for a Friday which will be the final chance for those that are anti-occupation to record their name in the history of Iraq’s resistance. December 30th, 2011 will be called: ‘The Friday of Occupation’s Defeat’” It goes on: “[That day] the youth will remain in the streets calling for the departure of every last American soldier, under whatever terms or form that the occupation government might adopt.” They have also chosen this day “to prepare to open up a new front to resist the second face of the occupation represented by its sectarian government, its divisive constitution, and to resist Iranian influence . . .” http://warresisters.wordpress.com/2011/12/09/the-friday-of-occupations-defeat-celebration-vigilance-and-a-new-front/?preview=true&preview_id=1568&preview_nonce=9e408f320b

Continue following WRL's ongoing efforts to work in solidarity with the Iraqi people. For more information, please contact WRL national field organizer Ali Issa, at ali@warresisters.org

Support the work of War Resisters League

Because the WRL is an independent, self-sustaining organization, we are entirely dependent on your donations to make our work happen.

For more information on giving opportunities, please email liz@warresisters.org or call 212.228.0450 x17


The Pentagon by 2008 had spent “at least $60 billion to combat IEDs” and in 2012 it “plans to spend at least $10.1 billion” more—and the results have been
“dismal.” By May 2007 “nearly 70,000” IEDs had been planted in Iraq by an enemy consisting of “multiple small independent groups” able to adapt rapidly to changed tactics. And many of these groups “were bitterly antagonistic—Shia, Sunni, Al Qaeda, and so forth”—yet they shared information about IED techniques within “days or even hours.” What does work technically is the skill of low-tech bomb specialists, Much of the article is about Master Sergeant Tano Chavez, a brilliant specialist in disarming IEDs. But the attacks continue, and Sergeant Chavez, who suffered several severe concussions and other wounds, returned home suffering from many maladies (traumatic brain injury TBI, PTSD, hearing loss), and now “non-deployable.” Assassinations of High Value Targets, “the ultimate objective of our entire counter-IED strategy,” also have not worked against IEDs, but have even increased them. After assassinations, “IED attacks did not go down” in the vicinity; rather, “They went up—by a lot.” This article damns “the techno-war that keeps the money flowing.”

KILLING CIVILIANS

--Hedges, Chris and Laila Al-Arian. Collateral Damage: America’s War Against Iraqi Civilians. (see War Crimes Newsletters)

“Our Long Lost War”
Collateral Damage: America’s War Against Iraqi Civilians, by Chris Hedges and Laila Al-Arian, depicts the horrors and death that naturally go along with occupation. In vivid detail, this small expose reveals what is so often hidden from public view—murder, brutality, torture and terror. Through interviews with veterans, Collateral Damage explains how the war has gone horribly wrong and unleashed a campaign that has irreparably ruined innumerable lives.

The book is divided into five chapters, the first four of which discuss different sources of deadly conflict between U.S. soldiers and ordinary Iraqis: convoys, checkpoints, raids and detention. The convoys are “ubiquitous in Iraq. They usually consist of 20-30 trucks and military escort vehicles that can extend for as long as a mile.” They are “the arteries that sustain the occupation. They ferry water, mail, maintenance parts, sewage, fuel and food to bases across Iraq.” Soldiers must protect these convoys, which are susceptible to IED’s and ambushes. As such they travel at a rapid pace and never stop, not even if children get in their way. It’s a matter of survival. If any Iraqi drivers get close, as often occurs, the troops fire at them with impunity. Read the rest of this entry http://thebloodycrossroads.com/tag/chris-hedges/

Collateral Damage: America’s War against Iraqi Civilians - by Chris Hedges and Laila Al-Arian. Article first published online: 11 JUN 2009

Review in Peace and Change by David Hostetter

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WE MEANT WELL BY PETER VAN BUREN on US Aid INCOMPETENCE

We Come in Peace, with Dessert December 30, 2011 http://wemeantwell.com/

Foreign Policy.com, in a year-end wrap up of its best illustrations, chose one from the excerpt they ran from We Meant Well. The caption reminds us of the fun left behind in Iraq:

State Department veteran Peter Van Buren made a splash this year with his exposé of some of the wasteful and
often absurd projects that Uncle Sam had lavished money on in Iraq. One of the most egregious was a nearly $10,000 program to teach Iraqi women the fine art of making French pastries. This watershed moment in the history of public diplomacy was brought memorably to life by illustrator Ward Sutton.

See the whole article at ForeignPolicy.com  http://wemeantwell.com/

**A Kirkus Reviews Best Nonfiction of 2011 title**

From a State Department insider, the first account of our blundering efforts to rebuild Iraq—a shocking and rollicking true-life tale of Americans abroad

Charged with rebuilding Iraq, would you spend taxpayer money on a sports mural in Baghdad's most dangerous neighborhood to promote reconciliation through art? How about an isolated milk factory that cannot get its milk to market? Or a pastry class training women to open cafés on bombed-out streets without water or electricity?

According to Peter Van Buren, we bought all these projects and more in the most expensive hearts-and-minds campaign since the Marshall Plan. *We Meant Well* is his eyewitness account of the civilian side of the surge—that surreal and bollixed attempt to defeat terrorism and win over Iraqis by reconstructing the world we had just destroyed. Leading a State Department Provincial Reconstruction Team on its quixotic mission, Van Buren details, with laser-like irony, his yearlong encounter with pointless projects, bureaucratic fumbling, overwhelmed soldiers, and oblivious administrators secluded in the world's largest embassy, who fail to realize that you can't rebuild a country without first picking up the trash.

Darkly funny while deadly serious, *We Meant Well* is a tragicomic voyage of ineptitude and corruption that leaves its writer—and readers—appalled and disillusioned but wiser.

**Praise**

One diplomat’s darkly humorous and ultimately scathing assault on just about everything the military and the State Department have done — or tried to do — since the invasion of Iraq. The title says it all.” —*Steven Myers, New York Times*

"In this shocking and darkly hilarious exposé of the reconstruction of post-Saddam Iraq, former State Department team leader Van Buren describes the tragicomedy that has been American efforts at nation building, marked by bizarre decisions and wrongheaded priorities… "We made things in Iraq look the way we wanted them to look," Van Buren writes. With lyrical prose and biting wit, this book reveals the devastating arrogance of imperial ambition and folly."—*Publishers Weekly* (Starred Review)

"One of the rare, completely satisfying results of the expensive debacle in Iraq."—*Kirkus Reviews* (Starred Review)


(see PTSD newsletter)
Editor's Note: There is no good reason why President Obama continued for 3 of his 4 years the Iraq war he promised to end. Below, Contributing Editor Stephen Zunes reflects on the wasted lives, time and money and asks us to hold responsible those who are sible for that madness. One need only check the newspapers daily how empty was the preposterous claim that if we just stayed in another year or two we could "stabilize" the situation. Equally steros is the claim that we have stopped the war when in fact we ns of thousands of "advisors" still receiving pay from the US ment. We also present reflections by Tom Hayden on what next and the possibility of an ongoing sectarian fight. --Rabbi Lerner

Remembering Those Responsible

Sunday 1 January 2012

by: Stephen Zunes,


The formal withdrawal of US troops from Iraq this month has led to a whole series of the invasion and the eight and a half years of occupation that followed as unanswered questions, including - given the tens of thousands of others on the US government payroll, many of whom are armed, who are q - just how total the withdrawal might actually be.

Political importance at this juncture is that we not allow the narratives on the tragic consequences or those responsible for the war - both Democrats - to escape their responsibility.

The invasion of Iraq has resulted in the deaths of up to half a million majority of whom are civilians, leaving over 600,000 orphans. More than 1.3
have been internally displaced and nearly twice that many have fled into
Iraqis have been internally displaced and nearly twice that many have fled into
and emotional injuries. Iran has advanced its influence in the region since
its arch-enemy Saddam Hussein, and is now the most influential foreign
factionary and ethnic tensions remain high and violence and terrorism
mass pervasive than a few years ago - are endemic.

The invasion of Salafi extremists in Iraq and throughout the Islamic world have been
trained experience in urban terrorism by fighting US forces. Combined with
spread wave of anti-Americanism that resulted from the war, the invasion -
intelligence agencies - has resulted in a backlash that could threaten the
and other countries for decades to come.

US taxpayers close to one trillion dollars, contributing greatly to the
which is now being used as an excuse to cut back vital social programs as
interest (since money to pay for the war was borrowed), care for wounded
other residual costs, the final tally could be close to three trillion dollars.

The Iraqi government, a bastion of secularism prior to the US invasion, is dominated by
battles which have shown little regard for human rights, particularly evident
pression of an incipient pro-democracy struggle last March. Offices of
groups have been raided and shut down, intellectuals and journalists - along
raters of the nonviolent anti-government protests - have been rounded up;
s continues on an administrative basis; government-backed death squads
suspected regime opponents and the current Iraqi government is
transparency international as one of the most corrupt regimes on Earth.

In invading Iraq was to support democracy, then, was as big a lie as the claim
s what we" weapons of mass destruction." And, though Saddam Hussein was a
ments in Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen over the past year have demonstrated
ways to oust Arab dictators than for foreign troops to invade a country and

In invading a foreign country on the far side of the world that was not an
was clearly illegal under international law as well as the UN Charter,
and ratified treaty, the US government was obliged to uphold under
US Constitution. It will be hard to expect other countries to abide by their international obligations if the United States - despite the enormous military, economic, and diplomatic power at its disposal - believes it is somehow exempt.

Not a "Mistake"

The Bush administration is no longer in office. There are prominent members of Congress - administration officials who were in Congress at the time - who are also responsible for the war in deciding to vote to authorize this illegal and unnecessary war. The Republicans controlled the Senate at the time of the October 2002 vote and could have stopped it, but a sizable number of them chose to support Bush instead.

Many now claim, make a "mistake." They knew full well beforehand about the tragic consequences of a US invasion of Iraq and a refutation of the falsehoods being put forward by the Bush administration to justify it were made available to Congress. In scores of policy reports, newspaper articles, academic journals and other sources, the tragic consequences of a US invasion of Iraq and a refutation of the Bush administration's claims that Iraq was a threat as well as the likely implications of a US

Members of Congress were also alerted by a large numbers of scholars of the Middle East, political leaders, former State Department and intelligence officials and others who recognized that a US invasion would likely result in a bloody insurgency, a rise in terrorism and extremism, increased sectarian and ethnic conflict, and related consequences. In scores of policy reports, newspaper articles, academic journals and other sources, the tragic consequences of a US invasion of Iraq and a refutation of the Bush administration's claims that Iraq was a threat as well as the likely implications of a US

The October 2002 vote authorizing the invasion was not like the vote on the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin resolution on the use of force against North Vietnam, for which Congress had no time for hearings or debate and for which most of those supporting it (mistakenly) thought they were simply authorizing limited short-term retaliatory strikes in response to a specific incidents. By contrast, in regard to the resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq, Congress had many months to investigate and debate the

claims that Iraq was a threat as well as the likely implications of a US
Members of Congress also fully recognized that the resolution authorized a full-scale invasion of a sovereign nation and a subsequent military occupation of an indefinite duration.

There was never any credible evidence that Iraq possessed chemical or biological weapons, offensive delivery systems, a nuclear program, or ties to Al-Qaeda. As someone who has done extensive research on strategic studies and terrorism in the Middle East, I can state that anyone who claimed otherwise was either a naif, an idiot or a liar.

There was a plethora of evidence suggesting that the Bush administration was lying about so-called "weapons of mass destruction," Iraqi links to Al-Qaeda and other rationalizations for the war. I shared these with Congressional offices, as did former UN weapons inspectors and scores of other independent strategic analysts.

Leading up to the US invasion of Iraq, there were many published reports challenging Bush administration claims regarding Iraq's WMD capabilities. Reputable publications such as Control Today, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, Middle East Policy, and others published articles systematically debunking accusations that Iraq had somehow been able to preserve or reconstitute its chemical weapons arsenal, had developed deployable biological weapons, or had restarted its nuclear program. Among the disarmament experts challenging the administration was Scott Ritter, an American who had headed the UN Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM) division that looked for hidden WMD facilities in Iraq. Through articles, interviews in the broadcast media and Capitol Hill appearances, Ritter joined scores of disarmament scholars and analysts in making a compelling and - as people now admit - completely accurate case that Iraq had been qualitatively disarmed years earlier. Think tanks such as the Fourth Freedom Foundation and the Institute for Policy Studies also published a series of reports challenging the administration's claims.

And there were plenty of skeptics within the US government. Even the pro-war New York Times observed that CIA reports in early 2002 demonstrated that "US intelligence showed precious little evidence to indicate a resumption of Iraq's nuclear program." A Knight-Ridder wire service report just before the congressional vote authorizing the invasion noted that "US intelligence and military experts dispute the suggestions that Iraq's weapons of mass destruction pose an imminent threat to the United States" and that intelligence analysts in the CIA were accusing the Bush administration of pressuring the agency to highlight information that would appear to
Post for years had been reporting that US officials were saying there was evidence that Iraq had resumed its chemical and biological weapons programs. Weeks before the congressional vote authorizing the invasion of Iraq, another nationally syndicated Knight-Ridder story revealed that there was "no new intelligence that indicates significant advances in their nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons." The article went on to note, "Senior US officials with access to top-secret intelligence on Iraq say they have detected no alarming increase in the threat that Saddam Hussein poses to American security."

Iraq's known stockpiles of chemical and biological agents had been accounted for. The shelf life of the small amount of materiel that had not been accounted for had also been destroyed - had long since expired and was no longer of weapons grade. There was no evidence that Iraq had any delivery systems for such weapons, either. In addition, the strict embargo, in effect since 1990, of any additional materials needed for the manufacture of WMDs, Iraq's inability to manufacture such weapons or delivery systems themselves, made any claims that Iraq constituted any "significant chemical and biological weapons capability" transparently false to anyone who cared to investigate the matter. Indeed, even the classified full version of the 2002 National Intelligence Estimate, while grossly overestimating Iraq's military capability, was filled with extensive doubts and caveats regarding President Bush's assertions regarding Iraq's chemical and biological weapons programs, and delivery systems.

House and Senate members who voted to authorize the invasion and now claim they were "misled" about Iraq's alleged military threat fail to explain why they found the administration's claims so much more convincing than the many other reports made from more objective sources that presumably made a much stronger case. The House and Senate members who voted for the war had offensive WMD capability. Curiously, except for one misleading summary from the 2002 NIE released in July 2003 - widely ridiculed at the time for its manipulated content - not a single member of Congress has agreed to allow independent strategic analyst any access to any documents they claim of the alleged Iraqi threat. In effect, they are using the infamous Nixon Watergate scandal that claims that, although they have evidence to make it public would somehow damage national security. In reality, existing evidence, they are clearly inaccurate and outdated and would therefore national security if made public.
Wars and Militarists

In voting to authorize the war, therefore, both Republican and Democratic supporters of the invasion demonstrated their belief that:

- the United States need not abide by its international legal obligations, those prohibiting wars of aggression;
- claims by right-wing US government officials and unreliable foreign exiles foreign government's military capabilities are more trustworthy than arms control analysts and United Nations inspectors;
- concerns expressed by scholars and others knowledgeable of the likely reaction to a foreign conquest and the likely complications that should be ignored; and, faith should instead be placed on the occupation forcibly imposed on the population by a corrupt right-wing Republican administration.

Even after the lies about the alleged Iraqi ties to Al-Qaeda and alleged "weapons of mass destruction" were revealed as such, most supporters of the war continued to rationalize for occupation. Democratic Senators John Kerry, John Edwards, Hillary Feinstein, Joe Biden and others continued to defend their decision to vote for war even after acknowledging the absence of WMDs or Al-Qaeda ties, by admitting that their vote was not about defending the United States, but oil and empire.

Given the tragic consequences of the war, one would have thought it would have ruined their political careers. Instead, many of them were rewarded.

A minority of Congressional Democrats voted to authorize the war in 2002 and large majority of Democrats nationally opposed the war, the Democratic nominate two unrepentant war supporters - Kerry and Edwards - as their president and vice-president. As a result, many of us who opposed the right of (or any nation) to engage in such aggressive wars refused to support the ticket and, not surprisingly, they lost a narrow election as a result.

Obama won the Democratic nomination and ultimately the presidency four promise not just to end the Iraq War, but to "end the mindset that got us first place." However, he ended up appointing supporters of the Iraq War to
most of his key foreign policy and national security positions, including his Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Secretary of Homeland Security, Chief of Staff, and Vice-President from among the right-wing minority of Democrats who supported Bush's policy. Meanwhile, pro-war Democrats in Congress continue to dominate such key positions as Senate Majority Leader, chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, chair of the Intelligence Committee, Assistant House Minority Leader, and ranking members of committees.

Like the Republicans, the Democratic Party is willing to effectively reward failure. These Democrats are joining like-minded Republicans in threatening a new As Gary Kamiya put it in Salon, "That centrist Democrats like Hillary Clinton cannot clearly reject Bush's catastrophic war seems to reflect their deeper inability to articulate, or perhaps even to understand, two things: that Iraq has severely damaged our national security, and by which the Bush administration sold their war has severely damaged our democracy… By refusing to use these legitimate arguments against Bush, the Democrats are making a tactical political error, they are allowing the disease he imported to

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Hayden on POSSIBLE SECTARIAN WAR
A war in Iraq may begin, a sectarian war spurred by Shiite revenge and geo-political tensions of the region, Shiite versus Sunni, Iran versus Saudi Arabia.

While America bears responsibility for stirring the sectarian cauldron, a next war will not be America’s to fight. Despite global pretensions, the mythic days of Laurence of Arabia, when Kipling’s heroes saved the Arabs from themselves, are over.

With Western imperialism in retreat, Iraqi nationalism may falter and divide. The actual winner of the last election was the Iraqiya bloc whose leadership includes Ayad Allawi, a secular Shiite, former prime minister of Iraq, supported by the vast majority of Sunnis. The Iraqiya leadership also includes the current vice-president, Tariq al-Hashimi, and parliamentary leader Saleh al-Mutlaq. Iraqiya won 2.8 million votes (24.5%) and 91 parliamentary seats in the 2010 election, slightly more than Nuri al-Maliki’s Shiite coalition, which won 89 seats and 24.2% of the vote.

Maliki managed to maintain power, however, through consolidation of Shiite organizations, ignoring of the repression of dissidents – all accomplished under America’s watch, despite ineffective American pretensions.

In recent weeks, some 600 Sunni leaders have been arrested and detained in sweeps and accused of a “Baathist conspiracy” against al-Maliki’s regime. On December 19, as the last US troops exited Iraq, Maliki ordered the arrest of vice-president al-Hashimi, whose current whereabouts are unknown.

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With the forced removal of the Saddam Hussein dictatorship, Iraqis may be subjected to a new one. In that event, both a new repression and a renewed insurgency are predictable. Iran is likely to side with al-Maliki and the Shiites, while Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the larger Sunni world will stand with the besieged Sunnis in a new Arab revolution.

Sunnis may lie over the border in Syria where a Sunni majority appears to be fighting against the Assads. The triumph of Sunnis in Syria will give strategic depth to the Sunnis of Anbar province and elsewhere in Iraq where they may constitute about 20 percent of the population overall. US support for the Syrian revolution would indirectly support the Sunnis in Iraq and weaken Iran’s leverage in Syria.

This is vividly illustrated by the 2010 electoral map showing Iraqiya’s deep support in Sunni Anbar and the Shiite base in Basra and the south.
US President Barack Obama staged a ceremony Tuesday morning at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland to mark the end of the Iraq War and the return of the top US commander in Iraq, General Lloyd Austin. With the president nodding his agreement, Austin declared, "What our troops achieved in Iraq over the course of nearly nine years is truly remarkable. Together with our coalition partners and corps of dedicated civilians, they removed a brutal dictator and gave the Iraqi people their freedom."

Field Marshal Göring could not have put it better in speaking of the "liberation" of Poland.
The departure of the last "combat" troops from Iraq by no means marks an end to the US intervention in the country. It does, however, offer an opportunity to take the measure of one of the greatest crimes of the modern period.

Whatever the sickening and hypocritical invocations of "success" and “freedom,” the war and occupation have been a catastrophe for the people of Iraq and a tragedy for the people of the United States.

Statistics give some sense of the scale of the destruction inflicted by the American military:

- More than one million Iraqis were killed as a result of the invasion and occupation, according to scientific estimates carried out in 2007. The United Nations estimated in 2008 that 4.7 million people, or about 16 percent of the population, were turned into refugees.

- The infrastructure of the country, including the electrical system, was devastated. According to the United Nations State of the World's Cities, 2010-2011 report, the percentage of the Iraqi urban population living in slums, defined as lacking access to basic necessities such as sanitation and water, increased from below 20 percent in 2003 to 53 percent in 2010.

- Real unemployment is on the order of 50 percent and inflation is over 50 percent. There has been a mass exodus of doctors and other professionals (estimated at 40 percent of those in the country prior to the war), and the education system lies in ruins.
• Iraq has experienced a staggering growth of infant and child mortality. A 2007 report estimated that 28 percent of children suffered from chronic malnutrition. An Iraqi government agency reported that 35 percent of Iraqi children in 2007 (about 5 million children) were orphans. An entire generation has seen their parents killed or disappeared.

• More than 4,500 US soldiers were killed during the war and occupation and more than 30,000 injured. This does not include the tens of thousands leaving Iraq with serious psychological trauma.

• In terms of resources, the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan are estimated to have cost some $4 trillion, including direct expenses and the long-term impact on health and economic growth. Hundreds of billions have been funneled to defense contractors and profiteers, and at least $16 billion has simply been lost or stolen.

The war in Iraq was a criminal enterprise in the fullest sense of the word. It was sold on the basis of lies brazenly told to an international audience about "weapons of mass destruction." It was an aggressive war, launched without the slightest provocation and in the face of mass opposition in the United States and around the world. It was an exercise in international banditry, aimed at seizing control of one of the most oil-rich countries in the world for the benefit of US oil companies, while bolstering the position of the United States in the Middle East and increasing its leverage against its great power rivals.

All the atrocities for which the Iraq War will be remembered flowed from the imperialist
character of the war: the mass imprisonment and torture of Iraqis at Abu Ghraib and other prisons; the leveling of Fallujah; the massacre of 24 civilians at Haditha; the rape and murder of a 14-year-old girl and massacre of her family in Mahmudiyah; the routine killings at checkpoints, during nighttime raids, and by bombs and missiles from jets and helicopter gunships.

Iraq's terrible encounter with American imperialism is far from over. The United States embassy in Iraq, the largest in the world, houses 15,000 people. CIA officials and private mercenaries—who played a major role in the occupation—will remain in the country. Tens of thousands of military troops are still in the region, ready to be deployed if needed.

Nearly nine years after the initial invasion, Iraq is ruled by an unstable and increasingly authoritarian regime and is rife with factional struggles that threaten to erupt in open civil war.

The war has left its mark on American society as well, and not only in the tens of thousands killed and injured and the trillions of dollars wasted.

The war has played no small part in the growing power of the military over domestic political life and the development of a military-police apparatus that poses a mortal danger to the democratic rights of the American people.

While the war was launched and carried out by the Bush administration, the central role in frustrating and diverting opposition was played by the Democratic Party and its "left" supporters. On the eve of the invasion, the US saw the largest antiwar protests since the
Vietnam War, with hundreds of thousands of Americans joining millions around the world to oppose the imminent atrocity.

Repeated attempts by the American people to put an end to the war were blocked by the Democratic Party, culminating in the election of Obama in 2008, whose victory was due in no small part to mass antiwar sentiment to which candidate Obama cynically appealed.

The official "antiwar" groups, having undermined organized opposition to the war by channeling it behind the election campaigns of the Democrats in 2004 and 2006, seized on the victory of Obama to wind up their protests. Far from representing a break from the policy of Bush, however, the Obama administration has continued it in all essentials. Not only did Obama maintain the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, he expanded the Afghan war into Pakistan and launched a new war in another oil-rich country, Libya.

The same organizations that proclaimed their opposition to the Iraq war supported the invasion of Libya. These middle-class organizations and publications such as the Nation magazine seized on the election of Obama to make their peace with imperialism.

The withdrawal of combat troops from Iraq is a prelude to new and even more bloody wars. The capitalist crisis is entering a new phase, bringing with it growing tensions between the major powers.
There are sections of the ruling class in the United States who saw the occupation as an ill-advised adventure that diverted resources and attention from more important threats—regional powers such as Iran and rising world powers such as China.

The American ruling class will act with just as much ruthlessness in attacking the jobs and social programs of workers at home as it does in asserting its interests internationally.

The immense reservoir of anti-war sentiment in the United States must again find expression as part of a social and political movement of the working class against the capitalist system.

Iraq casualties and deaths by US state: mapped

What has been the cost to US forces of the war in Iraq? As operations come to an end, we map the casualties in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn so far. Click on a state to explore the data, or use the dropdown menu below to see deaths per capita and numbers of wounded.

Mapped using Google Fusion tables

- Download the data
- US deaths in Afghanistan mapped by state

Simon Rogers

guardian.co.uk, Wednesday 14 December 2011 11.30 EST
Iraq, killed in action

0 - 50
50 - 100
100 - 200
200 - 300
300 - 400

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Iraq rejects US request to maintain bases after troop withdrawal.

END IRAQ WAR NEWSLETTER #11