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FURTWANGLER

BRET FURTWANGLER | GRAPHICS EDITOR

Time for new weapons

A new sunrise lights upon an old regime in America, and no matter how one may have despised the outcome, one must admire the way people were able to vote and be thankful for a gift that few nations truly have. No matter how many pairs of rosy-colored lenses we try to don, some nations will never have real democracies. It appears more and more likely that Iraq will fall into the morass of countries wearing mere masks of legitimacy while their citizens suffer.

The Bush Administration has already written a happy ending to the story of Iraq (complete with a new flag that might as well bear the label "made in Texas"); but it is becoming painfully obvious that it is time to take a new tact in the war on terror. It's bad enough that General Myers is calling battles against opposition "opportunities," but now we have to watch one of those "opportunities" emerge in the battle for Fallujah, a symbol of a war that has become a fight just to keep our heads above water.

Even Mr. Rumsfeld appears to have recognized the awful truth. Backpedalling from earlier statements extolling the virtues of an imperfect democracy, he reminded us in Monday's Pentagon press briefing that, "you cannot have a country that is free and democratic and respectful of all the people in the country if you have safe havens for people who go around chopping people's heads off."

I liked him more when he was honest about our chances. Let us face facts: The only democracy that will ever come to Iraq will be built on the back of broken eggshells.

Of course the Secretary of Defense remains optimistic. "Over time you'll find that the process of tipping will take place, that more and more of the Iraqis will be angry about the fact that their innocent people are being killed by the extremists. ... They'll want elections, and the more they see the extremists acting against that possibility of elections, I think that they'll turn



JENNIFER MCBRIDE
QUASHING DISSENT

on those people."

In other words, the worse it gets, the more likely Iraqis will have an election in January. What is up is down, what is black is white. Welcome to the other side of the rabbit hole, because in neocon paradise, failure is an impossibility. Instability and stability alike lead us calmly down the yellow brick road to emerald polling booths.

People searching, determined for a way to cleanse the mud spatters off their illusions of descending, happy white doves quickly turn to Afghanistan as an indicator of sweet scenarios ahead. At least in Afghanistan, drug lords and warlords were able to keep their people in line enough for elections to be held but not enough to form any reasonable opposition to America's darling paper doll regime.

Unfortunately, Iraq lacks even that cohesion of chaos. The three factions forming the interim government are well organized, completely polarized and ready to cannibalize their own country. Iraq's most prominent Sunni political party has withdrawn from the coalition government, while prominent Sunni clerics call for boycotts of coming elections. Ironically, the best example of a unified Iraq can be found in Fallujah—where Sunnis and Shiites alike back the rebel cleric al Sadr.

If an Iraqi government represents the few instead of the many, disenfranchised youths will become violent rebels and discouraged Iraqis will not stand up for their illegitimate government. Already we are having

problems with contingents of Iraqi forces unwilling to fight.

Rumsfeld's answers to press questions underscore how little the administration understands of the delicate balance necessary for stability. "The only option that exists for those folks is to decide that they have a stake in the future of that country and to become a part of the political process," he told reporters. And of course this will all happen once evil is cleansed from Iraq's domain. Which will happen cleanly. "There aren't going to be large numbers of civilians killed, certainly not by U.S. forces," Rumsfeld stated, praising U.S. precision. But the United States doesn't keep track of Iraqi civilian casualties, so we'll never know, will we?

Please, Mr. Rumsfeld, stop feeding us bullshit. Stop trying to convince us that rain is dry. We are bogged down in urban battles chasing ghosts and the only solution coming from the administration's mouth is actually a sermon. It's time for President Bush to use some of that political capital for something other than coddling. The only hope for a new Iraq won't be found in the hearts and the minds of people miraculously deciding en masse that "Oh yes, democracy is what we really want after all." The best way that Bush can prove the U.S. is willing to get serious is to take advantage of the Cabinet reshuffle to replace Rumsfeld's ever-cheerful talking head with someone who is willing to be straight with the people ... and with the President.

It's time to ask for more troops. It's time to consider partitions. It's time to break the bubble, Mr. Bush. You may have won an election, but now unfettered by campaigning, you must buckle down and deal with the election on the other side of the world ... and misleading statements, no matter how pleasant, should not be a part of your arsenal.

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■ Editorial

Optimistic U.S. needs to regain focus in Iraq

As 10,000 to 15,000 U.S. troops launch a major offensive in Fallujah 19 months after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, it is time for Americans to re-evaluate what our soldiers are dying for and who they are fighting against.

The invasion, lumped into the "war on terror" by those scraping the barrel for an explanation for disintegrating U.S.-world relations, has become a monster. On Monday, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld told reporters he expected insurgents to put up a tough fight.

"Listen, these folks are determined," he said. "These are killers. They chop people's heads off. They're getting money from around the world. They're getting recruits."

It is entertaining to watch the rose-tinted glasses come off right before a major offensive. Where was this rhetoric during the election? And is any of this news to anyone? Did Rumsfeld honestly think one of the oldest human cultures in the world would embrace gun-wielding, America-propaganda-spreading troops with open arms?

The U.S. military estimates that at least 20 percent of the insurgents in Fallujah are foreigners, many following Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, according to the Associated Press. As if the "who" of the Iraq situation didn't seem ambiguous enough, the "why" is becoming progressively more unclear.

According to the Department of Defense, at least 1,133 members of the U.S. military have died (as of Monday) in Iraq, 995 of those deaths occurring after May 2003, when President Bush declared an end to "major combat operations." At least 871 died as a result of hostile action. Furthermore, 100,000 Iraqi civilians have died as a result of the invasion, according to a study released last week by Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

What has this mind-boggling human suffering and sacrifice gotten us? Not much. On Sunday, Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, faced with what The New York Times called "an expanding outbreak of insurgent violence across the country," declared a 60-day state of emergency. It is hard to fathom how the Iraqi forces will be able to protect themselves without coalition help anytime soon. And a free, fair and widespread election in January is looking like a pipe dream.

America must no longer use Iraq as a testing ground for its policies. The "insurgency" exists well beyond Fallujah, impacting hundreds of thousands of civilians. The United States must send more troops to Iraq to help contain the violence and, most importantly, to help rebuild. After more than a year of combat, the Bush Administration must strengthen its international allies to help foster peace and quell a fast-approaching global uprising.

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