

# WE ARE THE DECIDERS



KAL

BY MOLLY IVINS

The purpose of this old-fashioned newspaper crusade to stop the war is not to make George W. Bush look like the dumbest President ever. People have done dumber things. What were they thinking when they bought into the Bay of Pigs fiasco? How dumb was the Egypt-Suez War? How massively stupid was the entire war in Vietnam? Even at that, the challenge with this misbegotten adventure is that WE simply cannot let it continue.

It is not a matter of whether we will lose or we are losing. We have lost. General John P. Abizaid, until recently the senior commander in the Middle East, insists that the answer to our problems there are not military. "You have to internationalize the problem. You have to attack it diplomatically, geo-strategically," he said.

His assessment is supported by General George W. Casey Jr., the senior American commander in Iraq, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who only recommend releasing forces with a clear definition of the goals for the additional troops.

Bush's call for a "surge" or "escalation" also goes against the Iraq Study Group. Talk is that the White House has planned to do anything but what the group suggested after months of investigation and proposals based on much broader strategic implications.

About the only politician out there besides Bush actively calling for a surge is Senator John McCain. In a recent opinion piece, he wrote: "The presence of additional coalition forces would allow the Iraqi government to do what it cannot accomplish today on its own — impose its rule throughout the country... By surging troops and bringing security to Baghdad and other areas, we will give Iraqis the best possible chance to succeed." But with all due respect to the senator from Arizona, that ship has long sailed.

A surge is not acceptable to the people in this country — we have voted overwhelmingly against this war in polls (about 80% of the public is against escalation, and a recent *Military Times* poll shows only 38% of active military want more troops sent) and at the polls. We know this is wrong. The people understand, the people have the right to make this decision, and the people have the obligation to make sure our will is implemented.

Congress must work for the people in the resolution of this fiasco. Ted Kennedy's proposal to control the money and tighten oversight is a welcome first step. And if Republicans want to continue to rubber-stamp this administration's idiotic "plans" and go against the will of the people, they should be thrown out as soon as possible, to join their recent colleagues.

Anyone who wants to talk knowledgeably about our Iraq misadventure should pick up Rajiv Chandrasekaran's *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone*. It's like reading a horror novel. You just want to put your face down and moan: How could we let this happen? How could we have been so stupid?

As *The Washington Post's* review notes, Chandrasekaran's book "methodically documents the baffling ineptitude that dominated U.S. attempts to influence Iraq's fiendish politics, rebuild the electrical grid, privatize the economy, run the oil industry, recruit expert staff or instill a modicum of normalcy to the lives of Iraqis."

We are the people who run this country. We are the deciders. And every single day, every single one of us needs to step outside and take some action to help stop this war. Raise hell. Think of something to make the ridiculous look ridiculous. Make our troops know we're for them and trying to get them out of there. Hit the streets to protest Bush's proposed surge. If you can, go to the peace march in Washington on January 27. We need people in the streets, banging pots and pans and demanding, "Stop it now!"

Molly Ivins died of breast cancer on January 31. This was her last column, published nationally through Creators Syndicate on January 11. Margaret Tanguay Webb, in a recent letter to *The Daily Astorian*, has expressed the loss her death signifies: "Well, bless Molly Ivins... She was a great lady and a terrific writer. Bitterly funny, unflinchingly truthful, she was often the only political pundit who has made me smile during the Bush regime. I wish Molly was still with us and that she lived in Astoria. She would send the liquefied natural gas corporations packing, and Lord knows what she would do with the port (of Astoria) commissioners."

## GROSS ABUSE OF CHARITIES

Molly Ivins wrote this column in early January 2006.

We live in a great nation. The police blotter of the *Mill Valley Herald* in California informs us that the constabulary there had to be called out on account of a citizen "dressed like a penguin" who was "standing on a street corner playing a ukulele." Makes me proud to be an American.

What does not make me proud to be an American is a specific twist in the Jack Abramoff/Tom DeLay scandal — in fact, this makes me want to urp up despite the fact I have a strong stomach when it comes to political corruption.

Both Abramoff and DeLay and many of their web of colleagues have consistently used non profit organizations ostensibly formed for charitable purposes to launder money, to move peculiar proceeds and to pay for high-flying perks.

Come on, guys, give us a break — if you're going to make a mockery of democracy and show your mastery at flipping money, wiring the system and fixing the odds — please don't use charitable organizations designed to help crippled children to do it.

That's bad taste.

According to the Associated Press, Tom DeLay "visited" cliff-top Caribbean resorts, golf courses designed by PGA champions and four-star restaurants, all courtesy of donors who bankrolled his political empire.

"Public documents reviewed by The Associated Press tell the story: at least 48 visits to golf clubs, and resorts with lush fairways, 100 flights aboard company planes, 200 stays at hotels, many world class, and 500 meals at restaurants, some averaging nearly \$200 for a dinner for two.

"Instead of his personal expense, the meals and trips for DeLay and his associates were paid with donations collected by the campaign committees, political action committees and children's charity the Texas Republican created during his rise to the top of Congress."

How cynical does this make you? When I hear Speaker (of the House) Dennis Hastert is returning his campaign contributions from Jack Abramoff or "donating it to charity," I wonder which little chamer of a Republican campaign fund masquerading as a charity he's sending it to.

The DeLay Foundation for Kids was set up 18 years ago and works on behalf of foster children. But it is also a way for companies to give unregulated and undisclosed funds: It's a way for companies to get into DeLay's good graces or, as Fred Lewis from Campaign for People says, "another way for donors to get their hooks into politicians."

Meanwhile, Abramoff was even more cavalier about "charity." He created the Capital Athletic Foundation to help inner-city children through organized sports. There

is no evidence any of the money ever went to that purpose, but *The Washington Post* reports it went to a sniper school for Israelis on the West Bank, a golf trip to Scotland for Rep. Bob Ney (R-Ohio), and a Jewish religious academy in Columbia, Maryland.

Abramoff's hapless tribal clients were generous contributors: I wonder if he thought it was funny that Native Americans would more likely identify with Palestinians than Israelis.

Believe it or not, there are nonprofit organizations in this country where the CEO barely makes more than the janitor, where nickels and pennies are saved so the clients or cause can get a little more.

While Jack Abramoff padded his bills and falsified expenses to tribal clients, there are people who work for minimum wages on tribal reservations to help some of the poorest people in America get a minimally decent chance at life.

Abramoff and DeLay and their crummy hangers-on haven't just cheated and lied. They have dishonored the work of many people who are devoted to helping others without even expecting a decent salary for it.

## WORLD WAR?

BY JACK DENNON

"Succeeding in Iraq," said President Bush on January 10, "requires defending its territorial integrity and stabilizing the regime in the face of the extremist challenge."

"This begins with addressing Iran and Syria. These two regimes are allowing terrorists and insurgents to use their territory to move in and out of Iraq. Iran is providing material support for attacks on American troops. We will disrupt the attacks on our forces. We will interrupt the flow of support from Iran and Syria. And we will seek out and destroy the network providing advanced weaponry and training to our enemies in Iraq."

That statement by President Bush touches upon a question fundamental to America's presence in Iraq; yet a question that the President managed to totally evade. The fundamental question is: Why do we have enemies in Iraq?

Iraq had nothing whatsoever to do with the September 11, 2001 attacks on America. Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction. Iraq was not a threat to America. Iraq is not now, and never has been a threat to America. America had no enemies in Iraq until President Bush created them by invading their country.

The "Downing Street memos" revealed to the world that the invasion was sold to Congress and the American people with statements that the Bush administration knew to be false. They were lies.

Even now the Bush administration, in similar fashion, is attempting to set into motion an attack on Iran; an attack, as reported by Geof Parrish at [www.workingforchange.com](http://www.workingforchange.com), that would be "pure unadulterated madness. A broad regional war, even if it doesn't lead to World War 3, and Armageddon, will kill millions, almost certainly see the first use of nuclear weapons in 60 years, will make Americans (and Israelis) far less safe, will destroy America's and the world's economies, will bankrupt our country, destroy our military, and will permanently isolate America as a globally despised moral leper. Oh, and we'll lose. Badly."

Unless Congress and the American people muster courage to demand impeachment of George Bush, and impeachment of Dick Cheney — a Vice President who has held sway over his boss like no other Vice President in our history — then Congress and the American people will share complicity in the crime and the catastrophe that must otherwise await us.

Jack Dennon lives in Warrenton.

THOM DE JONG

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## MOLLY IVINS AMERICA'S JERICHO VOICE

Up to the walls of Jericho  
 She marched with a spear in her hand  
 Go blow them ram horns she cried  
 For the battle is in my hand  
 The walls have not come down,  
 but they have been given a serious shaking.  
 That Jericho voice is stilled now.  
 Molly Ivins has been quieted.

Molly,  
 I am shouting,  
 With two voices,  
 Walls come down!  
 Walls come down!  
 Walls come down!

~MAYA ANGELOU