

Lame Duck Still Quacks

By Jon Spitz – March, 2008

With the 2008 presidential race hogging the media spotlight, the American people can be forgiven for forgetting about the fact that there is still a bloody war going on in Iraq and that we still have a sitting president who is literally getting away with murder.

Mainstream media coverage of the war has devolved into an uncritical echo of Bush's claim that the "surge" has worked and we are now winning the war. The very idea that a drop in war casualties somehow translates into the Iraqi people beginning to embrace their American occupiers is absurd on its face.

The fractious situation in Iraq is very complicated and the reasons for the lull in fighting are many and complex, but the main result of the US "surge" has been to transfer lots of guns over to Sunni Muslim militias who agreed to go after al Qaeda cells within Iraq. Experience tells us that these Sunni Muslim militias are not loyal to the US military and will eventually turn these weapons against us. Then the casualty count is likely to rise once again.

There has also been a significant increase in the US air war during the "surge" that has gone virtually unreported by the mainstream media. Death and destruction from the bombing in Iraq continues apace even as the mainstream media downplays the violence.

Meanwhile the Democratic candidates for president (Clinton and Obama) are being presented by the mainstream media as pandering to the left-wing anti-war "extremists" in their own Party (which happens to be a large majority of the American people by the way) even though both candidates favor staying in Iraq indefinitely with a scaled down military force. Neither candidate is ever asked to explain how this smaller force is supposed to do what a larger force has been unable to accomplish.

As the war in Iraq rages on the Democrats who control Congress have routinely approved Bush's requests for hundreds of billions of more dollars to keep the war going without any deadlines for withdrawal. If the Democrats were truly serious about ending the war they would use the Congress's power of the purse to stop funding it and then Bush would have no choice but to bring the troops home. But alas, the Democrats are not serious about ending the war.

The Democrats did manage to pass an appropriations bill that specifically denied funding for construction of permanent US military bases in Iraq but Bush simply issued a "signing statement" saying he would not obey this law. And as is their habit, the Democrats just shrugged meekly and went along with Bush's fiat.

In addition to tailoring his own domestic laws, Bush has also negotiated an agreement with the Iraqi government to keep a permanent US military presence in Iraq. This is Bush's attempt to try and mandate US foreign policy beyond his legal term of office. He made this agreement outside the normal treaty process so that Congress would have no

opportunity to vote on it. Here again, the Congress has not seriously challenged Bush on this unconstitutional power grab.

With virtually no Congressional resistance to his war in Iraq, Bush felt empowered to spend much of his recent trip to the Middle East trying to drum up support from Islamic countries for his plan to bomb Iran. Unlike the cowering US Congress, however, the leaders of these countries did not bow down to the naked emperor, and Bush came away with no local Middle Eastern support for his lunatic plan. But such rejection means nothing to Bush and the bombing of Iran is still very much on his agenda.

Bush spent the rest of his Middle Eastern trip begging his Saudi Arabian “friends” to increase oil exports to the US, but his pathetic plea was firmly rejected by the Saudis. Even as the US Congress continues to bend over and kiss the emperor’s ass, the Saudis had the nerve to lecture him on how the US is an energy glutton and needs to go on a diet. Of course the real reason the Saudis refused to increase oil exports to the US is because they can’t increase production even if they wanted to. The untold story behind the Saudi rejection of Bush is that the Saudis have reached peak oil and they can no longer simply increase supply on demand. Saudi peak oil is a defining moment in the world’s energy economy.

The US economy is now in a state of freefall. This circumstance is the logical and long predicted result of corporate sponsored government policies that have concentrated the nation’s wealth in the hands of a very few ultra-rich people while eliminating millions of well paying jobs for average working people. To keep this economy afloat consumers have relied more and more on debt which many can no longer afford to repay and the whole system is collapsing. The answer to this problem according to the Federal Reserve Bank is to make it easier for people to borrow even more money by lowering interest rates, but this is just pouring more fuel on the fire.

With future oil supplies much less assured than in the past and the price of oil going up commensurately, the US economy is in for a period of major retrenchment. Down the road there will be no alternative for the American people other than to learn how to live their lives using much less energy.

So here we have a sitting president who is not trusted by the American people, who gets no respect from the international community, and who is in the last months of his final term. There is a tremendous desire by the Democrats in Congress and by most of the American people to just forget about Bush and concentrate on that momentous day when he will finally be gone. But Bush is not gone, and in these perilous months before the November election he is still in a position to do a lot of damage. Public beware – this lame duck is still quacking.