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What Have We Achieved?

Erwin Riedner—Editor, *TWCP*

This special edition of *The Wayne County Progressive*, dated on the fourth anniversary of the American invasion of Iraq, is presented as a vigorous expression of protest to the Bush administration's illegal, senseless, ever-escalating war.

On Wednesday, February 28, 2007, the membership at the Network's monthly meeting voted unanimously to publish this extra newsletter so our organization could express its outrage and dismay over the terrible war in Iraq, thrust upon us by the misjudgments, lies and just plain ignorance of our president and his neo-conservative operatives in and out of government.

One among the questions we ask about the war is this: what have we achieved by our invasion and occupation of Iraq? We keep waiting for the war's apologists to tell us.

We haven't apprehended the Iraqi sponsors of the 9/11 attack because none was an Iraqi. We haven't found weapons of mass destruction, supposedly 45 minutes away from raining down on us, because there weren't any. We haven't learned Saddam Hussein's uranium enrichment was anything more than a twisted fabrication. We haven't brought democracy to Iraq, only bloody anarchy, civil war, and a right-wing, ineffective government. Oil revenues have not paid for our madness, you and I have.

What we have accomplished in Iraq, sadly, is uncontrolled death, maiming and mental destruction of thousands upon thousands, our own and theirs. Plus we compromised our good name world-wide, stretched our military to fragility, and created an astounding war debt that for years will rob us of good schools, decent health coverage, and funds for scientific research.

Now, to justify their latest folly—the infamous “surge”—the double-talkers running our country employ in a deceitful and sanctimonious “support-our-troops” propaganda campaign, once

again cynically exploiting on the honest faith and patriotism of those deceived and tricked into sending their sons,



daughters, husbands, brothers and sisters off to an illegal and senseless war no different from another great, trumped-up horror haunting our past, Viet Nam.

Americans declare themselves to be a reasonable and responsible people. How can we then not recognize that America too can have incompetent and devious leadership? When my generation served, it didn't take us long to understand the incontrovertible truth that “there aren't bad soldiers, just bad officers,” a truth that applied all the way up to and especially to the commander-in-chief. As it was then, so it is now: another tragedy of failed leadership.

More and more, thinking patriotic citizens are asking those who say we cannot at the same time protest the war and support our troops to please explain how supporting our troops translates into sending them off to be killed, maimed or driven to mental breakdown because Bush and his hustler cronies have concocted an insane foreign policy? And how does overlooking bungled care of the wounded and broken who do return constitute supporting them?

Supporting our troops means, to my friends and to me, that we will continue to rally, protest and write against the obscenity the evil axis of Bush/Cheney/Rice and the rest has foisted upon us.

We demand leadership that is honest, intelligent and decent. As Americans who are not just citizens of Wayne

County but of the state, country and the world, we demand transparency and full, truthful disclosure of reasons and rationales for any policy or action.

America is waking up to the deceptions of the flag-waving, doctrinaire neo-cons. Elected officials or candidates seeking office who use troops as props to maintain or gain power will face constituent and voter accountability.

The Great American Blixkrieg

Gordon Shull—Network Founding Member

Editor's Note: During the Bush administration's 2003 crazed ballyhoo and bullying buildup to the invasion and occupation of Iraq, there were only a few good and thoughtful people sufficiently courageous to clearly warn against such ill-conceived adventurism. One of them was, of course, Senator Russ Feingold of Wisconsin who now stands justified to his objections to the Bush administration's deceptions about the Iraq quagmire.

Another wise voice crying in the wilderness was College of Wooster professor emeritus of international relations, Gordon Shull, whose article warning against the rush toward war appeared in the *Wooster Daily Record* on March 20, 2003, just as President Bush and his madmen were setting up the Iraqi debacle. Portions of Dr. Shull's article follow. One reconsideration should be read into the following article: Gordon suggested it would take ten to twenty years for a majority of Americans to wake up to the terrible error in attacking Iraq. It has taken less than four.

“Beware the Ides of March!” Today these words, uttered to the man on the top of the world's totem pole, have an eerie ring. I do believe that 10 years, 20 years from now, people will look back on mid-March 2003 as a time of great, unnecessary American folly.

We have heard many times that the United Nations Security Council had adopted 17 resolutions demanding that Saddam Hussein disclose and disarm his weapons of mass destruction, and he had dodged or flouted all of them. But the latest resolution was buttressed by a **Blixkrieg**, page 1...

unanimous Security Council, new rules about inspection and a huge American-British military presence in the neighborhood.

The results have been mixed. But Hans Blix, the chief U.N. inspector, believes that he can do his job—for better or for worse—“not in years, not in weeks, but in months.” Is it possible that Saddam is on a learning curve? That multiplying the inspectors, and keeping the kind of military cordon that did not exist during those other 17 resolutions, just might produce results?

It is passing strange that President Bush, who marshaled the Security Council, and put that cordon around Saddam, does not believe that this new presence might make a difference on Saddam’s policy. Maybe so, maybe not. What on earth is to be lost by giving Blix his nine or 10 months?

This, of course, would be terribly inconvenient for our soldiers who are already there, prepared and preparing. Besides, it will soon be beastly hot, and American is short on sunscreen (another argument for waiting until next winter). But what is a huge inconvenience compared to the devastation of war—especially when the evidence is mounting that such a war, waged without the world’s support, will recruit thousands of young Muslims and Arabs to al-Qaida, the greater enemy? Bin Laden must be chortling in his cave.

The best way to avoid giving bin Laden his tens of thousands is to give Blix his 10 months, keep many of our troops in place, and redouble the promising new Blair-Bush initiative on the Israeli-Palestinians front....

All We are Saying is—what?

A decision to give Blix his 10 months, during which America actively supports the Blix test, and just as actively pursues a new initiative in Israeli-Palestinian relations just might make a huge difference in the world’s support of the United States.

Bust is has become clear that Bush decided long ago that he was going to have his war in Iraq, with or without the United Nations or even NATO. So now, when he world doesn’t see things his way, he is like a child throwing a tantrum because people are dangling his lollipop out of reach. He must have that lollipop now—not next winter—even if he has to break the furniture.

If that furniture bears the label of the United Nations or NATO, he can pretend that it is they, not he, who broke it. But in the absence of a clear threat to any neighbor, and the presence of some evidence that Saddam is learning at last,

only a collation of the willing and the billing will believe that one.

The air is full of two song these days. One comes from most of the world: “All we are saying is give Blix a chance.” The other belongs to the Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz-Perle choir. “All we are saying is give war a chance.”

For the rest of us, that eerie warning: Beware the Ides of March.

Valor and Squalor

Paul Krugman
from *The New York Times*, March 5, 2007
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When Salon, the online magazine, reported on mistreatment of veterans at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center two years ago, officials simply denied that there were any problems. And they initially tried to brush off lat month’s expose in the Washington Post.

But this time, with President Bush’s approval at 29 percent, Democrats in control of Congress, and Donald Rumsfeld no longer defense secretary—Robert Gates, his successor, appears genuinely distressed at the situation—the whitewash didn’t stick.

Yet even now it’s not clear whether the public will be told the full story, which is that the horrors of Walter Reed’s outpatient unit are no aberrations. For all its cries of “support the troops,” the Bush administration has treated veterans’ medical care the same way it treats everything else: nickel-and-diming the needy, protecting the incompetent and privatizing everything it can.

What makes this a particular shame is that in the Clinton years, veterans’ health care—like the Federal Emergency Management Agency—became a shining example of how good leadership can revitalize a troubled government program. By the early years of this decade the Veterans Health Administration was, by many measures, providing the highest-quality health care in America. (It probably still is: Walter Reed is a military facility, not run by the V.H.A.)

But as with FEMA, the Bush administration has done all it can to undermine that achievement. And the Walter Reed scandal is another Hurricane Katrina: the moment when the administration’s misgovernment became obvious to everyone.

The problem starts with money. The administration uses carefully cooked numbers to pretend that it has been generous to veterans, but the historical data contained in its own budget for fiscal 2008 tell the true story. The quagmire in Iraq has vastly increased

the demands on the Veterans Administration, yet since 2001 federal outlays for veterans’ medical care have actually lagged behind overall national health spending.

To save money, the administration has been charging veterans for many formerly free services. For example, in 2005 Salon reported that some Walter Reed patients were forced to pay hundreds of dollars each month for their meals.

More important, the administration has broken longstanding promises of lifetime health care to those who defend our nation. Two months before the invasion of Iraq the V.H.A., which previously offered care to all veterans, introduced severe new restrictions on who is entitled to enroll in its health care system. As the agency’s Web site helpfully explains, veterans whose income exceeds as little as \$27,790 a year, and who lack “special eligibilities such as a compensable service connected condition or recent combat service,” will be turned away.

So when you hear stories of veterans who spend months or years fighting to get the care they deserve, trying to prove that their injuries are service-related, remember this: all this red tape was created not by the inherent inefficiency of government bureaucracy, but by the Bush administration’s penny-pinching.

But money is only part of the problem.

We know from Hurricane Katrina post-mortems that one of the factors degrading FEMA’s effectiveness was the Bush administration’s relentless push to outsource and privatize disaster management, which demoralized government employees and drove away many of the agency’s most experienced professionals. It appears that the same thing has been happening to veteran’s care.

The redoubtable Henry Waxman, chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, points out that IAP Worldwide Services, a company run by two former Halliburton executives, received a large contract to run Walter Reed under suspicious circumstances: the Army reversed the results of an audit concluding that government employees could do the job more cheaply.

And Mr. Waxman, who will be holding a hearing on the issue today, appears to have solid evidence, including an internal Walter Reed memo from last year, that the prospect of privatization led to a FEMA-like exodus of skilled personnel.

What comes next? Francis J. Harvey, who as far as I can tell was the first defense contractor appointed secretary of the Army, has been forced out. But the

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parallels between what happened at Walter Reed and what happened in New Orleans—not to mention parallels with the mother of all scandals, the failed reconstruction of Iraq—tell us that the roots of the scandal run far deeper than the actions of a few bad men.

provided: 5,361,148 people with health care, or 271,778 elementary school teachers, or 2,469,624 Head Start places for children, or 9,095,890 children with health care, or 149,167 affordable housing units, or 1,440 new elementary school buildings, or 1,978,985 scholarships to university applicants, or 244,840 music and arts teachers, or 383,668 public safety offi-

Wooster for three full days in April of 2006. It was first shown on Wooster's downtown square for one full day, then moved to the Fairgrounds for a day, and completed the three days at the College of Wooster campus.

NOTICE: Monday, March 19 at 7:00 p.m. Anti-war rally, on the Wooster Square



The Next-to-the-Last Week of the Fourth Year in Iraq

"Surge" means a transient sudden rise of current or voltage in an electrical circuit, or a sudden and transient increase in water level (e.g., "storm surge, etc.). Temporariness is understood when normal people use the word.

Consider the week of March 4th through 10th in Iraq, and whether or not the Bush administration's claim of growing calm in Iraq isn't just one more pack of lies. On the 4th British troops stormed an Iraqi intelligence office in Bastra where they found 30 prisoners, a number of them tortured. Iraq's Prime Minister al-Malaki was incensed, but not about the torture, but that the British raided and stopped it! No wonder the British are soon

American Casualties in Iraq

As of March 15, 2007 (Source CNN)

Deaths: 3,198

Wounded: 23,827

Of those wounded, approximately 8,100 have one of or a combination of the following permanent, handicapping conditions: blindness in one or both eyes; disfiguring facial burns; disfiguring facial wounds such as missing noses, lips, cheeks or chins; throat injuries that have destroyed the ability to speak; torso or abdominal injuries interrupting bodily functions; one or more missing hands, arms or shoulders, one or more missing hips, feet or legs; permanent brain damage; debilitating combat-related mental illnesses.

War Costs Translated

Jan Daily—Network Founding Member

Taxpayers in Ohio alone will pay \$16 billion for the cost of the Iraq war through 2007. For the same amount of money, the following could have been

pulling out, after which al-Malaki and his intelligence officers can proceed as they wish with their own version of Abu Graebe, the prison where we either learned from them or they learned from us, or both.

On Monday, March 5 a suicide bomber set himself off in a book market, killing 20 people besides himself. On Tuesday, March 6, 118 Shiite pilgrims were killed. On Wednesday Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno (he's what's called the day-to-day commander of American troops in Iraq) recommended that those 21,500 "surge" troops, plus the 7,000 support troops that our esteemed president forgot to mention, when he was blathering about saving the war, stay on well into next year, 2008!

Eyes Wide Open Ohio Returns to Wooster

Military and Civilian Deaths in the Iraq War

A vivid and moving exhibit demonstrating the costs of war in Iraq in terms of military and civil deaths will be on the downtown Wooster Square, at the Gazebo, on Saturday, April 28 between 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. The exhibit is sponsored by the Wooster Area Interfaith Partnership plus the group, Wooster Opposing the War.

The exhibit places pairs of combat boots in rows, each pair standing for an Ohioan killed in combat in Iraq, as well as pairs of slippers and shoes to stand for some among the many Iraqi civilians deaths as the result of the terrible and shameful conflict

The Eyes Wide Open exhibit was in

Then on Thursday March 7 the big general himself, David Petraeus, said he would almost surely need even more than the 21,500 + 7,000 troops, to "get the job done," to use one among the many Bush clichés.

On Friday the 8th of March the Defense Department confirmed the deaths of the following service members over the previous 5 days: