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Osama's Back

by Jacob G. Hornberger

Osama bin Laden undoubtedly infuriated President Bush [with his most recent audiotape](#), which was played last week on Aljazeera, for four reasons:

First, bin Laden's tape serves as a reminder to the American people that he is still alive despite the untold number of innocent people that U.S. personnel killed and maimed in the attack on Afghanistan as part of their unsuccessful "war-on-terrorism" attempt to kill him.

Second, bin Laden's focus on U.S. foreign policy, especially Bush's invasion and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, once again reminds Americans that Bush, Cheney, and the rest of the federal gang have been lying from the beginning about the terrorists' being motivated by hatred for America's "freedom and values" rather than by the brutality of U.S. foreign policy, including the [sanctions against Iraq](#), which contributed to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqi children, and which were a motivating factor in the World Trade Center attacks, both [in 1993](#) and 2001.

Third, bin Laden's warning of future terrorist attacks in the United States exposes the ludicrous nature of the president's alternative "[magnet rationale](#)" of invading Iraq (after the WMDs failed to materialize) — that terrorists would be so irresistibly drawn to "bring it on" to U.S. troops in Iraq that, like filings to a magnet, none of them would be able to come to the United States and commit terrorist acts. At the risk of belaboring the obvious, human beings, including terrorists, are not iron filings and thus are able to make choices as to which targets they wish to kill. It may be more difficult to travel to the United States, as compared to Iraq or even Europe, to commit terrorist acts, but that doesn't mean that the U.S. occupation of Iraq precludes them from doing so.

The problem is that if there is another terrorist act, Bush and his cohorts will immediately forget about the failure of the "magnet rationale" and immediately use the new attack as another excuse to exercise [the Padilla doctrine](#), enact a new USA PATRIOT Act, spy on Americans, round up foreigners, build a Berlin Wall around America, et cetera.

Fourth, bin Laden's insistence that Bush end his occupation of Iraq has now put the president in a very uncomfortable position. Bush had been planning to begin withdrawing troops from Iraq, obviously because of the upcoming 2006 congressional elections and the risk that Republicans might lose control of the House or Senate. But if he pulls the troops out now, in the wake of the bin Laden tape, it will appear that he is kowtowing to bin Laden. So, bin Laden has effectively cornered Bush into continuing his military occupation of Iraq, which means more and more U.S. soldiers and Iraqi people being killed practically on a daily basis for the indefinite future.

So why would bin Laden do that, knowing that his statement would be more likely to motivate Bush to stay in Iraq than to exit Iraq? For the same reason that [conservative think tanks call for reform](#) of government programs rather than elimination: the continuation of the programs guarantees a constant supply of donor money into the organization. If the programs were eliminated, the need for financial support would diminish.

It's the same with bin Laden and Iraq. Bush's invasion of that country has got to have provided bin Laden with a boundless source of both volunteers and cash. Moreover, why would bin Laden want to stop an occupation that he knows is bleeding the United States monetarily, killing American troops on a daily basis as they try to protect an Iran-aligned Shi'ite regime in Iraq, inciting ever-increasing animosity against the United States, and weakening the U.S. military? And what does it matter to bin Laden that Bush continues to use the #147;terrorist threat#148; to continue frightening the American people into supporting his assumption of dictatorial powers, including military arrests and detentions of Americans (e.g., Jose Padilla), rounding up foreigners, and spying on Americans or that Bush?

Given the Bush administration's propensity to [target messengers](#) who carry discomfoting messages, federal officials are undoubtedly now thinking that President Bush should have bombed Aljazeera [after all](#).

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