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Bush War Policy Comes Crashing Down **by Sheldon Richman**

It's been a rough several weeks for President Bush and the war party. Observe some recent headlines:

“Training Iraqi troops no longer driving force in U.S. policy” — The McClatchy Newspaper story pointed out, “Military planners have abandoned the idea that training Iraqi troops will enable American soldiers to start coming home soon and now believe that U.S. troops will have to defeat the insurgents and secure control of troubled provinces.”

“U.S. Command Shortens Life of ‘Long War’ as a Reference” — The *New York Times* article stated, “When the Bush administration has sought to explain its strategy for fighting terrorism, it has often said the United States is involved in a ‘long war’ against Islamic extremists.... After taking over last month as the head of Central Command, Adm. William J. Fallon quietly retired the phrase. Military officials said that cultural advisers at the command had become concerned that the concept of a long war alienated Middle East audiences by suggesting that the United States would keep a large number of forces in the region indefinitely.”

“Petraeus: Iraq needs enormous commitment” — The Associated Press story said, “The U.S. military commander in Iraq says the war effort may well get harder before it gets easier and American casualties are likely to continue to climb.... While he would not predict troop levels into the fall or comment directly on the legislation Congress passed Thursday [later vetoed], his comments made clear that his war plan did not include a significant reduction of U.S. forces any time soon.”

“Inspectors Find Rebuilt Projects Crumbling in Iraq” — This *New York Times* article stated, “In a troubling sign for the American-financed rebuilding program in Iraq, inspectors for a federal oversight agency have found that in a sampling of eight projects that the United States had declared successes, seven were no longer operating as designed because of plumbing and electrical failures, lack of proper maintenance, apparent looting and expensive equipment that lay idle.”

To recap:

- The Bush administration is no longer planning to train the Iraqi military to do the main fighting; the burden will be almost entirely on the United States.
- For propaganda reasons, the phrase “long war” has been dropped from the military’s vocabulary even though ...
- The top military commander in Iraq says the fighting will get fiercer, there will be more deaths, and no troops will be coming home in the near future.
- Meanwhile, even the “successful” projects carried out in Iraq by the U.S. government are falling apart.

No, not a good several weeks for the president and his men and women. In fact, it could be an understatement to say that the whole war-policy edifice is crashing down. The curtain of lies and propaganda has shredded to the point where it no longer obscures the truth. The people have responded accordingly: they overwhelmingly disapprove of the war.

The only thing to be resolved is when to get out. Unfortunately, the Democrats, as we’ve just seen, don’t have the votes to force a confrontation with the president. Some compromise war-spending bill will be devised, perhaps even with “nonbinding benchmarks” — suggestions without consequences — for the Iraqi government. Big deal. The objective isn’t to reform the Iraqis; it’s to end the American occupation. Any compromise bill will be a face-saving measure all around. But what will it really mean?

And so this dismal war will go on, despite the wishes the American people. More men will die in vain — because a president is too stubborn to say he was wrong.

One of the crimes of the Vietnam war was that American troops kept being sent long after the politicians knew “winning” was not an option. It appears we are retracing those tragic steps.

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