

war that one can scarcely grasp it. His own Office of Special Plans in the Pentagon and other such irregular organizations, designed to bypass traditional institutions, were the ones most egregiously wrong about Iraq. They bought in totally to the WMD illusion, to the bogus al-Qaeda/Iraq link, and to the non-existent “center of terrorism” in Baghdad—in fact, they originated most of it. Ahmad Chalabi was their guy—he was going to take over immediately and open relations with Israel and democratize the whole Middle East. Chalabi was Cheney’s guy, above all, and it was his “intelligence” that was deliberately falsified.

So Dick Cheney turns out to be a true radical—not a moderate Republican. With President Bush-43, he has worked to wipe out the heritage of Father Bush, James Baker, and Brent Scowcroft. When critics opine that Cheney has created his own “empire,” they are far from totally wrong, but it is an empire of irregulars: neocon Cold Warriors baying for another fight, American Likudniks out for Greater Israel, Special Planners, and Special Operations. Almost everything that this vice president has overseen has, interestingly enough, not been accomplished within traditional institutions but rather by creating new ones.

While there is little mystery about what he has actually done, there remains the mystery of how a man from Wyoming should be the epicenter of a scheme so strange, so Machiavellian, so profoundly disaggregated from the American context. But no one should expect Dick Cheney and his group to change. They will not. They will go down fighting, shouting—correction: whispering—that they are right. ■

Georgie Anne Geyer is a nationally syndicated columnist and the author of Guerilla Prince: The Untold Story of Fidel Castro.

Saddam Takes a Ba’ath

But we still know little about the Iraqi resistance.

By Philip Giraldi

THE CAPTURE OF Saddam Hussein by U.S. forces is surely a significant moment in the war against Iraq, though its impact is almost certainly political rather than tactical, and it might, perversely, actually increase the intensity and scale of Iraqi resistance. In no sense is it the result of improved intelligence gathering, nor is it a victory in the war on terrorism. Without Saddam, a revival of Ba’ath Party fortunes becomes chimerical, forcing Sunni moderates to examine seriously the options that remain to them and making a constitutional settlement more achievable. Saddam in chains also unifies, empowers, and legitimizes the beleaguered Iraqi Governing Council as it prepares to pass judgment on the Iraqi dictator’s years of misrule and oppression. Most significant of all, the political prospects of President George W. Bush have been measurably strengthened. Saddam as a tangible symbol of victory enables the Bush administration to show-trial the crimes of the Iraqi dictator as lead-up to America’s own elections, turning the Iraq-war liability into an asset.

The capture of Saddam reveals much about the capabilities and limitations of U.S. operational intelligence in Iraq. Every intelligence officer knows that most breakthroughs against impossibly hard targets are the result of *deus ex machina*, an unanticipated providential intervention. Cold War Soviet spies were mostly volunteers who co-operated with the West for their own reasons, not because they had been assiduously courted, developed, and recruited by an

American case officer. Terrorist cells are rarely penetrated, and when they are it is because someone has unexpectedly stepped forward to provide the critical information, not because of astute planning and execution by Washington.

Because good, sustainable intelligence must of necessity be based on an established group of agents that are carefully tested and evaluated, the problem with relying on random bursts of information provided by volunteers is that the flow of intelligence cannot be managed or relied upon. The volunteers, referred to as “walk ins,” can provide pure gold, but they much more often market information that is deliberately or unintentionally false. Many are motivated by money or are seeking revenge on someone or some group. They tie up resources. Their information is more often than not fabricated or useless, but when there is little else to rely upon, they are ignored at one’s peril. This has been the American dilemma in Iraq—the lack of a good intelligence network on the ground leads to untoward reliance on uncontrolled and untested sources who volunteer questionable information.

Saddam was reportedly captured when a slighted member of the Ba’athist inner circle took his revenge and revealed the Iraqi leader’s whereabouts. Contrary to press accounts, Saddam had no compromising documents on his person when taken. Subsequently, the son of a general executed for disloyalty volunteered the information on the organization of the resistance that was exploited by U.S. forces to make a series

of arrests immediately after the capture. Both men came from Saddam's hometown and were members of his extended family or clan. In response to the two betrayals, Ba'athist insurgents assumed the worst case and scattered, relocating cells and scrapping operations to protect themselves from American raids. Subsequent incursions by the U.S. military have been largely ineffective. Will there

The nature of the resistance remains the core issue. The U.S. military knows little about whom it is fighting. Confusion is evident in the painfully convoluted and contradictory explanations for the persistence of the insurgency. There may be as many as five distinct resistance groups, including Saddam-loyalist Ba'athists, former army officers, Islamists, Ansar al-Islam, and foreign jihadis,

trated in Sunni regions, and most strongly in Ba'athist strongholds, but it has not been confined to those areas. Attacks have taken place against coalition forces in predominantly Shi'ite areas in Baghdad, Karbala, and Basra.

Many Iraqis hate Saddam, but they dislike the occupation forces even more. Apart from the Kurds, who have their own agenda for courting the U.S., hatred of the occupation and questioning of its motives is widespread. Indeed, the resistance to the American occupation may actually broaden and become more diversified as many Iraqis who demurred at fighting for Saddam may find it more palatable to fight to expel the Americans and restore sovereignty to a legitimized Saddam-less Iraq. There are signs that the Shi'ites, nearly two-thirds of the population and unwilling to resist on behalf of Saddam, may do so for a new nation led by Shi'ite clerics. Lacking Saddam, the various resistance groups may also be willing to co-operate more closely against the occupying powers. Former government officials and ex-army officers are already dealing directly with foreign terrorists.

For post-Saddam Iraq, problems appear to be numerous, while solutions are few. The increasingly decentralized insurgency is fighting for God and country as well as for national honor, betrayed most recently through the pusillanimous surrender of Saddam. For the U.S. to win, the one-third of the Iraqi people represented by the disenfranchised and hopeless Sunnis must be given a defined political space to wean them away from armed insurgency and the lure of a national resistance. Without the Sunnis serving as a catalyst, the Shi'ites would be less inclined to take up arms, leaving a truncated resistance to the less numerous Islamists and their foreign allies. ■

Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a partner in Cannistraro Associates.

THE NATURE OF THE RESISTANCE REMAINS THE CORE ISSUE. THE U.S. MILITARY KNOWS LITTLE ABOUT WHOM IT IS FIGHTING.

be any other significant intelligence windfall linked to the capture? Probably not, unless the example of the two insiders who betrayed Saddam proves contagious and others decide that their own personal or family interests correspond with those of the coalition.

Widespread commentary suggesting either that Saddam himself will prove to be a major source of new information or that the resistance will wither without his leadership is fatuous. Saddam may have detailed knowledge of weapons programs that will help the White House if it chooses to revisit the causes of the war, but the political problem of the genesis of the war is largely moot. It is more likely than not that Saddam, if he co-operates, will have little to contribute and that the substantial body of evidence indicating that weapons programs and ties to terrorists did not exist will prevail. Suggestions that Saddam headed a well-planned resistance to the coalition, that his army faded away by design to continue the struggle by other means, are also fanciful. Saddam, unable to communicate and on the run, scurrying from bolt hole to bolt hole, could not direct the resistance and was not well informed regarding it. If widespread centralized opposition had been planned, it is curious that there is no solid evidence for it.

nationalists, and pan-Arabs. Several may be acting together on an operational level and others co-operating in an *ad hoc* fashion, without detailed planning or organization. Most may be relying on local financial resources and on the large stockpiles of weapons and trained men to be found throughout the country. Al-Qaeda is encouraging jihadi action against the U.S. and has committed resources to the struggle, but it may not be controlling or directing action ostensibly being taken on its behalf. Devastating suicide attacks against police and coalition partners may shift to target U.S. convoys as al-Qaeda becomes more comfortable with the operating environment and assumes a larger role.

The resort to sledgehammer air strikes and artillery barrages by the U.S. military is the sure sign of a failure in intelligence as the counterinsurgency effort becomes broader and punishes the guilty, suspect, and innocent alike. Civilian deaths are seedbeds for resistance. House demolitions, mass arrests, and midnight raids featuring terrified women and children call to mind the Israeli model, which has not pacified the West Bank and Gaza despite nearly 40 years of trying. Iraq may well become a country up in arms against an invader. To be sure, the resistance has been concen-

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How to Lose Your Job in Talk Radio

Clear Channel gags an antiwar conservative.

By Charles Goyette

IMAGINE THESE STARTLING headlines with the nation at war in the Pacific six months after Dec. 7, 1941: “No Signs of Japanese Involvement in Pearl Harbor Attack! Faulty Intelligence Cited; Wolfowitz: Mistakes Were Made.”

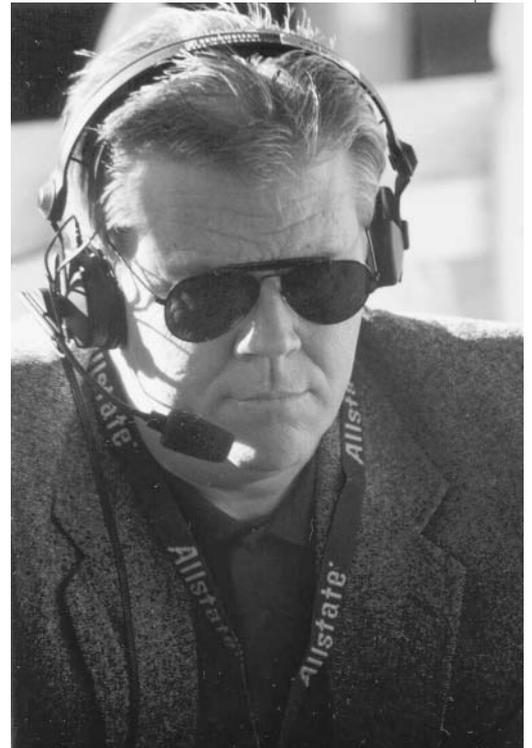
Or how about an equally disconcerting World War II headline from the European theater: “German Army Not Found in France, Poland, Admits President; Rumsfeld: ‘Oops!’, Powell Silent; ‘Bring ‘Em On,’ Says Defiant FDR.”

It seems to me that when there is reason to go to war, it should be self-evident. The Secretary of State should not need to convince a skeptical world with satellite photos of a couple of Toyota pickups and a dumpster. And faced with a legitimate *casus belli*, it should not be hard to muster an actual constitutional declaration of war. Now in the absence of a meaningful Iraqi role in the 9/11 attack and the mysterious disappearance of those fearsome Weapons of Mass Destruction, there might be some psychic satisfaction to be had in saying, “I told you so!” But it sure isn’t doing my career as a talk-show host any good.

The criterion of self-evidence was only one of dozens of objections I raised before the elective war in Iraq on my

afternoon drive-time talk show on KFYI in Phoenix. Many of the other arguments are familiar to readers of *The American Conservative*.

But the case for war was a shape-shifter, skillfully morphing into a new rationale as quickly as the old one failed to withstand scrutiny. For a year before the war, I scrambled to keep up with the latest incarnations of the neocon case. Most were pitifully transparent and readily exposed. (Besides the aluminum tubes and the trailers that had Bush saying, “Gotcha,” does anyone remember those death-dealing drones? Never have third-world, wind-up, rubber-band, balsa-wood airplanes instilled so much fear in so many people.) Still, my management didn’t like my being out of step with the president’s parade of national hysteria, and the war-fevered spectators didn’t care to be told they were suffering illusions. So after three years, I was replaced on my primetime talk show by the Frick and Frack of Bushophiles, two giggling guys who think everything our tongue-tied president does is “Most excellent, dude!” I have been relegated to the later 7–10 p.m. slot, when most people, even in a congested commuting market like Phoenix, are already home watching TV.



Charles Goyette

Why did this happen? Why only a couple of months after my company picked up the option on my contract for another year in the fifth-largest city in the United States, did it suddenly decide to relegate me to radio Outer Darkness? The answer lies hidden in the oil-and-water incompatibility of these two seemingly disconnected phrases: “Criticizing Bush” and “Clear Channel.”

Criticizing Bush? Well then, must I be some sort of rug-chewing liberal? Not even close. As a boy, I stood on the grass in a small Arizona town square when Barry Goldwater officially began his