

By William Blum

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This is not to put George W. Bush down. That's too easy, and I've done it many times. No, this is to counter the current trend to rehabilitate the man and his Iraqi horror show, which partly coincides with the opening of his presidential library in Texas. At the dedication ceremony, President Obama spoke of Bush's "compassion and generosity" and declared that: "He is a good man." The word "Iraq" did not pass his lips. The closest he came at all was saying "So even as we Americans may at times disagree on matters of foreign policy, we share a profound respect and reverence for the men and women of our military and their families." (1) Should morality be that flexible? Even for a politician? Obama could have just called in sick.

At the January 31 congressional hearing on the nomination of Chuck Hagel to be Secretary of Defense, Senator John McCain ripped into him for his critique of the Iraq war:

"The question is, were you right or were you wrong?" McCain demanded, pressing Hagel on why he opposed Bush's decision to send 20,000 additional troops to Iraq in the so-called 'surge'.

"I'm not going to give you a yes-or-no answer. I think it's far more complicated than that," Hagel responded. He said he would await the "judgment of history."

Glaring at Hagel, McCain ended the exchange with a bitter rejoinder: "I think history has already made a judgment about the surge, sir, and you are on the wrong side of it." (2)

Before the revisionist history of the surge gets chiseled into marble, let me repeat part of what I wrote in this report at the time, December 2007:

The American progress is measured by a decrease in violence, the White House has decided – a daily holocaust has been cut back to a daily multiple catastrophe. And who's keeping the

count? Why, the same good people who have been regularly feeding us a lie for the past five years about the number of Iraqi deaths, completely ignoring the epidemiological studies. A recent analysis by the Washington Post left the administration's claim pretty much in tatters. The article opened with: "The U.S. military's claim that violence has decreased sharply in Iraq in recent months has come under scrutiny from many experts within and outside the government, who contend that some of the underlying statistics are questionable and selectively ignore negative trends."

To the extent that there may have been a reduction in violence, we must also keep in mind that, thanks to this lovely little war, there are several million Iraqis either dead, wounded, in exile abroad, or in bursting American and Iraqi prisons. So the number of potential victims and killers has been greatly reduced. Moreover, extensive ethnic cleansing has taken place in Iraq (another good indication of progress, *n'est-ce pas? nicht wahr?*) – Sunnis and Shiites are now living more in their own special enclaves than before, none of those stinking mixed communities with their unholy mixed marriages, so violence of the sectarian type has also gone down. On top of all this, US soldiers have been venturing out a lot less (for fear of things like ... well, dying), so the violence against our noble lads is also down.

One of the signs of the reduction in violence in Iraq, the administration would like us to believe, is that many Iraqi families are returning from Syria, where they had fled because of the violence. The New York Times, however, reported that "Under intense pressure to show results after months of political stalemate, the [Iraqi] government has continued to publicize figures that exaggerate the movement back to Iraq"; as well as exaggerating "Iraqis' confidence that the current lull in violence can be sustained." The count, it turns out, included all Iraqis crossing the border, for whatever reason. A United Nations survey found that 46 percent were leaving Syria because they could not afford to stay; 25 percent said they fell victim to a stricter Syrian visa policy; and only 14 percent said they were returning because they had heard about improved security.

How long can it be before vacation trips to "Exotic Iraq" are flashed across our TVs? "Baghdad's Beautiful Beaches Beckon". Just step over the bodies. Indeed, the State Department has recently advertised for a "business development/tourism" expert to work in Baghdad, "with a particular focus on tourism and related services." (3)

Another argument raised again recently to preserve George W.'s legacy is that "He kept us safe". Hmm ... I could swear that he was in the White House around the time of September 11 ... What his supporters mean is that Bush's War on Terrorism was a success because there wasn't another terrorist attack in the United States after September 11, 2001 while he was in

office; as if terrorists killing Americans is acceptable if it's done abroad. Following the American/Bush strike on Afghanistan in October 2001 there were literally scores of terrorist attacks – including some major ones – against American institutions in the Middle East, South Asia and the Pacific: military, civilian, Christian, and other targets associated with the United States.

Even the claim that the War on Terrorism kept Americans safe at home is questionable. There was no terrorist attack in the United States during the 6 1/2 years prior to the one in September 2001; not since the April 1995 bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City. It would thus appear that the absence of terrorist attacks in the United States is the norm.

1. [Remarks by President Obama at Dedication of the George W. Bush Presidential Library](#) [□](#)
2. *Los Angeles Times*, February 1, 2013 [□](#)
3. [Anti-Empire Report, #52, December 11, 2007](#) [□](#)