

Have We Achieved Our Objectives In Iraq?

Exactly where are we in this conflict? It's difficult to cut through to the truth with so much hot air coming from all sides. I decided to go back and read the Joint Resolution approved October 2002 by the President and the Senate authorizing the invasion or liberation (take your pick) of Iraq.

It begins with a bunch of whereas clauses summarizing the then current situation: Iraq had been kicked out of Kuwait and had agreed not to develop nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and Iraq would not support terrorism; weapons inspectors had been forced to withdraw in 1998 and Congress had declared that Iraq's continued development of weapons of mass destruction threatened world peace; the Iraqi regime continued to brutalize its civilian population; Iraq showed its hostility toward the United States by attempting to assassinate Bush 41 and shoot at US planes enforcing the no-fly zone; members of al Qaida are known to be in Iraq; the regime continues to harbor other terrorist organizations; Iraq might launch a surprise attack on the US or provide weapons of mass destruction to terrorists.

Therefore, the Joint Resolution authorized the President to use the Armed Forces of the United States as he determines to be necessary and appropriate in order to:

- (1) defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq; and
- (2) enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions regarding Iraq.

A review of this document indicates the US had several objectives, at least initially, in the war against the Iraqi regime.

- To eliminate weapons of mass destruction stockpiled or under development by Iraq as called for by various UN resolutions.
- To implement democracy within Iraq and eventually throughout much of the Middle East.
- To free the people of Iraq from a brutal dictatorship.
- To eliminate a dangerous enemy.
- To prevent Saddam Hussein from working with international terrorist groups that might threaten the US.

Although not specified in the Iraq War Resolution, it seems clear to me that the US was intent on making sure that control of Iraqi oil was taken from Saddam and turned over to a friendly Iraqi government. Removing Saddam also eliminated his threat to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and other oil rich Middle East nations.

As everyone knows, we did not discover weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Although there are rumors that these weapons were shipped out of Iraq shortly before the invasion, no hard evidence supports this theory.

Therefore, we must conclude that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq during the days leading up to the war. It appears there was a massive intelligence failure not only in the US, but in many other nations as well. Some have claimed that the Bush administration knew all along that there were no such weapons in Iraq, but this claim isn't justified with evidence. Basically, it was a screw-up of massive proportions.

Iraq does have a democratic government, a parliamentary system where the people vote for their representatives, who join together in political parties and elect a Prime Minister. As described in Wikipedia, a permanent 275-member Iraqi National Assembly was selected in a general election in December 2005, initiating the formation of a new government. The Prime Minister of Iraq is Nouri al-Maliki, who holds most of the executive authority and appoints the cabinet. The current President of Iraq is Jalal Talabani, who serves largely as a figurehead, with few powers. The vice presidents are Tariq al-Hashimi and Adel Abdul Mehdi, deputy leader of SCIRI, the largest party in the Iraqi National Assembly. Although the government at times seems ineffective, it is an honest democracy. It remains to be seen if additional democracies will be established across the Middle East.

The US-led coalition has freed the people of Iraq from Saddam's brutal dictatorship, and the new government is not oppressive. However, a violent Sunni/al Qaida insurgency has continued to murder thousands in an effort to plunge the nation into chaos and civil war. The US-led Surge, actually an increase in troops and a change in strategy, has splintered the insurgency and reduced the violence. Although the war is moving in the right direction, Iraq is still a dangerous country, both for the Iraqis and US troops.

The elimination of Saddam's regime removed a dangerous enemy without question. However, the insurgency is equally dangerous. If our enemies are

able to win in Iraq, they may be able to spread their hatred of the US beyond the borders of Iraq and across the region.

There is no hard evidence that Saddam was working with international terrorist groups. There appears to be some contact between al Qaida and Saddam's regime, but no evidence of any type of alliance. It may be that the US was concerned about the potential for an alliance, given that both Saddam and al Qaida hate us.

Iraqi oil production is about 2.5 million bpd, about where it was before the war. However, the oil is being sold by a friendly government, so we don't have to worry it will be used as a weapon.

To summarize, we have removed the yoke of dictatorship from the people of Iraq and implemented a democratic, if somewhat ineffective, national government. After years of warfare with extremists, the Surge seems to be leading to a better life for Iraqis. We have also removed an enemy from Iraq, and secured a supply of oil. All good things, clearly. On the other hand, no weapons of mass destruction were found, and the ties between Saddam and terrorists were not threatening. And we paid a heavy price in blood and national treasure.

Was it worth it? Each of us will have to make that assessment.

(Originally published on Dan Ronco's website and reprinted with his permission).

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Dan Ronco's expertise in engineering and computer science infuses his fast-paced techno-thriller *Unholy Domain* with detail and authenticity. His second novel, it warns of the looming clash between religion and advanced science. Visit [Dan Ronco](#).

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