

## **Where is Our Iraq War Report? British Investigation Yields A Damning Verdict**

By Nick Gier

After seven long years of investigation, a British commission led by Sir John Chilcot has issued its findings on the British participation in the Iraq War. The report, 2.6 million words in 12 volumes, concludes that plans were “seriously flawed” and that the war “went badly wrong, with consequences to this day.” As an example, Chilcot mentioned the recent ISIS car bombing in Baghdad that claimed 250 lives. There would be no ISIS today if President Georg W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair had not taken their nations into war.

### **Saddam Hussein Was “No Imminent Threat”; Al Qaeda Came After Invasion**

The inquiry also concluded that Saddam Hussein posed “no imminent threat” and that he had no ties to Al Qaeda. The report stated that then Prime Minister Tony Blair was warned that a war with Hussein would increase the risk of domestic terror attacks in Britain. Critics of Bush’s war plans also predicted jihadists would flock to Iraq, but his response was to provoke them with “Bring them on!” In the chaos of the war Al Qaeda did indeed gain strength and gave birth to the horrors of ISIS, which now, after losing huge areas of Iraq and Syria to an aggressive Coalition campaign, are focusing on domestic terrorism.

### **Lap Dog Blair to Bush: “I Will Be with You, Whatever”**

The inquiry has led to the release of secret memos between Bush and Blair in which both, as early as October 2001, agreed that Hussein should be removed from power. In a declassified “Note on Iraq” (7/28/02) Blair promises Bush that “I will be with you whatever,” and offered this prediction: “If we win quickly, everyone will be our friend. If we don't, recriminations will start fast.”

The initial ground war did indeed go quickly, and Bush celebrated “Mission Accomplished” with a stunt landing on the USS Abraham Lincoln on May 1, 2003. But the Chilcot Report found that plans for a post-invasion Iraq were “wholly inadequate.” On the American side, Bush political appointees with little or no training in nation building and ignorant of Arab culture made fatal mistakes.

### **Zarqawi: A Missed Opportunity to Decapitate the Head of the Monster**

Major among these errors was the decision to disband the Iraqi army, many of whom joined Al Qaeda and then ISIS. Abu Masab al-Zarqawi, future head of Al Qaeda in Iraq, was initially based in Jordan, and even when he joined Ansar al-Islam, he and these Kurdish Islamists had, contrary to claims by the Bush administration, no relationship with Hussein. In fact, the Kurds hated Hussein because he had killed 5,000 of their compatriots with chemical weapons in March 1988.

It was the British, however, who first used mustard gas against Iraqis who dared to rebel against their colonial masters. In 1912 Churchill and his cartographers, with the control of oil foremost in their minds, carelessly laid out the borders of Iraq bringing Shias, Sunnis, and

Kurds together. In 1919, during the rebellion, Churchill, no less heartless than Hussein, said: “I do not understand this squeamishness about the use of gas. I am strongly in favor of using poisoned gas against uncivilized tribes. It will cause great inconvenience and spread a lively terror.” This was an acceptable form of terrorism, wrapped as it was a grand imperial shroud.

The Pentagon wanted to take out the Ansar al-Islam base in Northeast Iraq prior to the invasion of Iraq, but this idea was vetoed by the National Security Agency. Tragically, Zarqawi was then free to lead a brutal campaign against Shia Muslims and Coalition forces until he was killed in 2006. As Carne Ross of the *New York Times* explains: “A thug named Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a marginal figure in Al Qaeda, was elevated in the jihadist hierarchy when Secretary of State Colin Powell, in his notorious prewar speech to the United Nations Security Council, falsely named him as a terrorist ally of Saddam Hussein” (7/6/16).

### **Invasion, not Obama, Cause of ISIS**

Some are blaming the rise of ISIS on Obama, because he withdrew all U. S. forces from Iraq in 2009 and left a weak Shia-led government vulnerable to Sunni extremists. The truth is that Bush failed to reach agreement with the Iraqi government about protecting any remaining forces from local prosecution. Obama was simply following a decision that the Bush administration had already made.

It is clear that the invasion itself caused the rise of Sunni jihadists and the Sunni/Shia civil war that followed. Hussein was a moderate Sunni, so sectarian tensions were held in check, and attacks on Shia Muslims (and Iraqi Christians for that matter) were rare. Tariq Aziz, Hussein’s foreign minister, was a Chaldean Christian, one of the oldest Christian sects. The Bush/Blair war caused the exodus of these proud Christians and the destruction of their homes and churches. Most of the Chaldeans have found a safe home in Sweden, which has taken the most Iraqi refugees.

### **Blair Aping Bush: Is Iraq Really Better Off without Saddam Hussein?**

In his response to the Chilcot Report, Blair sounded just like Bush: the world is better off without Saddam Hussein. Is it really, even with Hussein’s horrible human rights record? At least the Shias and the Sunnis were not killing each other, the Christians were flourishing, and there were no grievances on which for Al Qaeda to capitalize. Over the decades calls for regime change in the Middle East has caused far more disruption and deaths than leaving the dictators in place.

### **Much “Failed” Intelligence Was actually “Cooked” Intelligence**

Paul Bremer, Bush’s top man in Iraq, has responded to the Chilcot Report by saying that it is unfair to blame his boss for failed intelligence. A more accurate phrase is “cooked” intelligence, many examples of which are found in former Secretary of State Colin Powell’s infamous speech to the UN on February 5, 2003. His own State Department knew that the aluminum tubes, which he said were manufactured for nuclear weapons, were in fact rocket launchers. On other allegations State Department officials warned Powell that they were “weak,” “not credible” or “highly questionable.”

In a detailed refutation of Powell's UN allegations, Jonathan Schwarz contends that "Powell took evidence of the Iraqis *doing what they were supposed to do*—i.e., searching their gigantic ammunition dumps to make sure they weren't accidentally holding onto banned chemical weapons—and doctored it *to make it look as if Iraq were hiding banned weapons*. Schwarz concludes: "Clearly, Powell's loyalty to George Bush extended to being willing to deceive the world: the United Nations, Americans, and the coalition troops about to be sent to kill and die in Iraq" (*Huffington Post*, 4/7/13).

### **Blair and Bush: Are They War Criminals?**

Parents of British soldiers killed in Iraq are now considering law suits against Blair and protestors in the streets are calling him a war criminal. The Chilcot Report maintains that the legal basis for the war was "questionable," but Chilcot said that jurists would have to settle that issue. The Justice Department declined to pursue charges against the Bush administration, so the issue has not been resolved in the U. S. either.

That there were violations of international law appear certain. In 2011 George W. Bush cancelled a trip to Switzerland because a complaint against him had been filed in a Geneva court. Bush has admitted that he ordered waterboarding, considered a war crime under the Geneva Convention on Torture. In 1998, using the principle of international jurisdiction, a Spanish judge forced British authorities to arrest Chile's dictator Augusto Pinochet for the same reason. Pinochet was later sent home because of ill health.

### **4,502 American Dead; 32,223 Wounded; 20 Daily Suicides**

Not only did Bush's prosecution of the war undermine our moral standing in the world, it also led to the deaths of 4,502 U. S. service men and women. (Although U. S. officials were forbidden from tallying Iraqi fatalities, estimates run from 180,000 to 1 million.) The 32,223 wounded Americans (many of them severely injured) has put a huge burden on the Veterans Administration even with increased funding. On average 20 Iraq and Afghanistan War veterans take their lives every day.

### **Trump: Saddam Hussein "Real Good" on Terrorists**

On the campaign trail Donald Trump claims that the U. S. should not have "destabilized" Iraq, even though he supported, along with Hillary Clinton and more than a hundred other Congressional Democrats, Bush's invasion. True to his crooked nature, he is now denying that he did so. At a rally in Raleigh, North Carolina, Trump reminded us that even though he was a "really bad guy," Hussein knew how to take care of terrorists. (Al Qaeda was outside his borders, so how exactly did he do this?) When he boasts that he would, like Hussein, not read terrorists their rights, he seems to be unaware that Obama is doing the same every time he authorizes a drone strike.

### **Cost of the War: \$2.2 Trillion and Counting; Third Largest Portion of National Debt**

Finally, there is the issue of billions and billions of dollars spent on this tragic and unnecessary war. A report by Reuters estimated that the cost, including veterans' benefits, is \$2.2 trillion, which would grow to over \$4 trillion over the next four decades. The Bush administration irresponsibly placed war costs off budget, so they simply became part of the national debt with interest.

According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, by 2020 the largest portion of national debt be due to the Bush tax cuts, which were not, as promised, off-set by economic growth. The next largest portion of the debt was caused by the Great Recession and the huge loss of revenues. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan comprise the third largest. A small portion of this debt is due to Obama's recovery efforts, which by a broad consensus of experts, saved the economy, especially the auto industry.

The GOP Congress has done nine investigations of Benghazi, but there has been no comprehensive probe into the Iraq War. Instead of yet again harassing Clinton, why doesn't Congress put Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld in the hot seat?

Bush ran up the debt with tax cuts and an unnecessary war with untold destruction and disastrous consequences, while Obama borrowed far less money to save the economy and give 20 million Americans health coverage. I don't know about you, but I'm with Obama.

Nick Gier of Moscow taught philosophy at the University of Idaho for 31 years. Read all of his columns on the Iraq War at the appropriate links at [www.NickGier.com](http://www.NickGier.com).