

Have the US Military Invasions Made the World a Better Place to Live in?

by Janet Jagan

The 30% US President George Bush has one of the lowest approval ratings in US Presidential history. The reasons are many, but the main causes of the President's lowered approval rating have to do with the US invasion of Iraq and the failure to deal with the catastrophic Hurricane Katrina in a timely and helpful manner.

If more errors are made, like the possibility of an attack on Iran, we can expect Bush's approval rating to plummet more. He has already refused to "rule out" a nuclear strike on Iran if that nation does not give up its nuclear programme. Iran insists that its uranium enrichment programme is entirely peaceful and aimed at producing nuclear power for civilian consumption.

The US is pushing for sanctions against Iran by the United Nations Security Council. However, two members so far have said they oppose sanctions and the use of force. They are China and Russia.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has declared that the Security Council cannot be sidestepped and has an obligation to check Iran's nuclear development. Yet it was the same USA that snubbed its nose at the United Nations which was then monitoring the claim that Iraq had Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), and despite the negative results the monitoring team were getting, pushed into Iraq to overthrow the Saddam Hussein government. As is common knowledge, there were no Weapons of Mass Destruction and the USA's unilateral decision to militarily invade Iraq to halt WMD usage was a lie. Now Rice has conveniently forgotten the US's former attitude to ignore the UN and has shifted to a new position to get backing for sanctions against Iran. She has gone even further in expressing the USA's possible military ambitions in Iran. She recently warned that the US could take steps outside the UN Security Council to pressure Iran to stop its nuclear development.

President Bush has already engaged his nation in two Middle East wars - Afghanistan and Iraq. Will he be foolish enough to enter a third debacle? We can only hope for the best, let negotiations proceed, and also hope for a peaceful settlement. This is not the time for macho cowboy behaviour, but skilled diplomacy.

Both countries invaded by the USA are having very difficult times. The insurgency in Iraq hasn't abated one inch and seems to be getting tougher. Deaths of Iraqis and US/Italian/British soldiers are still growing. The US military occupation is the root cause of the terror.

After more than four months since the elections in Iraq there are still delays in the formation of a government, so much so that two high-ranking members of the Bush cabinet, Rice and Rumsfeld visited Iraq last week to urge a quicker formation of a government.

And in the meantime, a European Union Parliamentary investigation into the "rendition" of prisoners under US control has revealed that CIA agents are guilty of illegally detaining and kidnapping persons, using European airfields to send them to countries where torture exists. The report stated that it was "inconceivable that European governments did not know what was going on" and further, that it's up to the European Governments to stop this violation of human rights.

And if that accusation against the US and its CIA was not bad enough, we now learn that FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) agents have accused US military personnel at Guantanamo Bay Prison in Cuba of using illegal "aggressive interrogation tactics" on political detainees, all Muslims. The American Civil Liberties Union uncovered these charges after obtaining a court order. In one document, it described witnessing two military investigators interrogating a detainee at Guantanamo while showing him homosexual pornography movies and using a strobe light in the room. Interrogations last 16-18 hours and use such reprehensible tactics as wrapping the prisoner in an Israeli flag and playing constantly loud music.

There is also a report that there is a secret underground prison in Iraq where more than 170 men showed the effects of malnutrition and torture.

Added to the Bush administration's woes are the mounting costs of the Iraq invasion, now estimated at US\$439 Billion, more than the total cost of the Vietnam War. Further, although it has been swept under the carpet, the fact that Republican Party financial supporters are getting favoured contracts, as in the case of the firm Halliburton (once headed by Vice President Dick Cheney) is all part of the dirt accumulating which is lowering the credibility of the Bush administration.

And fear and instability are so great in Iraq that already some 65,000 Iraqis have fled to tent settlements to get out of the range of daily killings. They are refugees in their own country.

And in Afghanistan, it will be years before US and other troops can withdraw, and probably many years before a genuine, national government can be formed.

Is the world a better place to live in following the two military invasions led by the USA? I think few will believe so.

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