

# Ad Mission

Power addiction, war advertising, faith-based policy -- just admit you have a problem!

## The Product is Defective

As the weeks and months pass this summer, hardly a day goes by without further announcements of carnage in Iraq. The reckless hubris of leaders who saw political and economic advantage in war has killed many innocents and degraded the quality of life for far more.

Despite the evident success of the inspections process, and the will of the international community as expressed through the U.N., the Bush administration chose to put young people in harm's way. From A-Z the reasons given for the war have been shot down by everyone from chief inspector Hans Blix to the Dark Prince himself, Paul Wolfowitz, who admitted that weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) were essentially a pretext that everyone could agree upon.

In the wake of the Dodgy Dossier, the 16 Words, and false ending of the war on May 1st, Bush's steering is decidedly suspect. The assertion that war in Iraq protects the American people rings hollow.

The war, we're told, has inflamed militant factions bent on attacking U.S. interests and stopping the occupation. What a surprise! The CIA predicted this before the war. The invasion has made Americans (and Westerners in general) less safe.

Bush embarked on nation building, despite his campaign pledges to the contrary. According to the Palestinian Prime Minister, Mahmoud Abbas, Bush confided that God had told him to wage war. Twice! But did God say why? The most compelling reason why the rationales offered by the Bush administration never quite added up or made sense is that the official rationales have been little more than "perception management." For every lie, another bigger lie must be told to cover up. War has become a favored process of exercising power. Marketing is driving the policy.

*Politicians hide themselves away;  
They only started the war.  
Why should they go out to fight?  
They leave that all to the poor.*

From the song "War Pigs" by Black Sabbath which was banned by Clear Channel in the lead up to war in Iraq

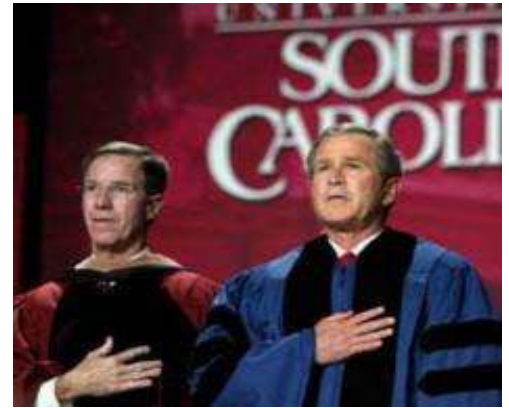
Much has been written about the marketing of Gulf War I, for which PR firm Hill and Knowlton used the Kuwaiti Ambassador's 15 year old daughter to propagate a lie about how Iraqis had killed babies in incubators. Moreover, it is known that the Rendon Group, a Washington based PR firm, pulled in \$400 million for it's work promoting the war in Afghanistan. Yet the marketing of this most recent Iraq war has yet to be adequately digested, no doubt in part because the press has been so complicit in forming the illusions that made the war possible.

The New York Times' Judith Miller delivered a series of articles based on unsubstantiated allegations about Iraqi WMDs during the lead up to the war. The articles proved enormously useful to the Bush hawks, who cited them immediately. While Miller "was touting the bioterror threat, her book Germs, co-authored with Times-men Steven Engelberg and William Broad was in the bookstores and climbing the best seller lists."

Inside the beltway the extent of the stagecraft in this war is probably unprecedented. Republican political strategist Karl Rove has reportedly been a regular participant in cabinet level foreign policy meetings. As editorialized by Richard Gephart in the New York Times, a leaked presentation from Rove argued that war provided a "positive issue environment" during the 2002 election campaign.

According to the trade publication PR Week, the [a group of public relations specialists hired by the Pentagon] sent "messaging advice" to the Pentagon. The group told ... Rumsfeld that in order to get the American public to buy into the war on terrorism they needed to suggest a link to nation states, not just nebulous groups such as al-Qaeda.

When Bush's re-election committee staged the thoroughly unnecessary Top Gun landing on May 1st, the banner on the ship read "Mission Accomplished." If by "mission" this meant that the U.S. had demonstrated its awesome destructive force and given the American people a bang-up show for TV, the sign may have been accurate.



The pious hypocrite: Bush's war was opposed by his own Methodist Church.



War weary troops were kept circling at sea off the coast of San Diego in order to make Bush's photo-op landing more spectacular

But if any of the less cynical motives ascribed to the war are to be taken seriously, very little has been accomplished. Fundamentalists are on the rise rather than the moderate puppets like Ahmed Chalabi who the Bush team had figured to install as oil-industry-friendly potentates. Like Kuwait and Afghanistan before it, no democracy has been brought to Iraq by American guns.

It may be possible to install democracy in Iraq, but the cost in lives and dollars is simply too high. New York Times editorialist Bob Herbert has written,

the U.S. cannot bully its way to victory in Iraq. It needs allies, and it needs a plan. As quickly as possible, we should turn the country over to a genuine international coalition, headed by the U.N. and supported in good faith by the U.S.

The problem is that the current administration, like Captain Ahab obsessed with his whale, has staked its virtual integrity on this bloody escapade. In lock step the Bush marshals insist that the war is winnable and that they will not be leaving until the job is done.

To this perhaps the best response is derision. Journalist Greg Pallast has developed a scathing political stand-up routine. He says, "I'm not one of these cynical people who thinks they got into this war for the oil.... But they're damn sure not going to leave without it." And therein lies the problem. Most of the spoils that the hawks in Washington are pursuing would be placed in jeopardy if the U.N. were to lead the reconstruction.

Hooked on power and clutching their booty, Bush and his robber barons are desperate to hold onto their fantasy image of themselves as pragmatists and heroes, unwilling to admit their errors. For this they may pay, someday. What is certain is that many others will be obliged to suffer until the American people recognize the folly of the occupation in Iraq.

In the mass psychology of wartime, a competitive game logic takes a firm grip of conventional wisdom. Rather than reassessing the situation using new information that has come to light about the motives and need for a war, we are hearing calls for more soldiers in Iraq. Bush, Bremer, and

*Some folks are born made to wave the flag  
Ooh, they're red, white, and blue.  
And when the band plays hail to the chief  
Ooh, they point the cannon at you.  
It ain't me. It ain't me.  
I ain't no senator's son.  
It ain't me. It ain't me.  
I ain't no fortunate son.*

From "Fortunate Son" by Creedence Clearwater Revival. This Vietnam era song was used in a nationalistic jeans advertisement in late 2001. Only the first two lines were used, subverting the anti-war intent of the lyrics.

Rumsfeld wag their fingers and insist that these terrorists, these "enemies of civilization" must learn that the U.S. will have its way.

But wait! It's time to admit that the product is defective.

These politicians, though they wear flag pins, are not admirable Americans. They wrap themselves in the flag and suddenly the American mass media sees no evil and hears no evil. In ignoring the will of the U.N. the Bush administration embarked on an illegal war. No amount of spin and marketing should be able to make it legal.

There are many reasons to end the war, and foremost among them should be respect for the lives of the men and women who will die if the occupation of Iraq is not ended. Beginning with the Americans (since many in the U.S. don't care about Iraqi lives), the young soldiers left to attend to this guerrilla war have been put in a very dangerous situation. Undoubtedly there are some among the soldiers who really believe in the cause, but many would rather be back in school. Who could blame them? Not Dick Cheney and George W. Bush, who both avoided military service in Vietnam.

When all the pretexts have been stripped away, what are the soldiers dying for? These men and women have hopes and dreams and aspirations, and families that love them. It's barbaric and brutal to write off their lives for the benefit of a campaign that is more political and mercenary than heroic.

Sadly, the consequences for the Iraqi people are even more tragic than for the American troops. After all, sooner or later most of the troops will return. For Iraqis the war leaves behind a legacy of broken families, amputations, rapes, diseases, land mines, and birth defects from uranium that will cause renewed anguish for decades if not centuries to come.

Terrible but true. The American people need to send some clear, new "messaging advice" to Washington. War is still not the answer. Liberate the occupied state of Iraq! Bring the troops home.

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