

## WAR IN IRAQ: NO END IN SIGHT

**"There is a veneer of normality about life in the new Iraq. But America's failure to deliver on its promises has triggered a spiral of murderous anarchy that threatens to become an epic tragedy." Robert Fisk, The Independent, 31.7.03**

The invasion and occupation of Iraq, that was going to make the whole world a safer place, that would "pay for itself" (through the theft of Iraqi oil by the West), that would allow Iraqis to live in peace, free from terror, with the food, services and healthcare which had been lacking during 12 years of United Nations sanctions, is nothing short of a disaster on all counts.

Is the world now a safer place? According to new research by the World Markets Research Centre into the risk of terrorist attacks, The US is now deemed to be the fourth most vulnerable country, behind only Colombia, Israel and Pakistan, while the UK comes in at number 10. It is now apparently safer to live in Yemen, Lebanon or Russia (which has suffered recent attacks by Chechen separatists) than in Britain. So, far from protecting us from terrorism, Bliar's warmongering has just made us more of a target.

But at least the world has been rid of all those weapons of mass destruction Iraq was stockpiling. Oh, sorry, none of them have been found, have they? At least not in Iraq. But there are plenty of not-very-well-hidden WsMD at military bases all over Britain. And as well as our own weapons, we are even testing particularly nasty ones for the US (who you'd think would have enough room to test their own) at Kirkcudbright in Scotland.

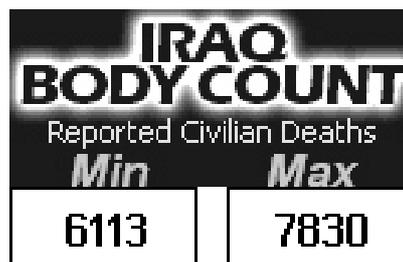
The cost of the war to British taxpayers is billions of pounds, and even conservative Pentagon figures estimate the cost of the occupation to the US as somewhere in the region of \$5bn every month. And all that oil revenue? As I write, the main Iraq to Turkey oil pipeline has been sabotaged for the second time by guerrillas and is burning out of control. It is likely to take ten days to repair, with a loss of revenue of approximately £44m. According to the US appointed acting Oil Minister in Iraq, Thamer al-Ghadaban, "a void in security" made the pipeline vulnerable. "In the past regime we had the oil police, the army and the cooperation of the tribes... Now all this has disappeared."

Sabotage of oil pipelines is just one example of the failure of the occupiers to restore order and establish peace in Iraq. The US occupiers manifestly failed to protect peace workers at the United Nations Building in Baghdad, destroyed by a huge bomb planted in a truck outside. Baghdad's main water supply pipe was bombed recently, leaving 5 million people without water while it was repaired. A Reuters cameraman was shot dead while filming outside Iraq's main prison because his camera was mistaken for a rocket-propelled grenade. And trigger-happy US troops are still killing innocent Iraqis.

The stories are all tragic; this is just one. An Iraqi family had the misfortune to be stranded on the road by their car which had broken down on the way to the wake of

another family member. When guerrillas attacked a passing US military convoy, then sped away, US soldiers fired instead on the family, killing two women, one of whom had been holding her six-month old baby. The Chicago Tribune, which reported this incident, comments that the deaths of civilians are turning whole villages, once in favour of the invasion and occupation, into bitter enemies of the US and UK. Casualties and fatalities amongst the occupying forces themselves are now so regular and so high that there is a determined movement within the US to bring the troops back home, alive. People are beginning to remember Vietnam.

The sheer numbers of civilian casualties and fatalities are horrific. When members of Wrexham Against War chalked stick figures (representing war casualties) on the pavement between the Army Recruitment Office and Queens Square on 23rd April, the estimated death toll of civilians in Iraq was around 1,000 (Iraq Body Count - IBC), but an Associated Press investigation in June confirmed 3,240 civilian deaths during a month of war, and the up-to-date total on the IBC website (including deaths since the "end" of the war) is now between 6,000 and nearly 8,000. Since many deaths go unreported and many bodies are buried under rubble, or in any case not always taken to hospital for death certificates to be issued, it is certain that these figures are substantially lower than the real death toll.



These are just the deaths. What of the 20,000 plus Iraqi civilians injured during and since the invasion? Unless the US fulfils its promise (and duty) to restore services such as clean water, sewerage and electricity, and to provide adequate health-care, medicines and food, the death toll will rise still further as injured Iraqis fail to recover. And all that stuff we were told before and during the war that we needn't be concerned over civilian casualties, that bombs would only be dropped on military targets? Lies, all lies.

We all have our own lives to lead and our own priorities, but there is still plenty of work to be done to keep this issue in the public eye and to send a clear message to Tony Bliar that we do not support his continued love affair with George Bush, big business and US imperialism. Whatever little each of us can do becomes part of the bigger picture, and we can change the world.

So, if anyone would like to help make an Iraq Body Count Banner for WPJF, to be hung from road bridges in Wrexham, or has ideas for other actions, please contact Genny: 0845 330 4505.

**Iraq Body Count: [www.iraqbodycount.net](http://www.iraqbodycount.net)**