
National News

Dems Request Hearing On Iraq Appointments

Democratic Senators Frank Lautenberg (N.J.), Charles Schumer (N.Y.), and Richard Durbin (Ill.) sent a letter to Sen. Susan Collins (R-Me.) last month, requesting emergency hearings on the hiring of incompetent Bush Administration cronies for vital positions in the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), which governed Iraq in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion in 2003. The letter was sent out in response to media reports of the hiring of unqualified staffers because of their allegiance to President Bush.

Senator Lautenberg's office also requested from Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld a list of all CPA staffers. What he got back, according to his website, was a list of 1,400 names, of which 1,250 were redacted, with the Pentagon citing privacy—i.e., treating it like a Freedom of Information Act request, since it did not come from a Congressional committee, but personally from the Senator.

Odom: The Longer We Stay, The Worse It Gets

Retired Army Lt. Gen. William Odom spoke at the Rohatyn Center for International Affairs at Middlebury College on Oct. 11. He affirmed that the invasion of Iraq is likely to be “the greatest strategic disaster in American history,” the *Rutland Herald* reported. He said that the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks were more analogous to June 28, 1914, the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo, than to Pearl Harbor, because of how a “series of national reactions and counterreactions” brought on World War I.

Odom said that the United States should leave Iraq, “no matter what kind of mess is left behind”: There would have been a mess if we left in 2003, but not as much as if we had left in 2004, and that wouldn't have been as bad as 2005. “Every day longer that we ‘stay the course’ the cost goes up and makes the eventual defeat much larger.”

If we are serious about stopping terrorism, he said, we should get serious about a settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

On North Korea, he said, “I would ignore the North Korean nuclear weapons. We can't do anything about it.” North Korean leader Kim Jong-il has boosted his own prestige by getting the United States to react. But, the deeper problem, he said, is that we have abandoned the strategy of coalition-building and diplomacy that preserved American leadership after World War II.

James Baker III: U.S. Should Talk to Enemies

James Baker III, the former Secretary of State and current co-chair of the Iraq Study Group (ISG), told ABC “This Week” on Oct. 8 that the United States must talk to nations it considers “enemies,” and that he has already met with representatives of Syria and Iran. Baker said that the ISG's report won't be ready until after the election, and perhaps not until next year.

On North Korea, he said he opposed the Administration's refusal to talk directly with Pyongyang.

Cheney Angry at Report Of Kissinger Meetings

Between the Mark Foley scandal, the Iraq War debacle, and Bob Woodward's book *State of Denial*, not a single Administration official went anywhere near the Sunday TV shows on Oct. 8 in person. Particularly upsetting to them, it seems, was Woodward's report in his book, that Vice President Cheney had told him that he meets monthly with former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who also meets the President every couple of months. Cheney called in to scream that Woodward could not use the Kissinger information.

Woodward, speaking on Tim Russert's “Meet the Press,” gave dates when the interviews took place. Woodward divulged that when he told Cheney that the statements

were on the record, Cheney yelled “bull—something” and hung up in a rage. Woodward said, “I had interviewed Vice President Cheney last year a couple of times at length about material I'm gathering on the Ford Administration, on-the-record interviews, but he volunteered, he said, ‘Oh, by the way, Henry Kissinger comes in’ and he, Dick Cheney, sits down with him once a month and the president every two or three months. And Cheney was upset I was quoting him. And I said, Look, this on-the-record doesn't have anything to do with Ford, you volunteered that. He then used a word which I can't repeat on the air. And I said, ‘Look, on the record is on the record,’ and he hung up on me.” Woodward called Cheney's reaction “a metaphor for what's going on. Hang up when somebody has a different point of view or information you don't want to deal with.”

Fairbanks, Alaska: Rumsfeld Must Go

Voters of Fairbanks, Alaska are expected to overwhelmingly approve a resolution calling for Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's resignation. Fairbanks is located adjacent to Fort Wainwright, the home of the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, which was supposed to come home this past Summer, after serving in Iraq for one year, but had its tour extended for 120 days to deal with the violence in Baghdad. Rumsfeld visited Fort Wainwright last month, according to AXcessNews.com on Oct. 7, and told families of the 172nd that he couldn't guarantee that the tour wouldn't be extended even longer.

The anger in and around Fairbanks is such that a three-hour hearing by the city assembly on Oct. 5 wasn't enough time to hear everybody who wanted to speak on the resolution. According to the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, three-quarters of those testifying supported the resolution, which states that “credibility at home and abroad must be restored,” starting with Rumsfeld's resignation.

Four 172nd Brigade soldiers have been killed since the unit's extension.