

Editorial

Stop the Occupation of Iraq!

As of March 31, 2006, three years and one week after the start of the “preventive war,” it must be admitted by every moral American that there is no “democracy” in Iraq. Unity talks continuously stall out, after major bombings and slaughters, and now the elected Shi’ite majority leaders are accusing President Bush of trying to appoint a puppet leader to replace Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jafaari, and are asking for U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad to be recalled as Ambassador.

At the same time, casualties in Iraq are at an *all-time high*, and reporters caught military spokesman Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch trying to lie about it, in a briefing in Baghdad on March 30, by spinning the data to report that “attacks in the west are down,” and that the United States is in control of the “majority” of Iraq. The reporter forced Lynch to admit that the number of Iraqis and Americans killed by the insurgency was at its *highest level*.

The U.S. population does not support the war, and over 70% of the U.S. troops in Iraq want their country to withdraw. It is time for members of Congress and the Senate, from both parties, to end the U.S. occupation of Iraq. Staying with the Cheney-Bush policy will just make matters worse.

Here are some of the tragic realities:

- On March 26, the negotiations for forming an Iraqi government of national unity were stopped, following a U.S. Army-Iraqi Army joint action outside of Baghdad earlier that day. The joint U.S.-Iraqi force executed 19 Shi’ites, while they were at prayer, in the al-Mustafa Mosque. Those who were killed were members of the Shi’ite Dawa Party, and members of the Mahdi Army, followers of Shi’ite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.

- Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jafaari, the Iraqi Ministry of Defense, and members of the Iraqi National Assembly have called for a full investigation of the al-Mustafa Mosque operation. The Iraqis are demanding that the investigation be conducted by a panel that does *not* include any U.S. military or diplomatic personnel.

- The Governor of Baghdad has cut off all contact with the U.S. military and the U.S. Embassy because of

the al-Mustafa Mosque affair. A similar situation exists in Basra, where the Iraqi officials cut off all contact with the British military, which controls the Southern sector.

- Leading Iraqis are demanding the recall of U.S. Ambassador Khalilzad, accusing him of fueling the civil war.

The al-Mustafa Mosque operation may prove to be politically fatal for the U.S.-led “Coalition” and anyone who allies with it. As Gen. William Odom (ret.), the former head of the National Security Agency, warned in an op-ed in October 2005, there is only one answer to the sophists’ line that the U.S. has to stay in Iraq to prevent a civil war: “Iraqis are already fighting Iraqis. Insurgents have killed far more Iraqis than Americans. That’s civil war. We created the civil war when we invaded; we can’t prevent a civil war by staying.”

A new turn developed on March 31, in the aftermath of the al-Mustafa Mosque killings, with an exposé in the London-based Arabic newspaper *al-Hayat*, which charges that the United States has built up a “third force” Iraqi commando force that is sparking the civil war. *Al-Hayat* reports that the Iraqi Defense Ministry insisted that none of its units had been involved in the attack on the mosque.

The newspaper states: “The Iraqi National Security Minister, Abdul-Karim al-Anazi, said that there is ‘a third army’ in Iraq, in addition to the Iraqi Army and the Coalition forces. This [third] army does not receive its orders from the Iraqi government, and practices ‘dirty operations, and is usually dressed in a special uniform to obscure its identity.’ ”

Is this force carrying out many of the killings of leaders of various sectarian groups, setting off a chain of revenge? That is the question *al-Hayat* implicitly raises.

Further angering Iraqi leaders, on March 30, Major General Lynch defended the attack on the mosque, saying that only “insurgents” had been killed, and dismissing the statements of the Shi’ite leaders that the Shi’ite worshippers had been killed while praying, as unreliable. With such relations between the U.S. military and the Iraqi leadership, there is no question: The U.S. must leave now, for the good of all involved.