

**JUNE 30**

# This is the first day of the rest of your death

**O**n the propaganda front, it's been another tough week for Washington's war makers. But for them, where there's hope there's death.

Let's address the Iraq war directly:

It's too soon to know whether the Bush administration's new PR offensive will do anything for you in terms of public opinion. But rest assured that the U.S. military effort in Iraq won't be curtailed anytime soon. Despite the downward trend of public backing for the war — and in spite of the mass media's inadequate yet significant widening of debate in recent weeks — a combination of factors is in place to sustain your deadly momentum.

One key dynamic is the U.S. military's institutional adrenaline for fulfilling its mission of mass destruction. To a large extent, war correspondent Michael Herr's description of the Vietnam War is an apt summary of the perpetual motion that the Pentagon keeps implementing in Iraq: "We took space back quickly, expensively, with total panic and close to maximum brutality. Our machine was devastating. And versatile. It could do everything but stop."

On the home front, another pivotal aspect of the Iraq war is that President Bush's solid-core constituencies are still in his corner. Despite some spin from mainstream and progressive media, the prominent Republicans who are making critical noises about the war are rarely doing more than mumbling their misgivings.

Yes, Sen. Chuck Hagel did say: "The White House is completely disconnected from reality." But he's complaining about the efficacy — not the morality — of the war effort. And while the moral basis for this war is hopeless, for many the hope that the U.S. military fortunes in Iraq will improve is apt to spring eternal.

Fortunately for a continuation of the occupation-driven carnage in Iraq, there's a huge disconnect between the massive problem and the mincing remedies being most widely promoted. While outlets like the New York Times have editorialized their discontent with Bush's speech Tuesday night, the biggest underlying beef is that the U.S. forces aren't winning.

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So long as enough Americans go along with the phantom goal of "victory," you get to keep killing in Iraq. To that end, a massive PR operation is underway.

"The White House recently brought onto its staff one of the nation's top academic experts on public opinion during wartime, whose studies are now helping Bush craft his message two years into a war with no easy end in sight," the Washington Post reported Thursday. "Behind the president's speech is a conviction among White House officials that the battle for public opinion on Iraq hinges on their success in convincing Americans that, whatever their views of going to war in the first place, the conflict there must and can be won."

What about most Democratic critics of the war on Capitol Hill? They keep saying that they want the U.S. military to succeed in Iraq, too. Here's Sen. Joseph Biden midway through this week, cheering on the war under the guise of critiquing it: "I really do think it's winnable, but you've got to keep the American people following with you. That's why I urged them to give the speech. He told us the why. He didn't tell us the how. Business as usual won't get us there. I think he has to change some policy or alter some policy."

And what about the Chuck Hagels of the political world? Well, listen to what Hagel had to say after Bush's much-drumrolled June 28 speech: "I have had differences with the administration over the planning and execution of our postwar policy in Iraq. However, we all are working toward finding a way to succeed in Iraq."

And what about organizations like MoveOn.org, now featuring Hagel's purported dissent in a new TV ad? Running to catch up with its antiwar base after many months of absenting itself from the antiwar movement, MoveOn did a poll of its email recipients as summer began — offering them an up-or-down vote on a congressional measure so weak that even if it became law, the U.S. military would be unimpeded from continuing its catalytic role in Iraq's carnage for a very long time.

Consider the much-hyped and somewhat repentant "Freedom Fries" congressman from North Carolina, Rep. Walter Jones. He's moving in a good direction, but where's his ballyhooed congressional measure really at? Jones had this to say at a June 16 news conference: "The resolution I am co-sponsoring will do no more than call on the president to set a plan and a date to begin reducing the number of troops we have in Iraq. It does not in any way, shape or form set a date certain for complete withdrawal."

Under the terms of the measure, withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq would begin no later than October 1, 2006. That's right. Withdrawal of troops would BEGIN in autumn 2006. On Capitol Hill, that kind of scenario might seem drastic — but for the militarized productivity of the grim reaper, under the circumstances, it's a pretty good deal.

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So, here's an executive summary of this memo to the Iraq war: As long as the main issues revolve around how you can be won and how you must not be quickly halted, there's a lot of death left in you.

*Norman Solomon is the author of the new book "War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death." A review in the Los Angeles Times this week called the book "a must-read for those who would like greater context with their bitter morning coffee, or to arm themselves for the debates about Iraq that are still to come." The book's first chapter is posted at: [www.WarMadeEasy.com](http://www.WarMadeEasy.com)*

