

“BEYOND THE RHETORIC”

Harry C. Alford □

Mr. President, It is Time to Bring the Troops Home □

It was like yesterday. We were attending a Board of Directors meeting at the US Chamber of Commerce. As planned, we walked across the street to the Old Executive Office Building of the White House for a presentation by the President, George W. Bush. It was there on that rainy November afternoon that he told the business CEO's of America that he was going to lead us into war with Iraq.

He explained his logic and expressed utmost confidence in our military leaders' war plan.

The thing that surprised me the most, in retrospect, was that not one person leaked this meeting to the press.

The world watched as the White House built its case against Iraq from that date to February of the following year.

The deal was already done but there was a need to prepare the public.

The actual war was brilliant and lasted shortly. What was deeply underestimated was the aftermath. That has become a total disaster. The Shiites, Kurds and Sunnis have been fighting for centuries and the fall of Saddam Hussein did nothing to change that.

In fact, what has happened is a rallying call from all these entities and a newly established operating base for Al Qaeda and other such thugs.

What we have is a full blown civil war sprinkled with a lot of terrorist activity.

Iraq is a mess and we don't have the answer.

Our mission was complete and we decided to change the scope and hang around.

That hanging around is costing us precious lives and many billions in wasted dollars.

The Military Industrial Complex, Halliburton et al, has been making record profits but we certainly can't call that progress.

Democracy doesn't always work. It didn't in Vietnam and it certainly isn't going to work in Iraq anytime soon. Iraq, the land of Nebuchadnezzar, has been at war since biblical times and it will be for quite a while longer.

We, in all our glory, will not be able to end it and should come to the reality that we should not be there.

It is time to "pull the plug".

Our president has dug in his "heels" and refuses to even consider the thought of pulling out.

Instead, he has ordered a surge.

Surge?

In the Vietnam days we called that escalation.

It is escalation indeed and history shows that such activity only increases your losses, such as military lives.

Enough!

As a former officer in the US Army, I am appalled at what is happening to our troops. Going into combat without the best equipment available is an American shame.

We have troops in harms way without a known mission and an inevitable exit strategy.

You can't put up a serious and successful fight without a mission.

Some of our troops have had to do 3-5 tours in the same war.

That is totally unheard of.

How much wear and tear can the human body and mind take?

The law of averages is going to catch up with individuals having to deal with that.

Sooner or later you are going to be crippled or dead via a war with no mission.

This is not fair to those who sacrifice so much and bring grief onto their loved ones.

It must really mess with the minds of young officers who lead their troops down urban streets waiting for some bad guys, not enemy soldiers, to strike them with grenades and sneaky bombs. That is not combat. It is police action and soldiers should not and cannot successfully do police action. Soldiers, especially American soldiers, should not practice and train for searching citizens' homes and chasing people down the streets whose total activity is to ambush and run through a civilian infrastructure.

This is not military.

How can the "mightiest power on earth" come down to this level?

Russia, China, India, etc. must be thinking, "Their time is limited and our time is coming".

There is a nouveau saying that "When you jump into a mud pit to wrestle with a hog, the hog is having big fun and you are making a mess of yourself". Sadly and in macabre terms this is our state in Iraq. We can't win fighting in this mud pit that has lived with oppression, terror, revolution and civil war far longer than our nation has been in existence.

Mr. President, we are asking too much of our military. They are working out of their job classification; receiving little appreciation and deserving much more pay, care and love from a nation that depends on them dearly. It is an abuse of our troops, economy and our future.

We made a big mistake.

Mistakes will be made.

How we handle the mistakes is what really matters.

Bring our troops home now!

Mr. Alford is the co-founder, President/CEO of the National Black Chamber of Commerce.