

and verbal gymnastics required to maintain the illusion of their essential rightness would exhaust lesser men. But not the neocons, and Sullivan proves himself equal to the task by boldly inverting what Novak wrote. The deepness of this kind of denial is hard to fathom. What world are these people living in?

Another sort of evasion has also blinded the president's leftist critics to Novak's glad tidings. Joshua Marshall, a writer for *Washington Monthly* and a popular liberal blogger, sourly suggested the Bushies are talking out of both sides of their mouths—"The campaign will leave to individual voters which message suits their needs"—but neglected to inform us which side is telling the truth. In a campaign season of unusual intensity, the rather encouraging news that the administration is coming to see the error of its interventionist ways is lost amid the partisan sniping.

Matthew Yglesias, a writer for *American Prospect*, disdains the Novak story as "Disinformation, aimed at placating Novak and other anti-war conservatives. Anti-war conservatism is, at this point, primarily an elite, inside-the-beltway phenomenon, so the trick is to convince the rank and file out there that all is well with Iraq while quietly reassuring skeptical elites that Bush is on their side so they don't go publicly off the reservation before the election." This argument assumes a rank-and-file conservative Republican base that approaches the Stalinist parties of yesteryear in its docile dogmatism, but even those dittoheads with the thickest craniums can see that Iraq is far from the "model" that was supposed to transform the Middle East by sheer example. Yglesias also ignores the implications of his own argument: if the conservative masses are so leader-oriented and unthinking, then surely they'll accept this U-turn as readily as Communist cadre countenanced the Kremlin's frequent flip-flops.

Syria, facing growing international pressure to end its longtime military presence in Lebanon, has begun redeploying units belonging to its 20,000-man occupation force.

Intelligence sources are reporting that Syria is shifting some of the soldiers in Lebanon back toward its own border as part of a major realignment that will include consolidation of Lebanon-based units. More than 3,000 soldiers dismantled their bases to the south and east of Beirut before retiring into the Bekaa Valley, hoping to lower their profile in the country and quiet the vocal Lebanese Christian, U.S., and French opposition to their military presence by increasing their distance from the capital. The Syrian actions are disturbing to groups that depend on Damascus's patronage to operate freely in Lebanon, particularly Hezbollah and the radical Palestinian groups that have training and support facilities in refugee camps. While the redeployment is considerably short of a withdrawal, it is a sign that the regime in Damascus is worried about possible United States military action against it.



Secretary of State Colin Powell has given Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom assurances that the United States will soften any declaration on Israeli-Palestinian relations that comes out of future Quartet meetings

of the EU, Russia, the UN and the U.S. on the Middle East road map. Shalom privately voiced concern about remarks made by President Bush in his speech before the United Nations on Sept. 21, during which the president called on Israel to impose a freeze on settlement construction in the West Bank and Gaza and for the Israelis to end the "daily humiliation" of the Palestinians. Bush strongly endorsed the road map, which Prime Minister Ariel Sharon effectively declared dead recently, but otherwise backed Sharon's positions and urged Arab states to recognize Israel and stop supporting Palestinian terrorism.



The Transportation Security Administration has asked the 77 commercial airlines flying in the U.S. to hand over all information relating to passengers who flew during the month of June.

The information will be used to test a new passenger pre-screening program called Secure Flight, which is being developed to compare information on passengers against existing watch lists of suspected terrorists. Currently, airlines have access to a database that is supposed to be checked when a reservation is made or a ticket bought, but there have been numerous glitches. An example of how the system can fail was provided by the diversion of a United Airlines London to Washington flight on which former pop singer Cat Stevens was a passenger. Stevens converted to Islam in 1977 and now calls himself Yusuf Islam. He is watch-listed because Israeli intelligence believes that he contributed money to militant Islamic groups, a charge he denies. Despite Islam's inclusion on the list, he was able to board the flight because his name as it appears on his passport did not exactly match the version in the database. His name was discovered during a mid-Atlantic review of the passenger manifest and the flight was diverted to Bangor, Maine, where he was removed and deported.

Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a partner in Cannistraro Associates, an international security consultancy.

One has to ask why critics of the war find it so hard to agree with Novak that the rising crisis in Iraq has reached a turning point: “Whether Bush or Kerry is elected, the president or president-elect will have to sit down immediately with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The military will tell the election winner there are insufficient U.S. forces in Iraq to wage effective war. That leaves three realistic options: increase overall U.S. military strength to reinforce Iraq, stay with the present strength to continue the war, or get out.”

The *New York Post* reports Rice’s denial, but there’s no denying the cold logic of Novak’s equation: either the U.S. increases levels of troop strength, funding, and—inevitably—casualties, or else we get out. The *status quo* is intolerable: it’s escalation or withdrawal. The administration, according to Novak, will go with the latter: “Well-placed sources in the administration are confident Bush’s decision will be to get out. They believe that is the recommendation of his national security team and would be the recommendation of second-term officials. An informed guess might have

and more political trouble for the president. In a campaign that is playing heavily on voters’ fears, the Pew poll shows 51 percent of Americans fear another war if Bush wins a second term.

The fear of a wider war is based, in part, on the perception that we really have lost control of events in Iraq—or never really won it to begin with. The dogs of war, once unleashed, are no respecters of boundaries, either political or moral: what is now a guerilla insurrection centered in the Sunni triangle could easily become a regional conflagration. As the second spoke in the “axis of evil” seeks a nuclear shield against the U.S., we are a border incident away from taking on Tehran. Syria, too, is a target and has been warned to seal off its border with Iraq, but this amounts to asking Damascus to come into the war—on the American side.

The neocons want “World War IV”—a war against a billion-plus Muslims from Djibouti to Jakarta. But does George W. Bush want it? Novak’s answer is no. The decision, he reports, has already been made, and—aside from his undoubted reportorial skills—there is ample reason

favor in the Bush administration but that the administration was moving to oppose the neoconservative agenda. Chalabi, who had always been the neocons’ Iraqi poster boy, fell from grace quickly and hard: theft was the least of the charges he found himself confronted with as U.S. soldiers searched his palatial estate for evidence of espionage on behalf of Iran. The neocons were stunned: writing in *National Review*, Michael Ledeen bitterly remonstrated with the administration, asking why the U.S. had “massed so much firepower to break into Chalabi’s house ... and the offices of the INC, instead of doing the same to Moqtada.” Maybe that’s because Moqtada wasn’t the one who fed us phony intelligence about nonexistent Iraqi WMD and betrayed U.S. secrets to Iran, ripping us off for millions in the process.

Chalabi’s neocon allies fibbed their way into seizing control of the mighty U.S. war machine and ran it to ground in Iraq—leaving George W. Bush alone amidst the wreckage. Chalabi is lucky he wasn’t at home when the Americans came knocking, because I, for one, would have treated him with all the respect he deserves.

What is striking about the Pentagon spy scandal—in which AIPAC stands accused of being the conduit through which classified information was passed to Israel from moles in high places—is that the investigation has been ongoing for over two years. That it is just now surfacing could be purely coincidental—or it could mean that the administration is taking this opportunity to move against the neocons on another front, now that one of their number—Pentagon analyst Larry Franklin—has been caught red-handed passing classified materials to Israeli officials.

The Franklin affair smashes yet another neoconservative icon. AIPAC is one of the most powerful lobbies in

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Condoleezza Rice as secretary of state, Paul Wolfowitz as defense secretary and Stephen Hadley as national security adviser. According to my sources, all would opt for a withdrawal.”

Sen. John McCain is always calling for “more boots on the ground”—his formula for a winning strategy in the former Yugoslavia—and the neocons would like nothing better, but this means more body bags shipped home

to believe he’s right. Two recent events foreshadowed this U-turn in U.S. policy: the raid on Ahmad Chalabi’s headquarters in Iraq and the investigation into a possible spy nest in the Pentagon that has been linked to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the policy shop overseen by Douglas Feith.

The raid was the first visible evidence that the neocons were not only out of

Washington: the administration would not take them on unless it meant business. It's also a question of timing: Chalabi barely had time to deny the charges before AIPAC was hiring defense lawyers. In context, the AIPAC investigation could be seen as part of a larger policy shift.

Pat Buchanan predicted in these pages that the American empire had reached its zenith at Fallujah, and the continuing stand-off has only confirmed his analysis: "The neoconservative dream was to create a pro-American, free-market democracy in Iraq to serve as a model and catalyst for Arab peoples and convert Iraq into a base camp of American Empire, flanking Iran and Syria. ... That utopian vision has vanished. President Bush has rejoined the realist camp. We are not going deeper in. We are on the way out."

With elections scheduled for January, and the U.S. determined to keep to this schedule, one can easily foresee how Buchanan's scenario would unfold. In an election in which all major parties would compete over who would kick out the Americans the fastest, the results could only lead to Iraq's newly-installed "democratic" government politely but firmly asking us to leave. How could we refuse?

We are good at nation-smashing but lousy at nation-building. That's the lesson the Republican foreign-policy establishment seems to have learned, so far, from the Iraqi misadventure. It is a good and necessary part of the syllabus, but they have a long way to go before they finally discover—or rediscover—the wisdom of the Founders, who counseled against going abroad "in search of monsters to destroy." ■

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PC Pow-Wow

The Mall's new monument to multiculturalism—cowboys not invited

By W. James Antle III

THE SUN GODS were certainly kind to the grand opening of the \$214 million National Museum of the American Indian. The sky was bright blue and the air was warm as thousands gathered on the Mall to celebrate diversity and indigenousness.

On the Metro ride over to the Smithsonian, it was not just the usual morning commute crowd. Subway cars were packed with people clad in traditional Native American attire, some wearing elaborate headdresses that encroached on the newspaper-reading space of their business-suit wearing, slightly uncomfortable looking seat companions. Press reports estimated that 25,000 American Indians from all over the country came to Washington for the event.

The young women behind me were comparing their outfits like teenagers freshly returned from a jaunt to the local shopping center. "We should trade leggings," one said to the girl next to her. "You would look better in mine, because you have a thinner waist."

My first stop was the Procession of the Nations, a lengthy parade of tribes attending the gathering. Essentially, lines of American Indians marched down the street carrying banners and signs while non-Indians stood on either side and clapped politely. Marchers dressed in military uniforms or carrying American flags won particularly enthusiastic applause. "Go, Oklahoma!" one elderly man repeatedly shouted as if he

were at a sporting event, apparently pleased to see a contingent from his home state.

I confess that most of the assembled nations were unfamiliar to me and at least a few of the names I did recognize—such as the National American Indian Chamber of Commerce—probably are not considered bona fide tribes. There were several marching bands on hand playing what were presumably ancient Native American songs along with some John Philip Sousa.

A family made their way through the crowd and ended up standing next to me. They were wearing moccasins and other traditional garb but did not look especially like Indians. Curious, I asked what nation they belonged to. "We're from New Jersey," the father answered cheerfully. A number of other middle-aged white people present were wearing leis, flowered shirts, white shorts, and other clothes more likely to be seen at a Jimmy Buffet concert than any reservation.

The First Americans Festival looked much like any small-town carnival, featuring storytellers, ice cream men, and even a merry-go-round. Walking past a series of tents filled alternately with artifacts and entertainment, one group of twenty-something young people were loudly telling a high-school-aged boy that this would be his first experience with Native American culture. Speaking with what I took to be a Polish accent, he asked a question