

[WAR]

## REGRESS REPORT

The latest National Intelligence Estimate drew ominous conclusions. In a departure from its 2006 version, which said that al-Qaeda was suffering, this year's report found that the terrorist organization had reconstituted in the northern regions of Pakistan and is positioned to carry out major strikes inside the United States. Just after the report's release, a new videotape of Osama bin Laden surfaced, indicating that he is alive and able to communicate with the Muslim world.

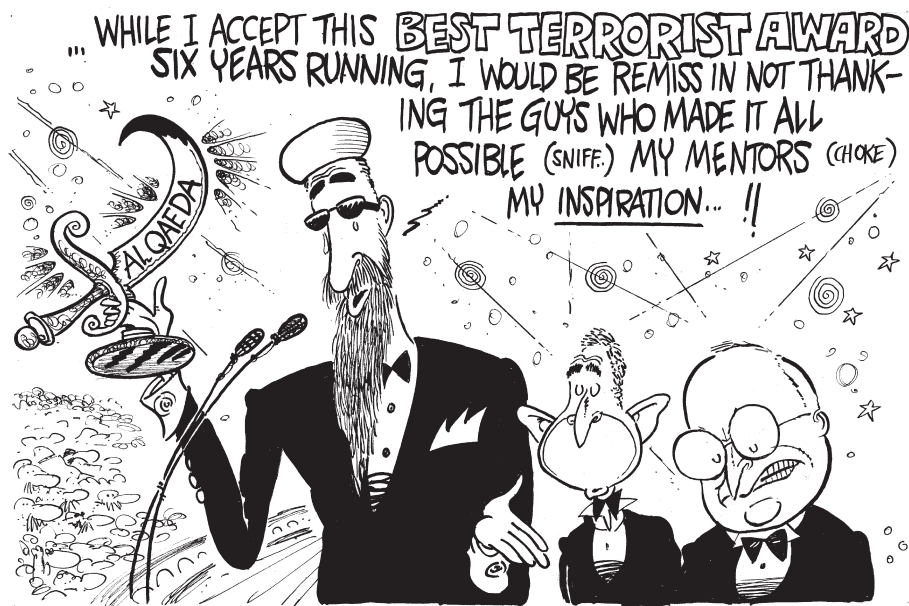
The NIE avoided political conclusions, but the facts underscore the striking incompetence of the Bush administration's effort to combat al-Qaeda. Why is bin Laden, whom Bush vowed to get "dead or alive," enjoying sanctuary in Pakistan? Why is he more able than ever to recruit terrorists? The answer is plain: when U.S. troops had al-Qaeda on the run, the administration pulled our forces off the hunt, shifting them to the futile invasion of Iraq. Toppling Saddam was the course neoconservatives had obsessively lobbied for long before 9/11, and Bush proved eager to oblige. The U.S. has since poured blood and treasure into Iraq, creating a fresh recruiting front, and spawning a new group, "al-Qaeda in Iraq," that did not exist before the occupation.

Osama bin Laden clearly owes George W. Bush and his Iraq War architects a note of thanks—the president couldn't have pursued more accommodating policies. Whether the American people share that gratitude is another matter.

[JUSTICE]

## C'EST MOI

Four words the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee should never have to say to the nation's chief law-enforcement officer: "I don't trust you."



That was the scene when Atty. Gen. Alberto Gonzales was questioned about pressuring his hospitalized predecessor to reauthorize the administration's domestic surveillance program. The senators' disdain crossed party lines: "Your credibility has been breached to the point of being actionable," the panel's ranking Republican told him.

But the AG didn't blink. He knows that devotion to his powerful patron—not his middling legal credentials—keeps him in a job. In a recent interview with the *Financial Times*, Gore Vidal commented that Gonzales "thinks he's Attorney-General of Mexico." "No, that is not a racist remark," the novelist averred, anticipating the easy put down. Those familiar with cronyism's corrosive effect on the rule of law will glean his meaning—and wince.

Loyalty, far more than skill, seems to be the Bushian shibboleth. Called to testify about the U.S. attorney firings, former White House Political Director Sara Taylor told the long-suffering Judiciary Committee, "I took an oath to the president, and I take that oath very seriously." "Did you mean, perhaps, you took an oath to the Constitution?" Chairman Patrick Leahy suggested. "I, uh, yes, yeah, you're correct, I took an oath to the Constitution, uh, but, what..." "I know the president refers to the government being his government," Leahy con-

tinued. "It's not." That may have been news to Ms. Taylor.

But Bush is unbowed. The White House has just announced that it will order the Justice Department not to prosecute administration aides for ignoring congressional subpoenas. Expect full compliance from those sworn to uphold the president—and his monarchical notion of justice.

[DIPLOMACY]

## WANNA BUY A WAR?

If only Baghdad could be more like Coke. We'd "like to teach the world to sing," but our branding seems to be a bit off.

According to a 211-page report commissioned by the U.S. Joint Forces Command—"Enlisting Madison Avenue: The Marketing Approach to Earning Popular Support in Theaters of Operation"—the occupation might be salvaged if we could just find the right advertising strategy.

Author Todd C. Helmus argues that the "American brand" hasn't been integrated into the lives of Iraqis as something positive. (Ignore that checkpoint on the corner.) He promises to help us "deliver a message about what democracy is." Liberty under law? Inalienable rights? That's so last century. Helmus counsels instead that the Pentagon try customer-service-speak: "we will help you."

Our government was able to purchase this wisdom from the RAND Corporation

for the bargain price of \$400,000. During the Cold War, RAND was all about boring game theory and scary nuclear stuff. In the age of terror, they've moved into the much hipper business of global branding.

Call it victory by jingle—but don't bet on Iraqis buying.

#### [ELECTION]

### DEBATABLE STATEMENTS

We've been following the Democratic debates and note that sometimes small asides reveal more about general ideological temperament than heavily polled and consultant-tested set pieces.

For instance, it is a liberal cliché to assert that America is "the richest country in the world." This invariably prefaces a statement about a social program—excellent free health care for everybody, for example—that America could "easily" afford. Obama and Hillary used the line in Charleston; John Edwards makes it a regular refrain.

America ranks high in per capita wealth (though several European states do better). But absent from the Democrats' recitation of "affordable" programs is any recognition that if we spent all the money they would cost, our economy couldn't sustain even top-ten status. Neither do they pay any attention to the structural underpinnings of being a wealthy country, such as maintaining manufacturing capability and a technological edge.

In the most recent exchange, a memorable moment came when Joe Biden, whose lukewarm opposition to the Iraq War has not shaken his belief that the American military can solve any problem in the world, no matter how culturally or strategically remote. Asked whether we should send troops to Darfur, Biden answered, "We must." Why? "Because we can." This signal phrase reveals how little a veteran of the

Senate Foreign Relations Committee has learned about the limits of American military power.

Also revealing, the moment fib monitors reached the red zone upon hearing Hillary Clinton talk about her "very difficult decision" to enroll daughter Chelsea in the highly regarded Sidwell Friends School rather than the Washington public-school system. If that was a tortured choice, it raises questions about Hill's decision-making capacity when it comes to Iraq, health care, or American factories shutting down.

#### [MILITARY]

### HIRED GUNS

Uncle Sam needs everyone he can get—and then some more. Over the past two years, the Army has met its recruiting goals by offering higher incentives to join, employing more recruiters, and providing waivers for disqualifying physical conditions or law violations. Despite all this, for the second month in a row, Army recruiters failed to meet their goals—off 15 percent in June. The shortfalls have many in the services worried that Iraq deployments will be extended to 18 months.

As the number of citizen soldiers diminishes, the number of private soldiers surges. In World War II, only 3-5 percent of the total American forces were contractors. Now nearly half of those in theater are not servicemen. Estimates range from 126,000 to 180,000, and their salaries dwarf military pay: a liaison officer earns \$350,000 per year—and costs taxpayers \$850,000 in overhead. Fighting the war "on the cheap"—that is, without enough soldiers and Marines—means hiring the most expensive mercenary force in history.

Our policymakers thus face a choice: break the Army with more missions, break the bank with more contractors, or break their commitment to global hegemony. ■

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# *One-Child Foreign Policy*

Lower birth rates will alter both society and strategy.

**By James Kurth**

MILITARY ANALYSTS are always talking about strategy. Often they are proposing one that they have just invented and naturally think will be the solution to the nation's security problems. The present time, filled as it is with the threat of Islamist terrorism and with the debacle of the Iraq War, is especially marked by the proliferation of strategic proposals.

More seasoned analysts know, however, that if any strategy is to prove effective, it must fit social and structural realities, including the state of technology, the economy, and the political system. Less noted is the role of demography.

Until recently, demographic changes were so slow that they hardly seemed to be a variable effecting strategic challenges. But today, many major nations are undergoing rapid and evident changes in their demographic structure. This is most obvious in Europe, but it is also the case in the United States, Russia, China, and Japan. Demographic disruption is impacting America, all of its major allies, and all of its traditional or potential adversaries.

In Western countries, the combination of a sharp decline in the birth rates of the European or European-descended population, on the one hand, and the sharp increase in the non-European immigrant population, on the other, is causing a great transformation in social structure and national identity, which is bringing about a major transformation in military strategy. The process has only begun, but in the years ahead, history will teach us once again that demography is destiny.

In order for a particular population to sustain its numbers, it should have an average reproduction rate of 2.1 births per woman. But the birth rate for almost every Western nation has fallen below 1.5 during the last couple of decades. In Italy and Spain, formerly the European nations with the highest birth rates, it is now under 1.3. Although the United States has a rising population, that growth is entirely due to immigration and to the higher reproduction rates of peoples of non-European origin. With the exception of devout religious communities—especially the Mormons—among most European-American groups, reproduction rates are below the level of sustainability.

When one projects these demographic statistics forward, it appears inevitable that in half a century most European-descended peoples will have only two-thirds or less of the population that they have today. Furthermore, a much larger percentage of that population will be old and no longer able to work. It follows that national security will have a very different meaning when nations themselves have become so different.

A transformation in Western, particularly American, military strategy has occurred alongside this demographic transformation. New technologies have issued in great improvements in what the military calls C4—command, control, communication, and computers. In the past two decades, the U.S. military has found it essential to incorporate these improvements into its strategies, operations, and weapons acquisitions, with the

totality of results being called the “revolution in military affairs” or RMA.

Unfortunately, there is always someone who will carry a good thing too far, as was the case with former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's ineffective “military transformation” project. Rumsfeld's misuse of the RMA meant reducing the size of the U.S. ground forces, but it had always been focused upon enabling our military to defeat other militaries—that is to say, upon conventional war—and had nothing to say about defeating insurgencies, as has become amply clear in Iraq. Rumsfeld's reductions made the transformed ground forces even less capable of dealing with the Iraqi insurgency than the old-fashioned pre-transformation forces would have been.

There has also been a parallel “revolution in attitudes toward the military” or RAM. Whereas the RMA has principally been propelled by the new technologies of the information economy, the RAM has been driven by the new demography of low birth rates. These two revolutions are connected and mutually reinforcing.

In the modernizing societies of a century ago, the number of children per couple was normally four or more. It was also common for some of these children to die from disease while their parents were still living. If it happened that some instead died while fighting in a war, this was seen as a sad, but not surprising, variation on the familiar theme of death among the young.

Today, it is very rare for a child in post-modern society to die from disease while his parents are alive. And if he should die