

## A SOLDIER REFLECTS

Regarding Kara Hopkins's "Stupid Party" (June 18), I too have been thinking about the exchange between Rudy Giuliani and Ron Paul about 9/11. I have been a lifelong Republican and have been a supporter of the war, which I can back up with a Department of Defense DD Form 214 showing my service in Iraq. After quite a lot of reflection, I still hold the same beliefs about why we are at war. However, my sense of how we should be fighting it has changed.

I voted for Bush in 2004 because I couldn't vote for a guy who openly admitted to committing atrocities in Vietnam while he was an officer and should have had the leadership and moral courage to stop. And I supported the war because both Clinton and Bush told us there were WMD. God help our civil liberties if Saddam drops one of those on an American city, I thought, though I was not of an interventionist mindset. (I believe that all of our soldiers should have returned to within the U.S. borders after the end of the Cold War.)

I served my tour in Iraq after it was clear the WMD would never be found and stood by my helicopter and saluted with tears in my eyes as the body bags containing the remains of my fellow GI's (some weighting less than 30 pounds) were loaded.

As I crisscrossed thousands of square miles of Iraq, I had high expectations about the country becoming free and prosperous. I was there for the first two elections and hoped with all my soul that they would quit killing each other and, of course, us. After I got out of the country, I followed the news every day, searching for some hint that the violence was abating. I listened in vain. We cannot install a democracy there. The hatred is so deep that we would have as much luck invading Lebanon, Palestine, and Israel, combining them into one country, and having them vote in one democracy.

Every great general in history knew when he had lost a battle and had sense enough to withdraw, regroup, and

rethink his strategy. Once soldiers see that they are dying in vain, a general rapidly lose the support of his men—and even more so when he is giving orders from the rear. It doesn't help when they know he didn't spend time in the foxholes in his youth.

If Americans believe we are at war with all of Islam or we are at war to keep the oil flowing, then we had better buckle down and fight all out like WWII. Quit trying to pretend that we can go on enjoying peacetime lives while tossing a few sons and daughters toward a far-off battle. It is going to take a lot of bodies to kill 1.5 billion Muslims.

If, however, as I believe, we are at war with a radical few, then we need to get out of the Middle East and deprive al-Qaeda of the rallying and recruitment point American occupation provides. Those thinking I have become an appeaser and pacifist could not be more wrong. It is my firm belief that all things in this universe are about force and counterforce and the struggle to survive. Terrorism will always be with us, and I will fight without hesitation for my freedom and right to live, but war is a ghastly thing that brings out the worst elements of human nature. If we can find different strategies that cost fewer lives and defuse the constant human struggles wherever possible, we must go that route.

I was wrong about the war and have to admit my mistake. As I look around for a leader to replace Bush, I have to go back and see who was making sounder judgments than I during the time of 9/11 hysteria. It wasn't any of the "top tier candidates," Democrat or Republican. That person was Ron Paul.

JOEL (LAST NAME WITHHELD)  
Via e-mail

## POLITICS IS EVERYTHING

In the Deep Background column of June 18, Karl Rove is cited as saying that an attack on Iran will cause catastrophic U.S. gas prices, which would damage Republican political prospects

in 2008 and reduce President Bush's approval ratings to single digits. This line of thinking is exactly why the U.S. is in decline: politicians are only interested in staying in power, regardless of the cost to the nation.

When will Rove and company concentrate on rebuilding our manufacturing base, ending illegal immigration, finding bin Laden, improving healthcare, reducing the national debt, and developing an exit strategy from Iraq? Never, because they do not represent the true spirit of America. They are just power-hungry tyrants.

DAVID L. EILERING  
Glen Carbon, Ill.

## A CAPITAL QUESTION

Richard Silverstein's review of *The Fight for Jerusalem* (July 2) concludes that designating East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state is justified and would be a significant overture to solving the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. He overlooks the fact that for 19 years—1948 to 1967—the Palestinians had 100-percent control of East Jerusalem (and the West Bank) but made no effort to designate it the capital of a Palestinian state.

Such indifference to East Jerusalem's status is exemplified by the fact that, while Jordan's King Hussein made two trips to East Jerusalem during those 19 years, no leader of the other 21 Arab nations deemed it worthy of a visit. And also let us not ignore a significant theological point that while the word "Jerusalem" is mentioned more than 600 times in the Bible, it does not appear once in the Koran.

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Via e-mail

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[MEDIA]

## LAPDOGS OF WAR

Faced with evidence that the surge in Iraq is not accomplishing its objectives, the Bush administration has launched a new effort to shore up political support for the war. The tactic is linguistic redefinition. Now, instead of fighting Iraqi insurgents, terrorists, Saddam loyalists, Shi'ite extremists, "dead-enders," or the tellingly imprecise term employed by many U.S. soldiers, "bad guys," the Bushites seek to convince Americans that we are fighting al-Qaeda in Iraq, apparently a Baghdad branch office of the group that attacked us on 9/11.

Thus in May, President Bush began talking up the idea that "al-Qaeda is public enemy number one in Iraq," using the term 27 times in one Iraq speech. The pro-war media has shamelessly played along. Blogger Glenn Greenwald has chronicled how the *New York Times'* Michael Gordon parrots the administration's claims, writing about American offensives against "Qaeda leaders," "Qaeda strongholds," and "Qaeda fighters." Other outlets have followed suit, though military analysts note that the al-Qaeda portion of the insurgency is no greater than it ever was and that the overwhelming majority of insurgents are native Iraqi Sunnis and Shi'ites.

Greenwald notes that the al-Qaeda label has even been adopted retrospectively: the *Times* now claims that the 2004 battle of Fallujah was aimed at capturing "top Qaeda leaders," a fact the paper somehow neglected to mention when the battle was going on and it correctly labeled Fallujah fighters as Iraqi Sunnis.

The administration has tried a version of this bait-and-switch before, when it went to great effort to convince Americans that Saddam Hussein was in cahoots with the 9/11 hijackers. Since then we have heard from many politicians and pundits lamenting that they were "misled" by administration claims



prior to the Iraq War. So to see the media again rush to market a different version of the same patently dishonest argument is more than disappointing.

[ELECTION]

## A CHOICE, NOT AN EGO

Michael Bloomberg's announcement that he's switching his party registration to Independent set off a flurry of speculation. A third-party challenge seems particularly enticing in 2008. David Broder summed up the mood in the electorate: "there is a palpable hunger among the public for someone who will attack the problems facing the country—the war in Iraq, immigration, energy, health care—and not worry about the politics."

Neither the Republican president nor the Democratic Congress evoke fond feeling: Bush's approval rating sits at 31 percent; Congress's at 25. The country voted in 2006 hoping to bring our troops home. Instead we got a surge. Polls show that only 20 percent of the public approves of "comprehensive immigration reform," yet leaders of both parties insist that opponents don't want to do the right thing for America.

The natural third party would be

socially conservative and economically populist, a party of the middle class. The political opportunity of the coming election is to challenge a foreign policy that has found support in the elites of both parties—and nowhere else.

It thus seems like a cruel joke that the most likely candidate is a pro-choice, pro-war, open-borders billionaire who offers voters nothing but the threat of self-financing his ego. It's enough to make a thinking observer question a system that claims to be democratic, yet becomes less representative with each election.

[2008]

## SKIP OUT, SNORT UP

June dealt the Giuliani campaign a one-two punch. First newspapers reported that the "Mayor of 9/11" had skipped out on the meetings of the Iraq Study Group because they interfered with his public-speaking schedule. After Giuliani begged off two panel meetings—one to make a \$100,000 speech in Atlanta, the other in favor of a \$200,000 address in South Korea—Study Group leaders asked him to show up or resign. He left.

It's understandable that Rudy might prefer making money to participating in