

From YOUR GOVERNMENT FAILED YOU by Richard A. Clarke:

"For generations, the U.S. military's leaders had held fast to observing international law with regard to prisoners. They believed that only if we upheld international standards did we have any chance of convincing others to do so. In short, if we tortured and abused prisoners, it increased the chances that our own troops would be abused when they were captured. Yet the record seems clear that generals, perhaps including the top U.S. commander in Iraq, Rick Sanchez, knew about, condoned, and authorized the kind of despicable treatment that the world saw in the pictures from Abu Ghraib. There may even have been daily reports to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on the progress of abusive interrogations and torture. Beyond the effect on what others might do to future U.S. prisoners, the Abu Ghraib phenomenon had an immediate effect on Arabs' and Muslims' perceptions of the United States of America. It was like rocket fuel for the al Qaeda movement worldwide. While generals failed in their legal, moral, and strategic mission by permitting such activity, at least one general did his duty. Major General Antonio Taguba was asked to investigate what had happened and write a report. He was encouraged to sweep as much as possible under the rug, make it look as if a "few bad apples," low-ranking personnel, had run amok. Instead, Taguba told the truth.

For doing so, he was asked to retire early. He knew that he was sacrificing his two--decade-long career, but he also knew he had to do the honorable thing. After retiring, he told the reporter Seymour Hersh, "We inculcate duty, honor, integrity . . . and yet when we get to senior officer level we forget those values. I know the Army will be mad at me . . . but the fact is that we violated the laws of land warfare, . . . our own principles, . . . and the core of our military values. . . . Those civilian and military leaders responsible should be held accountable." In any hall of American military heroes, there should be a special place for

Antonio Taguba, for he demonstrated a form of courage rarer than battlefield valor, and he gave real meaning to the word *honor*."

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"To this day I am still not sure whether any of the Bush national security team really thought about invading Iraq in terms of the near-term effect it would have on terrorism. They focused on some distant future Middle East without terrorism, a future that would somehow evolve from the forces we let loose by invading Iraq. How one would get from the present day of the invasion and occupation to that glorious future was not discussed in any detail. There was also little talk about the terrorism that would be fueled by the invasion in the near term.

The Bush administration did talk about Iraq's previous role in terrorism to justify the invasion, implying that with Saddam gone that terrorist support would go away. But there really was not much of an Iraqi role in terrorism and the Bush team knew it. They knew early on that there was no real connection between Iraq and al Qaeda, despite Vice President - Cheney's continued references to some fictitious meeting between a 9/11 hijacker and an Iraqi in the Czech Republic. U.S. intelligence and law enforcement experts could not have been more clear or definitive that there had been no such meeting and there was no operational relationship between al Qaeda and Iraq. (In March, 2008 after reviewing 600,000 captured Iraqi documents, the Pentagon came to the same conclusion.)⁴⁶ Administration officials publicly noted some other terrorist connections, but in a way that sounded as if they were not convinced themselves: the aging terrorist loner Abu Nidal had retired to Iraq, the Iraqi Baath Party was giving stipends to the families of Palestinian suicide bombers. The truth was that there were three terrorist groups of any significance in Iraq in 2002 and only one of them was in areas controlled by the Saddam regime."

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"The longest-running and most effective supporter of terrorists is not al Qaeda but the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and its Qods (Jerusalem) Force.⁸³ They created, trained, and equipped Hezbollah terrorists in Lebanon beginning more than twenty-five years ago. They attacked Jewish centers in Argentina and the U.S. Air Force housing complex at Khobar, Saudi Arabia. During the 1990s, they facilitated both the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, which merged with al Qaeda, and occasionally helped al Qaeda itself. There is no doubt in my mind that they have trained and equipped groups in Iraq that have attacked American forces there, introducing small numbers of highly sophisticated explosive formed projectiles. They may be engaged in similar activity now in Afghanistan.⁸⁴ The United States and its allies, including the Sunni Arab states, need to engage in an ongoing intelligence and counterterrorism effort to counter and roll back the influence of Qods Force. At the same time, Americans need to understand better what may motivate the Iranian leadership to permit the Qods Force's activities.

From the Iranian leadership's perspective, the United States invaded the nations on Iran's east and west and threatened it as part of an "axis of evil." Moreover, there have been reports of U.S., Israeli, and British covert action inside Iran in the Azeri, Baluchi, and Arab regions.⁸⁵ If the Iranian leaders think the United States is trying to destabilize their nation, turning up the heat in Iraq and Afghanistan would be a logical response. Because it may be difficult and somewhat irrelevant to determine who started the increased tensions, whose covert action program came first, it is at least worth trying seriously to find a negotiated way of having both sides back down, as the Baker-Hamilton Iraq Study Group proposed. If the United States were to engage in overt military activity, such as

bombing targets in Iran, we would launch a cycle of retaliation, which would severely damage our interests. There is no reason to believe that the “endgame” of that cycle would be good for the United States and many reasons to think it would be a disaster for us. We would also unite the Iranian nation behind its current President and indefinitely defer the day a more rational regime comes to power. An American bombing campaign against Iran would please two people most: Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and American Vice President Dick Cheney. That fact alone should give us pause."