

## So who's winning in Iraq?

As politicians, media commentators, and historians continue to ponder the historical legacy of the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the US, Britain and Australia, one fact is never faced: the invasion and its bloody aftermath represents the largest and most successful political 'sting' in history.

The standard argument now revolves around the two options: do Western Nations keep their soldiers in Iraq 'to finish the job', or do they 'cut and run'?

Yet both of those alternatives are based on conceptual errors, and both therefore help to conceal the real nature and origin of Iraq's sad plight. The errors are rooted in the twin lies that underpin the propaganda issued by each side:

**Lie 1:** America invaded Iraq primarily to liberate Iraqis and replace Hussein's despotic regime with a freely elected democratic government.

**Lie 2:** Al Qa'eda is fighting to free Iraqis from the grip of the infidel crusaders and their predatory commercial culture.

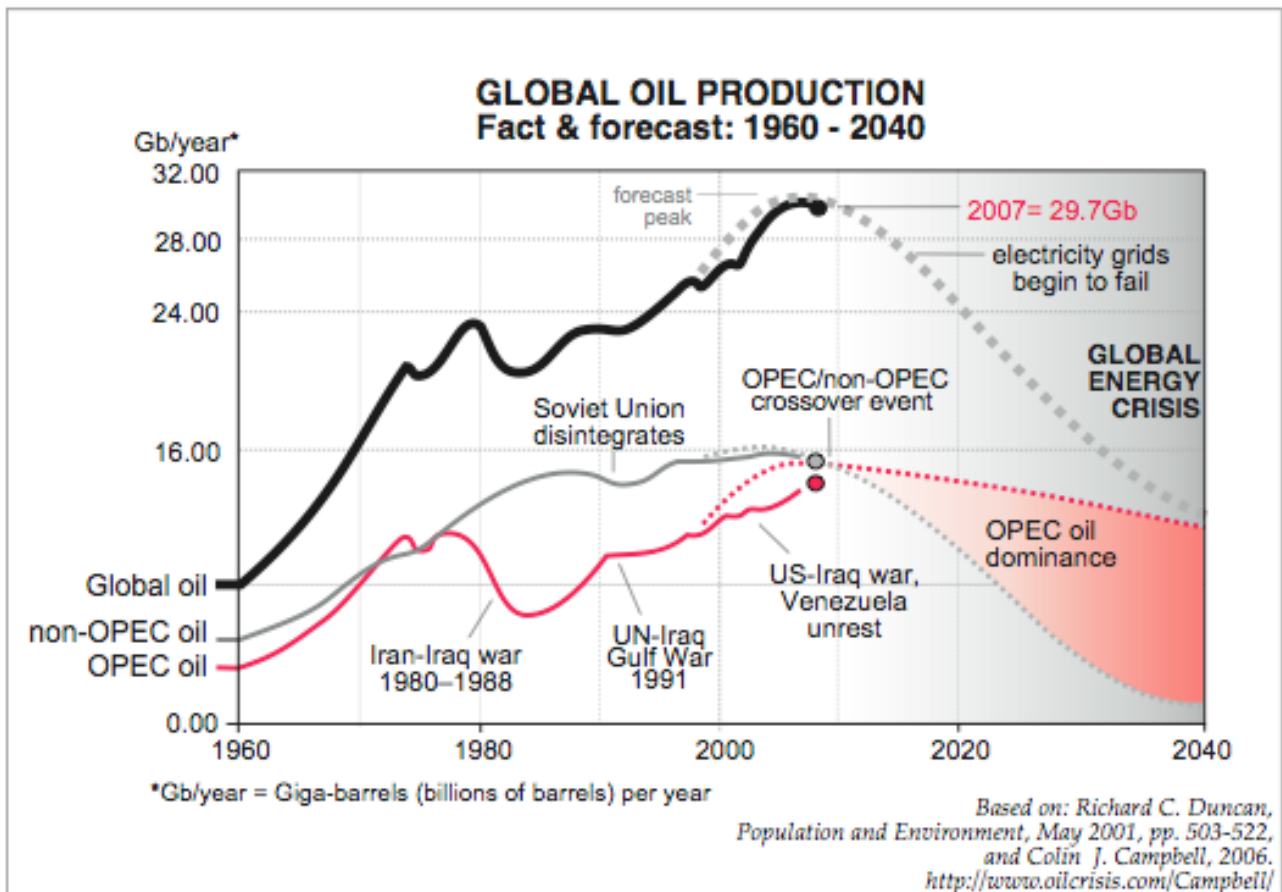
To uncover the truth behind these two lies we need to step back from them and objectively reassess the underlying requirements of America and al Qa'eda.

**America** needs to maintain its access to Middle-East oil reserves, or it faces imminent extinction as a world power.

**Al Qa'eda** needs America to appear to be an anti-Islamic Crusader in order to rouse Muslims everywhere to a jihad, a holy war against this 'satanic' predator and its godless materialism.

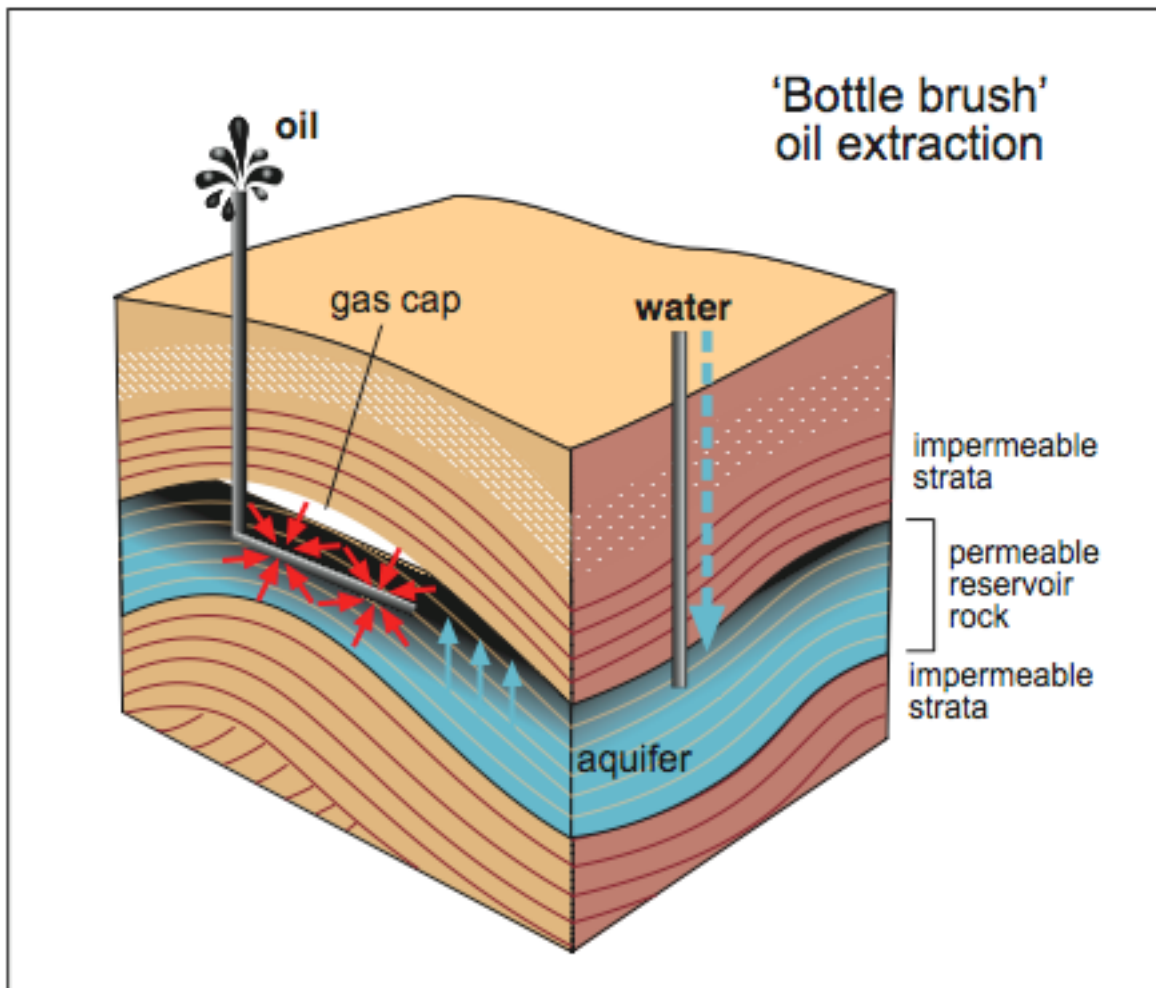
The confrontation that arises from these discordant agendas appears, on the surface, to represent a grossly uneven contest, a contest between a monster and a midget, a contest in which the outcome is a foregone conclusion. Yet there is a concealed factor here that so skews the balance it invalidates all rational accounting.

Not only is the USA the most powerful nation in the world, it is also the most oil-dependent. Its domestic production peaked in 1970 and is now in serious decline; and with the momentous global milestone of Peak Oil already passed (2005/2006), global production is also about to begin its terminal decline.<sup>1</sup>



America currently imports more than 40% of its gargantuan requirements from OPEC countries, especially Saudi Arabia. But that nation's largest oil reservoir, Ghawar, now has to be primed with seven million barrels of seawater every day, just to maintain pump-head pressures. Consequently, its daily water-cut is now 40% at best, and up to 55% in places according to some Saudi engineers. In other words, this source too, is fast running out.

The four biggest fields (Ghawar, Safaniyah, Hanifa, and Khafji) are all more than 50 years old, having produced almost all Saudi oil in the past half-century. All are now kept flowing largely by massive injections of seawater. This is of explosive significance, argues energy-investment banker and Middle East specialists, Matthew Simmons. "We could be on the verge of seeing a collapse of 30 or 40 per cent of their production in the imminent future. And imminent means some time in the next three to five years - but it could even be tomorrow."



*Unlike vertical wells, horizontal wells give little warning of their demise. As a vertical well nears the end of its life the oil yield declines gradually and in a predictable fashion. When a water-injected horizontal well depletes its oil reservoir there comes a time when the rising water table submerges the 'bottle-brush' system along the whole length of the extraction pipe, and production ceases—abruptly.*

So while the world faces a severe energy crisis in the very near future, America faces imminent extinction as an industrial and military power. Meanwhile, its crucial oil arteries in the Middle East are plainly exposed and well within the reach of its bitterest enemy, al Qa'eda.

Al Qa'eda, on the other hand, is shrewdly led, well concealed and globally dispersed, and unlike America, it has no obvious Achilles Heel. So the tables are turned; the hunters have become the hunted, and vice versa.<sup>2</sup>

Al Qa'eda realized in the early 1990's that it might break the power of its satanic foe merely by blocking America's access to Middle-Eastern oil. But an undertaking of this magnitude would require the services of a multitude of fanatical recruits. To gain those recruits it would need a religious *cause célèbre*, a jihad—such as might be generated by a major US assault on a small Muslim nation. But how could this assault be triggered? The American people

would first have to be goaded into a state of irrational fury (see ABC Lateline interview on p.5).

So al Qa'eda's strategists, then based in Sudan, set about planning a series of national affronts to the American populace in order to generate the kind of derangement required to launch such a war; a war that would, in essence, pit Western Christians against Middle-Eastern Muslims; a war that possessed all the dismal ingredients of a Medieval Crusade.

In the mid 1990's American agents stationed in Khartoum became alarmed by 'leaked' information that the Sudanese government, generally friendly, was secretly plotting to assassinate a number of high-ranking US government representatives. 'Sources' also hinted that the Saudi government was manufacturing chemical and biological weapons (WMD) at the al Shifa pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum.

In a vain attempt to reassure the Clinton Administration that there was no assassination plot, Sudanese officials repeatedly offered to supply the CIA with detailed information on al Qa'eda's leaders and their movements. The offers were ignored, and ultimately rejected.

In 1996 and again in 1997 the Sudanese government also offered to hand over al Qa'eda's spiritual leader, Osama bin Laden. The offer was rejected. The US government then severed its trade links with Sudan, recalled its diplomats and intelligence staff, and in 1998 destroyed 'Sudan's WMD factory' in a savage air attack.

Later that year the CIA conceded that the anti-American assassination plots had proved to be untrue, the 'WMD factory' had been making aspirins, and the Sudanese government was innocent on all counts. However, Osama bin Laden had been deported from Sudan by this time and had re-established al Qa'eda in Afghanistan.

It seems reasonable to conclude from these events that al Qa'eda had fed faked intelligence to the FBI and CIA in the hope that the US might launch a major military strike on Sudan. ("Evil America pounces on small, defenceless Islamic nation!") But despite the presence of a significant oilfield in the Christian south of the country, Sudan was deemed unworthy of such an assault, and America refocussed its attention on oil-rich Iraq and its despotic leader.

So it was back to the drawing board for al Qa'eda, but at least the problem of a new bait had solved itself, and the picador campaign could proceed as before.

Accordingly, in August 1998, al Qa'eda bombers successfully attacked US embassies in Dar es Salaam, Kenya, and in Nairobi, Tanzania, killing more than 200 people; and in October 2000 a well-trained al Qa'eda team seriously

damaged the guided-missile destroyer USS Cole as it refuelled in Aden Harbour.

Then out of the blue, on January 20, 2001, a naïve Texas oilman managed to wangle his way into the White House. Here indeed was a gift from Allah, for here was a poorly educated, gung-ho Baptist assuming command of the world's greatest military machine. And the thing that most confronted him on the global stage was a small, oil-soaked, Muslim nation run by an 'evil' dictator—who also happened to be a proven war-loser. Here, surely, was bait that George W. Bush could not possibly ignore. And right on cue, in April 2001 his cabinet agreed that 'military intervention' in Iraq was going to be 'necessary' to preserve the sanctity of the oil trade.

With a born-again crusader at America's helm, al Qa'eda's next three targets chose themselves. They had to be iconic and of mystical value to most Americans.

On September 11, 2001, three teams of hijackers successfully flew their passenger-loaded aircraft into the World Trade Towers in New York and into the hub of America's defence capability, the Pentagon, in Washington. With the dramatic collapse of the Twin Towers beamed around the world, the strategy was a propaganda triumph—despite the unintended casualty list. Only one primary target, the White House, escaped unscathed.

With the US monster now thoroughly enraged and thirsting for vengeance, the next task for al Qa'eda was to maintain that rage and focus it sharply on Iraq.

On October 12 the following year agents from an Asian extremist group, Jamaar Islamiah, bombed the crowded tourist town of Kuta in Bali. The death toll of 202 consisted largely of Western tourists and included 88 Australians, 26 Britons and 7 Americans. And inevitably, Western intelligence joined the dots that linked Jamaar Islamiah with al Qa'eda, and al Qa'eda with Saddam Hussein.

Satellite images meanwhile suggested that Hussein was hastily concealing his stocks of chemical and biological weapons, and the British parliament was told that Hussein already possessed the means to deliver WMD to any local battlefield 'within 45 minutes'. It was also 'known' that he was well on the way to acquiring the means to deliver them further a-field, possibly deep into Europe.

The incriminating scent trail was now unequivocal, and it led directly to the unwitting 'tethered goat', Saddam Hussein.

The final bait in al Qa'eda's campaign was the appearance of a (fake) Iraqi contract to buy uranium ore (yellowcake) from the sub-Saharan nation of Niger.

Oil-soaked and spiced with yellowcake the Hussein regime was now doomed. Hussein meanwhile played the role of bait to arrogant perfection, putting barrier after barrier in front of UN weapons inspectors.

Fired with frustrated rage and holy zeal, Crusader Bush could wait no longer for UN approval, and publicly began to prepare for the invasion of Iraq. And in their mountain redoubts, the holy warriors intensified their training, oiled their weapons, and prayed for the invasion to begin ...

The answer to their prayers burst on Baghdad on March 19 and 20, 2003, amid a thunderous overture of smoke and fire as hordes of guided missiles, rockets and bombs homed in on their targets. And while Australian commandos quietly inserted themselves deep into Iraq's desert heartland to soften up Iraq's air defences, American and British armoured units began to roll out of Kuwait on the road to Saddam's palace.

It was Al Qa'eda's moment of triumph, the culmination of the longest and most successful international sting in history. The ten-year picador campaign that led to it had finally hooked not only the gullible Bush, but also two of his closest friends, the Prime Ministers of Great Britain and Australia.

And still the three victims suspect nothing. Al Qa'eda's strategists could wish for no greater accolade.

With all of its intermediate goals achieved and its 'satanic' foe bleeding militarily and financially in two places at once (Iraq and Afghanistan), al Qa'eda can now begin its lethal endgame and attempt to force its US opponent into terminal energy starvation by prolonging both conflicts and keeping up attacks on any oil installations that feed either directly or indirectly into the US economy.

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Although the foregoing cannot be fully corroborated from al Qa'eda's perspective, there are, nevertheless, four crucial attributes that make this 'sting' scenario a valid hypothesis:

- 1. It fits the facts.**
- 2. It was eminently falsifiable.** (For example: by the discovery of WMD in Iraq, and by the discovery of evidence of cooperative links between al Qa'eda and Saddam Hussein.)
- 3. It was predictive.** (Hundreds of thousands of Islamic extremists have indeed answered the call to jihad; civil disorder continues in Iraq; oil installations in Saudi Arabia have already been attacked; and finally, the only group to profit from the Iraq war and its subsequent chaos has been al Qa'eda.)
- 4. Most significant of all, al Qa'eda's preamble to the invasion was a carbon copy of its attempt to lure America into a major assault on Sudan.**

And then there was this **ABC Lateline interview** (23.8.07) with the editor-in chief of the London-based pan-Arab newspaper *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, **Abd al-Bari Atwan**:

TONY JONES: When you met bin Laden, he told you that his long-term plan was to 'bring the Americans into a fight on Muslim soil'. Now, that must have sounded like madness at the time, but now we have Iraq.

ABD AL-BARI ATWAN: It seems Osama bin Laden had a long-term strategy. He told me personally that he can't go and fight the Americans and their country. But, if he manages to provoke them and bring them to the Middle East and to their Muslim worlds where he can find them or fight them on his own turf, on his field, he will actually teach them a lesson. It seems the invasion of Iraq fulfilled Osama bin Laden's wish. That's why the Americans are losing in Iraq, financially and on a human basis, and even their allies, including Australia, are really losing patience, losing money, losing personnel, losing reputation in that part of the world.

## **... So, who's winning in Iraq?**

### **POSTSCRIPT**

*More than 4,500 US soldiers have died in Iraq since Bush declared 'Mission Accomplished' at the end of the 2003 invasion, meanwhile the death toll among Western coalition forces in Afghanistan is now accelerating. History's ancient rule that alien military might NEVER SUCCEEDS against locally-based guerilla opponents is being corroborated yet again.*

*The one spectacular failure in al Qa'eda's 15-year campaign to defeat their 'great satan' has been the election of its highly intelligent 'black' President, a President who was educated in Indonesia and whose middle name is Hussein.*

*History could not have delivered a more telling blow to the fundamentalists of both sides.*

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<sup>1</sup> The United States currently consumes 25% of the world's industrial energy to serve less than 5% of the world's population, and the three 'Cs' of modern government (computation, communication and control) absolutely depend on electricity. America's electricity production is largely coal-fired, but wholly

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oildependent in that the coal is extracted and delivered by diesel engines. So with US electricity production already at its limits and global demand fast outstripping supply, any interruption to the westward flow of Saudi oil will ensure a cascade of power shutdowns in America. This would transform city after city into foodless, lawless jungles. If that occurs, America will implode, rather like a pricked soufflé.

<sup>2</sup> In 1992 Saudi Arabia's wealthy ruling family struck a Faustian bargain with a rebellious group of sheikhs within the puritanical Wahhabi sect that once ruled most of Saudi Arabia. These Saudi associates of al Qa'eda, led by Osama bin Laden, were offered generous ongoing funding in exchange for their permanent exile. With the aid of this funding they immediately re-established themselves in Sudan's capital, Khartoum, and set up a secure al Qa'eda training base deep in the desert. Their primary aim: to rid the world of its great Satan, America. Their secondary aim: to depose Saudi Arabia's ruling family and re-establish Wahhabi law in their homeland.