

Rebuilding Iraq poses questions

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Who is responsible for rebuilding Iraq? Saddam? Bush? Or poor Iraqis? Before we get into more details let us take a look at some facts about Iraq: Population is about 24 million. Oil reserve about 112 billion barrels and number two in the world. Gross National Product is about 28.6 billion vs. 9.4 trillion in the U.S.

Rebuilding Iraq will bring together buyers, manufacturers, suppliers, and contractors, giving them direct access to project directors, government bodies and a variety of decision-makers involved in the economic rebirth of Iraq, which will very possibly involve earning billions of dollars.

The Bush administration is still not meeting the goal it set this summer to inject \$300 million to \$400 million monthly into Iraq's economy by Sept. 1.

The case of rebuilding Iraq became a business opportunity for American companies, such as Zero Halliburton, once headed by U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney. The contract to rebuild Iraq's basic infrastructure including hospitals, ports, airports and schools has been awarded by

the U.S. government's Agency for International Development (USAID) to The Kellogg Brown & Root (KBR) unit of Halliburton. On the other hand, Iraqi officials are still talking about the Iraq rebuild being done by qualified Iraqi businessmen. As a matter of fact, they are still advertising for what is called the Hosted Iraqi Buyers Program (HIBP). Isn't that a joke?

The rebuilding Iraq dilemma wasn't supposed to exist if the destroyer of Iraq did his homework. In other words, the Bush administration's Iraq policy and decisions has found that the administration invaded Iraq without a comprehensive plan in place to secure and rebuild the country. Can you imagine how irrational that is?

Since it is still unknown how much damage has been or will be done to Iraqi oil fields and Iraq's basic infrastructure in the war, it's difficult to estimate the contract's eventual dollar value.

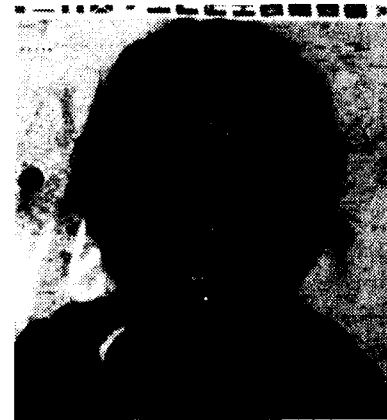
However, the contract's most important and biggest value could be that it puts Halliburton in a prime position to handle the complete renovation of Iraq's long-neglected oil infrastructure, which will be a very desirable job.



Photo courtesy of Google Images

Amid having to deal with the immediate need for cleanup, the Iraqi government must figure out how to rebuild their country after the devastation it has experienced. While many American countries want the job, the Iraqi leaders are also considering native Iraqi business for the reconstruction.

World View



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Dear World View readers, in the last issue I highlighted global negative and positive aspects of cultures around the world. This time I would like to take an opportunity to examine religion abstractly and globally.

Before I go any further, here are three questions: Have religions yet developed a socially intact society anywhere in the world? Have any religions given a complete description of the universe? How many wars in human history erupted for religious reason(s)?

The dictionary definition for religion is a "Belief in and reverence for a supernatural power or powers regarded as creator and governor of the universe." However, people practice religions to manipulate the supernatural power to be on their side, to make them more comfortable.

Some supernatural powers people in the world tend to worship are nature, cows, the sun, statues and more.

In traditional and western cultures, religion seeks to deal with ultimate questions of human purpose and meaning for existence, but is it doing that? In today's real world, scientific research cannot rely on religious explanations. Ask your physics teacher about that. In terms of political organization, most developed countries now adopt the rule of separating the state from the religion (Church, Mosque, or Temple), not only because there are too many religions and it would be unfair to select national religions, but also because reality is a bit different than it was when religion was formed.

It is very believable that religions have done a good job in forming people's behavior, and it is also very believable that most religions are similar. But what hasn't been taken in account is the variety of perceptions people can have for a single belief. All I am asking is are we really thinking critically about our beliefs? There is a local society and a global society, and obviously they are interconnected socially and naturally. So, do you think having a perfect local society regardless of the global society would be the ticket? Do you think as an individual considering only yourself regardless of local or global society would be the ticket?

Insurgents launch deadly attacks across central Iraq as US prepares for Fallujah attack

By ROBERT H. REID
Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq - Facing a major assault in Fallujah, insurgents struck back Saturday with suicide car bombs, mortars and rockets across a wide swath of central Iraq, killing over 30 people and wounding more than 60 others, including two dozen Americans.

The attacks could have been aimed at relieving pressure on Fallujah, where about 10,000 American troops are massing for a major assault. U.S. jets pounded Fallujah early Saturday in the heaviest airstrikes in six months including five 500-pound bombs dropped on insurgent targets.

The deadliest attacks Saturday occurred in Samarra, a city 60 miles north of Baghdad that U.S. and Iraqi commanders have tout-

ed as model for pacifying restive Sunni Muslim areas of the country.

Insurgents in Samarra stormed a police station, triggered at least two suicide car bombs and fired mortars at government installations.

Twenty-nine people, including 17 police and 12 Iraqi civilians, were killed throughout the city, the U.S. military said. Arabic language television stations said more than 30 died as gangs of insurgents roamed the city, clashing with American and Iraqi forces.

The dead included the local Iraqi National Guard commander, Abdel Razeq Shaker al-Garmali, hospital officials said. Another 40 people, including 17 policemen, were injured, the military said.

U.S. military vehicles roamed through the besieged city using

loudspeakers to announce an indefinite curfew starting at 2 p.m. Saturday. American warplanes and helicopters roamed the skies.

Elsewhere, 20 American soldiers were wounded Saturday in an attack against a convoy in Ramadi, a major city in the volatile Sunni Triangle, the U.S. military said. The statement gave no further details, citing security. Three other Americans were wounded when a car bomb exploded near the entrance to Baghdad International Airport. One Iraqi was killed and another injured, the U.S. military said. Three Humvees were heavily damaged, witnesses said.

Two Marines were injured by a car bomb near a Fallujah checkpoint, and a U.S. soldier was wounded when a roadside bomb exploded south of Fallujah.

Samarra, an ancient city of gold-domed mosques that once served as the capital of a Muslim empire extending from Spain to India, was recaptured from Sunni Muslim insurgents in September and was touted as a model for restoring government control to other areas formerly under guerrilla domination.

U.S. and Iraqi forces hope to use the same techniques if they drive Sunni militants from Fallujah. American commanders have assembled a force of Marines, Army soldiers and U.S.-trained Iraqi fighters around Fallujah, a major insurgent base 40 miles west of Baghdad.

They are awaiting orders from interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi to launch an all-out assault.

However, the violence in Samarra underscored the diffi-

culty of maintaining civilian authority in Sunni areas even after the worst of the fighting ebbs.

"I cannot claim that entering Fallujah will end the terrorist attacks in Iraq," Iraq's national security adviser, Qassem Dawoud, told Al-Arabiya television. "But I can say that we will deal with a very big pocket of terrorism in Iraq and we will uproot it. This pocket forms the backbone and the center for terrorists in other areas in Iraq."

Elsewhere, gunmen killed a former official of Saddam Hussein's intelligence service in Baquouba, 35 miles northeast of Baghdad, police said. The assailants stopped a car carrying former Lt. Col. Abdul Sattar al-Luheibi, ordered him out of the car and gunned him down in front of his 13-year-old son.

Palestine leader falls ill

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Last weekend's inauguration of an emergency cabinet for the Palestinian Authority has raised a flurry of speculation over the state of their 74-year-old leader's health.

Yasser Arafat was born in Cairo in 1929. It was there that he met his future aides, Khalil al Wazir (Abu Jihad) and Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), with whom he founded Fatah (an acronym formed from the initial letters of the Arabic words for national liberation movement) in Kuwait in 1958.

Palestinian officials on Wednesday denied rumors that Arafat had last week suffered a mild heart attack and explained that Arafat has been suffering from a bad case of the flu or an intestinal infection. But according to a source inside the compound, the most recent diagnosis is that Arafat is suffering from stomach cancer. Al-Jazeera TV reported Wednesday that two teams of doctors, one from Jordan and the other from Egypt, arrived in Ramallah Wednesday to treat Arafat. Abu Dhabi TV reported on Thursday that following their examination of the Palestinian leader, the Egyptian doctors "expressed



Photo courtesy of Google Images

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's recent unidentified illness has left the fate of the country undecided.

concern" about the state of his health. Neither report specified his condition.

Arafat is president of the Palestinian Authority and chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which means that he also represents Palestinians beyond the West Bank and Gaza Strip. There is no clear

successor to Mr. Arafat. His power is very much personal and other Palestinian leaders have tended to be in his shadow. Under the Palestinian Authority's constitution, the speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Rawhi Fattuh, would succeed. However, this constitution has yet to be fully ratified.

Afghan president-elect Karzai pledges crackdown

By Stephen Graham
Associated Press Writer

KABUL, Afghanistan - Hamid Karzai pledged Thursday to use his five-year term as Afghanistan's first elected president to crack down on warlords and the country's booming drug economy.

Accepting his victory in the historic Oct. 9 ballot, Karzai also appealed to his rivals hours after they conceded defeat despite lingering fraud allegations.

"The Afghan people have placed their trust in us, for which we are very grateful," Karzai said at his Presidential Palace, flanked by his two smiling running-mates. "It will be hard to live up to, but we will do our best."

Karzai has said smashing Afghanistan's opium and heroin smugglers will be his top priority and the key to reining in warlords resisting the feeble authority of the central government.

He has also pledged to clear his Cabinet of faction leaders who helped the United States oust the Taliban three years ago but have proved to be dead-weights in office.

Asked if any warlords or figures believed to profit from drugs would survive the purge, Karzai said: "There will not be any private militia forces in Afghanistan."

"There will definitely, definitely not be any drug thing in Afghanistan," he said. "We're going to be dedicated, strong in working against that."

Election officials declared Karzai the winner Wednesday after more than three weeks of laborious counting and arguments about whether Karzai had cheated his way to victory.

Yunus Qanooni, who finished second with 16 percent compared to Karzai's 55 percent, accepted the result just hours before Karzai made his televised acceptance speech.

"For me, Afghanistan's national interests are the most important," said Qanooni, Karzai's former education minister. "If we didn't accept the result, the country would go toward a crisis."

Ethnic Hazara chieftain Mohammed Mohaqeq and ethnic Uzbek strongman Abdul Rashid Dostum followed suit.

A boycott could have undermined Karzai's chances of extending his authority across a country still riven with factional and ethnic tensions, and soured the atmosphere for parliamentary elections slated for the spring.

A panel of foreign experts that examined the allegations said it found a string of irregularities, including ballot-stuffing, but said they couldn't have changed the result.