



take action!

HOW WE GOT INTO THE IRAQ WAR (AND HOW WE CAN GET OUT)



by Sayre Sheldon

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TOP 12 REASONS. TOP 12 THINGS TO DO.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO *CHOOSE* TO GO TO WAR? If the war in Iraq is a “war of choice,” that raises many questions for those of us who live in this country. Who made those choices, why, and when?

We need to ask not simply to find the answers; but to lead us to something deeper: to the tactics and skills that will help end this “war of choice,” and prevent the next one (which may, sadly, be a military action on Iran).

To begin, we need to understand that more than one administration in the U.S. — over decades — had been laying plans to invade Iraq. The events of 9/11 were a catalyst, but the plans were ready to hatch long before.

We also need to understand that there was no way to stop the forces that came together to take the U.S. into Iraq. While critics may claim that the peace movement was ineffectual (and Congress too timid), the truth is that this administration was determined to follow its path to war. The war was the end result of a long process, and many forces.

This piece identifies some of these forces and some of the actors. Over time, as more is revealed, we will surely come closer to a true picture of what really happened.

I write this today because the truth is that we can't wait. In February of 2007, the war is about to begin its fifth year, and the only strategy offered by the administration is to send in more troops. This is more than simply throwing good money after bad: it is deepening what many have called “the worst foreign policy disaster in U.S. history,” and further endangering the lives of thousands of people.

It is up to us to demand a way out.

Top 12 reasons why the U.S. chose war

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. The military - industrial complex:
Large and growing larger | 7. Protecting our oil supplies |
| 2. Neoconservatives taking power | 8. Allowing the religious right to take a greater role |
| 3. Expanding the executive powers of the presidency | 9. Challenging the U.N.'s expertise and authority |
| 4. Controlling the terms of the debate: “War on Terror” and “Axis of Evil” | 10. Refusing to listen — to experts or to the public |
| 5. Adopting the policy of “preventive war” | 11. The media failing to do the job |
| 6. Rigging the intelligence | 12. Limiting political debate |

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Women's Action for New Directions
February 2007



Women's Action for New Directions

WAND empowers women to take action to reduce violence and militarism in society, and redirect excessive military spending to unmet human and environmental needs.

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1. WHAT YOU CAN DO

Since Eisenhower sounded his warning, many people have worked to raise awareness of the military-industrial complex — particularly by exposing how the Pentagon budget robs our society of the money to fill fundamental needs.

The federal budget is still the pocket-book that controls the policy. Today, we can encourage Congress to cut the funding for the war. And we can find other ways to lobby for fundamental changes to the Pentagon budget (e.g., terminating programs that build weapons systems designed to fight the Soviet Union during the Cold War).

For more information about the size and nature of the federal budget, see the WAND Action Guide *American Pie*: www.wand.org/getfacts/factpie_fy07.pdf

#1: THE POWER OF THE PURSE

1. THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX: LARGE AND GROWING LARGER

In the early years of this country, the military was quite small. We trusted our relative isolation to keep us safe; we were reluctant to get involved with other countries. (Although we drove out the indigenous population and rapidly expanded our territory.)

In 1821, John Quincy Adams warned that our country should “not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy” and that if we did, we ran the risk of becoming “the dictatress of the world.” Presidents from Lincoln to Eisenhower added their warnings against the U.S. exerting too much power in the world.

This pattern continued until our involvement in World War I; immediately after, however, the U.S. returned to a peacetime society.

World War II ushered in another era. After that war, as the Soviet Union emerged as a formidable opposing power, the arms race began. For 45 years of Cold War, the U.S. devoted trillions of dollars to building an enormous arsenal of arms, including thousands of nuclear weapons. Dwight Eisenhower sounded the warning about the problem of the military-industrial complex, and its importance in and hold on our daily lives.

Around this time as well, Congress created the Defense Department and the National Security Council, which enhanced the power of the president to make decisions about going to war.

Over the next few decades, the U.S. did indeed go to war — without Congressional approval. Our troops fought in Korea and Vietnam (to stop the spread of communism), and in many smaller military actions.

However, these wars gradually undermined the president’s credibility. Over time, the general sentiment in the U.S. against war became stronger, and for a while our foreign policy was less belligerent.

When the Soviet Union finally collapsed, the U.S. found itself as the only remaining superpower — and began to see itself as invincible.

Which raised a new problem for the military-industrial complex: with no enemies of equal status, what could be the justification for maintaining our vast military system? The U.S. would have to find new enemies.

When small wars and ethnic conflicts flared around the world, the hawks cited them as justification for a strong “defense” and an ever larger Pentagon budget.

In the end, Dwight Eisenhower’s warning has come, sadly, to life. In a time of relative peace and prosperity, military spending is wildly out of proportion. The U.S. spends more on our military than the rest of the world combined.

Over half of our discretionary federal budget goes to the Pentagon.

It is no wonder that those who are invested in this engine would look for justifications for its growth — and would seek out “wars of choice.”

Every gun that is made,
every warship launched,
every rocket fired, signifies
in the final sense a theft from
those who hunger and are not
fed, those who are cold and
are not clothed.

—Dwight D. Eisenhower

2. NEOCONSERVATIVES TAKING POWER

Since the end of the Cold War, a branch of the far right in the U.S. has promoted the idea of unilateralism — “going-it-alone” in the world. Known as neoconservatives, they believe in U.S. supremacy and the efficiency of military power; dislike diplomacy; share contempt for international organizations and treaties; and strongly support nuclear weapons and missile defense. Although most have not served in the military, they often have strong ties with the defense industry and rarely hesitate to send others into combat.

During the Reagan years, the neoconservatives emerged as a powerful force. But after the Iran-Contra scandal — and especially during the years of the Clinton administration — many left government to work in think tanks or on right wing publications.

The election of George W. Bush and Dick Cheney ushered in a new era for the neoconservatives. Several men took on important national security and Pentagon roles: Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, Douglas Feith, “Scooter” Libby, Stephen Hadley, Elliot Abrams and others. These men defined Iraq as a threat and a target for regime change even before 9/11. When the first Gulf War ended without the U.S. invading Iraq and deposing Saddam Hussein, they regarded it as a serious mistake.

At the first National Security Council meeting of the George W. Bush presidency — in January 2001 — the Council decided to “formulate a coherent Iraq strategy.” This sounded the first note: right wing think tanks had already begun preparing the briefing papers and providing evidence that it was necessary to invade Iraq.

3. THE IMPERIAL PRESIDENCY

After the Watergate scandal of the Nixon years, Congress tried to limit the executive powers of the presidency and restore oversight to Congress. Many conservatives and neoconservatives watched this development in dismay, and then committed themselves to restoring strength and executive power to the presidency.

Since the neoconservatives consider diplomacy slow and tedious, they believe the president should be able to wield almost instant power to take action in any trouble spot around the world.

George W. Bush embraced an expanded view of the presidency. After his contested first election and the narrow margin of victory in his second, he made no effort to govern in a bipartisan way. Instead, he interpreted his elections as overwhelming mandates to do what he pleased. (During the first press conference after his re-election, Bush said, “I earned capital in the campaign, political capital, and now I intend to spend it. It is my style.”)

From the *Boston Globe*: “President Bush has quietly claimed the authority to disobey more than 750 laws enacted since he took office, asserting that he has the power to set aside any statute passed by Congress when it conflicts with his interpretation of the Constitution. Among the laws Bush said he can ignore are military rules and regulations, affirmative-action provisions, requirements that Congress be told about immigration services problems, ‘whistle-blower’ protections for nuclear regulatory officials, and safeguards against political interference in federally funded research.”

Many of these groups had been around for years, but largely unknown. Supported by large corporate donations, groups like the American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation — and more recently William Kristol’s Project for a New American Century — have had a huge influence on American thought and government since the early 1970’s. Their goal has always been to build a permanent conservative Republican majority.

As the world changed during the 1980’s and 1990’s, these think tanks increasingly directed their attention toward a transformation of the Middle East. Indeed, in 1996, Richard Perle (and others) wrote a paper for Likud Party leader Benjamin Netanyahu advocating the removal of Saddam Hussein. Eventually, they convinced Congress to adopt regime change in Iraq as a policy.

When George W. Bush was elected, the neoconservatives believed they had their chance to convince the U.S. to topple Saddam Hussein.

2. WHAT YOU CAN DO

While it’s almost impossible to see and lessen the power of unelected officials, we can do all we can to expose their role in starting the war, and demand accountability for their actions. We can support realistic policies and oppose the unrealistic, undemocratic, and dangerous schemes of the neoconservatives. For more information, please visit the Project on Government Oversight: www.pogo.org.

Bush has empowered Vice President Cheney in ways never seen before. Indeed, the neoconservatives have been using the vice president’s office to expand executive power without accountability. We had little idea how pervasive this practice was until “Scooter” Libby, Cheney’s chief of staff, was indicted.

In the past, vice presidents had people of different political persuasions around them; Libby picked only from the far right. The vice president’s staff has been described as a cabal or a “shadow National Security Council.”

Before 9/11, Cheney’s current chief of staff and chief legal consultant, David Addington, was preparing a reinterpretation of the Constitution that would give the President vast new powers and “reduce Congress to a cipher.”

By 9/11, then, the neoconservatives had laid the groundwork for an executive with almost unlimited capacity; and with sympathy for their visions of the world.

On 9/11, the match was struck.

3. WHAT YOU CAN DO

We can support all efforts to take back the legitimate powers of Congress in deciding on war. This means questioning the president’s right to prolong the war. We all have elected representatives in Congress and in State Houses—lobby them by calls, letters, visits.

4. “WAR ON TERROR” AND “AXIS OF EVIL”

In the first stunned days after September 11, 2001, the mood of the country was one of eagerness to strike back.

Afghanistan seemed a legitimate target. Not only did that country harbor Osama bin Laden, but the Taliban supported Al Qaeda camps from which the terrorists had come.

Instead, both the president and the vice president almost immediately asked their advisors for links to Iraq. We could later wonder how a country which had no Al Qaeda connections, nor had produced any of the hijackers, could be on the target list.

The case for invading Iraq might still have gone the way of many military plans, however, if the response to 9/11 had been limited to eliminating Al Qaeda — rather than declaring a “war on terror.” In effect, the president declared a full-scale war, waged around the world, with no definable end.

In one sweeping phrase, the administration had a justification for seeking to transform the Middle East. In one phrase, the president lumped together the many different forms of terrorism and many different causes for it. Conservative commentator Charles Krauthammer wrote that the war on terrorism was “the successor to the great ideological wars of the 20th century...the dream sleep we had in the 1990’s had evaporated, and we were in a new world.”

In 2002, the president’s speechwriters came up with another powerful phrase: the “axis of evil” tied together three unconnected countries — Iran, Iraq, North Korea. By borrowing a term from

World War II, the president lent a false importance and scale to this new war.

A further policy expansion came when Bush announced that any country harboring terrorism would be considered an enemy. This policy defined as our “friends” any country who claimed to be fighting terrorism; the rest of the world could be labeled as supporting terror.

Creating fear of the shadowy global “enemy” made it easier to manipulate public perception. It also made it easier to bring up Iraq; the president’s advisors believed that Afghanistan would be a quick success, and they would need to follow it up with a more impressive blow against a country that might be a potential danger.

In the end, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld convinced Bush that a small military force, combined with the U.S.’s overwhelming technological advantage, would make short work of Iraq.

4. WHAT YOU CAN DO

We can start with the language itself. Substitute "campaign" for the "war on terror" stereotype, tell neighbors about the lack of connections between Iraq and terrorism, and teach compassion for Iraqis as individuals (not "good guys" or "bad guys"). We can recognize the fear citizens feel, and its very real origins, but express determination not to be manipulated by fear.

5. THE CONCEPT OF “PREVENTIVE WAR”

When terrorism hit our shores, it became clear that we were in a new age, and that we needed a new foreign policy. The old doctrines of containment and deterrence, that Truman had instituted to keep the peace in the Cold War, were no longer sufficient.

Deterrence had worked with the Soviet Union because of the relative security of knowing that either side could destroy the other. Neither side wanted to perish. When more countries acquired nuclear weapons, or began programs to do so, deterrence began to dissolve.

Terrorism changed the equation altogether. In fact, terrorists *are* willing to perish; deterrence no longer applies. When large-scale terrorism appeared, so did the real prospect of terrorist groups acquiring nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction, and using them in suicidal ways.

On June 1, 2002, the president gave the speech at West Point setting forth the “Bush Doctrine”: new threats require new thinking, containment is no longer an option, and we cannot wait for threats to fully materialize but must “be ready for preemptive action when necessary to defend our liberty and to defend our lives.” Hailed in the *Wall Street Journal* as the “Dawn of A New Diplomatic Era,” the article was illustrated with a picture of St. George fighting the dragon.

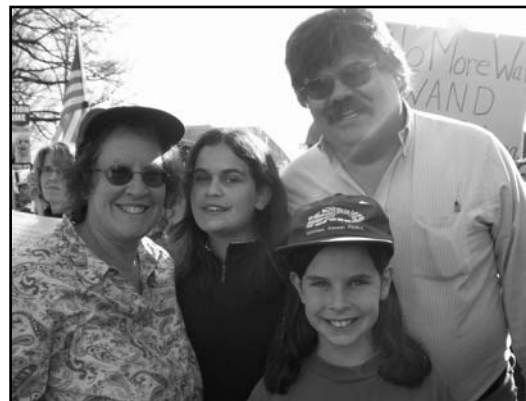
In September 2002, Bush went further, with the publication of a National Security Strategy claiming a country could attack another without specific evidence of a pending attack.

Advocating preventive war was perhaps the greatest departure from international law in all the years of trying to use law to stop war since World War I.

But if the administration was to convince Congress and the American people that a preventive war against Iraq was necessary, more evidence was needed.

5. WHAT YOU CAN DO

We need to understand and expose the illegalities of preventive war and campaign for a return to diplomacy, dialogue with other countries, and honoring treaties.



6. RIGGING THE INTELLIGENCE

The administration decided to justify the invasion of Iraq by stating that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and was threatening to use them against the U.S. They simply needed the proof. In a later interview, Paul Wolfowitz admitted that the administration believed the public would accept this better than any other reason.

When the weapons inspectors had to leave Iraq in 1998, it was easy to make a case for Saddam Hussein being in violation of the UN sanctions. But many experts — including weapons inspector David Kay — claimed that the inspections had successfully destroyed what WMD Saddam Hussein had; and they could find little evidence that any programs were being reactivated.

In a reversal of the usual process, intelligence had to be found in order to justify invading. As Seymour Hersh has extensively documented, former sources of intelligence were ignored, and new “selective” ones were used to make the case.

One major source came from Iraqi defectors (including Ahmad Chalabi) who fed false reports of weapons of mass destruction to the press. Vice President Cheney went to the CIA again and again, seeking to get the proof he wanted, and rejecting reports that did not suit his purpose. The administration set up secret groups within the Pentagon and White House to manufacture evidence of Saddam Hussein’s nuclear weapons, and to release it to the press and public.

In his 2002 State of the Union address, Bush recounted (later repudiated) reports of Saddam Hussein trying to get material for nuclear weapons. Eventually, even Secretary of State Colin Powell — one of the country’s most revered and trusted leaders — in his speech to the UN on February 5, 2003, repeated much of this evidence to make a convincing argument for the war.

Doubts about “cooked” intelligence swirled through the U.S. and other countries. In England, the notorious “Downing St. Memo,” when finally exposed in May, 2005, proved that intelligence was deliberately built to make the case (after it was already clear that Bush had decided on the war and Prime Minister Tony Blair was already on record in supporting him).

6. WHAT YOU CAN DO

It is especially hard for citizen groups to question intelligence — but we can show we understand how bad the original intelligence was that took us to war.

We can support the current Senate Intelligence Committee's plans to investigate the origins of the Iraq war (now that it is possible). We need to challenge the ways in which intelligence is being used today to prepare for military action against Iran. We should demand that the government make a case for war that does justify its absolute necessity.

7. PROTECTING OUR OIL SUPPLIES

As the world’s largest consumer of imported oil, we are careful to guard and guarantee our oil supplies. And indeed, our foreign policy since World War II has been oriented in this direction.

We obtain 30% of our oil from the Persian Gulf region; that figure is expected to rise to 50% to 60% by 2030. Our supply depends on some of the world’s most anti-American countries (or, as Bush has said, “countries that don’t particularly like us”). These countries acted against us once in the 1970’s, when OPEC cut supplies (our country quickly went into recession).

We have had to keep favor with countries we don’t like; for example, we supported Iraq during the Iraq/Iran war, and we supported Iraq even when they were gassing some of their own people and the Iranians. Since we regard Saudi Arabia as somewhat unreliable, we have regarded Iraq as a better partner; indeed, one of the reasons the neoconservatives gave for invading Iraq was to lessen our dependency on Saudi Arabia.

At the same time, this administration has done little or nothing about conservation, but has instead spent billions on guaranteeing that we get what we need. Oil experts estimate that the additional money for military expenses in getting our oil would add more than five dollars to the price of a gallon.

When Cheney’s task force on energy met in May 2001 to decide on a national energy policy, the results were kept secret; we do know that they discussed Iraqi sources of oil. The task force was made up mostly of energy executives (including the head of

Enron). The emphasis was on finding increasing sources of oil to satisfy the country’s growing needs.

Later, Cheney’s former company, Halliburton, got the no-bid contract to reconstruct Iraq’s oil industry. Due to damages from the war and continuing security problems, oil revenues have done little to benefit either the U.S. or Iraq — even though Paul Wolfowitz promised that oil revenues would pay for reconstruction.

7. WHAT YOU CAN DO

This is a “no-brainer.” All citizens should be advocating for ending our oil dependency, adopting new conservation measures, and pursuing renewable energy sources. The issue of global warming makes WAND’s mission to redirect money from the military to environmental needs even more important.



8. THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

Perhaps the most controversial element in the rush to war is the role played by the religious right.

While it is often religious fundamentalists who commit acts of terrorism, the American public does not want to see religion in this light, nor, as Kevin Phillips has commented, do they want to hear that it might have steered us towards war.

But the rising power of fundamentalism in the U.S. is clear. Polls show those who interpret the Bible literally as perhaps over 50% of our population. Presidential Assistant Karl Rove recognized years ago that the religious right vote could determine who would be president of the U.S., and set his sights accordingly.

Then there is George W. Bush as a born-again Christian: shortly after 9/11, he used phrases that suggested he saw himself as divinely appointed to lead in this crisis. He also used “crusade” in an early speech (but his advisors warned him not to use that phrase again).

There is also the phenomenon of ultraconservative religious views on “the second coming,” described in the Bible as taking place in Jerusalem. Bill Moyers reports that at first he could not

believe what he was hearing: that the invasion of Iraq was “a warm-up act” to the Book of Revelations’ prediction of Armageddon. These fundamentalists saw the necessity of invading Iraq in order to abolish Babylon (Baghdad) on the way to Palestine, where the final battle is prophesied to be fought.

The neoconservatives brought in an expert on Islam, Professor Bernard Lewis, who argued that the U.S. must challenge militant Islamism by “seeding democracy” in the Middle East with a military invasion.

8. WHAT YOU CAN DO

Defending our Constitution and keeping church and state separate is fundamental to our Constitution and the job of every one of us. WAND now has a program that taps into the best aspects of the faith and religious community: Faith in Action. Find out more about it and explore the other faith-based institutions that are taking action to oppose war and abolish nuclear weapons.

Visit the Faith in Action site: www.faithwand.org

9. THE UN OR NOT THE UN?

How were we able to go to war without UN approval, after we had agreed to seek it?

The U.S. and the UN have had an uneasy relationship for years (even though the U.S. was instrumental in the UN’s formation). While earlier presidents denigrated the UN, the UN’s standing in administration circles was never lower than when the decisions to go to war in Iraq were being made. The U.S. had withdrawn from many major international treaties, while our media focused mainly on the need to reform the UN.

The UN’s responsibility for controlling nuclear weapons was another source of friction with the U.S. When the U.S. insisted on Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction being the reason for going to war, the pressure grew to prove the existence of these weapons through the UN.

In November, 2002, the Security Council passed the resolution to require Saddam Hussein to honor all previous resolutions and show that he hadn’t rebuilt his weapons programs. Saddam Hussein agreed to the resolution and allowed weapons inspectors back. Under Chief Weapons Inspector Hans Blix, it seemed that progress was being made — but the U.S. kept denying this progress and attacking Blix. When Saddam Hussein submitted his report to the UN, Bush termed it unacceptable. Tony Blair, however, had made UN Security Council approval a requisite, and polls showed the U.S. public wanted UN approval.

At this point, most of the countries the U.S. could have used as allies were saying that containment (not invasion) was the way to deal with Saddam Hussein. When it became obvious that a second resolution authorizing invasion wouldn’t be passed by the Security Council, the U.S. claimed that the first one was adequate.

(At that point, thousands of us went to New York on February 25th to march as close to the UN as we were allowed, and around the world millions marched in opposition to the war.)

9. WHAT YOU CAN DO

As a registered Non Governmental Organization (NGO) at the UN, WAND has a small role at the UN. We can work to educate other Americans about what the UN does and expose the U.S. right-wing press and administration’s efforts to denigrate it. Again, the UN is one of our best hopes in the efforts to end war and to achieve the elimination of nuclear weapons for which WAND was originally founded.



10. REFUSING TO LISTEN TO VOICES THAT MATTER

We all know what has gone wrong in Iraq since the U.S. invaded. Most of it is not a surprise. The uncomfortable truth is that not only the experts, but intelligent people, made accurate predictions about almost all of it.

Why didn't the administration plan properly?

In the past few months, we've seen our president repudiate the advice of a bi-partisan group of "elder statesmen"—the Iraq Study Group—and ignore each of their steps for extricating ourselves from Iraq.

This is entirely consistent with Bush's determination not to listen to any opinion but that of his own appointed inner circle before going to war. He began his administration with the premise that no foreign policy move made by Clinton was to be continued. This meant breaking off diplomatic efforts to restrain North Korea's nuclear program and pulling back from the Israeli-Palestine peace process.

He also had to ignore the advice of all others on current foreign policy. After 9/11, Bush admitted to Bob Woodward that he never consulted his father, only a "higher" father. The expanded war powers he took included side-lining the State Department — where years of carefully acquired information indicated that occu-

pying Iraq would be long, expensive, and possibly futile. When the army chief of staff warned that a successful occupation would require hundreds of thousands of our troops, Bush discounted his opinion.

Instead of relying on informed opinion, where did the president turn? To abstract theories of neoconservative ideologies; their proposals were based on what they wanted to believe about the Middle East. Perhaps worse is the more recent revelation that the Bush administration refused any negative advice on invading Iraq because the neoconservatives were afraid "it would get in the way of going to war."

10. WHAT YOU CAN DO

Holding our media responsible can be done in many ways — including communicating with newspapers by letters and e-mail, calling radio and TV, especially your local stations. Read news from sources beyond the U.S. We can expand our own ability to make and distribute news, especially using the internet to educate and give people the needed action steps to take.

11. THE MEDIA FALLS SHORT

The media did not fail, so much as fall prey to manipulation. Why did the media fall for the Bush administration's arguments for the Iraq war?

By this point, authors have written whole books about the media in the lead-up to the war as having a "pack mentality," and claiming that U.S. journalists were far too reliant on sources sympathetic to the administration. (Certainly some sources have clear allegiances; for example, Roger Ailes went from advising Republican presidents to leading Fox news (where the news department is mainly a mouthpiece for the administration).)

Karl Rove helped the administration develop the attitude that the media was just another special interest group, and that all news depended on what side you were on. Facts began to lose any credibility; the media began to report just about anything (for example, stories about the unmanned planes Iraq was supposed to be able to send over the U.S. persisted long after they were disproved).

At the same time, administrations have learned over the years to make the media serve them by granting or denying access on the basis of who is friendly. Reporters could be given favors if they played along—or refused any role in press conferences if they didn't.

And finally, the administration was exposed as hiring its own propagandist and passing him off as a journalist. People were regarded as consumers: the president's chief of staff, Andrew Card, talked about the difficulties of "selling the war" in August of 2002.

There is no doubt that journalism today is under siege: newspapers are losing audiences to other media and cutting back on

overseas bureaus. However, there was little excuse for burying stories critical of going to war on inside pages; major newspapers have apologized for doing so, and have acknowledged responsibility for silencing debate among the public.

11. WHAT YOU CAN DO

We are all experts: we knew the war was wrong and predicted what would go wrong so we should speak out in letters, blogs, in groups, wherever we get a chance. We need to remember, it's not about saying "we told you so," it's about ending this war and working to make sure it doesn't happen again.



12. STIFLING POLITICAL DEBATE

Before Congress voted to give the president the power to go to war in October, 2002, there were only a few days of debate — especially compared to the debate over the first Gulf war.

Of course, the circumstances were different. The U.S. had been attacked (not Kuwait). The country was still in the grip of post-9/11 shock. Mid-term elections were close. Opponents to the war were assured that the conditions they made — more multilateral action and more reliance on the UN — would be followed.

Still, the resolution was rushed through — without sufficient intelligence or time to process what there was. In the end, 23 Senators and 133 House Members voted against the resolution (of these, 21 and 133 were Democrats). 155 Democrats voted for an amendment that would have made it necessary for Bush to come back for authorization if he didn't get it from the UN.

Many spoke passionately against going to war: Minority Whip (now Speaker of the House) Nancy Pelosi argued against sending our soldiers and warned: "There's no political solution on the ground in Iraq...the occupation could be interminable...so could the amount of money...We must focus on building our own economy before we worry about Iraq's economy..." She finished by asking the country to show its greatness by seeking diplomatic solutions.

Today many in Congress have openly said they would not have voted for the resolution if they had known what they know now; others are increasingly wishing they had voted against it.

But for many of us, the process was fatally flawed. The country's future, the lives of its military personnel, untold billions of its funds, its standing in the world — were all being gambled on a promise of easy success with total disregard and ignorance of the real conditions in Iraq. None of the conditions promised to Congress were actually met. The rush towards war was on. The irreversible build-up of our forces in the Gulf began.

12. WHAT YOU CAN DO

All citizens need to play a part in opening the political debate. WAND helps to educate and encourage women to stand up and speak out. We have our members, chapters, partners, WILL and Washington office to put pressure on our government. Take part in campaigns, relentlessly question candidates about their stance on military spending, preemption, how more "wars of choice" can be prevented, and why. Join with others to demonstrate and take back the power citizens have been denied in recent years.

www.wand.org

From Molly Ivins' Final Column

January 11, 2007

We are the people who run this country. We are the deciders. And every single day, every single one of us needs to step outside and take some action to help stop this war. Raise hell. Think of something to make the ridiculous look ridiculous. Make our troops know we're for them and trying to get them out of there. Hit the streets to protest Bush's proposed surge. If you can, go to the peace march in Washington on Jan. 27. We need people in the streets, banging pots and pans and demanding, "Stop it, now!"

Right: some of the WAND delegation to the march on DC January 21, 2007. We're trying our best, Molly...

