

[DIPLOMACY]

TRAILING OUR COAT

In the hope that renewed threats will cause Tehran to abandon its nuclear-weapons ambitions, President Bush ordered the State and Treasury Departments to reclassify Iran's largest banks and affiliates of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as supporters of terrorism and impose sanctions. The *Washington Post* called these "the most punitive measures imposed on Tehran since the 1979 takeover of the American Embassy." Condoleezza Rice warned that "Iran's rulers [who] choose to continue down a path of confrontation" will face "resistance" from the United States and its allies. According to the Bush administration, these punishments are the first steps toward peace.

Of course, the president's potential successors understand the logic of the sanctions. Mitt Romney, when asked what he would do if economic sanctions fail to warm relations, said he was open to "bombardment of some kind." Compassionate conservative Mike Huckabee explained, "Before we bomb them, we ought to try to bankrupt them." Making the administration's Orwellian logic explicit, he continued, "Iran is not a nation building up nuclear arms to defend against somebody, because there is no one threatening them." Clearly,

[CULTURE]

POLITICAL SCIENCE

We would be remiss if we didn't comment on the ritual humiliation of James Watson, who won a Nobel Prize in 1953, shared with two others, for discovering the structure of DNA, and has since been the guiding force behind one of America's most important scientific research libraries. The episode has been widely covered. At the end of a long interview in the *London Times* kicking off a lecture tour, Watson was asked a leading question and rather



than ducking, averred that he was "inherently gloomy about the prospect of Africa" because "all our social policies are based on the fact that their intelligence is the same as ours, whereas all the testing says not really."

A mass gang-up followed, as many competed to see who could most emphatically abhor the remark. First his prestigious lectures in London and Edinburgh were cancelled, then an "outraged" Federation of American Scientists issued a statement denouncing his "noxious" views, and finally Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, which owes its eminence entirely to Watson's efforts, forced his resignation. Were public stoning legal in the West, that would have been the logical next step.

Americans have perfectly good moral and societal reasons not to dwell on the racial distribution of intelligence, and there is much wisdom in Nathan Glazer's comment in response to the publication of *The Bell Curve*. According to Hershstein and Murray, Glazer said, America "live[s] with an untruth. ... I ask myself whether the untruth is not better for American society than the truth."

But that doesn't justify the mob-like attacks that followed Watson's remark. If the old scientist's comments were so

obviously batty, they could have easily been ignored, discounted, or refuted. Scientists could point to Africa's record of development once freed from the shackles of colonialism or generate more nuanced arguments. The effort to block out and shout down goes entirely against the spirit of free inquiry, a great legacy of the modern West. If American science is now represented by those who would restart the Inquisition over a few comments in a newspaper interview, that is greater cause for worry than anything James Watson said.

[CONGRESS]

COUNTRY OVER PARTY

Congressman Walter Jones's courage may cost him his seat. Two years ago, the North Carolina conservative broke with the GOP establishment to oppose the indefinite occupation of Iraq. In July, he was one of only four House Republicans to vote for a troop-withdrawal bill. Now the six-term congressman faces his first primary challenge.

He won't go gentle. Jones, who still sits on the Armed Services Committee though his antiwar stand has cost him the leadership position his seniority deserves, knows the administration has Iran in its sites. His first blocking maneuver was a

January resolution to require Congressional approval for use of force. It fast became archive fodder. Undeterred, on Oct. 25, Jones introduced the Constitutional War Powers Resolution. It would “prohibit presidential entry into future hostilities without congressional action except: to repel and retaliate against an attack on the United States, repel an attack on U.S. troops, or protect and evacuate U.S. citizens.” Sounds like the sort of thing any legislator who read the document he swore to defend would readily endorse. Not exactly. After Jones, just two of the House’s 200 Republicans, Ron Paul and Wayne Gilchrest, have signed on. Anyone who thinks conservative principle yet trumps party diktat need look no further. The cult of loyalty maintains its grip.

But Jones remains his own man. He told the *LA Times*, “When my days end in Congress, I would rather be able to say I did what was right for America, rather than my party did this, my party did that.”

[ELECTION]

SIDESWIPING HILLARY

At the most recent Democratic primary debate, Connecticut Sen. Chris Dodd performed the most valuable service a no-hope candidate can: calling out the frontrunner. Asked about Gov. Elliot Spitzer’s plan to give illegal aliens drivers licenses, Hillary Clinton said that the scheme “makes sense.” The rest of the field nodded in agreement—except for Dodd.

“We need to deal with security on our borders, we need to deal with the attraction that draws people here, we need to deal fairly with those who are here; but this is a privilege ... and that ought not to be extended.”

Clinton then said, “I did not say that it should be done, but I certainly recognize why Gov. Spitzer is trying to do it.”

Correction. Dodd again: “Wait a

minute, you said, yes, you thought it made sense to do it.”

Reeling, Hillary played the victim card: “You know, this is where everybody plays gotcha.” Yes. It’s called politics.

For the first time, Hillary no longer looked inevitable. The gap between the Democratic Party’s elite multi-culti fantasies and grassroots desire for a secure border (and safe roads for that matter) is a gulf Clinton cannot bridge.

[GOP]

DOVES NEED NOT APPLY

We’ve learned this firsthand: insufficient rhapsody about Ron Paul—even in favorable pieces—invites an avalanche of e-mail. The Bush babies at RedState got the treatment and answered with a ban: “If your account is less than 6 months old, you can talk about something else, you can participate in the other threads and be your zany libertarian self all you want, but you cannot pimp Ron Paul.”

Unable to wrap their minds around the possibility that they had encountered a Republican they couldn’t love, the RedStaters concluded that Paul can’t possibly be one of them, thus his online evangelists are “a bunch of liberals pretending to be Republicans.” Apparently it was unfathomable that the Right could produce a candidate who thinks war should be declared, government should be smaller, and the Constitution might be more than a museum piece.

A howl went up: RedStaters can’t handle the truth. But the supreme confidence required to believe we’re winning in Iraq isn’t cowed by the keyboard stylings of Ron Paul’s happy few. The cyber-cons don’t fear losing; they consider the debate irrelevant. In today’s GOP, such things are already settled—which is a far sadder thing than a band of cranky bloggers pulling up the ladder to their treehouse. ■

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Hired Guns

While the volunteer Army struggles, the business of war booms.

By Kelley Beaucar Vlahos

THE ARMED security contractor in Iraq makes an appearance on the collective American radar only when events get so ugly they won't go away: the charred bodies of four Blackwater guards swinging from a Fallujah bridge in 2004, the 17 civilians reportedly killed by Blackwater men in a Baghdad square in September.

Mostly their presence—anywhere from 20,000- to 70,000-strong depending on who's counting—moves on a battlefield that, in the words of the 1980s television series "Tales of the Darkside," is "just as real, but not as brightly lit" as the news we see every night. They kill, bleed on the side of the road, and recover with stumps and prostheses, just not at Walter Reed Medical Center.

Richard Zbryski put the shadowy existence of the private parallel army in cold, hard perspective when he described how the body of his brother, Walter Zbryski, a 56-year-old retired New York City firefighter, was shipped home from his job as a contracted truck driver in Iraq. "What really upset me was that he was laying there floating in 6 inches of his own body fluids," still wearing his bloodied clothes, with half of his head blown away, Zbryski told the *Chicago Tribune*.

His brother was one of the more than 1,000 civilian contractors killed since the war began. More than 180,000 remain in Iraq today. Most are unarmed, doing everything from feeding and providing basic services to the U.S. military to constructing bases, transporting equipment, and rebuilding Iraqi infrastructure.

But it's the hired guns and spooks—the tens of thousands of guards protecting diplomats and VIPs, government buildings, reconstruction projects and convoys, plus prison interrogators—who bring into focus the fate of the mission and the implications of privatizing the military. They have people wondering what new breed of mercenary super-soldier American money is buying.

"There are many questions as to how a myriad of heavily armed private armies can serve the purpose of the US military and foreign policy," writes Robert Young Pelton, in *Licensed to Kill: Hired Guns in the War on Terror*.

Pelton has traveled with both military and private contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq throughout the conflict. He describes the new terrain shaped by outsourcing and reports that it bears little resemblance to the noble enterprise sold to the military years ago. Five years into operations, it is a darkly obscured landscape of violence, profiteering, and negligence. He senses that this parallel army is undermining the entire mission, leading to "blowback of extraordinary proportions."

"It strikes at the core of the entire American principle, the idea of the citizen soldier," he tells *TAC*. "We've been fighting this war longer than World War II, and the military is absolutely dependent on the private sector."

Never in modern history has war privatization reached this level. The course was set as early as the 1980s, when post-Cold War military restructuring led to

the first LOGCAP—the Army's Logistics Civil Augmentation Program—which furnished an open-ended, cost-plus contingency contract for private vendors to provide rapid support services to the Army in deployment operations. Military brass initially resisted the idea, write Dina Rasor and Robert Bauman in *Betraying Our Troops: The Destructive Results of Privatizing War*: "Military commanders, at the time, expressed considerable mistrust of a contractor's ability to supply troops on the battlefield because they would be too slow, unreliable, and uncontrollable."

But Dick Cheney, then defense secretary under President George H.W. Bush, was still able to secure a \$3.9 billion LOGCAP contract for Brown & Root before leaving office and becoming the CEO of its parent company, Halliburton, in 1995. Privatization expanded throughout the Clinton administration, with the new Kellogg, Brown & Root (KBR) and Dyncorp International receiving lucrative service contracts to work in Somalia, Rwanda, Southeast Asia, Kuwait, Haiti, and the former Yugoslavia.

Some say Cheney was the midwife of the military-private sector alliance. With Donald Rumsfeld, a kindred spirit who has also enjoyed a lucrative public-private revolving-door career, he was able to nurture that alliance into its current mutation in the global war on terror.

"[Privatization] became a mantra, that the contractors could do so much better," said Rasor, whose book is an exhaustive account of "what happens when you introduce a for-profit motive