

RiverOpinion



Are We There Yet?

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Contributing Columnist

*When we get there,
Will we know where,
That we've reached the goal
Of final victory?*

*Are we there yet?
Are we where yet?
Are we at the place where
Now we want to be?*



You remember.

Remember the automobile trip with the family when you were a child? It wasn't more than a few minutes into the journey when you asked "Are we there yet?" And you asked the question more than once as the miles rolled by.

Or the time came when you were the parent, and one of the kids posed the age-old query.

Flash forward to the present, and an entire nation is asking its leaders: "are we there yet? When will we be there? Will it be tomorrow, or next week, or next year? And how will we know when we're there?"

In the meantime, the journey has consumed more than three and a half years, taken over 3,000 precious American lives, maimed tens of thousands and contributed to the devastation of an ancient Middle Eastern country.

And the official answer is that we must continue until victory has been achieved. What constitutes "victory" has never been defined, but after months of study, a bi-partisan committee of 10 knowledgeable individuals has advised that the vast expenditure of blood and

treasure have led only to a situation that is "grave and deteriorating."

While the politicians ponder what to do next, there are facts that need to be faced before a sensible path can be chosen.

No powerful nation wants to lose a war - particularly a war which it started. It is undeniable that the United States, if it so chooses, can bring weapons and forces to bear that would wipe out the country of Iraq and leave the territory uninhabitable for generations to come.

Action of that magnitude would constitute overkill, however, and make this country a pariah among other countries. Furthermore, it is not necessary.

The fact is that we already won the war. We won it several weeks after it started, when Baghdad fell, and the President announced that the mission was "accomplished."

If that wasn't the date when the war was won, then it was certainly over some months later, when we captured the tyrant and brought him to justice before an Iraqi court.

And if that wasn't the true date of victory, then certainly it must have been last month when the former dictator was executed.

The problem is not whether we won the war. By any standard of measurement, we won it, several times over.

The mistake was in remaining as an army of occupation, for which we were unprepared. Nobody loves a foreign occupying power, especially the natives of a country where the citizens gleefully murder, torture, and kill each other because, although they worship the same God and the identical prophet, they differ on the methods by which they conduct that worship.

It's called "civilization," Iraqi style, and there is nothing much occupying troops can do about it, except get

caught in the cross-fire.

We are told that diplomacy and training will solve the problem, but the fact is that other nations in the area have no incentive to seek a solution, and the local troops we train and equip will use that training and equipment to slaughter fellow non-conforming religionists, whether we are there or not.

So we won the war, but we are losing the peace.

And losing the peace is not such a terrible thing. The United States does it all the time.

We beat the Germans and the Japanese in World War II, in slightly less than the time we've been in Iraq. Judging by the number of Japanese and German automobiles on our highways today, and the financial condition of Ford and General Motors, who won the peace?

Our soldiers, sailors and marines have done a magnificent job under difficult circumstances, and it is time to bring them all home to a hero's welcome.

They deserve our special thanks and unwavering gratitude because a majority of them have been abused by the top brass in the Pentagon.

Members of the reserves and the National Guard have been forced into active service and deployed again and again, while a good portion of the regular Army has remained in non-combat assignments in Europe, South Korea, Japan and other areas around the world.

The part-time warriors of the reserves and the Guard have been utilized and over-exposed in a way that was never intended when these units were originally conceived. The original idea was that they were to be available for emergencies - not yanked out of their civilian pursuits for long-term combat while full time professionals relax in peaceful cities.

This misuse of military heroes calls for another Blue

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