

Saddam's Revenge

At the moment the hangman's noose tightens around Saddam Hussein's shriveled neck, he can take solace in one major unintended consequence of his defeat by coalition forces: America and the Bush administration have suffered enormously in the wake of Saddam's overthrow.

Every exit poll last Tuesday said the same thing: Most Americans do not believe the Iraq conflict is good for the country. Some believe our military action was immoral, but most simply want victory, not stalemate, in Iraq.

The thinking behind that lies in the deep respect most Americans have for the U.S. military. I mean, who in their right mind wants to see soldiers and marines killed and maimed for a campaign that is still chaotic after three and a half years? Left-wing loons aside, clear thinking Americans are willing to accept war if the violence is justified and benefits the country. But this Iraq deal remains unresolved, and there is little good news coming out of Baghdad.

As I mentioned in this space a few weeks ago, the Iraqi people have not stepped up to control the terrorists in their midst. It does not take three years to train a national police force or even a standing army for that matter. Corruption and religious hatred is rife in Iraq. A country that was deemed "secular" and desiring of freedom by U.S. intelligence has turned out to be a place of ancient hatreds and incredible, mindless violence.

You don't see the Muslims of Afghanistan, as primitive as that country is, drilling holes in each other's heads and forming roving death squads. At least the Afghans are giving democracy a chance by not embracing the Taliban uprising coming out of Pakistan, or protecting homicide bombers who can paralyze any free society.

But millions of Iraqis are either too afraid or too apathetic to join their countrymen who simply want to live in peace and freedom. How many hateful Iraqi Mullahs are ordering their brainwashed minions to kill innocent people? How many crooked cops and military people are creating fear and loathing by committing loathsome crimes?

There is no army in the world that can impose democracy or any other kind of government on an unwilling population. Remember, the Soviets brutalized Afghanistan using hundreds of thousands of troops and a ruthless secret police, but could not make communism acceptable there.

So the Bush administration is caught in a situation that once looked like a "slam dunk," to use former CIA Director George Tenet's phrase, but has now evolved into an election-turning debacle.

However, a bad situation could rapidly become worse if ideologically crazed politicians implement policies that give the terrorists a major victory. Remember, Iraq is a stalemate, not a defeat. The terrorists can strut around all they want, but Saddam is facing the gallows and Iran is not controlling the Gulf oil flow—at least not yet.

President Bush is correct when he says that Iraq is now the central battlefield in the war on terror. And the demise of Donald Rumsfeld finally signals that a new strategy might be on horizon.

All Americans should hope so. Fighting Islamic fascism is the most important issue in the world today. We'll now see if the Democrats have a better idea as to how to do that.