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It's criminal

By Scott Ritter

03/22/06 "Alternet" -- -- As America reaches the third anniversary of President Bush's decision to invade and occupy Iraq, there is for the first time the unsettling realization brought about by the clarity of acts that emerges only after the passage of time that something horrible has happened.

This awakening of collective awareness on the part of the American people is reflected not only in the numerous polls which show President Bush's popularity plummeting to all-time lows, largely because of the war in Iraq, but also the collective shrug of the shoulders on the part of the one-time cheerleaders for the war in Iraq -- the mainstream American media -- when covering the hollow rhetoric of the President as he tries to rally a nation around a cause that has long since lost its allure.

No amount of flowery language and repeated pulls at the patriotic heartstrings of America, no repeated assault on the senses and sensibilities through repetitious referral to the events of 9/11 can jump start a second phase of the kind of mindless nationalistic fervor that greeted the erstwhile Cowboy President when he first herded a compliant America down the path of war with Iraq three years ago.

Looking back on the string of unfulfilled objectives, broken promises, squandered dreams, shattered bodies and eviscerated lives that was and is the war in Iraq, one thought emerges plain and clear. This isn't simply a result of bad governance. This is criminal.

Bad governance is telling the American people that a war with Iraq would be concluded in a manner of months, and would cost the American taxpayer less than \$2 billion, when in fact the war has gone on for three years now, with no end in sight, and over a quarter-trillion dollars have been expended, with untold billions more to be spent.

Criminal governance is the fabrication of a justification for war (weapons of mass

destruction), hiding the President's true intentions from the American people and the Congress of the United States (Bush signed off on the Iraq war plans in late August 2002, and yet continued to publicly state that no decision for military action had been made), and shredding international law by waging an aggressive war of pre-emption void of any United Nations Security Council resolution authorizing such actions.

Bad governance is manipulating war planning on the part of military professionals so that we enter into a conflict with far too few troops for the task, with no plan for how to proceed once the fighting ended and the reality of occupation set in.

Criminal governance is violating every principle of the laws of war in the conduct of the occupation of Iraq, manipulating the economic and political direction of Iraq, suppressing its population, and engaging in wanton acts of widespread murder, torture and abuse of the Iraqi people.

The fact is the war in Iraq has degenerated into one giant hate crime.

American soldiers and Marines are being thrown into a cauldron of our own making, scalded by a conflict with no purpose or direction, with the end result being that in order to survive these fighting men and women have dehumanized the totality of the Iraqi people.

The ancestors of ancient Babylon have become nothing more than "sand niggers", "rag-heads", "camel jockeys", "ninja women" or "haji" in the hearts and minds of American fighting men who are now killing Iraqis in ever increasing numbers. Gone is any talk of rebuilding Iraq. We are there to destroy it. The criminal nature of the war in Iraq is starting to become common knowledge among observers of the war.

It has long sense been common knowledge on the part of those waging it. In Vietnam Americans were shocked by the revelations of Mai Lai and the murder of innocent Vietnamese civilians by American fighting men. But Mai Lai is repeated in bits and pieces every day in Iraq, with the American military occupation slaughtering family after family of Iraqis in the name of bringing peace and security.

The realization that something has gone horribly wrong in Iraq, however, has not translated into any kind of discernable action on the part of the American people. While pundit after pundit breaks ranks with the Bush administration on Iraq, often repudiating their own pre-war chest beating and encouragement of the war, the fact is that the manifesto which manifested itself in the invasion of Iraq -- the 2002 National Security Strategy of the United States -- continues to dictate the manner and nature of America's interfacing with the rest of the world in unquestioned

fashion.

Indeed, President Bush has, on the eve of the third anniversary of the Iraqi war, promulgated a new, improved version of this manifesto, the 2006 National Security Strategy of the United States, which re-affirms America's commitment to the principles of pre-emptive war. In short, the President has re-certified America as the greatest threat to international peace and security in modern times, especially when one considers that even as America is engaged in the brutal rape and occupation of Iraq, President Bush has his eyes firmly set on another war of aggression in Iran.

What are the American people doing in response? There is a huge difference between becoming aware and taking action. While poll numbers on Iraq reflect a growing unease about the war, this unease has not manifested itself into any discernable reaction of consequence. The Democratic Party has remained largely mute, largely because of the culpability on the part of much of its membership in facilitating and sustaining the Iraqi war and its underlining doctrine of global domination by the United States.

But in the face of the near total subservience on the part of the Republican Party in supporting the policies of President Bush no matter how illegal and harmful they are to America and the world, the Democratic Party must shake itself free of the doldrums it currently finds itself stuck in. The time for passive recognition that the war in Iraq has gone bad is long past.

The time for concrete political action has arrived. The Democrats need to recognize that the political struggle in America today is not a trivial extension of the partisan Red State-Blue State nonsense the American media likes to bandy about, but rather a far more serious struggle of national survival, if one in fact defines the American nation as being reflective of the ideals and values set forth by the Constitution of the United States.

The Iraq War, if anything, is a reflection of the total abrogation of constitutional responsibility and process by the Congress of the United States. As a result, the President has led a nation down the path of illegal war of aggression which has damaged America's reputation abroad, and its very fabric here at home. The Republican-controlled Congress has done little to stop this collective march towards national self-destruction, rubber-stamping the president's illegal actions with little regard to either the rule of law or Congress's status as a second but equal branch of government.

This must end.

The fact is that America today stands on the brink of having everything we stand

for as a nation being swept away by a power-crazed President and a compliant Congress, both of whom are Republican. Whatever direction the Democratic Party takes in the future, it must be with the recognition that the hopes and dreams of saving the United States as a nation of laws founded in the words and principles of the Constitution rest heavily on their shoulders. The Democratic Party must become laser-like in its rejection of the war in Iraq, resolute in condemning this war for what it is, an illegal war of aggression, and determined in fighting for the concept of a nation governed by the rule of law by holding President Bush accountable for his illegal actions.

In short, the rallying cry of the Democratic Party must become impeachment. Given the magnitude of the crimes committed by the United States in Iraq under the direction and leadership of President Bush and his administration, there is simply no other recourse that can bring a halt to the madness in Iraq, and the insanity being planned in Iran and elsewhere.

The remedy is clear. The question now is whether the Democratic Party is up to the task.

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