



DON'T LOOK NOW,

BUT IT'S YOU!

**THE CASE FOUNDATION**

Last week was really something.

It started with 16 U.S. intelligence agencies offering [a consensus view](#) that Iraq is a "*cause célèbre*" for Islamic militants, that it may be radicalizing people faster than we can crush their heads and that explicitly predicted the insurgency would get worse next year. A few days later Congress [passed an additional \\$70 billion appropriation](#) for continuing operations in Afghanistan and Iraq through next year, a "bridge" measure that will hold us over until the whole \$110 billion that was passed in a record-breaking defense bill comes online.

That brings the total for both wars (and beefing up security at foreign embassies) to over a half trillion dollars.

Of that, \$18.4 billion was for the reconstruction of Iraq. That funding quietly expired this weekend; projects that have already had funds committed to them will continue, but the well is now dry. U.S. taxpayers will get \$800 million back. In the end less than \$18 billion was spent on reconstruction, a third of that going to security costs. The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), Stuart Bowen, has reported, most recently at the end of July ([PDF](#)), that Iraq is covered in abandoned, half-finished projects. He talks of a huge "reconstruction gap" that exists between both American taxpayers' and Iraqi citizens' expectations of what will be rebuilt and the actual goods that will be delivered at the end of the process.

The same week the funds ran out, SIGIR issued a second report on Parsons, inc. Parsons has to be as happy about Halliburton taking so much heat while it quietly fleeces taxpayers underneath the media's radar as Target is about WalMart. Parsons famously blew the construction of Iraq's health clinics -- only a handful of 500 clinics were ever completed even though Parsons got the full amount of the estimate. Now Parsons has [so badly botched the construction of Iraq's police academy](#), a project that was supposed to be "a showcase for U.S. efforts to train Iraqi recruits who eventually are expected to take control of the nation's security from the U.S. military," that part of the structure will have to be torn down.

It was a week in which the administration [insisted](#) that democratic reforms and greater political participation were the keys to defeating extremists, and the [Iraqi Parliament passed](#) "a broad new set of laws criminalizing speech that ridicules the government or its officials, some resurrected verbatim from Saddam Hussein's penal code."

Bob Woodward [recounted](#) that Bush told a number of leading Republican lawmakers: "I will not withdraw, even if Laura and Barney are the only ones supporting me," and two polls came out the same week that showed that a majority of Iraqis want American forces out of their country (joining a majority of Americans). According to the State Department, a majority of Baghdad residents wants the U.S. to withdrawal immediately. [A poll](#) by the Program on International Policy Attitudes showed that a majority of both Sunni and Shiite Iraqis want the U.S. to depart, but only a small minority -- one in five -- thinks we'll leave if asked by Iraq's "sovereign" government. Like last year's PIPA poll, almost all Iraqis see us as "occupiers" instead of "liberators," four in five believe we want to establish permanent bases and six in ten -- including majorities of both Shiites and Sunnis -- approve of attacks on U.S. troops. Almost four in five Iraqis believe the U.S. presence causes more violence than it prevents.

We are in full-on Alice in Wonderland territory -- we've reached a moment when only the deeply deluded can still believe that we should stay the course in Iraq.

Which is why the most hair-raising news in all of last week's reporting was Woodward's revelation about Henry Kissinger giving the administration significant advice about the mess:

Woodward also reports that the president and vice president often meet with Henry Kissinger, who was President Richard Nixon's secretary of state, as an adviser. Says Woodward, "Now what's Kissinger's advice? In Iraq, he declared very simply, 'Victory is the only meaningful exit strategy.'" Woodward adds. "This is so fascinating. Kissinger's fighting the Vietnam War again because, in his view, the problem in Vietnam was we lost our will."

As Retardo at Sadly, No! [put it](#), "The sound you just heard was Christopher Hitchens flying headfirst into his own liquor cabinet."

Kissinger, who [can't take a trip to Europe](#) for fear of being tried as a war criminal, is a leader among those who looked at our defeat in Vietnam and decided that Americans were simply weak. Lacking the most basic understanding of human morality and decency, and failing to grasp the advantage that people fighting for self-determination have over even super-powerful occupiers, Kissinger and his many compatriots on the right never figured out that the real issue was that Americans won't long support needless and corrupt wars thousands of miles from home.

Kissinger. That explains a lot.