

June 27th, 2005

THE AMERICAN THINKER

[ABOUT](#)[CONTACT](#)[MERCHANDISE](#)[DONATIONS](#)[LINKS](#)[CONTRIBUTORS](#)[HOME](#)

An Open Letter to the President

June 27th, 2005

Dear Mr. President,

I've no idea what your advisers are telling you, but based on my own experience in Washington I suspect they are talking more bluntly among themselves than they are to you. So I'm writing to deliver an unpleasant message you must hear, and hear now: We are in danger of losing the war in Iraq.

To understand why, think back for a moment to what happened in Vietnam. Even as our troops did better and better on the ground – as they killed more and more North Vietnamese and Viet Cong soldiers and secured more and more of South Vietnam itself – support for that war eroded here at home. For example, the Tet offensive was a huge military victory for our forces – but a decisive political defeat in the US. Simply put, we didn't lose the Vietnam war in Vietnam. We lost it in Washington.

In just the last week, a ferocious national debate has erupted over the war. Your political enemies have launched a public-relations offensive to convince Americans that we are losing in Iraq. You and members of your administration are responding by arguing that despite the visible setbacks, such as all those horrific bombings in and around Baghdad, the war in Iraq is going well. The truth lies somewhere in between.

In some ways the war really is going well. For example, the new Iraqi government is making a remarkable amount of progress every day, reconstruction projects are forging ahead, and the Iraqi security forces are starting to make their presence felt throughout the country. But in other ways, the war isn't going very well. The level of physical security remains abysmal, and it isn't just those car-bombs and drive-by shootings; it's been more than two years since we overthrew Saddam Hussein's regime, and we still haven't secured the road to Baghdad International Airport. The honest assessment, which neither your enemies nor your supporters want to publicly offer, is that we are still in the middle of the war – which means it could go either way.

The Numbers that Matter

From what I see on television and read in the press, the Vice President, the Secretary of Defense and our top generals are convinced that the war in Iraq has turned decisively against the terrorists, and that they are doomed to military defeat. The numbers they provide on terrorists killed or captured are impressive, so what they say about our prospects for victory may well be true.

Unfortunately, these numbers aren't the only ones that matter. In business, when a company has bet its future on a new product, it's very common for the company's sales force to be optimistic because they have the numbers to prove that this new product is

steadily gaining market share. What the sales force doesn't see – but what the CEO does – are the numbers which show that the company is hemorrhaging cash. So the question isn't whether the new product will be a success, but whether this new product will succeed fast enough, before the company goes bust. In other words, it's a race against time. As I'm sure you learned at Harvard Business School, in real life cash flow can dry up faster than it does in the spread-sheets and Power-Point presentations the company's financial geniuses gin up for the securities analysts.

In war, public support is the equivalent of cash flow. So the question isn't whether a war is going well, but whether a war is going well enough, and fast enough, to end in victory before public support gives out. And it's obvious that public support for the war in Iraq has begun to erode, which means that from now on we are not only in a battle against our enemy overseas, but in a race against time here at home.

I don't know how much time is left before public support for this war erodes to the point when victory will lie beyond our grasp. Your judgment will certainly be better than mine, because only you can combine the top-secret intelligence reports on your desk with your own superb "gut feel" for public opinion to estimate just when these two trend-lines will intersect. My only suggestion is that whatever projection you come up with – Three months? Nine months? Two years? – you cut it in half. History teaches that once public support for a war starts to erode – no matter what may be the actual, on-the-ground situation – it erodes at an accelerating rate. But what matters most isn't so much the actual date you project for when the two lines will intersect. Rather, what matters most is that you recognize these two lines now are on a collision course, and that you understand what this means:

You have less time to win this war than you thought you had. So to win, you will need to fight harder.

Get Real with the Generals

First, you need to fight harder in Iraq. You keep saying that you are giving our generals all the troops they want. With all respect, sir, this couldn't possibly be true. In the history of the world there has never been a general who thought he had enough troops. If your generals are telling you they have all the troops they want to finish the job in Iraq, either the generals are idiots – or they have gotten the word that asking for more troops will end their careers. Sit down with your generals privately – just you and them -- and find out how many troops they really think they need. If they still insist they don't want more troops on the ground in Iraq, then get yourself a new bunch of generals. If they tell you they need another 250,000 soldiers and Marines – then fly them over from Korea, Germany or wherever they are stationed just as fast as possible. If we haven't got them to send – then order a draft. One way or another, put enough troops on the ground in Iraq to secure that country -- fast. And while you're at it, give the orders to either take out the governments of Syria and Iran or to hit them with so much force that they quit playing footsie with al Queda and the Baathists, because we cannot win in Iraq so long as Syria and Iran are providing support and sanctuary. In short, do whatever is necessary, and do it now.

Second – and in my judgment, even more important -- you need to fight harder in Washington. To explain why this will help win the war in Iraq, let me tell you about

how one of your predecessors acted domestically in a way that had a huge foreign impact. Shortly after President Reagan took office, our country's 13,000 air-traffic controllers went on strike. Reagan ordered them back to work, and when they refused he did the one thing neither the controllers nor anyone else ever imagined he would do: he fired them all.

The ensuing political explosion is well known, but what isn't well known is what effect the President's decision had on the Soviet Union's leaders. It terrified them, because they realized that in Ronald Reagan they were confronting a President who was willing to put all his chips on the table and go for broke no matter what might be the political consequences. I had access to a lot of top-secret intelligence in those days, and I can tell you that during the next few years there were several very dangerous things the Kremlin wanted to do, but refrained from doing purely out of fear over how President Reagan would respond. (You needn't take my word for all this. After the Cold War ended quite a few of Gorbachev's now-unemployed foreign-policy advisers earned some pocket-money on the European and American lecture circuits, and they all made this point. If you hadn't heard this story before, it's because the episode reflected so well on President Reagan our press didn't trouble to report it.)

With all respect, sir, your performance in Washington has been too weak. You are letting Congress get away with stiffing John Bolton, you cut a compromise in the Senate that got a few judges confirmed but that left the Democrats in a position to filibuster whichever future nominees they choose, you haven't vetoed a single bill despite all the budget-busting pork that is mortgaging our children's future, and while you are out giving speeches to Rotary Clubs about how to save Social Security, your proposal to privatize a portion of future payments is being strangled in its crib by the Democrats. Whatever may be the domestic effects of all this, the foreign effects are catastrophic. The terrorists in Iraq, their leaders who are hiding in caves, the mullahs in Teheran, the creep in Damascus and the nut in North Korea – they all see what is happening to your programs and your people, and the judgment they are reaching is this: if you aren't willing to fight to the death in Washington, you aren't willing to fight to the death in Iraq.

Turning the Potomac Red

Forget all the super-sophisticated, geo-political baloney. War is a very personal business. Look, when you send a platoon of soldiers or Marines out on patrol in Baghdad, or Tikrit, or Fallujah, you don't expect that second lieutenant to come back to base and report that he reached a "compromise" with the terrorists; that they agreed our guys would kill or capture no more than five of their guys, but in return our own casualties would be light, or that the second lieutenant decided not to engage the enemy because he thought it best to save himself and his platoon for whatever the next battle might be. You expect that young officer to engage the enemy, kill them all – or go down shooting.

Well, so should you. You need to start fighting in Washington just as hard as you expect our troops to fight in Iraq. And you need to keep fighting until the Potomac flows red with the blood of your political enemies. Personally, I think you'll win more of your domestic battles than your advisers seem to think you'll win. But what really matters is that by fighting to the death for your domestic programs, our country's

enemies will get the message that you are a man who will risk everything – everything – to win. And by itself this will markedly increase our chances for victory in Iraq.

The war is now entering its most dangerous phase, by which I mean that period of time during which we will either secure our victory or lose so much public support that our defeat becomes inevitable. The outcome will be determined by the decisions you make – both foreign and domestic – in the coming weeks.

God bless you, sir, for all you have done to keep us safe. Now, go get ‘em.

Respectfully,

Herbert E. Meyer

Herbert E. Meyer served during the Reagan Administration as Special Assistant to the Director of Central Intelligence and Vice Chairman of the CIA's National Intelligence Council. His DVD on The Siege of Western Civilization (www.siegeofwesterniv.com) has become an international best-seller.

Herbert E. Meyer

[» Print this article](#)

[Go Top - Home](#)