

HON. RON PAUL OF TEXAS Before the U.S. House of Representatives April 17, 2007 We Just Marched In (So We Can Just March Out)

All the reasons given to justify a preemptive strike against Iraq were wrong. Congress and the American people were misled.

Support for the war came from various special interests that had agitated for an invasion of Iraq since 1998. The Iraq Liberation Act, passed by Congress and signed into law by President Clinton, stated that getting rid of Saddam Hussein was official U.S. policy. This policy was carried out in 2003.

Congress failed miserably in meeting its crucial obligations as the branch of government charged with deciding whether to declare war. It wrongly and unconstitutionally transferred this power to the president, and the president did not hesitate to use it.

Although it is clear there was no cause for war, we just marched in. Our leaders deceived themselves and the public with assurances that the war was righteous and would be over quickly. Their justifications were false, and they failed to grasp even basic facts about the chaotic political and religious history of the region.

Congress bears the greater blame for this fiasco. It reneged on its responsibility to declare or not declare war. It transferred this decision-making power to the executive branch, and gave open sanction to anything the president did. In fact the founders diligently tried to prevent the executive from possessing this power, granting it to Congress alone in Article 1 Section 8 of the Constitution.

Today just about everyone acknowledges the war has gone badly, and 70% of the American people want it to end. Our national defense is weakened, the financial costs continue to drain

us, our allies have deserted us, and our enemies are multiplying – not to mention the tragic toll of death and injury suffered by American forces.

Iraq is a mess, and we urgently need a new direction- but our leaders offer only hand wringing and platitudes. They have no clear-cut ideas to end the suffering and war. Even the most ardent war hawks cannot begin to define victory in Iraq.

As an Air Force officer serving from 1963-1968, I heard the same agonizing pleas from the American people. These pleas were met with the same excuses about why we could not change a deeply flawed policy and rethink the war in Vietnam. That bloody conflict, also undeclared and unconstitutional, seems to have taught us little despite the horrific costs.

Once again, though everyone now accepts that the original justifications for invading Iraq were not legitimate, we are given excuses for not leaving. We flaunt our power by building permanent military bases and an enormous billion-dollar embassy, yet claim we have no plans to stay in Iraq permanently. Assurances that our presence in Iraq has nothing to do with oil are not believed in the Middle East.

The argument for staying- to prevent civil war and bring stability to the region- logically falls on deaf ears.

If the justifications for war were wrong;

If the war is going badly;

If we can't afford the costs, both human and economic;

If civil war and chaos have resulted from our occupation;

If the reasons for staying are no more credible than the reasons for going;

THEN..... Why the dilemma? The American people have spoken, and continue to speak out, against this war. So why not end it? How do we end it? Why not exactly the way we went in? We just marched in, and we can just march out.

More good things may come of it than anyone can imagine. Consider our relationship with Vietnam, now our friendly trading partner. Certainly we are doing better with her than when we tried to impose our will by force. It is time to march out of Iraq and march home.