

## **Even Mormons Jumping Off Bush Bandwagon as War Takes its Toll**

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DETROIT -- Iraq is lost militarily and politically. Even the Mormons are now abandoning President George W. Bush's mad war. That's akin to the Swiss Guard deserting and leaving the pope to fend for himself with the Vatican under siege.



***Mormon President Gordon B. Hinckley***

Other than his own greedy family members, oil barons and military contractors, no group of Americans has stood so steadfastly behind the Bush administration than the members of the Church of Latter-day Saints.

Voters in Utah, the Mormon theocracy, have supported Bush with loyalty they usually reserve for the Brigham Young football team. In 2004, Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney's criminal enterprise got 71 percent of the vote in Utah.

The Salt Lake Tribune reported that a two-year compilation of Gallup polls showed staunch support among Mormons for the war in Iraq and Bush's handling of the violence: "American Mormons, more than any other religious group over that period, believed the United States was right to invade Iraq."

But a recent survey found "just 44 percent of those identifying themselves as Mormons said they backed Bush's war management." Mormon support for the war has plunged 21 percentage points in just five months.

The defection of the Mormons is a seismic political event, and you can bet Bush's political brain, Karl Rove, turns pale when he sees those numbers. The head of the Church of Latter-day Saints is expressing doubts about war, and the mayor of Salt Lake City is leading the charge to impeach Bush.

LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley may have set the stage for the precipitous plunge in Mormon support for the war. Speaking to students at Brigham Young University last fall, Hinckley spoke of "the terrible cost of war."

While not mentioning Iraq or Bush directly, the church leader said of war, "What a fruitless thing it

often is," adding, "And what a terrible price it extracts." In the Mormon tradition, the words of the church president are carefully weighed.

Kirk Jowers, the director of the University of Utah's Hinckley Institute of Politics, told the Salt Lake Tribune the church leader's remarks "may have been interpreted by the LDS community as an indictment against the world's violence."

Jowers said, "Small phrases by President Hinckley are to the LDS community as Alan Greenspan's words were to the financial community."

Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson, a lapsed Mormon, rejected subtle pronouncements and ambiguity. He said Bush should be impeached for committing "high crimes and misdemeanors." Anderson had the guts to say what every clear-thinking American ought to be shouting from the mountain tops.

Anderson told CNN, "If impeachment were ever justified, this is certainly the time. This president, by engaging in such incredible abuses of power, breaches of trust with both the Congress and the American people, and misleading us into this tragic and unbelievable war, the violation of treaties, other international law, our Constitution, our own domestic laws and then his role in heinous human rights abuse; I think all of that together calls for impeachment."

Whatever Democratic candidate for president will say and embrace similar words of truth has my support. That sure as hell will not be the calculating, triangulating Hillary Clinton. Such crisp honesty escapes her. Other leaders in the Democratic Party are similarly afflicted with the play-it-safe syndrome.

Anderson made his fellow Democrats cringe, saying forthrightly, "The fact that anybody would say that impeachment is off the table when we have a president who has been so egregious in his violation of our Constitution, a president who asserts unitary executive power, that is absolutely chilling."

Anderson denounced the "culture of obedience" that has so damaged our nation and weakened the Democratic Party.

Bush will now blame Congress, the Democrats and the Iraqi people for the disaster in Iraq that was doomed from its inception. Those of us who rejected the "culture of obedience" are seeing the horrible tragedy we predicted unfolding every day.

Bush's surge is just another slogan. There is no military solution that will undo the fiasco the invasion and occupation have brought.

Bush only wants to keep the war going long enough to pass the bloody baton to his successor. Then he will fade into ignominious oblivion, hiding out at his ranch in Texas, even more disconnected from the suffering his messianic megalomania and unrivaled incompetence have brought the world.

Last week, 152 people were killed when a truck bomb exploded in Tal Afar, making it the single deadliest bombing attack since the war began. Bush claimed last March that Tal Afar was a great Iraq success story. If Americans knew more about these stories, the White House argued at the time, they would have more confidence in Bush's victory strategy.

On March 23, 2006, Bush told a crowd of supporters in Cleveland he had found the magic bullet in

Tal Afar, driving terrorists from what he hailed as a "free city."

Bush gushed about his success in the northern Iraq city, bellowing to the faithful, "The strategy that worked so well in Tal Afar did not emerge overnight -- it came only after much trial and error. It took time to understand and adjust to the brutality of the enemy in Iraq, yet the strategy is working."

The reality in Tal Afar destroys "Bubble Boy" Bush's grand delusions. In revenge attacks, Shiite police rounded up 70 people in a Sunni neighborhood and summarily executed them. Can Bush and his strategists explain for us what brutal enemies are responsible for this bloodshed?

Last week, more than 500 people were killed. The death toll will continue as long as American troops remain in Iraq. Only political reconciliation can salvage the nation, and Iraqis must determine their own destiny. The arrogance and cruelty of western occupation will never bring peace and stability to Iraq.

The extent of the civilian casualties in Iraq will make us despised in the Middle East for decades to come. Bush's war gives the bin Ladens of the world just what they want.

The British, our only significant ally in Iraq, are now confirming that the scientists who concluded more than 600,000 Iraqis have been killed since the invasion were spot-on.

The study done by researchers from Johns Hopkins University and the Al Mustansiriya University in Baghdad was originally published last October in the British medical journal "The Lancet."

At the time, the U.S. and British governments rejected the death-toll survey. Bush dismissed the report as "unreliable," while failing to offer a scintilla of evidence to support his claim. The toadies in the corporate media let him get away with it.

The chief scientific adviser to the British Ministry of Defense, Roy Anderson, reviewed the methodology used in calculating the Iraq death toll. He told the Independent newspaper the methods were "robust" and "close to best practice." Another official told the paper it was "a tried and tested way of measuring mortality in conflict zones."

Now that our aggression has shattered Iraq, Bush and his neocon Amen Chorus are now blaming the Iraqis for their fate. They just don't appreciate what we've done for them. Sure, there have been a few casualties, but that's the price of freedom, these condescending cowards are saying. We gave them a chance, and those ignorant, unruly desert people are rejecting our gifts.

The other promised benefits from Operation Iraqi Liberation -- OIL -- are just not materializing. A Saddamless Iraq was sure to stabilize and democratize the Middle East, and make Israel safe and secure. Our "moderate" Arab friends would join in our crusade, and peace would spread like wildfire. But somehow Bush's hubris has collided with reality, and his geopolitical fantasies are manifest failures.

Even Bush's hand-holding buddy Saudi King Abdullah has abandoned him. The king cancelled his appearance at a White House dinner planned to honor him next month. This extraordinary diplomatic insult is a measure of the Saudis' anger and the strain on their long friendship with the United States.

The Busheviks have rejected everything the Saudis have tried to do to broker a deal to jump-start talks with the Palestinian government, settle tensions in Lebanon and bring Iran into regional

discussions.

King Abdullah now calls the U.S forces in Iraq "an illegal foreign occupation." The Saudis are skeptical of any hope for peace in the region. Like the Mormons, they are bailing out on Bush's war.

Hinckley, the prophet and seer for millions of Mormons around the world, spoke about how fleeting the power of military and political leaders can be in his remarks at Brigham Young.

"They ruled with near omnipotence, and their very words brought terror into the hearts of people," he said. And yet, he added, "they have all passed into the darkness of the grave."

Bush's war in Iraq is lost. Nothing can be done to recover from it. The war and the people who created it have descended into the darkness of the grave.

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