IRAQ: THE PEOPLE'S REPORT
Produced and distributed by United for Peace and Justice

The so-called Petraeus Report-actually written within the White House-is supposed to evaluate "progress" in the U.S. war and surging occupation of Iraq based on a set of congressionally-determined benchmarks. Those evaluations will ostensibly provide an overview of how far along U.S.-occupied Iraq is in achieving "stability," "democracy," "equity between groups," and more.

But however the White House drafters and General Petraeus and the spindoctors assess the benchmarks, what the report will almost certainly NOT do is provide a true glimpse of what the shattered lives of the 25 million Iraqis look like today.

It will almost certainly NOT mention the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians dead because of the U.S. war and occupation: the British medical journal Lancet reported 650,000 dead as of two years ago and casualties have increased since.

It will probably NOT say much about the two million Iraqis who have fled the war to seek hard-to-find refuge in neighboring countries, nor the additional two million Iraqis forced by war-fueled violence to flee their homes and who remain displaced and homeless inside Iraq.

It will very likely NOT mention that most Iraqis have electricity for only about five hours a day, that clean water remains scarce for most and unobtainable for many, and that Iraq's oil production remains a fraction of what it was before war.

It is NOT likely to highlight the fact that the Pentagon has already spent $456 billion or so of our tax dollars, occupation, war and violence have so devestated the Iraqi economy that unemployment has reached up to 40% and higher, and underemployment an additional 10% or more.

If the report has anything close to a true assessment, it would acknowledge that the lives of people in 2007 Iraq are worse than ever.

It will NOT admit to another set of truths as well. The 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq was illegal, and in violation of the United Nations Charter. It was based on lies, and those lies have NOT become truths just because the U.S. occupation has now continued for 4 and 1/2 years.

- The war was NOT launched because Iraq had weapons of mass destruction; it didn't;
- The U.S. did NOT invade Iraq because Saddam Hussein was tied to al-Qaeda; he wasn't;
- The U.S. did NOT invade to bring democracy to the people of Iraq; it hasn't.

The failure of the Iraq War has also meant a huge cost to our democracy at home. We have paid an enormous price: in the deaths and shattered minds and bodies of our young soldiers; in the threats to an economy ravaged by billion-dollar bills to pay for an illegal war; in the destruction of so much of our infrastructure, security and social fabric because of human and financial resources diverted to Iraq; and in the shredding of our Constitution and civil rights as fear becomes a weapon in the hands of the Bush administration aimed at Congress, the courts and the people of this country.

Photo by Todd Baker

Costs to the U.S.

U.S. military killed in Iraq: 3,737
Number of U.S. troops wounded in combat since the war began: 27,662

Number of children with a parent currently deployed: 700,000

Percent of National Guard units not ready to respond to crises at home and abroad: 90%

Army Suicide Rate:
2006: 17.3 per 100,000 (Highest in past 26 years)
26 Year average: 12.3 per 100,000

Troops suffering from psychological symptoms:
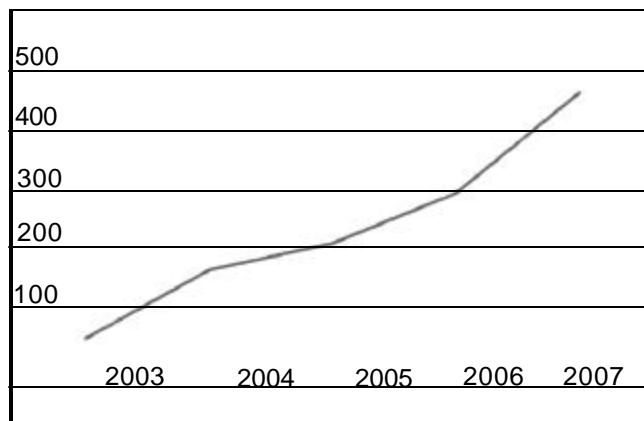Marines: 31%
Army: 38%
National Guard: nearly 50%

What $456 billion could have paid for in the U.S. for one year:
Affordable housing units: 4,103,285
Public school teachers: 7,897,598
Insured children: 272,883,333

Chart 1: Money Appropriated for the War and Occupation in Billions of Dollars

The cost so far: $456 billion

Congress will consider an additional $141 billion request by the President this fall.

The estimated long-term cost: $2.3 trillion

The Costs of War to our Cities
Mayor Lois Frankel, West Palm Florida

There are so many reasons to oppose this war and we are here to high-light those reasons that affect us so deeply in terms of the infrastructure in our cities. There is a long history of sacrifice during wartime--losing sons and daughters, tightening the belt at home. But I call this war in Iraq--the war for nothing.

I cannot understand, as most Americans don't, why we went in and why we are still there. Let me not talk about numbers, but rather of people. In West Palm Beach, there is a couple who lives on the northern part of the city, Ida and John who are 90 years old. John has Alzheimer's and Ida is so frail she is unable to cook or shop. They have outlived family and friends. They are 1 of 1,000 people in my community who are waiting for a federal program called Meals on Wheels--a lifeline to bring food to their house. Imagine that in the USA, being 90 years old and waiting for food. Or how about the single mother, who is a nurse's aide. She is also 1 of 900 people who are on the waiting list for public housing.

Mayor Lois Frankel addressing the Cities for Peace press conference July, 2007 in Washington D.C.

Our city of 100,000 people have already paid $122 million in taxes which could have provided healthcare, housing, teachers, and tuition for our students. While our soldiers are paying the highest costs for this war, the effects reach down to every single one of us. And the price is just not worth it.

Costs to Iraq

Iraqi Civilian Casualties: estimates range from 71,017 - 600,000+
Iraqi Police and Security Forces Killed: 7,391

Number of resistance fighters in Iraq:
November 2003 estimate: 5,000 fighters
March 2007 estimate: 70,000

Iraq's war-related deaths per day:
2006: 33
2007: 62

Unemployment: 25% - 60 %
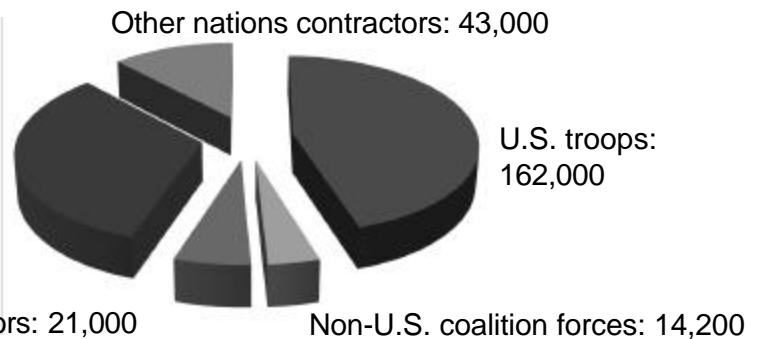Unemployment in the U.S. during the Great Depression: 25%

Health Costs:
80% of people lack effective sanitation
70% lack access to regular clean water
Chronic child malnutrition rate: 21% (est)

Number of doctors before the invasion: 34,000
Number of doctors who have left: 12,000 (est)

Refugee Crisis:
Internally displaced: 1,135,000
Living Abroad: 2.2-2.4 million
Refugees admitted to the U.S. since April 2003: 701

Chart 2: Number of Troops and Contractors

Contractors: 182,000

U.S. and Coalition Forces: 176,200

Other nations contractors: 43,000

Iraqi contractors: 118,000

U.S. troops: 162,000

U.S. contractors: 21,000

Non-U.S. coalition forces: 14,200

From the Eyes of Iraqis
Hiba Dawood -- Iraqi reporter forced to flee Iraq in 2005

I don't care anymore about the frauds going on, I don't care about the failing political situation and the split of the parties, I don't care about conferences held outside Iraq to solve problems inside Iraq, I don't care anymore about the oil that has been smuggled from Iraq, and I don't care about the U.S. companies making money out of Iraqi's blood.

I care about the lack of electricity that has affected directly my mother who uses inhaling equipment for her chronic asthma. I care about the lack of potable water that affected my brother who has been having diarrhea for over a year now. I care about the effects of the Depleted Uranium used in the war, now that my father has cancer. I care that my sister, the only person in family who put food on the table and pay for treatment for my father, quit her job after she was wounded in an explosion near where she worked.

The lack of security drove my sister's family to leave Iraq after her husband received death threats because he worked with the government. Fearing for my life, I left Iraq in 2005, escaping the risk of being a reporter.

I haven't seen my two children--who stopped going to school a year ago after three bombs were found in their classrooms--or my family for two years now. I worry constantly about them. The day my uncle was found slaughtered and thrown in a river, my mom spoke the truth about the war and occupation of Iraq, "Today is better than tomorrow."

Picture by DOD/US Army/Mike Pryor via pingnews

Leaving Iraq

Only a full withdrawal of U.S. troops will allow Iraqis to begin the long and difficult struggle to overcome the invasion-driven sectarian violence and begin to rebuild their country. U.S. policy, as we withdraw, must recognize that we do not have the right to determine Iraq's future These six steps outline a responsible redeployment.

First: Announce a timetable for the immediate, rapid and complete withdrawal of U.S. and coalition troops and mercenaries, and simultaneously end U.S. offensive operations. Such a halt will give substance to U.S. claims that it does not intend to occupy Iraq indefinitely, and is serious about bringing all the troops home. It will remove a key justification for the anti-U.S. resistance, and will make possible the beginnings of negotiations with resistance forces leading to a full ceasefire. Congress should not approve any additional funding, except to provide for the safe return of the troops.

Second: The U.S. should immediately announce the closure of all U.S. military bases in Iraq as soon as U.S. troops, coalition troops, and mercenaries are out of the country.

Third: The U.S. should immediately stop its effort to force Iraq's parliament to pass an oil law that privileges U.S. and other international oil companies. The U.S. should announce that control of Iraq's oil belongs solely to the people of Iraq, and that Iraq's own decisions regarding its oil production will have no bearing on U.S. obligations for reconstruction and reparations.

Fourth: Provide economic and political support for reconstruction and for maintaining national unity in Iraq. Reconstruction funds should be turned over to the Iraqi government to enable them to hire local contractors, local suppliers, and local workers, while remaining contracts with U.S. based corporations should be cancelled or otherwise settled, so as to free funds currently committed to U.S. contractors to be made available directly to Iraqis. We should make clear that additional reconstruction and reparation funds will be forthcoming after the end of the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

Fifth: The U.S. should stop trying to train Iraqi military and police forces, and instead turn over remaining training funds to the United Nations for use after the end of the U.S. occupation. The U.S. should stop trying to create Iraq's military in its own image and for its own interests.

Sixth: Support a regional conference under Arab League or United Nations auspices to produce a regional nonaggression pact. Iran, Turkey, Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia all are key to Iraq's ability to control its own future, and all have strong interests in supporting Iraq's unity and stability. Such a conference's success would be determined by other countries' and other people's belief that the U.S. no longer intends to dominate and control Iraq's politics. The U.S. should make clear that international law, not U.S. military power, should be determinative in setting the role of the international community.