

GUESS WHAT? IT'S THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF LETHAL HYPOCRISY

March 18, 2008--Five years ago today, just before dawn broke over Baghdad, U.S. forces launched the Iraq war by dropping four bunker-buster bombs and forty Tomahawk missiles on Dora Farms, a palace compound within the al-Dora farming community on the outskirts of the city. The bombs and missiles were meant to kill Saddam Hussein and his two sons, Uday and Qusay, who were supposedly spending the night at the compound. But several of the bombs missed their target, and since neither Saddam nor any member of his family or administration was there, the attack killed none of them. Instead it killed fifteen civilians, including one child. So our very first attack on Iraq killed three civilians for each of the five times our commander in chief pledged to “protect innocent lives in every way possible” just before starting the invasion:

1. **“In the event of conflict, America also accepts our responsibility to protect innocent lives in every way possible.**
2. **“We will respect innocent life in Iraq.”**
3. **“If we were to commit our troops — if we were to commit our troops I would pray for their safety, and I would pray for the safety of innocent Iraqi lives as well.**
4. **“We will do everything we can to minimize the loss of life.”**
5. **“And we will do everything we can, as I mentioned — and I mean this — to protect innocent life.”**

President George W. Bush
Excerpts from news conference of
March 6, 2003

Does anyone out there know the name of the first child we killed in Iraq, or the name of any one of those other fourteen civilians? As the number of American soldiers killed in Iraq rapidly approaches 4000, we should remind ourselves that Iraqi civilians have paid a far higher price. They were our very first victims. Though article 51 (item 5b) of the expanded Geneva Conventions of 1979 plainly forbids any attack that might cause civilian deaths disproportionate to the “direct military objective anticipated,” U.S. forces tried to hit a target ringed by farming families because we had been told that Saddam and his sons might be lurking among them. In other words, just after our commander in chief had repeatedly pledged to do “everything possible” to spare civilians, he sacrificed fifteen of them to the almighty god of suspicion—the same god who told us that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction and was aiming them at us.

Since that time, the war in Iraq has killed more than 80,000 civilians (<http://www.iraqbodycount.org/>), which is almost thirty times the number of people killed on 9/11. And what have we gained by this appalling sacrifice? According to John Burns of the New York Times, who has covered most of the war to date, what Iraqis overwhelmingly want right now is not democracy but a return to the stability they had under—guess who?—Saddam Hussein.

Happy anniversary, Baghdad!