The BLACK CoMMentator

Commentary, analysis and investigations
on issues affecting African Americans
www.blackcommentator.com

Issue 161 – December 1, 2005

Cover Story
Obama Mouths Mush on War
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U.S. Senator Barack Obama has planted his feet deeply inside the Iraq war–prolongation camp of the Democratic Party, the great swamp that, if not drained, will swallow up any hope of victory over the GOP in next year's congressional elections. In a masterpiece of double–speak before the prestigious Council on Foreign Relations, November 22, the Black Illinois lawmaker managed to out–mush–mouth Sen. John Kerry – a prodigious feat, indeed.

Obama's speech had the Democratic Leadership Council's (DLC) brand stamped all over it. Triangulating expertly, Obama first praised the war record of Rep. John Murtha (D–PA), who has called for immediate steps towards U.S. military redeployment out of Iraq, hopefully in six months, then dismissed both Murtha's bill and any hint of "timetables" for withdrawal. In essence, all Obama wants from the Bush regime is that it fess up to having launched the war based on false information, and to henceforth come clean with the Senate on how it plans to proceed in the future. Those Democrats who want to dwell on the past – the actual genesis and rationale for the war, and the real reasons for its continuation – should be quiet.

Both sides are wrong, says Obama – deploying the classic triangulation device – for engaging in a "war of talking points" – "one I am not interested in joining." Then Obama positions himself above the fray:

> "Iraq was a major issue in last year's election. But that election is now over. We need to stop the campaign."

Americans want a "pragmatic solution to the real war we're facing in Iraq."

According to Webster, the term "pragmatic" means "practical as opposed to idealistic." Here is what Obama contends is a practical solution to what ails U.S. policy in Iraq:

> "The President could take the politics out of Iraq once and for all if he would simply go on television and say to the American people 'Yes, we made mistakes. Yes, there are things I would have done differently. But now that we're here, I am willing to work with both

Republicans and Democrats to find the most responsible way out.'"

It's not hard to satisfy Sen. Obama. If Bush would just stop repeating his lies to cover the fact that the Iraq war was premeditated, on the front−burner since his administration came to power, and therefore a crime against peace, well, we could all pretend like nothing criminal had happened – and was still happening.

In the near term Obama, a semanticist with a vengeance, says, "we need to focus our attention on how to reduce the U.S. military footprint in Iraq. Notice that I say 'reduce,' and not 'fully withdraw.'"

"Withdrawal" and "timetables" are bad words, and Obama will have nothing to do with them. The Senator praises the bipartisan Republican Senate bill – meaningless in the practical sense, but psychologically painful to the Bush men – that calls for the administration to report on how it has moved toward "benchmarks" in winding down the Iraq war:

> "What the Administration and some in the press labeled as a 'timetable' for withdrawal was in fact a commonsense statement that: one, 2006 should be the year that the Iraqi government decreases its dependency on the United States; two, that the various Iraqi factions must arrive at a fair political accommodation to defeat the insurgency; and three, the Administration must make available to Congress critical information on reality−based benchmarks that will help us succeed in Iraq."

In other words, treat the Congress as if it is really a lawful branch of government, and declare 2006 a "Year of Living Dangerously" for those Iraqi "factions" that insist on remaining in a state of "dependency." That'll stop the war, Obama thinks.

Of course, the "insurgents" are not a "faction," and must therefore be defeated. On this point, Obama and the Bush men agree:

> "In sum, we have to focus, methodically and without partisanship, on those steps that will: one, stabilize Iraq, avoid all out civil war, and give the factions within Iraq the space they need to forge a political settlement; two, contain and ultimately extinguish the insurgency in Iraq; and three, bring our troops safely home."

Nobody in the White House would argue with any of these points. Point number two in Obama's "pragmatic" baseline is, the containment and elimination of the "insurgency." Of course, one can only do that by continuing the war. Indeed, it appears that Obama and many of his colleagues are more intent on *consulting* the Bush men on the best ways to "win" the war than in effecting an American withdrawal at any foreseeable time.

They want "victory" just as much as the White House; they just don't want the word shouted at every press conference.

These Democrats would "perfect" the process. One might just as well perfect the act of rape.

Gradations of Occupation

In a speech of 4,250 words, Obama manages to only once speak any variant on the word "occupation" – and he puts that in someone else's mouth. He drapes himself in military (and political) camouflage, agreeing with "our top military commander in Iraq…that a key goal of the military was to 'reduce our presence in Iraq, taking away one of the elements that fuels the insurgency: that of the coalition forces as an occupying force.'"

Perhaps Obama and his chosen military mentors believe that an occupation of 80,000 Americans, rather than the current 160,000, is only half an occupation, which can then be scaled down to varying degrees of less–than–occupation. (The rape analogy works well, here.)

Obama sees virtue in a prolonged American military presence:

> "I believe that U.S. forces are still a part of the solution in Iraq. The strategic goals should be to allow for a limited drawdown of U.S. troops, coupled with a shift to a more effective counter–insurgency strategy that puts the Iraqi security forces in the lead and intensifies our efforts to train Iraqi forces.

> "At the same time, sufficient numbers of U.S. troops should be left in place to prevent Iraq from exploding into civil war, ethnic cleansing, and a haven for terrorism."

Here we see contradictions so glaring, that we cannot believe a man of Obama's intelligence to be innocent of rank, purposeful obfuscation. If the U.S. troops are to remain in place in order to "prevent" Iraqis, in and out of government, from taking certain actions, then the Americans are meant to be a classic occupying force – the real power in Iraq.

It becomes clear that, in matters of war and of peace, Barack Obama is engaged in a balancing act – one that he believes can be endlessly perfected by the proper use of speechifying and terminology.

> "We must find the right balance – offering enough security to serve as a buffer and carry out a targeted, effective counter–insurgency strategy, but not so much of a presence that we serve as an aggravation. It is this balance that will be critical to finding our way forward."

Ah, now we understand! Eighty–two percent of Iraqis want the foreigners out of their country because the American and British troops are "aggravating" them. The issue of national self–determination – the right not be bossed around and shot down in one's own country – is a petty aggravation, easily managed by careful calibrations from the occupier's legislative and executive branches. Aggravation is a sad consequence of war, but the Iraqis will have to live with it – or die from it – while Obama and his colleagues get their "pragmatic" thing working.

In his senatorial incarnation, Obama does his best to avoid aggravating anybody – except the people to his left. Certainly, he does not want to aggravate the Bush Pirates, lest they resume saying nasty things about "reasonable" people such as himself. One must be a wordsmith. Obama is up to the task:

> "…we need not a time–*table*, in the sense of a precise date for U.S. troop pull–outs, but a time–*frame* for such a phased withdrawal. [*Italics* added.] More specifically, we need to be very clear about key issues, such as bases and the level of troops in Iraq. We need to say that there will be no bases in Iraq a decade from now and the United States armed forces cannot stand–up and support an Iraqi government in perpetuity – pushing the Iraqis to take ownership over the situation and placing pressure on various factions to reach the broad based political settlement that is so essential to defeating the insurgency."

Not a "table" but a "frame." Now, that's some slick wartime furniture. And the U.S. occupation "time" that will be "framed" (not "tabled") must not exceed a decade. During that "frame" of "time" the U.S. will push the (governmental factions) of Iraqis to "take ownership" of their occupied country. Ownership from whom? From other Iraqis? Or from – heaven forbid – the occupiers?

Sorry Obama – U.S. Cannot Remain in Iraq

There is a point at which the word–smith's specialty becomes so detached from reality that it can only be appreciated as…art, an abstraction, a conjure, a mo–jo. Obama's speech falls in such a category.

The current corporate media interest in Iraq–exit "strategies" was sparked by hawkish Rep. John Murtha's startling turnaround. Obama failed to address a single point made by his fellow Democrat. Murtha provided both a military and political <u>assessment</u>:

> "The United States and coalition troops have done all they can in Iraq. But it's time for a change in direction. Our military is suffering. The future of our country is at risk. We cannot continue on the present course. It is evident that continued military action in Iraq is not in the best interest of the United States of America, the Iraqi people or the Persian Gulf Region….

> "I have concluded the presence of U.S. troops in Iraq is impeding this progress. Our troops have become the primary target of the insurgency. They are united against U.S. forces, and we have become a catalyst for violence. U.S. troops are the common enemy of the Sunnis, the Saddamists and the foreign jihadists. And let me tell you, they haven't captured any in this latest activity, so this idea that they're coming in from outside, we still think [they constitute] only seven percent [of the insurgency].

> "I believe with the U.S. troop redeployment the Iraqi security forces will be incentivized to take control. A poll recently conducted – this is a British poll reported in The Washington Times – over 80 percent of Iraqis are strongly opposed to the presence of coalition forces, and about 45 percent of Iraqi population believe attacks against American troops are justified. I believe we need to turn Iraq over to the Iraqis. I believe before the Iraqi elections, scheduled for mid–December, the Iraqi people and the emerging government must be put on notice. The United States will immediately redeploy – immediately redeploy. No schedule which can be changed, nothing that's controlled by the Iraqis, this is an immediate redeployment of our American forces because they have become the target."

> "All of Iraq must know that Iraq is free – free from a United States occupation, and I believe this will send a signal to the Sunnis to join the political process."

Both Senate and House Democratic leadership have done everything in their power to bury Murtha's evaluation, and to instead engage in fantasies and diversions. They embraced Murtha, and then kissed him off. Obama's speech was a magnificent diversion, 4000–plus words signifying nothing but his dalliances with the Gang of Four presidential aspirants (all DLC) mentioned by the Washington Post, in its <u>coverage</u> of Obama's presentation to the Council on Foreign Relations:

> "Four prospective Democratic presidential candidates – [Sen. Joseph Biden (D–DE)], Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D–N.Y.), Sen. John F. Kerry (D–Mass.) and former North Carolina senator John Edwards – have advocated a more gradual approach, with no sudden steps. Biden called Monday for the withdrawal of 50,000 troops by the end of next year and all but 20,000 to 40,000 out by January 2008."

None of these nonsense numbers have anything to do with *the war*, which is an Iraqi war, the war that Rep. Murtha and his military confidantes know is being lost (or, if you are an Iraqi who wants an independent nation, won).

Everyone with a political antenna understands that Obama is jockeying for position as a VP or presidential nominee–maker in 2008. He has created a political action committee, <u>HopeFund</u>, to finance 14 of his senatorial colleagues – <u>ten</u> of whom are DLC (that's half of the DLC presence in the Senate.) Although not a

formal member of the DLC, Obama's stance on the Iraq war places him squarely in their camp on this issue – and he is advertising the fact. The arc of his ambition dictates his position.

Gaming, When the Game is Over

The corporate–funded DLC will likely doom the Democrats' chance to catch up with U.S. public opinion on Iraq, which is on an irreversible curve toward withdrawal. But U.S. opinion is the least important factor in the equation – it is the imperial tail that is wagged by the Iraqi dog. As Murtha's military buddies informed him, the situation on the ground has deteriorated beyond American control. Their agents and proxies no longer feel beholden to Washington – an imperial center they resent as much as any other Iraqi, personified as it is by racist idiots who insult their servants without care, conscience or even consciousness.

Obama attempts to create new "benchmarks" to replace the Bush men's old "benchmarks" of progress in the war: elections, nominal transfers of power, etc. But it is all too late. Will there be a transition period to disentangle Halliburton and the other corporate contractors from Iraq, so that Iraqis can participate in their own reconstruction, as Obama proposes? How long a transition? There is no time, and never was. The United States invaded Iraq with no base of support within the country – just a gaggle of greedy CIA–funded exiles. The aggression's purpose was to create a corporate–ruled colony – a Houston on the Euphrates that would become a platform to new corporate colonies. It failed. Now, other forces are in play. Game over.

The Iraq adventure was step–one of a game plan – a history–shaking aggression – to destroy the existing world order and transform U.S. military supremacy into imperial sovereignty over vast new stretches of the globe. The people that are referred to as Iraqi "insurgents" stopped it cold, and the whole gambit is about to go into the deep freeze.

At the very start of the invasion, on March 20, 2003, **BC** understood that the Bush men had embarked on a course that would accelerate American imperial decline. The article was titled, "They Have Reached Too Far":

> "War is the great and terrible engine of history. Bush and his Pirates hope to employ that engine to harness Time and cheat the laws of political economy, to leapfrog over the contradictions of their parasitical existence into a new epoch of their own imagining.

> "Instead, they have lunged into the abyss, from which no one will extricate them, for they will be hated much more than feared.

> "In attempting to break humanity's will to resist, the Bush pirates have reached too far."

It is truly pitiful that the Bush men and DLC–centered Democrats cling to the hope that their Iraqi clients will rescue them from the debacle that was foreordained in March, 2003. Barack Obama has definitively joined the ranks of those who seek to prolong the agony. However, **BC**'s critique is not "idealistic," as Sen. Obama might seek to paint it, but practical – "pragmatic," if you will. By late summer of 2006, when voters are deciding what they want their Senate and House to look like, if the Democrats have not caught up to public opinion to offer a tangible and quick exit from Iraq, the Republicans will retain control of both chambers of congress.

All that will be left in November is mush from Kerry, Hillary, Biden, Edwards – and Obama's – mouths.

BC Publishers Glen Ford and Peter Gamble are writing a book titled, Barack Obama and the Crisis in Black Leadership.