

Week 10: Pre-Post War Considerations

At the beginning of the war, the Iraqi army was said to have “219 tanks, 260 armored vehicles, more than 60 artillery pieces and more than 5000 soldiers.” Currently, however, it is believed the army has dropped about 75%. As a group of Marine battalions approached the Iraqi city of Amara, they encountered no resistance, but instead found that “locals around there are saying they stacked their weapons, parked their vehicles, and walked away.” In the village of Kumayt, coalition forces found a “battalion’s worth” of abandoned Iraqi tanks, without a soldier in sight.

Meanwhile, the attack on Baghdad is in full force. Air assaults continue to pummel governmental buildings – recently the Planning Ministry and Information Ministry buildings were destroyed. Abrams tanks and A-10’s provide cover for US and coalition troops as they move deeper into the city.

Yesterday an USAF bomber dropped four 2000-pound bombs over a Baghdad neighborhood where Saddam was believed to be meeting with his sons and other Iraqi leaders. These bombs left a crater 60-feet deep. Whether they actually killed Saddam is yet to be determined.

It seems the end of the war is just around the corner. However, one must be careful to say when. Bush has been fairly consistent in hesitating to promise a quick victory. Even today he said “the only thing I know is he is losing power.” Bush went on to say “We will not stop until they are free. Saddam Hussein will be gone. It may have been yesterday.” Bush is promising victory, but he will not say when.

Assuming the ever more imminent victory, what will be the next step? Bush and Blair met in Northern Ireland today to discuss this question. Their primary focus was on the setup of the new Iraqi government and the role of the United Nations.

It is evident that Bush is intent on retaining the right of the United States and Great Britain to “decide the members and powers of the temporary authority.” From there, as Blair said, “This new Iraq that will emerge is not to be run either by us [meaning the US or Britain] or, indeed, by the UN. That’s is a false choice. It will be run by the Iraqi people.”

President Bush wishes to only allow the United Nations limited involvement in postwar Iraq. This involvement will be limited primarily to humanitarian efforts such as providing food and medicine, as well as offering suggestions to the US and Britain on how to set up the interim governing body.

Further, Bush has to figure out how long to keep US and coalition forces in Iraq once the war is over. There is a possibility of using a peacekeeping force provided by NATO, though NATO, like the UN Security council, is deeply divided over this war.

No matter the course Bush takes with the UN and NATO, the government put in place, presumably a democracy, will face serious obstacles ahead. It will be interesting to see what happens.

Finally, Bush has been questioned about whether he means what he says about the role the UN will play in postwar Iraq. The President responded, “Evidently there’s some skepticism here in Europe about whether or not I mean what I say. Saddam Hussein clearly knows I mean what I say.”