

The victorious trip

The cable agencies were quick to get the news out, news which, though not exactly laughable, are indeed ironic. Everyone said their share. There was competition, that is to say, they competed with one another. Videos of Dick Cheney, the war's intellectual author, and his disciple McCain, also reached us. They appear, with a disciplined air about them, among numerous people, in a kind of classroom fitted with simple chairs, where all manner of military chiefs trained in the art of killing are gathered. I will use a straightforward language and quote the opinions of students, teachers, reporters and institutions to reflect the ugly truth of the situation.

The following quotations were taken from Cheney's speech, televised by the omnipresent CNN:

"We've made progress not only on the security front, but that they've made progress in governing, as well."

"When you come here, after you've been here a few times over the years, and watched these events unfold, and focus on the fact this is the -- this week marks the fifth anniversary since we launched into Iraq in March of '03, all that has transpired, not only in the last, what, 14 or 15 months."

"It's been a remarkable turnaround in the overall security situation and the level of violence, both in terms of military and civilian casualties."

"I think it's been a difficult, challenging, but nonetheless successful endeavor; [...] and that it's been well worth the effort."

"So I'm delighted to be back; pleased to be able to return next week to Washington and report to the President that we are making significant progress in Iraq."

In response to a question, he said:

"I think the fact that the President made the decision that he did a year ago, when he decided not to reduce force levels in Iraq, but rather to increase them, and add additional five combat brigades, that all of that put to rest any notion that either here inside Iraq or in the region people could, "wait us out."

" [...] but also what happened in terms of people being convinced that the U.S. was here to stay, that we were going to complete the mission."

"We have the benefit now of having that year under our belts. So I think now when Americans - [...] talk about what's happening in Iraq, we've got a real success story to point to."

At 9:50 a.m., the CNN interrupted this broadcast to air a report on Bush's remarks on the state of the economy.

"Right now we're dealing with a difficult situation," the President declared.

The broadcast was again interrupted and the reporter added that President Bush had remarked the United State was keeping the economic situation under control, that the country was facing a crisis, though everything was under control or, at least, that these had been the US President's words.

At that moment, the Financial Times was publishing an article by Alan Greenspan which read that "the

current financial crisis in the US is likely to be judged in retrospect as the most wrenching since the end of the second world war (...) The crisis will leave many casualties" What's more, as Bush spoke, the price of gold reached 1,023.68 dollars the troy ounce and oil was at 112 dollars the barrel.

The news continues to reach us non-stop.

"Monday, March 17, 2008. Millions of Iraqis have little or no access to clean water, sanitation and healthcare, five years after the US-led invasion, according to the Red Cross," BBC World reports, to add:

"Iraq's humanitarian situation is 'among the most critical in the world'."

"Millions had been left essentially to fend for themselves."

"Some families spend a third of their average monthly wage of \$150 [...] just buying clean water."

"Healthcare in Iraq was 'now in worse shape than ever' and the services that are available are too expensive for many people."

"Iraqi hospitals lack qualified staff and basic drugs, facilities are not properly maintained and public hospitals provide only 30,000 beds, less than half of the 80,000 needed."

"Many of those killed in the current violence have never been properly identified."

"Better security in some parts of Iraq must not distract attention from the continuing plight of millions of people who have essentially been left to their own devices."

An Amnesty International report run by DPA reads:

"Human rights violations are a constant across the country, where millions of Iraqis depend on humanitarian aid to survive"

"Millions of dollars have been spent on security but today two out of three Iraqis still have no access to safe drinking water and almost one in three of the population -some eight million people- need emergency aid to survive."

"No-one knows exactly how many people have been killed in Iraq since the US-led invasion in March 2003."

"Trials are often unfair, with confessions of guilt reportedly obtained under torture."

ANSA reports that Vice-President Dick Cheney met in Baghdad today with Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Al Maliki, as a series of explosions shook the country's capital, causing at least two deaths and wounding several.

Cheney, the report adds, also met the U.S. November elections Republican candidate John McCain, who arrived in Iraq on Sunday, also as part of an unannounced visit.

Shortly after Cheney's arrival, we read, a violent explosion was reported in the Baghdad downtown area, apparently a mortar blast aimed at the capital's maximum security Green Zone, where the embassies and main government buildings are located.

According to the report, General Kassim Atta, a Baghdad security operations spokesperson, declared that a third bomb went off today in a civilian vehicle located in Tahariyat Square, in the heart of Karrada, causing the death of one civilian and wounding three.

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The U.S. press agency AP reports that:

“Explosions struck Baghdad during twin visits by the presumptive Republican presidential nominee and Vice President Dick Cheney.”

“Helicopter gunship circled over central Baghdad and the heavily fortified Green Zone, but no details were immediately available on the cause of the explosions.”

“It is Cheney's third vice presidential trip to Iraq where 160,000 American troops are deployed and the U.S. death toll is nearing 4,000.”

“McCain, who has linked his political future to U.S. military success in Iraq, met Monday with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki shortly before the Iraqi leader began separate talks with Cheney.”

“Al-Maliki said he and the vice president discussed ongoing negotiations over a long-term security agreement between the two countries.”

“The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad said it could not confirm reports of a rocket attack on the Green Zone after Cheney's arrival.”

DPA reports on and elaborates on these events further down its article:

“Triple bombings Monday left two people dead and four injured across the Iraqi capital Baghdad” [...] “shortly after the arrival of US Vice-President Dick Cheney to the Iraqi capital.”

“In the upmarket western Mansour district, a bomb attack on a police patrol left a policeman dead and another injured.”

“In another blast [...] three civilians were injured [...] in the [...] Zayouna district [...]. In central Baghdad, a civilian was killed and three people were injured [...] said General Qasim Atta [...]”

But the bombings also took place outside the Iraqi capital:

One of the attacks in Kerbala, 110 kilometers from Baghdad, caused 42 deaths and wounded 58, EFE reported.

The other dispatch added that it was a suicide attack perpetrated by a woman, who detonated an explosive charge which was attached to her body.

In this connection, ANSA reported that a suicide bombing caused between 25 and 36 deaths and wounded dozens today.

In light of these news, which arrive by the hour, was Cheney's a victorious trip or not?

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