



Operation Iraqi Freedom: What Went Right, What Went Wrong, and Why

Walter J. Boyne

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No war has ever had the intensive media coverage of the 2003 war in Iraq, and none has ever had such monumental second-guessing. Months before the war began, domestic and international pundits painted a gloomy picture of a new Vietnam or of a nuclear Armageddon that would see Israel reduced to ruins.

The war started with a brilliant series of pre-emptive bangs that shattered Iraqi leadership and seized the most valuable areas of Iraq. How did the US military machine, assumed to have insufficient air power, too few troops, and little momentum take a country the size of California within three weeks?

In the 1991 victory in the Gulf War, the United States lead a much larger coalition force into a heavy air campaign followed by a lightening quick ground campaign. In the years that followed, the United States military experienced a continuing series of reductions in the national defense budget.

What was left unrecorded was the incredible degree of competence with which the US military leadership managed the reduction in resources, balancing force structures against personnel requirements against procurement needs and logistic realities.

Any one considering the great military victory achieved in Iraq must ask the following questions: Who was bright enough to plan to have the weapons systems in the right place at the right time? Who orchestrated this vast complex array of sophisticated military machinery-ships, submarines, missiles, armor, and soldiers-all needing fuel, ammunition and water?

The answer is the much-maligned civil and military leaders of the American defense establishment, working in concert with the most advanced defense-based corporations in the world. While there were those anxious to parade the iniquities of a two-billion dollar bomber, most often failed to appreciate the genius required to conceive of, much less create a system which can use a satellite to send signals to a B-1B to program a precision guided missile to take out a Soviet T-72 tank parked in a mosque-without damaging the mosque!

Admittedly, there were lapses in the Iraqi war, such as the looting of museums by members of the Ba'ath party just a day after many had declared Baghdad liberated and the raids on hospitals, another problem that could have easily been remedied by a show of U.S. presence and force. And there were technological complications as well, including the aching misfortune of death by friendly fire. The author deals with these shortcomings in a straightforward manner.

Operation Iraqi Freedom: What Went Right and Why; What Went Wrong and Why gives intimate insight into the way in which the armed services, particularly the United States Air Force, managed to overcome genuine budgetary, political, and military difficulties to create the finest military force in the world, one that operated with the most extreme care to avoid collateral damage and to prevent loss of life.

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