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EDITORIALS

4,000

Iraq war rages, and death toll rises.
At what point do we say, 'Enough is enough'?

How many more American lives are worth losing in Iraq? Another 1,000? 2,000? 5,000?

A roadside bomb that went off in southern Baghdad late Easter Sunday killed four American soldiers, raising the death toll there since the invasion five years ago to 4,000. There also have been 29,000 American military service members injured, many permanently because of limbs blasted off their bodies or brains damaged by shrapnel or explosive shock waves. The figures do not include those who will struggle with post-traumatic stress syndrome.

As high as it is, the price in lives and injuries would be bearable if we could point to some gain that made it worthwhile. Some argue that the gain has been no more terrorist attacks on the United States since we invaded. However, Iraq had nothing to do with the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack — or any other attack — on this country. And “victory” in Iraq will provide no guarantee that terrorists elsewhere will not launch some sort of attack on us here.

A Gallup Poll this month reported that 59 percent of Americans have concluded that invading Iraq was a mistake, and 54 percent said history will judge it a failure.

Asked about polls consistently showing that about two-thirds of Americans say the war in Iraq is not worth fighting, Vice President Dick Cheney last week answered, openly, “So?”

The reporter asked, “So, you don’t care what the American people think?”

The vice president was candid:

“No. I think you cannot be blown off course by the fluctuations in the public opinion polls.”

But the judgment of the American people that the war in Iraq was a mistake has been consistent, not fluctuating, for the past two years or so. In fact, Americans made their feelings known in the 2006 elections when they turned out the Republican majority in Congress.

Though the change in U.S. tactics in Iraq implemented by Gen. David Petraeus, along with an increase in the number of troops, helped dampen the violence there since last year, we’ve seen little or no progress on the political front. Various Iraqi factions continue to haggle and show no urgency about working out their differences peacefully. And the violence may be escalating: At least 35 Iraqis died Sunday in suicide bombings, mortar fire or in gunfire from men in cars who fired into an outdoor market.

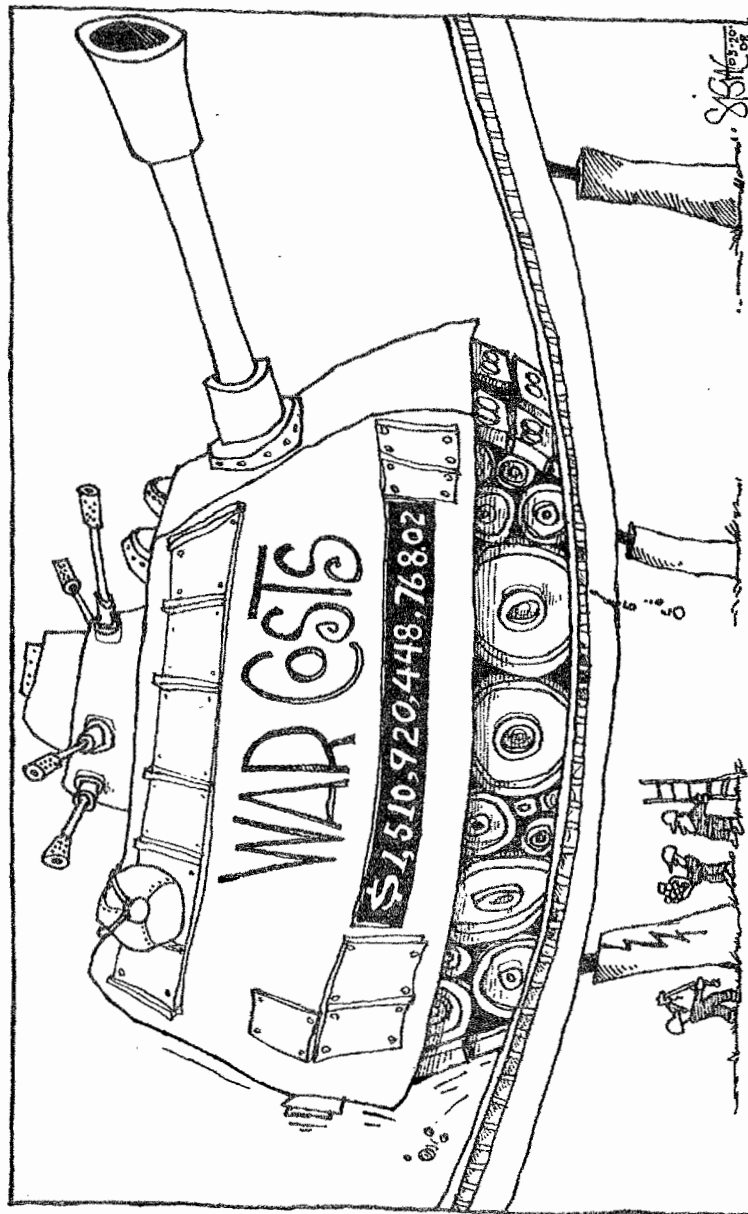
President Bush has made any number of fatal misjudgments about Iraq, and he sticks to this one: He’s not willing to begin a withdrawal because that, in his view, would mean losing. But neither has he ever been willing to go to Congress and the American people and call for the military build-up, volunteers and spending that would be required to truly impose American will.

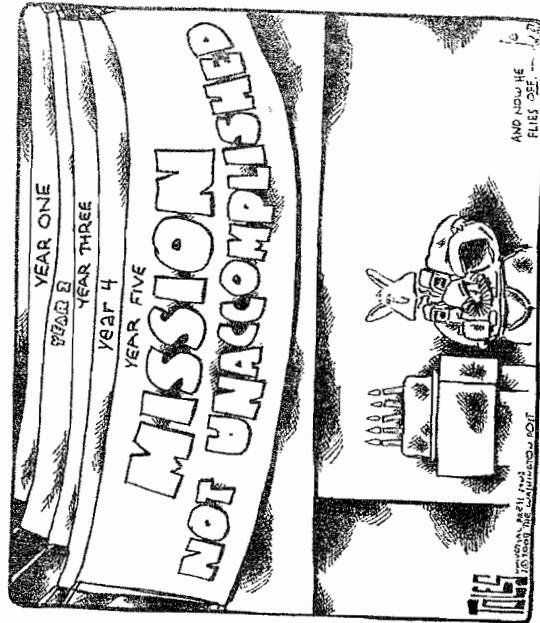
So he settles for a stalemate and waits for his term to run out. The American public has tuned out the war and worries first and most about the economy.

Only the troops and their families continue to sacrifice. Four thousand, and more to come.

COMMENTARY

SIGNE WILKINSON | PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS





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