

**Rep. Woolsey Sept. 15, 2005 Iraq Hearing  
Testimony of Former United States Senator Max Cleland (D-Georgia)**

**Iraq: A No-Win, No-End War  
Time For An Exit Strategy**

**“The public has been led into a trap from which it will be hard to escape with dignity and honor. They have been tricked into it by a steady withholding of information... The Baghdad communiqués are belated, insincere, incomplete. Things have been far worse than we have been told, our administration more bloody and inefficient than the public knows... We are today not far from a disaster.”**

T. E. Lawrence, (Lawrence of Arabia)

*The Sunday Times of London*, August 22, 1920.

In terms of the Iraq war, I agree with my distinguished former colleague and Vietnam veteran, United States Senator Chuck Hagel, that the war in Iraq is beginning to look a lot like Vietnam. As a matter of fact, I feel like I am living in a time warp. We have seen a President of the United States declare a threat to our nation and attack a country, which did not attack us. The pretext for the invasion was later discovered to be false. The Secretary of Defense and his civilian appointees disregarded the advice of top military brass and recommended a minimal force for invasion. It was discovered later, much to our country's shagrin, that the civilian leadership had grossly underestimated the guerrilla war in which our nation found itself. In this war, American forces, civilians and local troops sympathetic to the American side experienced assassinations, suicide bombs and other acts of terror.

The military called for more troops. The public got weary of the casualties which were much more than expected. The civilian leadership was unrepentant. The President called for patience from the American people and for staying the course. The war drew out to a devastating conclusion for the United States. America was torn apart by the war. Citizen was set against citizen. Veteran was set against veteran. It was America's worst foreign policy defeat.

The war was Vietnam. The President was Lyndon Johnson. The Secretary of Defense was Robert McNamara. His civilian leadership at the Pentagon was known as the Whiz Kids. The military commander in Vietnam was General William Westmorland.

Now, I am seeing this movie all over again. I can't stand by silently while thousands of American soldiers risk their lives—again—for a no-win, no-end war. Our military personnel are the bravest men and women I have ever seen go into harms' way for this country.

I especially admire the courage of those I see at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Bethesda Naval Hospital missing arms, legs and eyes. Other returning soldiers suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder are now being sent back for their third tour. These young men and women will all carry the war with them to their graves. They are special young Americans and every one of us owes every one of them our support, love and encouragement. Now, however, I have concluded that the best way to support our troops is with an exit strategy from Iraq.

Again, this is a time warp for me. We went into Vietnam mostly alone. We came out solely alone. We went into Iraq virtually alone. With Prime Minister Tony Blair talking about pulling out his troops next year from Iraq, we are on our own again. Like Vietnam, in Iraq we dissed the UN and our NATO allies -- the very people now we need for help in an exit strategy.

As distressing as our current situation is, we still have time to make sure Iraq does not end like Vietnam. We need an exit strategy we choose or it will certainly be chosen for us. The question about Iraq is not whether we will withdraw our forces but when. More than 100 members out of the Iraqi parliament have urged the US to fully withdraw its military forces from Iraq. It is now time to seek what international support we can get for our withdrawal. We need to map out a strategy that works for us and turn Iraq over to the Iraqis. Then we can turn our attention to two real tasks before us. First, we need to kill or capture Osama bin Laden and his terrorist cadre who planned the attack on the United States on September 11. They continue to pose a threat to us, our allies and our interests around the world. The sooner we do this the better off we will be — the safer we will be. We should have killed or captured Bin Laden and his cadre in the mountains of Tora Bora in Afghanistan when we had the chance. We would have done it had it not been for poor planning and inadequate US forces caused by already preconceived notions of launching an attack on Iraq. I agree with former White House terrorism advisor, Richard Clarke, who in his book, *Against All Enemies*, stated that attacking Iraq after 9/11 was like attacking Mexico after Pearl Harbor. It made no sense what so ever.

The second big challenge our country faces is to re-build a number of our cities and at least three of our states after Hurricane Katrina. We cannot do this as long as we continue to make Iraq the 51<sup>st</sup> state! It is time we looked after our own backyard. We are spending more money in Iraq than rebuilding New Orleans, Biloxi, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. It is time to bring our troops home — especially the National Guard that was created to guard America and to deal with disasters in our own country rather than being sent to die in the deserts in Iraq. It is time to put America first!

Iraq does not have to be another Vietnam. The war in Iraq does not have to drag on forever. It is not too late to learn from our own history. Why do I urge this course of action for our nation now? Because I have seen this movie before. I know how it ends.