

## **OBAMA'S BETTER JUDGMENT ON THE IRAQ WAR**

by Anthony K. Lee

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Some people say Hillary Clinton would make a better President than Barack Obama because she is more "qualified." So far, she has proven herself more qualified in one main area--helping to involve the United States in criminal, disastrous wars. I'm referring, of course, to the war in Iraq.

Here is only a partial list of the devastation unleashed by the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis dead; Iraq's economy, infrastructure, and society decimated; the country turned into a nightmare of sectarian massacres and ethnic cleansing. Thousands of American troops dead; thousands more maimed and injured; and hatred toward the United States in the rest of the world at the highest level in history.

The financial price is also staggering. So far, the U.S. government has poured 500 billion dollars into this swamp of blood and despair. Each day of the Iraq occupation costs another \$150-200 million to taxpayers. Some estimate that the war will end up costing \$1-2 trillion or even more-- money which the U.S. government must borrow from foreign lenders. And while we ordinary citizens finance the war and bear the debts, defense contractors profit greatly from the killing and destruction. This is what Senator Hillary Clinton voted for in October 2002, when she voted for a congressional resolution giving President Bush the power to order an attack on Iraq, which Bush then proceeded to do in March 2003.

Senator Clinton now claims Bush misused and abused his authority in ordering the invasion. She claims she voted for the resolution to increase diplomatic pressure on the Iraqi government. Her claim is without justification. The war resolution she supported was entitled, "Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002." What else did she think she was voting for? The fact is that Congress voted for war based on lies. For instance, Senator Clinton insisted Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. No one believes that anymore. In May 2004, Bush himself joked that maybe the weapons (which no one could find, because they did not exist) were hidden somewhere in the Oval Office.

Senator Clinton also praised Secretary of State Colin Powell's February 2003 misleading speech favoring war at the United Nations as "compelling." It is clear that those who voted for attacking Iraq were wrong. On the other hand, my Harvard Law School classmate Barack Obama opposed the war from the beginning. In October 2002, while still an Illinois State Senator, Obama spoke publicly against going to war. At the time, the Bush administration was rallying the public behind the war, falsely stating that the Iraqi regime had a hand in the September 11, 2001 attacks.

People who opposed attacking Iraq--a country that had not attacked the United States--were denounced as traitors. Obama's campaign for the United States Senate was still in the near future. It would have been easy enough, and far safer politically, for Obama to come out in favor of war. Senator Obama, however, stuck by his beliefs. The position he took over five years ago has been vindicated: The occupation of Iraq has been a disaster. Polls indicate that a majority of Americans now oppose the war and believe it was a mistake. For showing his better judgment on the decision to go to war, Senator Obama is more qualified than Senator Clinton to be our next President.