

## Guess who is praying?

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Article

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### **Both the American President and the British Prime Minister have claimed that they had divine guidance to invade Iraq.**

THREE years after the invasion of Iraq by the so-called coalition of the willing at the instigation of the Anglo-American leaders, the situation can be likened to a madhouse far worse than previous years.

Despite claims of progress on the democratic front, the number of deaths continues to rise unabated. Only this time, the threat of sectarian war looms on the horizon, pitting the "liberated" Iraqis against each other.

Even the US President was quoted as admitting that some people are "trying to sow the seeds of sectarian violence". Who that "someone" is anybody's guess.

As an indication of the worsening situation, the much revered Golden Mosque in Samarra was a target of violence and scores of people were killed last month.

Many fear that Iraq may be pushed into civil war fuelled by retaliatory attacks and counter-attacks.

While the ordinary Iraqis have practically no choice, this is not the case for the invading forces. Some have already left while others are contemplating doing so in due course.

In all probability, the US will be the last to leave though some wish it was sooner.

An "unofficially approved" survey conducted by Zogby International/Le Moyne College, involving 1,000 respondents from the US military personnel in Iraq, showed that an overwhelming majority of the troops believe that the US should withdraw from the country within the next year (Financial Times Asia, March 1). And some 30 per cent think the US should leave immediately.

According to another survey of 222,000 Iraq war veterans published in the February issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association, more than a third sought psychological counselling soon after returning from Iraq.



**ARMED TO THE TEETH: A tank backing American soldiers patrolling the streets of Baghdad.**

One in five returning soldiers met the US military's "risk criteria for a mental health concern" such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or depression. One in 10 were actually diagnosed with the condition, many after witnessing people being killed or wounded.

These are not the only cases of mental crisis. The Wall Street Journal (March 7) ran a story entitled: "Iraq suffers from crisis of scarred psyches".

It cited a recent study of 1,000 randomly selected people across five Baghdad neighbourhoods where 890 reported having experienced a violent incident firsthand. This includes all 27 children under the age of 12 in the sampling.

An Iraqi psychiatrist has predicted that it would take "a generation or more" for the country's collective psyche to recover from the violence.

Now, British Prime Minister Tony Blair has suggested that his decision to go to war in Iraq was somehow God-inspired.

On ITV1's Parkinson chat show in Britain, he said: "I think if you have faith about these things, then you realise that that judgment is made by other people... and if you believe in God, it's made by God as well."

This drew immediate criticisms from many parties, including those whose sons were killed in Iraq. One of them said: "A good Christian wouldn't be for this war."

Another regarded the comments as "abhorrent" and that God was used in vain as a get-out for total strategic failure.

Last year, US President George W. Bush had also suggested God told him to "end the tyranny" in Iraq, according to The Guardian.

Indeed, many wondered how the two leaders had received similar divine inspiration, rekindling talk that it came to them when they prayed together in 2002 at Bush's ranch in Texas.

One thing is increasingly clear: The Iraq war is a catastrophic political blunder and God has nothing to do with it.

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