

US Congress hails Washington's Iraqi stooge

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The degradation of the US political process found grotesque expression Thursday in the joint session of Congress convened to pay homage to Ayad Allawi.

Congressmen and senators as well as members of the Bush cabinet and the Joint Chiefs of Staff repeatedly leapt to their feet in standing ovations as the “interim prime minister” of Iraq proclaimed his commitment to “freedom and democracy,” and praised the US occupation as the country’s liberation and a decisive blow in the “worldwide war against terrorists.”

The news media, with very few exceptions, treated Allawi deferentially, accepting his status as a visiting head of state and quoting him at length on the policies of his government.

Allawi’s visit was marred by one minor detail: his right arm was in a cast, providing for awkward moments as Democrats and Republicans reached out to shake his hand following the speech.

Asked about the injury by *New York Times* correspondent John Burns, Allawi replied: “I’ve been shooting people, didn’t you know?” It was subsequently reported that he had broken his wrist by slamming it against his desk while screaming at Iraqi subordinates.

Burns noted that Allawi’s sardonic remark referred to reports that, shortly before he was installed as interim prime minister in June, he personally executed six Iraqis imprisoned for taking part in the resistance to the US occupation. “The story quickly faded,” Burns wrote, “with American officials saying they had no information to confirm it.”

The story was broken by *Sydney Morning Herald* correspondent Paul McGeough, a former editor of the paper, who based the report on two independent witnesses who said they were present at the killings and provided detailed and mutually corroborative accounts.

“The prisoners—handcuffed and blindfolded—were lined up against a wall in a courtyard adjacent to the

maximum-security block in which they were held,” McGeough wrote. “Informants told the *Herald* that Dr. Allawi shot each young man in the head as about a dozen Iraqi policemen and four Americans from the prime minister’s personal security team watched in stunned silence.”

This explosive story did not “fade,” it was deliberately buried by the US media, which has shown little interest in probing the ugly reality behind the Bush administration’s democratic pretensions in Iraq.

The man greeted with stormy applause on Capitol Hill is, to put it plainly, a sadistic thug. Another report that received scant attention in the press involved Allawi personally chopping off a prisoner’s hand in an attempt to force a confession to “terrorist” activities.

Allawi was handpicked by Washington for both his unwavering loyalty and his cold-blooded ruthlessness. Though he has been accurately described by one of his former CIA handlers as a man with “blood on his hands,” members of Congress had no compunction about grasping his one good hand in theirs.

Who is this supposed champion of democracy? Allawi got his start as an agent of the Iraqi secret police, first intimidating fellow students in Iraq and then, after being sent to London, assuming the title of president of the European chapter of the Association of Iraqi Students Abroad. In this capacity, he functioned as a hit man for the Baathist regime, hunting down and killing dissidents.

After breaking with the Baghdad regime in the early 1970s, Allawi pursued a political course that would remain constant for the next 30 years. He sold his services to Western and Arab intelligence agencies—Britain’s MI6, the Saudi secret service and the CIA—while trying to convince the imperialist powers that he could bring about a coup in Iraq, removing Saddam Hussein from power while preserving intact the repressive forces of the Baathist

regime.

As an asset of the CIA, Allawi received a regular paycheck from Washington. This was increased following Clinton's signing of the Iraqi Liberation Act of 1998, which recognized Allawi's CIA front, the Iraqi National Accord, as a group approved for funding. In return, he and the INA staged limited operations in Iraq, which included the terrorist bombings of school buses and movie theaters.

Following the US invasion, Allawi returned to Iraq after three decades in exile. He bided his time as his hated rival—and cousin—Ahmed Chalabi, the Pentagon's favored stooge, fell from grace and was cast aside, amid recriminations over the abject failure of the US occupation.

Allawi was tapped by Washington to fill the post of interim prime minister. He has no popular base. Indeed, he is one of the most widely hated political figures in the country. His movements in Iraq are restricted to a heavily fortified compound ringed by US tanks and security forces, punctuated by occasional trips in which he is transported by US military convoys.

The US occupation authorities' attraction to Allawi is based in large measure on his connections with former Baathists, secret police operatives and army commanders—elements they are seeking to reactivate in reconstructing the country's repressive forces. They also know that he will rubber-stamp any repressive military action ordered by the Pentagon.

This will become increasingly important as the US launches a brutal counter-offensive against the Iraqi resistance, with the aim of seizing back control of cities and regions that have been turned into “no-go” areas for US troops. Military commanders have indicated that this onslaught is planned for after the US election in November.

Allawi's appearance has little parallel in US history. One might compare it to Hitler inviting Quisling to address the Reichstag and declare his gratitude to Germany for the Nazi occupation of Norway. However, unlike his Iraqi counterpart, the Norwegian fascist Quisling was a political actor in his own country before the occupation. He didn't return from decades in exile as a camp follower of the German invaders.

The speech given by Allawi could have been written—and in large part surely was—by the Bush-Cheney campaign. It included multiple references to

September 11 and the “war on terrorism,” as well as assertions that the decision to go to war was right and that the world is “better off without Saddam Hussein.”

This Republican political stratagem—like so many before it—has left the Democrats flummoxed. In response to Allawi's speech, Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry limited himself to saying it was designed to “put the best face” on a disastrous situation for the US in Iraq.

Neither he nor any other leading Democrat dares state the obvious: Allawi is a paid stooge who has no popular support. He is an assassin and a terrorist, and his selection by Washington is an abomination that merely confirms the criminal character of the Iraq war.

Before the invasion, neither the Democrats nor the media showed any inclination to seriously question the Bush administration's fraudulent claims about weapons of mass destruction. Now they have no desire to expose the vile nature of the puppet regime that Washington is trying to cobble together in Baghdad.

To do so would only confirm that the US conquest of Iraq is an imperialist and colonialist venture, embarked on to grab control of the country's oil reserves and impose a regime that will follow Washington's dictates.

Whatever his criticisms of the Bush administration's handling of the war, when Kerry says, “We must complete the mission,” he is endorsing the same predatory war aims. That is why he and the Democrats participate in the fiction that the thug Allawi is a legitimate leader of the Iraqi people.



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