

Kerry rejects call for Iraq troop withdrawal

Defeated Democratic candidate on “Meet the Press”

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For any of his erstwhile supporters who cling to illusions about what might have been had the vote gone a bit differently on November 2, the defeated Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry provided a definitive answer Sunday.

Appearing on the NBC television news program “Meet the Press,” Kerry was shown a videotape of his fellow Massachusetts senator, Edward Kennedy, calling for a timetable for the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq, beginning with the immediate removal of at least 12,000.

“Do you agree with Senator Kennedy that 12,000 American troops should leave at once?” asked NBC’s Tim Russert.

“No,” replied Kerry.

“Do you believe there should be a specific timetable of withdrawal of American troops?” Russert continued.

“No,” Kerry repeated.

The tone of the televised exchange was the exact opposite of ambush journalism. It was evident that Kerry welcomed the opportunity to disassociate himself from Kennedy’s proposal and embrace a policy that, in all essentials, is indistinguishable from that of the Bush administration—one that means US military occupation for years to come.

At the same time, the establishment media was anxious to get the Democratic standard-bearer on record, affirming the unity of the two parties of big business on the all-important issue of the continuing war in Iraq.

“Now, obviously, you’ve got to provide security and stability in order to turn this over to the Iraqis and to be able to withdraw our troops,” Kerry declared in the interview. Asked if he would vote to approve the Bush administration’s request for \$80 billion in additional funding for the Iraq war, he responded, “The likelihood

is yes.”

Providing “security and stability” is a euphemism for crushing the resistance to US occupation. It means killing thousands upon thousands more Iraqis and sacrificing hundreds, if not thousands, more US soldiers. This is what the \$80 billion will pay for.

The revealing interview follows the trajectory of the Kerry campaign. The senator won the Democratic primary by posturing as an antiwar candidate and denouncing Bush for “misleading” the American people, but once he emerged as the undisputed front-runner, he rushed to declare his commitment to the occupation, and even condemned the Bush administration for failing to send enough troops.

He turned from trying to hoodwink the overwhelmingly antiwar Democratic base to assuring the US ruling elite that he could be trusted to prosecute the war, and do it more competently than the Republican incumbent. In granting the interview, Kerry was merely dotting the “i’s” and crossing the “t’s” on the policy that he advanced in the run-up to the election.

Now, in defeat, Kerry speaks of the election as a “mandate for unity” and “finding common ground.” That ground, evidently, is to be found on the killing fields of Iraq.

Kerry lost the election in November because the Democratic Party was unable and unwilling to offer any genuine alternative to the policies of the Bush administration. The Democratic presidential candidate embraced the fraud of the “global war on terror” and the lie that the colonial war to conquer Iraq and its oil reserves is part of this supposed struggle against terrorism.

Interviewer Russert quoted to Kerry an article that appeared in *Newsweek* magazine citing a post-election

meeting of Democratic Party supporters at AFL-CIO headquarters in Washington. Kerry, according to the report, “told the group they needed new ways to make people understand they didn’t like abortion. Democrats also needed to welcome more pro-life candidates into the party.” The magazine reported, “[T]here was a gasp in the room.”

Asked if the report was accurate, Kerry replied, “It’s pretty accurate, sure.” He went on to say he would support federal legislation to require parental notification of planned abortions, a measure that would drastically undermine abortion rights, threaten the health of minors, and criminalize a legal form of medical care.

The lesson drawn by Kerry and other leading Democrats from their defeat in the 2004 election is not to advance a program to counter the reactionary social policies of the Bush administration or end the war in Iraq. Rather, they are convinced that the party must turn even further to the right, competing with the Republicans in the use of “values” demagoguery and appeals to religious backwardness.



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