

Where, Not When by Dan Jacoby

There's a lot of buzz about when the Bush administration is going to turn Saddam Hussein over to some American-appointed Iraqi interim governing body. The question people should be asking, however, is not when we're going to turn him over, but where, and to whom.

Slobodan Milosevic was the tyrannical leader of a country who attacked his neighbors, slaughtered thousands of people, and was eventually captured. He was quite properly turned over to the World Court in The Hague to stand trial for crimes against humanity. Saddam Hussein deserves the same fate. But we're not going to send him to Holland, we're keeping him in Iraq.

Why?

Could it be that the World Court cannot impose a death sentence? After all, George W. Bush and his team (including John Ashcroft) sent a 17-year-old kid to stand trial in the place they deemed "most likely" to execute him, and failed. They must be gnashing their teeth over that one, and desperate to execute someone.

Could it be that they're just unwilling to let anyone they don't handpick to have any say in anything related to Iraq? Through viceroy Paul Bremer, they've done everything they can to control who runs Iraq, who gets to do business there, and who gets to take the profits – and the souvenirs – out.

Chances are neither of these is the real reason for not turning Hussein over to the proper authority. Chances are that George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and others are afraid of what will come out in a real, public trial.

They could be afraid Saddam Hussein will talk about the chemical weapons Donald Rumsfeld sold him during the Reagan administration, just so he could use them on Iranian soldiers.

They could be afraid that Hussein will give details of how George H. W. Bush helped put him in power in the first place, and then fought to get rid of him when he refused to be a mere puppet regime.

They could be afraid that Hussein will explain how the U.S. under George H. W. Bush refused to let Kuwait pay the \$2 billion we made them promise Iraq to help fund their war against Iran. And then Hussein will explain how he asked George H. W. Bush and Secretary of State James Baker if he could invade Kuwait – and they gave him permission. (Yep, Hussein "miscalculated" on that one – he thought Bush and Baker meant what they said.)

In short, George W. Bush and his team are afraid that twenty-five years of Republican foreign policy will finally be given the critical scrutiny it needs. They're afraid that America, like the rest of the world, will finally realize how incompetent and insipid the Republicans are.