

In ESSENCE

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FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Iraq's Forgotten Refugees

THE SOURCE: "The Iraqi Refugee Disaster" by Ben Sanders and Merrill Smith, in *World Policy Journal*, Fall 2007.

THE NEAR-TOTAL NEGLECT OF the two million refugees—about seven percent of the Iraqi population—who have fled since the American intervention in 2003 has had one perversely positive outcome, write Ben Sanders and Merrill Smith, editors of *World Refugee Survey*. The world's negligence has spared the Iraqis from being herded into United Nations-organized refugee camps, there to be trapped for years—or generations.

The tide of refugees from Iraq is far greater than that from the Vietnam War, but the American response has been weak. Between 1975 and 1980, the United States resettled 322,000 of the global total of 583,000 Indochina refugees. It paid for more than half of the budget of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). But

Washington has accepted only about 2,000 Iraqi refugees for resettlement. It contributed about a third of the UN refugee budget in 2007.

America has been permitted such a response because this refugee crisis has been invisible—no overcrowded ships wallowing toward the Philippines, no desperate boat people being robbed by pirates. Instead, Iraqis have fled in cars and taxis, renting apartments in the slums of Damascus, Amman, Cairo, and Beirut. An estimated 40 percent of Iraqi professionals have left, trying to live on savings and jobs in the underground economy. In many families, the authors say, "chil-

The near-total neglect of Iraq's two million refugees has, at least, spared them from being herded into United Nations refugee camps.

dren are now the main breadwinners since parents have less fear of authorities catching them without papers."

[Since Sanders and Smith wrote their article, thousands of refugees have returned to Iraq, though UNHCR says the flow subsided in December.]

The world has about 14 million refugees—Eritreans who fled to Sudan since 1968, Burmese in Thailand since 1986, Palestinians living in camps since 1948. The camps are often wretched places, scenes of abuse of women and children, illness, and poverty. The militias and guerilla groups that control many of the camps use the international aid that keeps the refugees alive to prolong armed struggles. Once established, refugee camps are hard to close. Host governments and others want to keep aid flowing.

The United States can save the Iraqis from this fate, the authors say. It can join with other donors to reimburse host countries for the costs of education, health care, and other social services for the refugees—while insisting that the host nations allow them to work legally. The State Department recently gave \$30 million

toward the schooling of Iraqi refugee children in addition to the \$150 million already available for Iraqis forced from their homes. But such a sum is likely only a down payment. Jordan and Syria alone claim that hosting Iraqi refugees costs each of them \$1 billion a year.

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

The New Infantry Epoch

THE SOURCE: "Infantry and National Priorities" by Maj. Gen. Robert H. Scales (Ret.), in *Armed Forces Journal*, Dec. 2007.

AN EPOCHAL SHIFT IN THE immemorial cycle of war is under way, writes retired major general Robert H. Scales, the former commandant of the Army War College. The infantry is back. America's enemies have learned that they can't win blitzkrieg-age wars, so they no longer fight them. They have moved the battlefields to cities, jungles, and mountains, where the U.S. military's technologically superior machines are ineffective.

"The enemy chooses to fight as infantry because he can win the infantry fight," Scales says, and America's experience in Iraq and Afghanistan shows that the nation has no choice but to meet its opponent on uncongenial terrain.

In recent wars, he writes, infantry soldiers



Soldiers patrol near the Baghdad train station in 2005. America's enemies are forcing foot soldiers to bear the brunt of the latest iteration of war. Four-fifths of combat deaths occur among infantry.

have suffered four of five combat deaths even though they make up less than four percent of U.S. military personnel. In wars waged with armor, airpower, and other heavy armaments, the kill ratios were skewed in America's favor: In the World War II Pacific cam-

paign, 13 enemy soldiers died for every American killed; in Europe against the Germans, the ratio was 11 to 1; in Korea, 13 to 1. But in the second battle of Fallujah, in November 2004, the ratio in close combat narrowed to 9 to 1, and for soldiers fighting inside buildings, the ratios were "much closer to parity," Scales writes.

For too long, the Defense Department has spent a major share of its budget on aircraft and ships—big-ticket items made by big corporations. Now it needs to put its money where its casualties are, Scales writes. The country needs to invest more in lighter, fuel-efficient vehicles that can operate in distant locales for extended periods, low-flying aerial drones to protect the lives of

EXCERPT

Fathers of Defeat

The American public, not the timeless nature of war, has changed. We no longer easily accept human imperfections. We care less about correcting problems than assessing blame—in postmodern America it is defeat that has a thousand fathers, while the notion of victory is an orphan.

—VICTOR DAVIS HANSON, author of *A War Like No Other: How the Athenians and Spartans Fought the Peloponnesian War* (2005), in *Claremont Review of Books* (Winter 2007–08)