

**THE BLOG**

# 654,000 Stuffs Happen

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By Marty Kaplan

10/11/2006 09:44 am ET | Updated May 25, 2011

Since the Iraq invasion, 654,000 more Iraqis have died because of it than would have died in a comparable period before it, according to a new Johns Hopkins University study just published on the online site of the respected British medical journal, *The Lancet*.

The Bush Administration pegs the number around 30,000. Percentages can't do justice to that discrepancy.

The Johns Hopkins findings will no doubt be roundly attacked, but they can't be blamed on mischief by George Soros or the liberal media. And even if you think the number should be a tad lower — say, half-a-million civilian casualties — it's hard to dismiss it, as Rummy did with the initial post-invasion looting and violence, as the bad stuff that happens to good liberators.

Half-a-million is the kind of shocking casualty toll we might have anticipated from one of Saddam's WMDs being sold to al-Qaeda and being unleashed on an American city.

Half-a-million dead from violence is what you might expect from a campaign of genocide, ethnic cleansing, a horrible civil war.

The one thing it's not is acceptable collateral damage from a humanitarian effort to liberate a people from a dictator.

The only way it becomes acceptable is by so dehumanizing the dead — depicting them as crazed fundamentalists who care more about the hereafter than life on earth — that you push from your mind the possibility that you share 99 percent of your DNA with them; that they have souls, too.

None of this, of course, counts the tens of thousands of Americans killed and wounded in pursuit of Bush's "freedom agenda."

Americans have always been willing to pay any price to defend our own freedom. Only now are we beginning to grasp the unspeakable price that others have to pay when a nation permits an Oedipal drama in the White House to be recklessly played out on the world stage with big boys' toys.

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