

Baghdad Bob, Redux  
by John Littig

Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf was Saddam Hussein's Information Minister at the outset of the Iraq war. He gave daily live TV news briefings on the invasion. His preposterous claims led to his receiving the nickname "Baghdad Bob" in the U.S. In the U.K. he was known as "Comical Ali," a play on words and allusion to Saddam's uncle, "Chemical Ali," who was fond of using poison gas against enemies of the Iraqi regime.

Baghdad Bob announced that rather than face the invincible Iraqi army, the American invaders were "committing suicide by the hundreds." Furthermore, the Americans "are going to surrender or be burned in their tanks." He announced on live TV that there were no Americans in Baghdad, even as American tanks could be seen approaching from behind him as he was speaking.

Baghdad Bob's information was always wrong, but his style was endearing. He became something of a cult figure. He appeared on T-shirts, coffee mugs, web-sites, and elsewhere in the pop culture. His ludicrous news conferences were broadcast on American and British TV, giving comic relief to the seriousness of war. In the U.K., there was a DVD documentary of his bizarre news briefings. The nickname "Baghdad Bob" came to represent someone who confidently asserts to be true what everyone else knows is false.

Although Baghdad Bob is the poster child for denying the obvious, he may now have two challengers for that honor: White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid.

On July 14, Earnest was holding the White House daily press briefing. In response to a reporter's question, he offered this: "I think that there have been a number of situations in which you've seen this administration intervene in a meaningful way, that has substantially furthered American interests and substantially improved the...you know...the tranquility of the global community."

Tranquility? Good grief! Iraq is falling back into chaos, and has been invaded by a jihadi army seeking to establish an Islamist state (similarly, Afghanistan will likely fall to the Taliban when the U.S. departs). Syria remains embroiled in a civil war which Attorney General Eric Holder says presents a danger to America "more frightening than anything I think I've seen as Attorney General." Boko Haram is kidnapping and slaughtering Christians in Nigeria. Israel and Hamas are in a shooting war. China is making territorial claims of its east Asian neighbors. Russia, unsatisfied with annexing Crimea, is threatening more of eastern Ukraine. And Russian-backed separatists are on audio tape describing their shoot-down of a plane---which to their surprise turned out to be a Malaysian civilian airliner.

On July 13, Senator John McCain, said on CNN that the world “is in greater turmoil than at any time in my lifetime.” And McCain has experienced turmoil firsthand in his lifetime.

Oh---one more thing. Our own southern border is being overrun by a flood of illegal aliens, which President Obama himself has called a “humanitarian crisis.” The Obama administration tells us these illegals are coming here to escape rampant violence in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras---which are apparently not too tranquil. Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson estimated that 90,000 illegal minors will be apprehended by the end of the fiscal year.

Which brings us to Harry Reid. On July 15, Reid told reporters “The border is secure. Martin Heinrich talked to the caucus today. He’s a border state senator. He said he can say without any equivocation the border is secure.” This isn’t taken out of context; it’s what Reid said and presumably what he believes. This despite Obama’s and Johnson’s statements to the contrary---along with stories and film of the border chaos on TV every day. Perhaps Reid does not watch the evening news.

So there you have it. Earnest and Reid publicly denying the obvious. But they’re not yet fully competitive with Baghdad Bob, and not nearly as entertaining to watch.