

From Baghdad to Biloxi: Bringing the Guard Home

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From Baghdad to Biloxi: Bringing Home the Guard

WarMadeEasy - Norman Solomon - The catastrophic hurricane was an act of God. But the U.S. war effort in Iraq is a continuing act of the president. And now, that effort is hampering the capacity of the National Guard to save lives at home.

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The National Guard Belongs in New Orleans and Biloxi.

Not Baghdad.

Norman Solomon

War Made Easy.com

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The men and women of the National Guard shouldn't be killing in Iraq. They should be helping in New Orleans and Biloxi.

Before the flooding of New Orleans drastically escalated on Tuesday, the White House tried to disarm questions that could be politically explosive. "To those of you who are concerned about whether or not we're prepared to help, don't be, we are," President Bush said. "We're in place, we've got equipment in place, supplies in place, and once the -- once we're able to assess the damage, we'll be able to move in and help those good folks in the affected areas."

Echoing the official assurances, CBS News reported: "Even though more than a third of Mississippi's and Louisiana's National Guard troops are either in Iraq or supporting the war effort, the National Guard says there are more than enough at home to do the job."

But after New Orleans levees collapsed and the scope of the catastrophe became more clear, such reassuring claims lost credibility. The Washington Post reported on Wednesday: "With thousands of their citizen-soldiers away fighting in Iraq, states hit hard by Hurricane Katrina scrambled to muster forces for rescue and security missions yesterday -- calling up Army bands and water-purification teams, among other units, and requesting help from distant states and the active-duty military."

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The back-page Post story added: ?National Guard officials in the states acknowledged that the scale of the destruction is stretching the limits of available manpower while placing another extraordinary demand on their troops -- most of whom have already served tours in Iraq or Afghanistan or in homeland defense missions since 2001.?

Speaking for the Mississippi National Guard, Lt. Andy Thaggard said: ?Missing the personnel is the big thing in this particular event. We need our people.? According to the Washington Post, the Mississippi National Guard ?has a brigade of more than 4,000 troops in central Iraq? while ?Louisiana also has about 3,000 Guard troops in Baghdad.?

National Guard troops don?t belong in Iraq. They should be rescuing and protecting in Louisiana and Mississippi, not patrolling and killing in a country that was invaded on the basis of presidential deception. They should be fighting the effects of flood waters at home -- helping people in the communities they know best -- not battling Iraqi people who want them to go away.

Let?s use the Internet today to forward and post this demand so widely that the politicians in Washington can no longer ignore it:

Bring the National Guard home. Immediately.

Norman Solomon is the author of the new book ?War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death.? For information, go to: www.WarMad.com
eEasy.com