

FIVE YEARS AFTER 9/11: METRICS OF FAILURE

September 8, 2006

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Center for American Progress



METRICS OF FAILURE ON THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF 9/11

By P.J. Crowley, senior fellow and director of national defense and national security, and Mira Patel, researcher, Center for American Progress

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"Today, we lack metrics to know if we are winning or losing the global war on terror. Are we capturing, killing or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the madrassas and the radical clerics are recruiting, training and deploying against us?"

- Donald Rumsfeld, October 2003

The simple answer to the question posed by the Secretary of Defense is no—due to the strategic disaster in Iraq and the global isolation and antagonism generated by the actions of the Bush administration.

On the fifth anniversary of 9/11, America is more vulnerable to terrorism. Our country is not as safe as it should be and not as secure as Americans think it is. The Bush administration is misreading the nature of this conflict and what is necessary to prevail. Despite the president's rhetoric that the military can fight terrorists "overseas so we don't have to face them here again," the threat we face knows no boundaries. There is too much emphasis on nation-states instead of dealing with the spread of a violent ideology.

The United States is mired in a costly operation in Iraq that the majority of terrorist experts agree has decreased America's national security. The American people want a change in course. They no longer trust what they are being told, because of media campaigns that have more to do with politics than policy.

The United States has spent over \$300 billion in Iraq, allowing al Qaeda to recreate the safe haven, training ground, and recruiting tool it lost in Afghanistan. Our current strategy relies too heavily on military force at the expense of tools that will be more decisive in the long run and enable the United States to win the "battle of ideas," the real central front to reduce the threat of terrorism to the homeland.

METRICS OF FAILURE ON THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF 9/11

Yet President Bush insists the United States must “stay the course.” Congress continues to fund a national security strategy that is overly reliant on conventional military power. Levels of violence in Iraq and Afghanistan are reaching new heights. A change of course is required. Perpetual war is not an option.

The United States requires a new post-Iraq strategy, one that views the American homeland as the central front. The new strategy must take an integrated approach that uses (and invests) in all elements of national power, not just one, and that employs a broader combination of tools to combat terrorists. Among the needed tools are: better intelligence to fully understand the threat; more coherent policies and effective communications to regain global hearts and minds; effective military deployments to deny foreign safe havens to violent extremists who do surface; targeted law enforcement to prevent attacks at home; and better trained and equipped first-responders if all else fails.

In addition, we must take steps at home and abroad. On the domestic front, we must develop energy solutions that promote security and reduce dependence on oil imports from unstable regimes. Vulnerabilities to terrorism within the American economy and society must be narrowed. Abroad, the best way to preclude the emergence of new generations of violent extremists is to rebuild a common cause with our allies and pursue complementary actions with the rest of the world.

The use of force will always be an option; the risk will never be zero. But America can and should be safer. The United States cannot secure its borders alone. The threat is global. The solutions are as well.

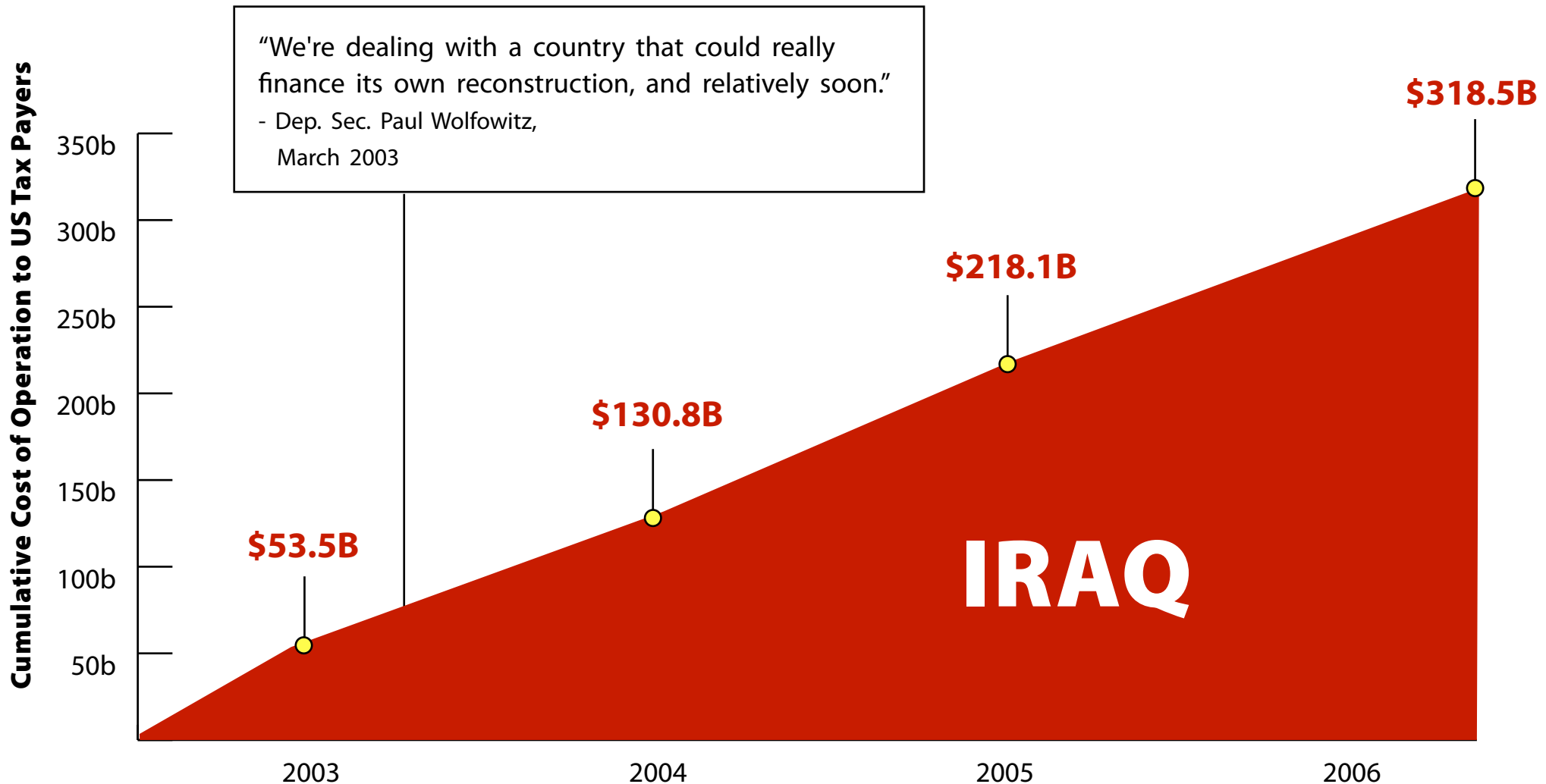
In the pages that follow, we explain through a series of charts the key metrics of failure of the Bush administration to make us safer from terrorist attacks. In addition, we offer links to specific progressive policy plans that would make our country safer, stronger, and better prepared to meet the global challenges of the 21st century.

IRAQ: A Costly Diversion

For a comprehensive strategy for Iraq, click here

The Bush Administration chose to invade a country that had no connection to 9/11, diverting resources needed to secure victory in Afghanistan, where the 9/11 plot was created. Terrorism and extremism are on the rise while we are mired in Iraq with no end in sight.

Cumulative spending in Iraq and Afghanistan



IRAQ: The Current Course Is Not Working

For a comprehensive strategy for Iraq, click here

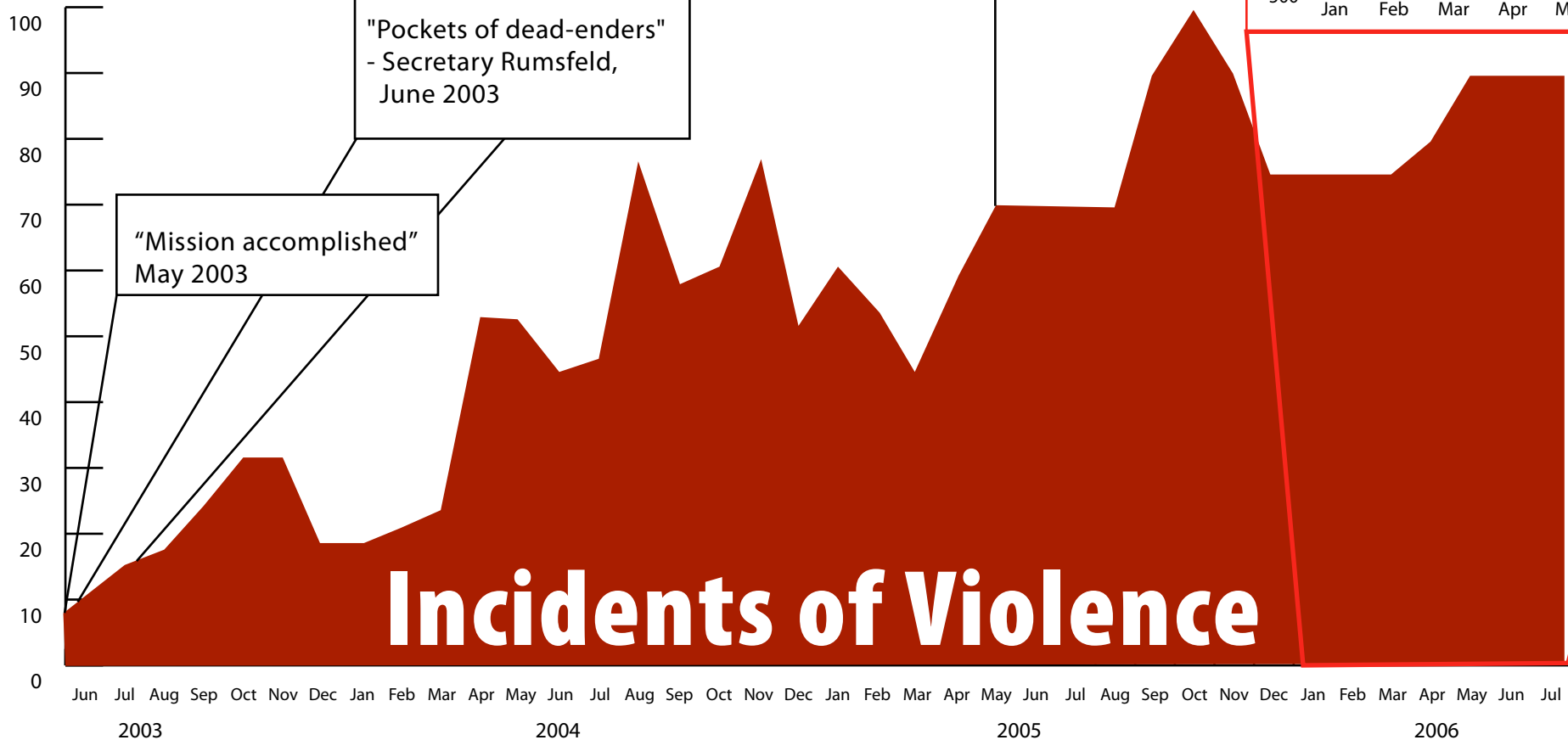
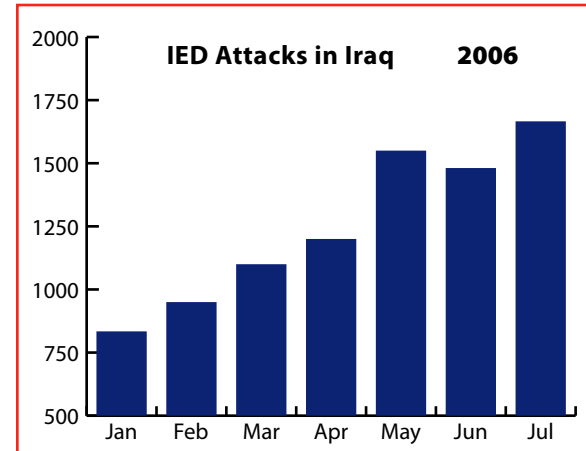
According to Iraqi officials, there were 1,536 violent deaths in Baghdad alone in August of 2006.

"I think they're in the last throes...of the insurgency."
- Vice President Cheney, May 2005

"Bring them on."
- President Bush, July 2003

"Pockets of dead-enders"
- Secretary Rumsfeld, June 2003

"Mission accomplished"
May 2003



Incidents of Violence

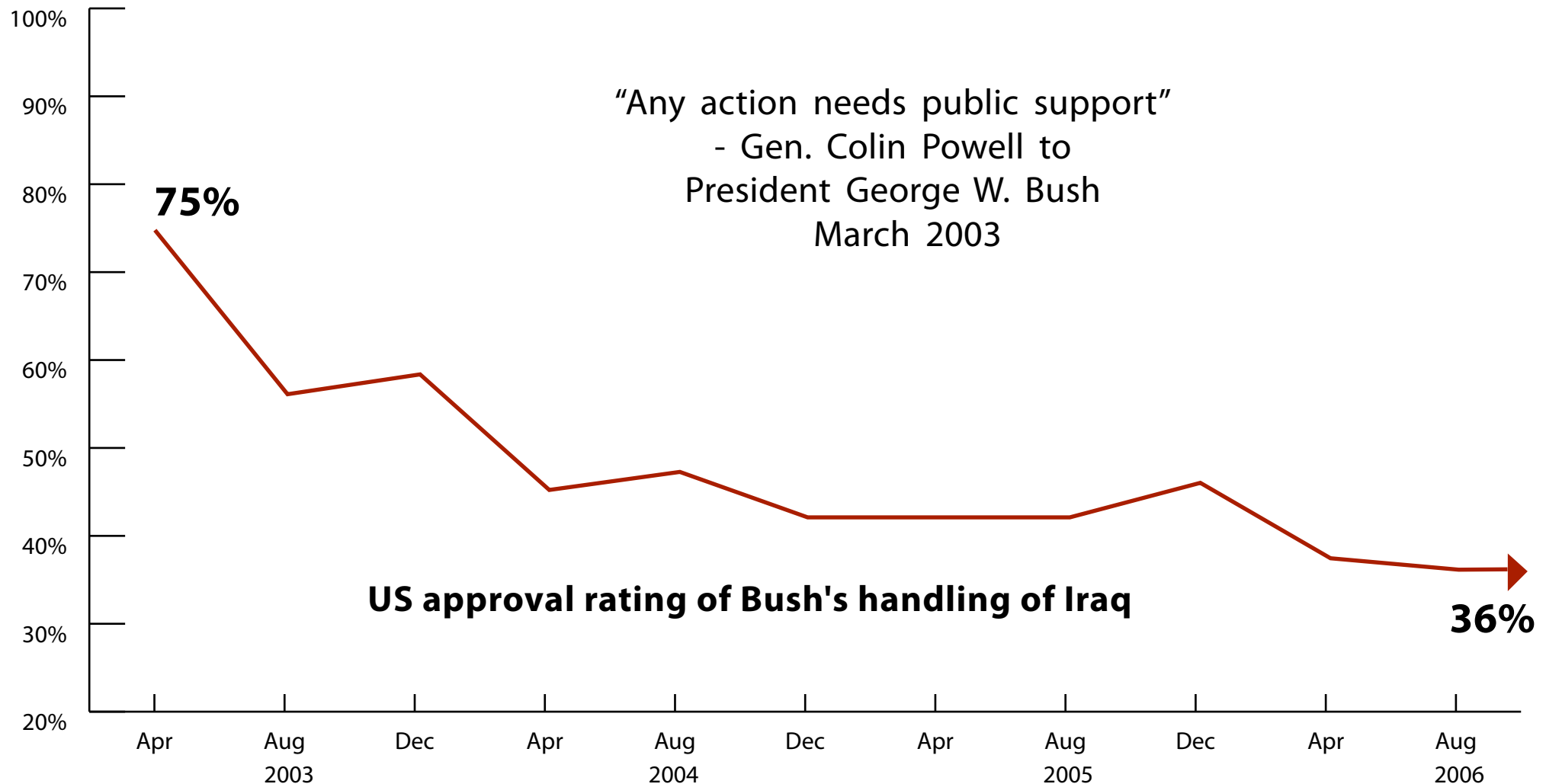
AMERICAN PUBLIC: Loss of Confidence in Current Course

For a comprehensive strategy for Iraq, [click here](#)

EXPERT CONSENSUS

86% of terrorist experts believe the world is becoming more dangerous for the United States.

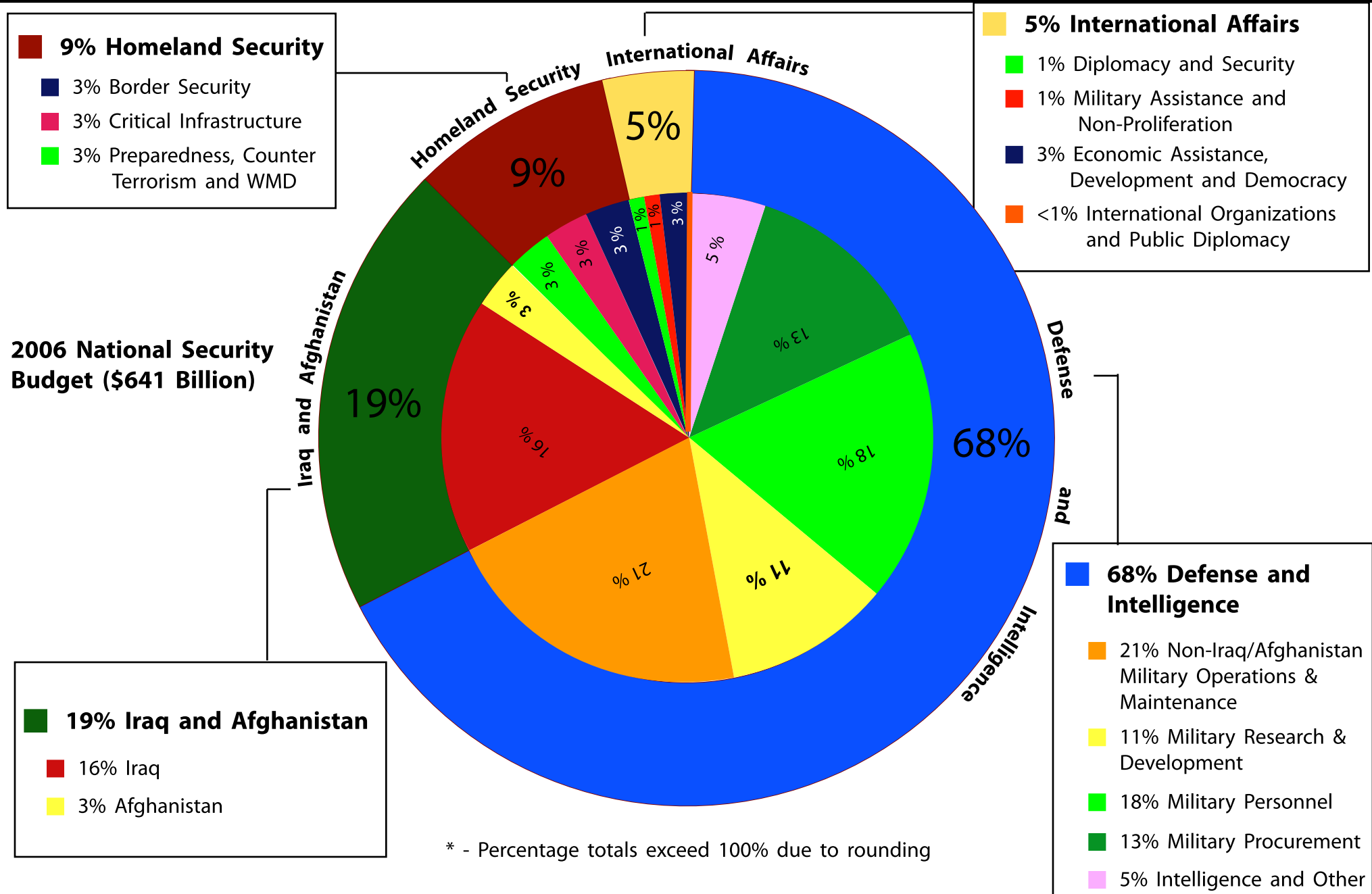
84% of terrorist experts disagree with President Bush's statement that the United States is winning the war on terror.



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FLAWED STRATEGY: Resources Drained From Other Priorities

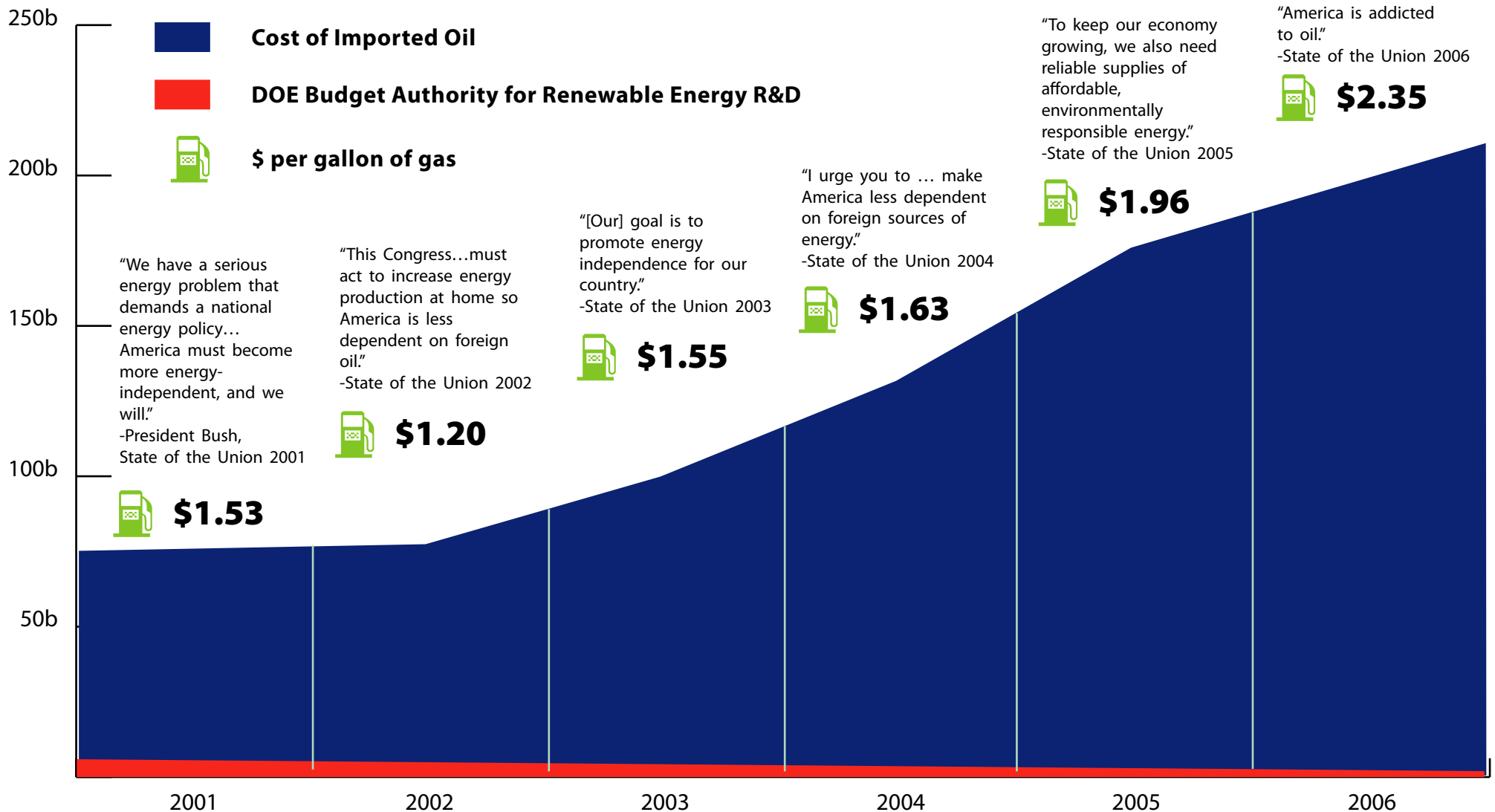
For a comprehensive national security strategy, [click here](#)



ENERGY INSECURITY: Rhetoric Versus Reality

For a real energy security strategy, click here

The United States is addicted to oil but the Bush Administration has provided rhetoric rather than leadership. Without greater investment in alternative sources of energy, we will face more conflicts over oil in the future. Meanwhile, the American people are paying at the pump for the current energy strategy.



AXIS OF EVIL: Ignoring the Greatest Threats

For a progressive strategy to nuclear nonproliferation, [click here](#)

We went to war over Iraq's nuclear weapons. No weapons of mass destruction were ever found. As the United States became bogged down in operations in Iraq, both North Korea and Iran have rapidly advanced their nuclear programs.

