ANOTHER IRAQ FAILURE BY PETRAEUS: GRAFT-RIDDEN MILITARY

Back when the Bush Administration and their neocon operators were most proud of their "accomplishments" in Iraq, their poster boy for this success most often was my favorite ass-kissing little chickenshit, David Petraeus. As the public finally became aware of what a disaster Iraq really was and as Obama moved his focus to the "good war" in Afghanistan, I noted that Petraeus' name was no longer associated with Iraq once it, and especially Petraeus' multiple attempts to train Iraq's military, had failed. Today we have further news on how Iraq's military came to be in such sad shape that many units simply disappeared when it came time to confront ISIS. It turns out that while he was gaining accolades for training Iraqi troops, Petraeus was in reality creating a system in which Iraqi officers were able to siphon off the billions of dollars the US wasted on the whole training operation:

> The Iraqi military and police forces had been so thoroughly pillaged by their own corrupt leadership that they all but collapsed this spring in the face of the advancing militants of the Islamic State – despite roughly $25 billion worth of American training and equipment over the past 10 years and far more from the Iraqi treasury.
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> The United States has insisted that the Iraqi military act as the conduit for any new aid and armaments being supplied for a counteroffensive, including money and weapons intended for tribal fighters willing to push out the Islamic State. In its 2015 budget, the Pentagon has requested $1.3 billion to provide

> weapons for the government forces and $24.1 million intended for the tribes.
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> But some of the weaponry recently supplied by the army has already ended up on the black market and in the hands of Islamic State fighters, according to Iraqi officers and lawmakers. American officials directed questions to the Iraqi government.
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> “I told the Americans, don’t give any weapons through the army – not even one piece – because corruption is everywhere, and you will not see any of it,” said Col. Shaaban al-Obeidi of the internal security forces, also a Sunni tribal leader in Anbar Province. “Our people will steal it.”

But don’t look for any of the new billions being spent to put controls on graft into place:

> American officials say working with the tribes, and military corruption, is beyond the scope of their mission. “Reducing corruption is not part of the advisers’ role,” said one American official involved in the effort, “and there is no reason to believe that advisers’ presence will reduce corruption.”

Isn’t that just peachy? We know without a doubt that giving weapons or financial support to the Iraqi military is guaranteed to wind up helping ISIS instead of fighting them. And yet Washington insists on throwing another $1.3 billion going down the same shithole.

Part of the reason that this can’t be stopped is that the US side of the graft is so organized and institutionalized. Moving out from just the efforts within Iraq to the entire campaign against ISIS, we see who really benefits:

> President Obama is asking Congress for

> an additional $5.6 billion to fight the militant group. A large share of the money, if approved, would be given to the Pentagon to train and equip Iraqi forces, while a smaller portion would be reserved for the State Department.
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> The big defense companies that manufacture weapons are likely to receive orders to help the military replenish its stocks, analysts said.
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> That includes Falls Church giants Northrop Grumman and General Dynamics, as well as Raytheon and Boeing, said Roman Schweizer, a defense policy analyst with Guggenheim Securities.
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> More broadly however, the budget includes funding requests for operations and maintenance of military bases, as well as classified operations and research and development.
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> That could potentially boost business for services companies such as Arlington's DRS Technologies, or contractors that work in the field of intelligence, said James McAleese, founder of Sterling-based McAleese & Associates, a government contracts consultancy.

Ah, but the big goose keeps producing golden eggs for the folks who train Iraq's military. The article continues:

> In the long term, the biggest procurement for services contractors could stem from the $1.6 billion requested for the Iraq Train and Equip Fund, Schweizer said.
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> The fund would be used to provide training at multiple sites throughout

> Iraq for approximately 12 Iraqi brigades, according to the White House.
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> Although the Pentagon has yet to state if it plans to use contractors for training, “history would suggest that when the Army goes somewhere, contractor support follows,” Schweizer said.

So, while Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah continue their tussles over who owns what in Afghanistan’s graft-sharing arrangement, graft-sharing here in the US is politely played out in the Washington process of contracting. And in Washington, we know that the company that makes the biggest investment in congressmembers wins fair and square.