

Franken's Opportunism on the Iraq War

Sen. (and former comedian) Al Franken was a rising Democratic Party star before sexual harassment allegations brought him down to earth, but was he really ever a progressive hero, asks William Blum at Anti-Empire Report.

By William Blum

Poor Al, who made us laugh for years on Saturday Night Live, is now disgraced as a woman molester – not one of the worst of the current pathetic crop, but he still looks bad. However, everything is relative, and it must be pointed out that the Senator is guilty of a worse moral transgression.

The erstwhile comedian would like you to believe that he was against the war in Iraq since it began. But he went to that sad country at least four times to entertain American troops. Does that make sense? Why does the Defense Department bring entertainers to military bases? To lift the soldiers' spirits of course.

And why does the military want to lift the soldiers' spirits? Because a happier soldier does his job better. And what is the soldier's job? For example, all the charming war crimes and human-rights violations in Iraq that have been documented in great detail for many years. Didn't Franken know what American soldiers do for a living?

Country singer Darryl Worley, who leans "a lot to the right," as he puts it, said he was far from pleased that Franken was coming along on the tour to Iraq. "You know, I just don't understand – why would somebody be on this tour if they're not supportive of the war? If he decides to play politics, I'm not gonna put up with it."

A year after the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, Franken criticized the Bush administration because they "failed to send enough troops to do the job right." What "job" did the man think the troops were sent to do that had not been performed to his standards because of lack of manpower? Did he want them to be more efficient at killing Iraqis who resisted the occupation? The volunteer American troops in Iraq did not even have the defense of having been drafted against their wishes.

Franken has been lifting soldiers' spirits for a long time. In 2009, he was honored by the United Service Organization (USO) for his ten years of entertaining troops abroad. That includes Kosovo in 1999, as imperialist an occupation as you'll ever want to see. He called his USO experience "one of the best things I've ever done." Franken has also spoken at West Point (2005),

encouraging the next generation of imperialist warriors. Is this a man to challenge the militarization of America at home and abroad?

Tom Hayden wrote this about Franken in 2005 when Franken had a regular program on the Air America radio network: "Is anyone else disappointed with Al Franken's daily defense of the continued war in Iraq? Not Bush's version of the war, because that would undermine Air America's laudable purpose of rallying an anti-Bush audience. But, well, Kerry's version of the war, one that can be better managed and won, somehow with better body armor and fewer torture cells."

While in Iraq to entertain the troops, Franken declared that the Bush administration "blew the diplomacy so we didn't have a real coalition," then failed to send enough troops to do the job right. "Out of sheer hubris, they have put the lives of these guys in jeopardy."

Franken was implying that if the United States had been more successful in bribing and threatening other countries to lend their name to the coalition fighting the war in Iraq the United States would have had a better chance of WINNING the war.

Is this the sentiment of someone opposed to the war? Or in support of it? It is actually the mind of an American liberal in all its depressing mushiness.

William Blum is an author, historian, and renowned critic of U.S. foreign policy. He is the author of *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II* and *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower*, among others. [This article originally appeared at the Anti-Empire Report, <https://williamblum.org/> .]
