

New York's Health Agency (NYSDOH) Cited in Iraq War's Blowback

The Iraq War had unexpected blowbacks in New York.

NEW YORK, NY, USA, December 5, 2016 /EINPresswire.com/ -- NEW YORK - As the Iraq War's official end on December 18, 2011 marks its fifth anniversary, many questions remain on its fallout. New York's French-American community is one of them, as it remembers its blacklisting when France opted out of attacking Iraq.

Choosing diplomatic pressure rather than "shock and awe" ignited fury for many in New York. The call for anti-French boycotts resonated in tabloids as pictures of New Yorkers spilling wines in gutters vied with accusations of an ally's betrayal and cowardice. Information can be found by googling "New York's French boycotts and Iraq," and "Freedom fries."

How effective were the boycotts? "Very much so, even devastating," says French consulate's official physician and mental health coordinator at the time, Gérard Sunnen, MD, "the French-American community of New York was stunned by their virulence. Why, many wondered, did they materialize only in New York, in striking contrast to the rest of the country?"

"Targeted were all manner of French-American businesses, from Air France to bakeries, as rosters of marked companies circulated widely. Earliest felled were restaurants, whose sales plummeted by as much as half. Like dominoes, they closed their doors, dismissing their workers. Called by many the "consulate's darkest hour," it went on for weeks, interminable months, and still resonates today."

"As layoffs mounted," Dr. Sunnen added, "so did their mental health consequences, from all manner of stress reactions to self-destructive depressions. And workers suddenly out of work could not find employment because no one would take them. The consulate's social services department work load soared to levels never attained before."

Faced with this onslaught, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) was repeatedly contacted to lend the community its medical and mental health assistance. In addition, New York state and city top officials were insistently asked to add their voice to call off the boycotts. All appeals remained unanswered and, for reasons of non-assistance and abandonment of responsibility, this matter was eventually reported and filed in New York and Federal courts.

Dr. Sunnen, who also cites his experience as a U.S. veteran, concludes, "history needs constant reckoning, otherwise it remains a fable. These events are now brought to light so that long-term allies can better understand the meaning of their relationship."

References:

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Gérard Sunnen, MD
Gérard Sunnen, MD
212-6790679
[email us here](#)

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