

Israel Wants EU to Decry Hezbollah

Sweeping assertions by Israeli officials regarding their certainty about the authorship of a bus bombing in Bulgaria last week pinning it first on Iran and then Hezbollah may not be backed up by solid intelligence, but it may help rally European condemnation, writes Gareth Porter for Inter Press Service.

By Gareth Porter

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's claim on Sunday of absolutely reliable intelligence linking Hezbollah to the bombing in Burgas, Bulgaria, last week was apparently aimed at supporting his government's determination to get the European Union to declare Hezbollah a terrorist state.

The Netanyahu claim in interviews on Fox News Sunday and on CBS Face the Nation of "rock solid" intelligence on the bombing was accompanied by an announcement that Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman would travel to Brussels on Monday to meet with EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton and foreign ministers of nine EU member states to persuade them to put Hezbollah on the list of terrorist organizations.

Netanyahu, who usually emphasizes Iran's role in terrorism, focused primarily on Hezbollah's alleged culpability. Unlike the United States, the EU has never officially considered Hezbollah to be a terrorist organization, but Netanyahu believes that pinning the Bulgarian bombing on Hezbollah gives him political leverage on the EU to change that. Lieberman was quoted Sunday as saying the bombing in Bulgaria "has changed the way in which Hezbollah is seen".

For months, Netanyahu has been building a case that Iran has been carrying out a worldwide campaign of terrorism. That narrative is based, however, on a systematic and highly successful Israeli campaign of shaping the news coverage of a series of murky allegations about terrorist actions or efforts in Baku, Tibilisi, Bangkok and Delhi, and into stories fitting neatly into the overall narrative. Netanyahu used sweeping language about the alleged intelligence underlying his charge that Hezbollah carried out the Bulgarian tourist bombing, but refused to offer any further information to back it up.

In the interview on Fox News Sunday, Netanyahu said, "We know with absolute certainty, without a shadow of a doubt that this is a Hezbollah operation." But despite being asked by interviewer Chris Wallace for some indication of the nature of the intelligence, he would say only that information had been shared with "friendly agencies."

When the heads of Mossad and Shin Bet, Tamir Pardo and Yoram Cohen, briefed the Israeli cabinet Sunday on those agencies' efforts against what were described as Iranian and Hezbollah plans for terrorism in more than 20 countries, they were not reported to have presented hard intelligence supporting the claim of Hezbollah responsibility for the Bulgarian bombing.

If the Israeli government did share intelligence information on Hezbollah and the Bulgarian bombing with the Central Intelligence Agency as Netanyahu claimed, it did not register with the senior U.S. officials on July 19. When a "senior U.S. official" was quoted by the New York Times that day confirming the Israeli assertion that the bomber who carried out the operation was "a member of a Hezbollah cell operating in Bulgaria," he was apparently merely making assumptions rather than relying on any hard evidence.

Also on July 19, Pentagon press secretary George Little said, "I don't know that anybody has assessed attribution for this cowardly action." On July 20, White House spokesman Jay Carney said the administration was "not in a position to make a statement about responsibility."

Netanyahu declared immediately after the news of the Bulgarian bus bombing July 18 that Iran was responsible for the attack. In support of the charge, he cited recent alleged terrorist incidents in a number of other countries. "All the signs lead to Iran," he said. But Netanyahu offered no proof, and the Israeli Embassy in Washington acknowledged to CNN on July 19 that it had no proof that Iran was the instigator of the attack.

Netanyahu also argued in his Fox News interview as well as in an appearance on CBS Face the Nation that an Iran/Hezbollah connection to the bombing of the Israeli tourist bus could be reasonably inferred from a Hezbollah terrorist plan that had been discovered in Cyprus only a week earlier. "The whole world can see who it is," said Netanyahu on Fox News Sunday. "You would have known or been able to surmise it from Cyprus a week ago." A "Hezbollah operative" in Cyprus was caught planning "exactly the same attack, exactly the same modus operandi," he said.

But the case to which Netanyahu referred is much less clear-cut than his dramatic description. In fact, it is unclear who the alleged Hezbollah operative really is and what he was actually doing in Cyprus. The 24-year-old Lebanese man with a Swedish passport was arrested in his hotel room in Limosol July 7 just two days after he had arrived in the country, following an urgent message sent to Cyprus from Israeli intelligence that the man intended to carry out attacks, according to Haaretz on July 14.

The Israeli press have portrayed the unnamed Lebanese as "collecting information

for a terror attack” being planned by Hezbollah (Israel Hayom) and as identifying the “vulnerabilities that would allow for maximal damage among a group of Israeli tourists in their first hours on Cyprus ” (Ynet News).

But those descriptions may not reflect what the Lebanese man was actually doing. A senior Cypriot official told Reuters a week after he was taken into custody, “It is not clear what, or whether, there was a target in Cyprus.” And other Cypriot authorities were reported by the Cyprus Mail on July 20 and by Associated Press Monday to have said they believe the man was acting alone.

The Cypriot Greek-language newspaper Phileftheros reported that he was found with information on tour buses carrying Israeli passengers, a list of places favored by Israeli tourists, and flight information on Israeli airlines that land in Cyprus, suggesting that he planned to detonate explosives on board a plane or bus. But despite an intensive search, no indication has been found that the man is linked to any explosives.

A lone individual arrested in his hotel room without any explosives hardly presents a close parallel to the bus bombing in Burgas. Contrary to Netanyahu’s breathless description of what happened in Cyprus, the arrest may turn out to have been an overreaction by Mossad to unconfirmed information the agency had obtained three months earlier that someone might be interested in harming Israeli tourists in Cyprus, reported by Ynet News on July 15.

Details that have emerged about the cases of Lebanese and Iranian citizens arrested at the insistence of Mossad in Thailand in January and Kenya in June also suggest that sensational press accounts of alleged terrorist plans by the suspects inspired by the Israelis may have been highly distorted, and that the individuals arrested may turn out not to be terrorists at all.

Gareth Porter, an investigative historian and journalist specializing in U.S. national security policy, received the UK-based Gellhorn Prize for journalism for 2011 for articles on the U.S. war in Afghanistan. [This article originally appeared at Inter Press Service.]

The Center Crumbles; the Right Grows

Ironically, the American Left has pined for the collapse of the Center, assuming that the outcome would be more progressive. But as the Center now crumbles, the result seems more likely to be a lurching toward an irrational Right under corporate dominance, writes Danny Schechter.

By Danny Schechter

Sometimes, we have to turn to our poets for real insight into our current global condition. It was back in 1919 in the aftermath of World War I, that Irish wordsmith William Butler Yeats put pen to paper and came up with “The Second Coming,” verses that have stood the test of time.

Yeats was born the year the American Civil War ended in 1865 and died in 1939, the year World War II began.

His most famous lines:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre

The falcon cannot hear the falconer;

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere

The ceremony of innocence is drowned;

The best lack all conviction, while the worst

Are full of passionate intensity

I am not so categorical about putting down “passionate intensity,” but it is certainly true, as every reader of every newspaper knows, the political center (or Centre in its Anglicized spelling) cannot hold and is not holding.

As a result, we see more volatility leading to instability, along with new stirrings on both the Right and the Left as the global economy weakens and many nations find themselves saddled with acrimony, debt, disillusion and decline. There is virtually no consensus on solutions.

Perhaps because of the entanglements and interdependency fostered by globalization, governments, right, left and center, don’t seem able to solve their economic crises or governance responsibilities. You see it everywhere as political schisms, irrespective of ideology, degenerate into canyons of disbelief and invective. Both socialist and capitalist governments are broken by endless dickering with patching efforts underway that seem to only lead to more crises, not the end of crisis.

Two recent developments point to issues that almost every country faces, including my own United States, where stalemate and polarization are the order

of the day, or should I say, the disorder of the day?

Consider China. The New York Times reports fear and loathing as debates emerge, first in private and then in public: “the private gatherings are a telling indicator of how even some in the elite are worried about the course the Communist Party is charting for China’s future.

“And to advocates of political change, they offer hope that influential party members support the idea that tomorrow’s China should give citizens more power to choose their leaders and seek redress for grievances, two longtime complaints about the current system.”

Now, turn to, Israel, where for all its talk of a united people, disunity reigns:

“JERUSALEM, The broadest unity coalition Israel has seen in many years broke apart Tuesday evening, rent by irreconcilable differences over how to integrate ultra-Orthodox men and Arab citizens into the military and civilian service, a fundamental question for the future of the Jewish democracy.

“After stunning the political establishment with a secret, late-night deal in May, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Shaul Mofaz, the leader of the centrist Kadima Party, failed to achieve their top priority and agreed to part ways.” In Hollywood, this is known as “irreconcilable differences”

One reason may be that the people who often appear to be in charge are, in fact, not. Elected officials are, in many cases, in office but not in power. They have ceded power to military interests such as Israel’s “War Cabinet” or America’s Pentagon or the lobbyists for economic power structures in Wall Street, the City in London or parallel financial centers in every country.

Central banks and international agencies like the IMF seem to be governing by default. Misgoverning may be a better word for it, according to top former IMF economist who just resigned and slammed the Fund for incompetence.

The Guardian reports, “In a resignation letter to the IMF’s board and senior staff, dated June 18, Peter Doyle said the IMF’s failures in issuing timely warnings for both the 2007-2009 global financial crisis and the euro zone crisis were a ‘failing in the first order’ and ‘are, if anything, becoming more deeply entrenched.’”

Everyone knows that Iran’s Supreme Ruler is the ultimate power broker in the Islamic Republic but unknown, even invisible, “supreme” forces run other countries while hiding their existence. In the U.S., the unelected “Supreme Court” majority more or less has a right-wing agenda. They selected George Bush

as the country's President in 2000 and then imposed through the *Citizens United* decision a way that corporations and the wealthy can use their money to dominate our politics. These "Supremes" don't just review laws; they make them.

There are conflicts and structural weaknesses within nations and between nations that undermine a social stability also insuring that the Center cannot hold. Top-down consensus-based liberalism of the technocratic variety has become more volatile. Third World analysts like Samin Amin have been arguing the Center is not holding, writing: "The world economy (of historical capitalism) moves from disequilibrium to disequilibrium through changes in the balance of power between classes and nations."

Deep internal conflicts have destabilized the system even as new forces and protest movements emerge to challenge it. MIT's Noam Chomsky also warns explicitly that the Center cannot hold, but focuses on the victims of its collapse. He writes:

"There are poignant studies of the indignation and the rage of those who have been cast aside as the state-corporate programs of financialization and deindustrialization have closed plants and destroyed families and communities. These studies reveal the sense of acute betrayal on the part of working people who believed they had fulfilled their duty to society in what they regard as a moral compact with business and government, only to discover that they had only been instruments for profit and power, truisms from which they had been carefully shielded by doctrinal institutions."

Chomsky fears that growing political resentment will lead to escapes into unreason, feeding the rise of the Right, something we are seeing in the U.S. and parts of Europe. "This is one possible outcome of collapse of the center," he writes. He then calls for a renewal of "the radical imagination." Says Chomsky: "The center is clearly not holding, and those who are harmed are once again shooting themselves in the foot."

Interesting that a Left, which has battled the Center for all these years, seems to bemoan its disintegration but for a reason. Those on the Left see a corrosion of formal democracy with corporations and financial institutions increasingly making key decisions with even less transparency and responsiveness to the public. They also recognize that there is less and less countervailing power with the unions weakened but still hoping to reform systems increasingly resistant to reform.

Activists like the Occupy Movement aspire to speak for the 99 percent but do not seem strong enough or organized enough to do so.

There are cycles of history, just as there are business cycles. Marx once wrote that events happen, “the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce.” We seem to still be in the tragic phase.

News Dissector Danny Schechter blogs at newsdissector.net. His latest books are *Occupy: Dissecting Occupy Wall Street* and *Blogothon* (Cosimo Books) He hosts a show on Progressive Radio Network. (PRN.fm) A version of this essay first appeared on PressTV.com. Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org

Finally, Fact-Checking Romney’s Lie

Exclusive: For 10 days, right-wing talkers and Mitt Romney have circulated a deceptively edited quote tricking Americans into thinking that President Obama believes businessmen didn’t build their businesses. Belatedly, one of the “independent fact-checkers” has spoken up, reports Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

It may have taken too long, but Washington Post “fact-checker” Glenn Kessler has finally acknowledged that Mitt Romney engaged in a distortion by using selective editing to make it appear that President Barack Obama was insulting people who build businesses when he actually was talking about building roads and bridges.

In his commentary, Kessler inserted some snide asides about Obama recycling what Kessler apparently regards as stale Democratic ideas about building public infrastructure so private industry can thrive.

But Kessler did concede on Monday that “The biggest problem with Romney’s ad is that it leaves out just enough chunks of Obama’s words, such as a reference to ‘roads and bridges’, so that it sounds like Obama is attacking individual initiative. The ad deceptively cuts away from Obama speaking in order to make it seem as if the sentences follow one another, when in fact eight sentences are snipped away.

“Suddenly, the word ‘that’ appears as if it is referring to a business, rather than (apparently) to roads and bridges.”

That was precisely the point I made in a story five days earlier, entitled “Mitt Romney’s New Lie.” That article said, “The ‘independent fact-checkers’ might want to dust off their Pinocchios and pull out their ‘truth-o-meters’ in

reaction to Mitt Romney's latest calculated lie, applying deceptive editing to President Barack Obama's remarks about how public infrastructure supports private enterprise.

"This is a clear case where Romney and the right-wing media know what they're doing. They clipped Obama's remarks in such a way as to make it seem that the President was saying that business owners didn't build their own businesses, when the comment actually refers to the building of roads and other public investments."

This right-wing disinformation project began after Obama gave a talk in Roanoke, Virginia, on July 13, in which he described the contributions that previous generations and public spending have made toward creating conditions that help businesses succeed:

"Somebody helped to create this unbelievable American system that we have that allowed you to thrive. Somebody invested in roads and bridges. If you've got a business, you didn't build that. Somebody else made that happen. The Internet didn't get invented on its own. Government research created the Internet so that all the companies could make money off the Internet."

Obama's syntax may have been slightly mangled, but the context was obvious (and is even more so if you watch the full talk). Obama was saying businesses did not build the roads, bridges and such that have helped the private sector flourish. But the right-wing media quickly lopped off the context. Fox News applied its classic selective editing.

Romney joined this adventure in agit-prop on July 17 when he told a rally in Pennsylvania that Obama "said this: 'If you've got a business, you didn't build that. Somebody else made that happen.'" Romney then extrapolated from the misleading quote that Obama wants Americans to be "ashamed of success" and that Obama is "changing the nature of America."

"I find it extraordinary that a philosophy of that nature would be spoken by a president of the United States," Romney said.

But Obama wasn't saying that someone else built the business; he was saying someone else built "that," i.e. the public infrastructure that businesses use. Given this clear context, Romney and other right-wing figures knew exactly what they were doing. They were lying and the lie was soon featured in attack ads flooding the TV.

One might have thought that this was precisely the reason for "independent fact-checkers" to intervene quickly to prevent the American electorate from being misled. But the major "fact-checking" groups mostly stayed on the sidelines,

much as their predecessors did in Campaign 2000 when Al Gore was facing similar distortions.

For 10 days, right-wing talkers, Mitt Romney and the attack ads had pretty much free rein to circulate this calculated lie and deceive millions of Americans.

Ironically, while mostly sitting on their hands in the face of this patent falsehood, Kessler and the “independent fact-checkers” at Annenberg Center’s Factcheck.org were busy pointing fingers at Obama and his campaign for blaming Romney for plant closings and off-shoring of jobs by his Bain Capital – and questioning his claim to have cut ties with the firm in February 1999.

Though the Obama campaign cited Bain Capital’s multiple Securities and Exchange Commission filings that showed Romney still in charge for the next three years the New York Times tallied 142 such filings Factcheck.org called the President and his team “all wet” in their suspicions about the contradictory Romney/Bain statements.

Yet, when Republicans and then Romney began ripping Obama’s roads-and-bridges quote out of context, all you could hear around the vaunted “fact-checkers” were the proverbial crickets chirping. Or to use a different metaphor, the lie had time to saunter around the world before the “fact-checkers” finally put their boots on.

So, in that context, perhaps we should be grateful that Kessler finally addressed this Romney distortion and gave the Republican presidential candidate “three Pinocchios” although one might have thought such a willful lie should deserve the full four.

To read more of Robert Parry’s writings, you can now order his last two books, *Secrecy & Privilege* and *Neck Deep*, at the discount price of only \$16 for both. For details on the special offer, [click here.](#)]

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, was written with two of his sons, Sam and Nat, and can be ordered at neckdeepbook.com. His two previous books, *Secrecy & Privilege: The Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq* and *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & ‘Project Truth’* are also available there.

Romney's Pentagon Budget Out of Step

While advocating more tax cuts tilted to the rich, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney also wants to expand military spending, meaning that social programs would take a big hit. But polls indicate Americans prefer cutting Pentagon dollars rather than Social Security and Medicare, writes Lawrence S. Wittner.

By Lawrence S. Wittner

On some issues, there is a serious disconnect between candidates for public office and the public they are hoping to represent. Take the case of Mitt Romney and military spending.

For some time now, the Republican presidential candidate has been an avid proponent of a vast U.S. military buildup. Last October, in a speech at the Citadel, he promised that he would never “wave the white flag of surrender” but, rather, devote himself to creating “an American Century.” This would be secured, he explained, by a hefty increase in U.S. armaments.

In terms of U.S. warships alone, he promised to raise annual production by 67 percent. Attacking President Barack Obama for what he claimed was military weakness, Romney called for increasing the U.S. military budget, in fiscal 2013, by 17 percent. Indeed, he has proposed raising U.S. military spending by as much as \$2 trillion over the next decade.

This military obsession comes at a curious time. After all, the U.S. military budget – currently standing at \$648.6 billion – has risen dramatically over the last 13 years and is the largest in U.S. history. Currently, U.S. military spending constitutes nearly as much money as the military spending of all other countries combined.

Furthermore, in the context of severe budget cutting by Congress, popular domestic social programs are being sacrificed to support the U.S. military budget – so much so that it currently consumes more than half of the U.S. government's discretionary spending.

Even the Republican-dominated House of Representatives seems to recognize that the time has come for cuts – and not increases – in military spending. On July 19, it voted 326 to 90 for a budget that reduced U.S. military spending (earmarked for the Defense Department and for current wars) to \$606 billion in fiscal year 2013.

If liberals and critics of the Afghan War had had their way, the military budget

would have been cut still further. And, if the threatened budget sequestration takes place, it will be cut more substantially. Indeed, the idea of cutting the huge U.S. military budget seems to enjoy considerable popularity among Americans.

In May 2012, a survey of U.S. public opinion by the Stimson Center, the Program for Public Consultation, and the Center for Public Integrity found that 76 percent of respondents favored slashing U.S. military expenditures. This included 80 percent of respondents in districts that elected Democrats and 74 percent in districts that elected Republicans.

Even in districts with the heaviest military spending – and, thus, presumably benefiting from its economic impact three-quarters of the public favored reducing the military budget. “The idea that Americans ... want to keep total defense spending up so as to preserve local jobs is not supported by the data,” reported Dr. Steven Kull, director of the Program for Public Consultation, a survey group associated with the University of Maryland.

By contrast, support for increasing military spending – so fervently backed by Romney – stood at only 4 percent in Democratic districts and 15 percent in Republican districts. Even more striking, the average cut in such spending favored by the American public was very substantial: \$103.5 billion.

Part of the explanation for this widespread approval of deep cuts in the military budget probably reflects the fact that the participants were well informed. Before taking the survey, the respondents received detailed information about that budget and had the chance to read numerous arguments for and against it.

But other recent polls, done without the provision of such information, also indicate substantial restlessness at the level of U.S. military spending. Earlier this year, asked to choose which of three programs – Medicare, Social Security or the military – should receive lower funding “in order to cut government spending,” 52 percent of Americans chose the military, 15 percent chose Medicare, and 13 percent chose Social Security.

Surveys in 2011 had similar findings. Several CBS/*New York Times* polls revealed that, when it came to budget cuts, 45-55 percent of respondents preferred targeting the military, 16-21 percent preferred targeting Medicare, and 13-17 percent preferred targeting Social Security.

Other polls taken in 2011 also indicated Americans’ willingness to cut U.S. military spending. That September, a *National Journal* poll asked Americans whether they favored a plan for “reducing the growth of defense spending by

about \$350 billion over 10 years.” In response, 55 percent said they did. Another poll that September, by the Kaiser Foundation, found 67 percent approval for some reduction in the defense budget, with 28 percent supporting a major reduction and 39 percent a minor reduction.

In October, a *Washington Post*/Bloomberg poll of Americans asked whether they supported or opposed “reducing military spending” to help cope with the U.S. budget deficit. Fifty-one percent expressed their support and 41 percent their opposition.

Overall, as Dr. Kull and other opinion analysts have concluded, there is substantial support among Americans for cutting the U.S. military budget, especially when the public is provided with relevant information and a choice of alternatives.

Of course, there are hawkish elements within the American public, as well as powerful defense contractors, that champion a U.S. military buildup. But Romney’s militarism seems unlikely to fire up many Americans outside their ranks.

Dr. Lawrence Wittner (<http://lawrencswittner.com>) is professor of history emeritus at SUNY/Albany. His latest book is *Working for Peace and Justice: Memoirs of an Activist Intellectual* (University of Tennessee Press).

Debunking Some Anti-Iran Agit-Prop

Led by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, hard-line critics of Iran were quick to jump to a conclusion blaming its operatives for a bus bombing targeting Israeli tourists in Bulgaria. Some Israeli and Western media even cited a speech by Iran’s President Ahmadinejad as proof, but Nima Shirazi exposed the misleading charge.

By Nima Shirazi

A demonization propaganda campaign is now in full swing with regard to the recent tragic terrorist bombing in the coastal Bulgarian town of Burgas that targeted Israeli tourists.

Such propaganda is a matter of life and death and establishes dangerous falsehoods as facts that race around the Internet and the world, forever defining the narrative, obscuring the truth, and perpetuating pervasive

mythologies that permeate our already skewed discourse on the issues of Iran, Israel, U.S. foreign policy and, now, the Burgas bus bombing.

The Times of Israel, the same “news” outfit that was quick to identify former Guantanamo detainee Mehdi Ghezali as the bomber based on half-baked Bulgarian media reports (a claim immediately denied by all intelligence agencies involved in the case) was back at it, this time with a report declaring that Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has revealed (and revealed in) Iran’s culpability for the attack in Bulgaria.

The *Times* opened its piece with what could not be mistaken for anything other than what it presents as a clear statement of fact: “Iran’s President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad gloated publicly on Thursday over the deaths of Israelis in a terror bombing in Bulgaria, and hinted that Iran was responsible for the attack.” Claiming that, just hours after the attack itself, “Ahmadinejad described the attack as ‘a response’ to Israeli ‘blows against Iran,’” the report continues:

“The bitter enemies of the Iranian people and the Islamic Revolution have recruited most of their forces in order to harm us,” Ahmadinejad said in a speech reported by Israel’s Channel 2 TV. “They have indeed succeeded in inflicting blows upon us more than once, but have been rewarded with a far stronger response.”

He added: “The enemy believes it can achieve its aims in a long, persistent struggle against the Iranian people, but in the end it will not. We are working to ensure that.”

Ahmadinejad’s speech was interpreted in Israel as asserting that the Burgas bombing was a revenge attack for the killing of Iranian nuclear scientists, for which Iran has repeatedly blamed Israel.

This report spread like wildfire around the internet, from right-wing sites like *The Blaze* and *Commentary* to progressive outlets like Paul Woodward’s *War in Context*. But it’s a lie.

Ahmadinejad’s speech, delivered in commemoration of World Mosque Day, had absolutely nothing to do with the bus bombing in Bulgaria. The quotes cherry-picked and bizarrely analyzed by the Israeli media have nothing to do with boasting or bragging about the attack.

The speech, typical of Ahmadinejad, states clearly that, in the face of Western aggression and efforts to impose hegemony over Iran and its rights, the Islamic Republic will stand firm and not back down. This is even evident in the English language report on the speech itself, available on Ahmadinejad’s own website.

"I assure the Iranian people that the government will not retreat even one iota from their rights, principles and values against the declining materialistic powers," Ahmadinejad said, "even if the enemies mobilize their past and future capabilities and get accompanied by certain parties inside the country."

The key part of the speech twisted and bastardized by the Israeli press actually states that "the main enemies of the Iranian nation and the Islamic Revolution have waged a major battle and mobilized their utmost power and capability but the Iranian government strongly resists against them. The enemy deals a blow to the Iranian nations step by step; but, in return, it receives a stronger, heavier blow."

The Iranian president is so obviously talking about the campaign to abrogate Iran's nuclear rights (Ahmadinejad said that "the hegemonic system opposes the Iranian nation only because of the high speed of its progress in various sectors such as industries, science and technology") and Iran's steadfastness in the face of economic pressure and ever-mounting sanctions and threats that to allege this has anything to do with Burgas is not only amazingly dishonest and grotesque, but also dangerous.

The critical paragraph of Ahmadinejad's speech (a small portion of the whole, which mostly praises the importance of mosques as constructive cultural centers of society) can be read below both in the original Farsi along with an alternate translation:

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"Dr. Ahmadi Nejad in another section of his remarks (words) mentioning that today the (Iranian) Government is involved in a heavy and all encompassing struggle reminded that: today the main enemies of the people, culture, ideals,

the Islamic revolution and the Iranian existence have mobilized all their abilities (powers) to prevent the fast movement towards progress of the Iranian nation, and the (Iranian) Government also with all of its power, day and night and every moment is standing in front of them.

“The enemies with domination over all the centers of economy and power in the world day and night and every moment are acting against the Islamic Republic and the (Iranian) Government also has risen in front of them (standing in front of them, against them) and if they deliver a blow they will receive a blow which usually the blow they receive will be heavier than the blow they have delivered.” (Translation by Ahmad Shirazi) Here is yet another translation of the relevant part of Ahmadinejad’s speech, generously provided by professional translator Mehrdad Shahabi:

“Referring to the fact that the government is today engaged in a heavy full-scale struggle, Dr. Ahmadinejad in another part of his speech pointed out that, ‘Today, the main enemies of the Iranian nation, its culture and ideals, its Islamic Revolution and the nation’s very existence have mobilized all their possibilities to impede the Iranian nation’s swift progress. In response, doing its utmost, the government, has stood up to them round the clock, day and night.

“‘Dominating the world’s economic and power centres, the enemies have been acting against the Islamic Republic round the clock, day and night. The government, for its part, has stood up to them in every step they take. For every blow delivered, they will receive a counter-blow, which is usually heavier than the blow delivered.”

The use of this quote, and the false presentation of it as having anything to do with the Burgas attack, may have set a new low in the warmongering campaign that Israel is waging against Iran.

Later, *The Times of Israel* retracted its bogus Ahmadinejad “gloating” story and issued a corrective article entitled, “Ahmadinejad was talking about sanctions, not Burgas, in his speech last Thursday, says Persian expert.” The expert cited is Bahman Kalbasi, correspondent for *BBC Persian*.

On Twitter, Kalbasi confirmed my debunking of the *Times* article, liking to my own post and writing “Nima at @WideAsleepNima correctly articulates the mistranslation by @TimesofIsrael : #Iran wideasleepinamerica.com/2012/07/the-in”

The retraction explains that while “Ahmadinejad’s speech was widely interpreted in Israel as asserting that the Burgas bombing was a revenge attack for the killing of Iranian nuclear scientists. ... Kalbasi said such interpretations reflect a mistranslation, and that the speech contains no word or phrase that

indicates Ahmadinejad was talking about the bombing.

“The relevant section of the speech relates to western sanctions on Iran and Iran’s response, he said, rather than to the Burgas bombing as an ostensible response to the killing of Iranian nuclear scientists.”

The article concludes: “He was talking about growing international and economic pressure on Iran, and assuring his constituency that their government will stand up for them and fight back,” said Kalbasi, noting that Thursday’s speech is carried on Ahmadinejad’s website.

Glad that’s finally cleared up.

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Will Downing St. Memo Recur on Iran?

Exclusive: A decade after the infamous “Downing Street Memo” and its “fixed” intelligence for invading Iraq, the pressure is on again to make the case whatever the facts for a new war with Iran. Will the UK’s MI6 and the CIA bend again or hold firm, ask ex-intelligence analysts Annie Machon and Ray McGovern.

By Annie Machon and Ray McGovern

Recent remarks by Sir John Sawers, who heads Britain’s MI6 (the Secret Intelligence Service that is Britain’s CIA counterpart), leave us wondering if Sawers is preparing to “fix” intelligence on Iran, as his immediate predecessor, Sir John Scarlett, did on Iraq.

Scarlett’s pre-Iraq war role in creating “dodgy dossiers” hyping the threat of non-existent “weapons of mass destruction” is relatively well known. On July 4, the red warning light for politicization was again flashing brightly in London, as Sawers told British senior civil servants that Iran is “two years away” from becoming a “nuclear weapons state.” How did Sawers come up with “two years?”

Since late 2007, the benchmark for weighing Iran’s nuclear program has been the unanimous assessment by all 16 U.S. intelligence agencies that Iran halted its nuclear weapons program in late 2003 and that, as of mid-2007, had not restarted

it. Those judgments have been revalidated every year since, despite strong pressure to bow to more ominous, but evidence-starved, assessments by Israel and its neo-conservative supporters.

The 2007 U.S. National Intelligence Estimate helped thwart plans to attack Iran in 2008, the last year of the Bush/Cheney administration. This shines through in George Bush's own memoir, *Decision Points*, in which he rues the NIE's "eye-popping declaration: 'We judge with high confidence that in fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program.'"

Bush continues, "But after the NIE, how could I possibly explain using the military to destroy the nuclear facilities of a country the intelligence community said had no active nuclear weapons program?" (*Decision Points*, p. 419)

Hands tied on the military side, U.S. covert operations flowered, with \$400 million appropriated at that same time for a major escalation of the dark-side struggle against Iran, according to military, intelligence, and congressional sources cited by Seymour Hersh in 2008.

The clandestine but all-too-real war on Iran has included attacks with computer viruses, the murders of Iranian scientists, and what the Israelis call the "unnatural" demise of senior officials like Revolutionary Guards Major General Hassan Moghaddam, father of Iran's missile program.

Moghaddam was killed in a large explosion last November, with *Time* magazine citing a "western intelligence source" as saying the Israel's Mossad was behind the blast. More threatening still to Iran are the severe economic sanctions laid upon it, sanctions which are tantamount to an act of war.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and pro-Israel neo-conservatives in the U.S. and elsewhere have been pushing hard for an attack on Iran, seizing every pretext they can find. Netanyahu was suspiciously fast off the blocks, for example, in claiming that Iran was behind the tragic terrorist bombing of Israeli tourists in Bulgaria on July 18, despite Bulgarian authorities and even the White House warning that it is too early to attribute responsibility.

Netanyahu's instant indictment of Iran strongly suggests he is looking for excuses to up the ante. With the Persian Gulf looking like an accident waiting to happen, stocked as it is with warships from the U.S., the U.K. and elsewhere, and with no fail-safe way of communicating with Iranian naval commanders, an escalation-generating accident or provocation is now more likely than ever.

July 23, a Day of Infamy

Oddly, Sawers's speech of July 4 came just as an important date approached, the

tenth anniversary of a sad day for British and U.S. intelligence on Iraq. On July 23, 2002 at a meeting at 10 Downing Street, then-MI6 head, John Dearlove, briefed Prime Minister Tony Blair and other senior officials on his talks with his American counterpart, CIA Director George Tenet, in Washington three days before.

In the official minutes of that briefing (now known as the Downing Street Memo), which were leaked to the *London Times* and published on May 1, 2005, Dearlove explains that George Bush has decided to attack Iraq and the war was to be “justified by the conjunction of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.”

When then-Foreign Secretary Jack Straw points out that the case was “thin,” Dearlove explains matter-of-factly, “The intelligence and facts are being fixed around the policy.”

There is no sign in the minutes that anyone hiccupped, much less demurred, at making a case for war and furthering Blair’s determination to join Bush in launching the kind of “war of aggression” outlawed by the Nuremberg Tribunal after World War II and by the United Nations Charter.

Helped by the acquiescence of its chief spies, the Blair government mainlined into the body politic un-assessed, raw intelligence and forged documents, with disastrous consequences for the world.

UK citizens were spoon-fed fake intelligence in the September Dossier (2002) and then, just six weeks before the attack on Iraq, the “Dodgy Dossier,” based largely on a 12-year old PhD thesis culled from the Internet, all presented by spy and politician alike as ominous premonitory intelligence.

So was made the case for war. All lies, resulting in hundreds of thousands dead and maimed and millions of Iraqis displaced, yet no one held to account.

Sir Richard Dearlove, who might have prevented this had he had the integrity to speak out, was allowed to retire with full honors and became the Master of a Cambridge college. John Scarlett, who as chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee signed off on the fraudulent dossiers, was rewarded with the top spy job at MI6 and a knighthood. George W. Bush gave George Tenet the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award.

What need have we for further proof? “So are they all, all honorable men”, reminiscent of those standing with Brutus in Shakespeare’s play, but with no Mark Antony to expose them and stir the appropriate popular reaction.

Therein lies the problem: instead of being held accountable, these “honorable men” were, well, honored. Their soft landings offer a noxious object lesson for

ambitious bureaucrats who are ready to play fast and loose with the truth and trim their sails to the prevailing winds.

Ill-begot honors offer neither deterrent nor disincentive to current and future intelligence chiefs tempted to follow suit and corrupt intelligence rather than challenge their political leaders with hard, un-“fixed” facts. Integrity? In this milieu integrity brings one knowing smirks rather than honors. And it can get you kicked out of the club.

Fixing Intelligence on Iran

Are we in for another round of “fixing”, this time on Iran? We may know soon. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, citing the terrorist attack in Bulgaria, has already provided what amounts to a variation on Dearlove’s ten-year-old theme regarding how war can be “justified by the conjunction of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.”

According to the *Jerusalem Post* on July 17, Netanyahu said all countries that understand that Iran is an exporter of world terror must join Israel in “stating that fact clearly,” in order to emphasize the importance of preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

Appearing on CBS’s *Face the Nation* on Sunday as well as on *Fox News Sunday*, Netanyahu returned to that theme. Blaming the July 18 terrorist attack in Bulgaria on Hezbollah supported by Iran, he asked TV viewers to imagine what would happen if the world’s most dangerous regime got the world’s most dangerous weapons.

This has too familiar a ring. Has it been just ten years?

Will MI6 chief Sawers model his conduct today on that of his predecessors who, ten years ago, “justified” war on Iraq? Will he “fix” intelligence around U.K./U.S./Israeli policy on Iran? Parliamentary overseers should demand a briefing from Sawers forthwith, before erstwhile bulldog Britain is again dragged like a poodle into another unnecessary war.

Annie Machon is a former intelligence officer in the UK’s MI5 Security Service (the U.S. counterpart is the FBI), and Ray McGovern is a former U.S. Army Intelligence officer and CIA analyst. [To see Annie Machon and Ray McGovern discuss this issue on TheRealNews, [click here.](#)]

Rushing to Judgment on Bus Bomb

In rushing to judgment blaming Iran for a bus bombing in Bulgaria, Israeli officials and neocon writers cited the conventional wisdom about Iran's authorship of a bombing in Argentina in 1994. However, the investigation of that case was deeply compromised by political pressure, recalls Gareth Porter for Lobelog.

By Gareth Porter

Immediately after the terror bombing of a busload of Israeli youth in Burgas, Bulgaria, both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and a "senior U.S. official" expressed certainty about Iran's responsibility. Since then, the White House has backed away from that position, after Bulgarian investigators warned against that assumption before the investigation is complete.

Similarly, it is generally assumed that Iran and Hezbollah were responsible for the terrorist bombing of a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires on July 18, 1994, because U.S. and Israeli officials, journalists and commentators have repeated that conclusion so often. It was the first reference made by those who were most eager to blame the Burgas bombing on Iran, such as Matthew Levitt and Jeffrey Goldberg.

But that terrorist bombing 18 years ago was not what it has come to appear by the constant drip of unsubstantiated journalistic and political references to it. The identification of that bombing as an Iranian operation should be regarded as a cautionary tale about the consequences of politics determining the results of a terrorist investigation.

The case made by the Argentine prosecutors that Iran and Hezbollah committed that 1994 terrorist bombing has long been cited as evidence that Iran is the world's premier terrorist state. But the Argentine case was fraudulent in its origins and produced a trail of false evidence in service of a frame-up. There is every reason to believe that the entire Argentine investigation was essentially a cover-up that protected the real perpetrators.

That is what I learned from my ten-month investigation in 2006-07 of the so-called AMIA bombing (the Spanish acronym for Argentine Israelite Mutual Association), the results of which were published in early 2008.

William Brencick, who was then chief of the political section at the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires and the primary Embassy contact for the investigation of the AMIA bombing, told me in an interview in June 2007 that the U.S. conviction

about Iranian culpability was based on what he called a “wall of assumptions”, a wall that obstructed an objective analysis of the case.

The first assumption was that it was a suicide bombing, and that such an operation pointed to Hezbollah, and therefore Iran. But the evidence produced to support that assumption was highly suspect. Of 200 initial eyewitnesses to the bombing, only one claimed to have seen the white Renault van that was supposed to have been the suicide car. And the testimony of that lone witness was contradicted by her sister, who said that she had seen only a black and yellow taxicab.

That is only the first of many indications that the official version of how the bombing went down was a tissue of lies. For example:

- The U.S. explosives expert sent soon after the bombing to analyze the crime scene found evidence suggesting that at least some of the explosives had been placed inside the community center, not in a car outside.
- The engine block of the alleged suicide car which police said led them to the arrest of the Shi’a used car salesman and chop shop owner who sold the car, was supposedly found in the rubble with its identification number clearly visible, something any serious bombing team, including Hezbollah, would have erased, unless it was intentionally left to lead to the desired result.
- Representatives of the Menem government twice offered large bribes to the used car dealer in custody to get him to finger others, including three police officials linked to a political rival of Menem. The judge whose bribe was videotaped and shown on Argentine television was eventually impeached.

Apart from an Argentine investigation that led down a false trail, there were serious problems with the motives attributed to Iran and Hezbollah for killing large numbers of Jewish citizens of Argentina. The official explanation was that Iran was taking revenge on the Menem government for having reneged, under pressure from the Clinton administration, on its agreements with Iran on nuclear cooperation.

But in fact, Argentina had only halted two of the three agreements reached in 1987 and 1988, as was revealed, ironically, in documents cited by the Argentine prosecutor’s report on the arrest warrant for Iranian officials dated October 2006 (unfortunately never made available in electronic form).

The documents showed that the Menem government was continuing to send 20 percent enriched uranium to Iran under the third agreement, and there were negotiations continuing both before and after the bombing to resume full nuclear cooperation.

As for Hezbollah, it was generally assumed that it wanted to avenge the Israeli killing of its “ally” Mustafa Dirani in May 1994. But when Hezbollah really wanted to take revenge against Israel, as it did after the Israeli massacre in Qana in 1996, it did not target civilians in a distant country with no relationship to the conflict with Israel; it openly attacked Israel with Katyusha rockets.

It is not clear yet who committed the latest terrorist bombing against Jewish civilians in Burgas, Bulgaria. But the sorry history of that Buenos Aires investigation should not be used to draw a premature conclusion about this matter or any other terrorist action.

Gareth Porter is an investigative historian and journalist specializing in U.S. national security policy. The paperback edition of his latest book, *Perils of Dominance: Imbalance of Power and the Road to War in Vietnam*, was published in 2006. [This article originally appeared at [Lobellog](#).]

America’s Twisted Notion of Freedom

In America, “freedom” now means the right to inflict harm on the community, whether it’s the freedom of Wall Street bankers to gamble recklessly, the freedom of the rich to shut factories and off-shore jobs or the freedom to swagger around with deadly weapons. That freedom has struck again in Colorado, writes Lawrence Davidson.

By Lawrence Davidson

Well here we go again. Late in the evening of July 20, “[a masked gunman](#) entered a Colorado movie theater playing the new Batman movie and “opened fire killing at least 12 people and wounding 50.” The gunman was not a large anthropomorphized bat but rather a young white male, and he “was armed with a rifle, a shotgun and two handguns” all of which he had legally obtained.

This is nothing new in the Land Of The Free. Among the more notable victims of the nation’s love affair with deadly weapons have been Abraham Lincoln, James Garfield, William McKinley, John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Ronald Reagan (wounded) and, of course, John Lennon.

Then there are the recent (and periodically ongoing) mass murders among the population at large: the Columbine High School shootings, the Beltway sniper incidents, the Virginia Tech massacre, and the 2011 Tucson killings. To this can

be added the daily shootings that occur in every city in the country. Taking the representative year of 2007, there were 31,224 deaths from gunshots with 17,352 of them (56 percent) being suicides. The numbers have, generally, been going up.

Those who stand against tightening up the nation's presently useless gun laws have a variety of arguments most of which are in good part delusional. Thus:

1. EXCUSE NUMBER ONE Guns don't kill people, people kill people.

a. It is certainly true that while sitting on a shelf, locked in a draw or carried in a holster, guns are inert pieces of machinery and, ultimately, it takes a finger to pull the trigger. Yet this fact is actually irrelevant. It's irrelevant because guns are not manufactured to stay on shelves, in draws or holsters. That inert status has nothing to do with why they exist. So, we can go on and ask:

b. Why are guns manufactured? Why do they exist? Primitive firearms were invented in China sometime in the 12th Century. They were invented to be used in warfare, that is to kill and injure other people. As the technology spread westward, first into the Arab lands and then to Europe, the technology was improved, but its *raison d'être* (its reason for being) to kill and injure others stayed the same.

The only thing that has changed over time is that in certain lands, particularly the U.S., a monopoly on the possession of such weapons ceased to be held by the state and guns diffused into the population as a whole.

In the United States, this process of diffusion was allowed based on a peculiar interpretation of Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. That amendment says that the right of the citizens to bear arms shall not be infringed. But that statement forms a dependent clause in a sentence that links the right to bear arms to the maintenance of "a well regulated militia."

Apart from the National Guard, the modern U.S. does not maintain militias. And, most of the membership of the National Rifle Association (NRA), along with the other gun-toting tough guys walking the streets of (particularly) the middle and southern U.S., don't even belong to the National Guard.

c. The hard truth is that guns were originally invented, and still today are primarily made, to shoot people. Their other uses: in hunting, to shoot holes in paper targets, to blast clay projectiles out of the air for fun, are strictly secondary to their primary purpose.

d. So the argument that guns don't kill people is a-historical and something of a red herring. Guns are essentially our partners, intimate accessories if you

will, in what is most often criminal activity, facilitating the efficiency of acts of homicide, assault and suicide. At the rate we pursue these activities, we just couldn't maintain the modern level of mayhem without them.

2. EXCUSE NUMBER TWO Guns are most often used for self-defense.

a. If you go on the Web, you can find surveys that allege the use of guns for self-defense numbering in the millions of episodes per year. However, these surveys are often carried out by biased organizations and are methodologically flawed. They have, therefore, been demonstrated to be unreliable.

b. More reliable studies, conducted by unbiased sources such as Harvard University, have shown, among other things, that: very few criminals are shot by law-abiding citizens; most criminals are shot either by the police, or by other criminals; and firearms reported to have been used in self-defense are, most of the time, used against members of a family or erstwhile friends during arguments.

Along the same lines, the statement concerning the Colorado theater massacre issued by Luke O'Dell, a spokesman for the Rocky Mountain Gun Owners Association, reflected the misconception that the answer to gun violence is more guns:

"Potentially, if there had been a law-abiding citizen who had been able to carry [a gun] in the theater [in Colorado], it's possible that the death toll would have been less." One might more plausibly argue that if the shooter had not been able to procure a rifle, a shotgun and two handguns "to carry" into the theater, the death toll would have been zero.

Lobby Power

It seems that it does not matter how many times these massacres take place; nothing is likely to change. Here is what an article, entitled "Still Little Interest In U.S. Gun Control" in the Philadelphia Inquirer of July 22, had to say: "Despite periodic mass shootings the political calculus seems locked down. Most Republicans adamantly oppose tighter gun controls, and most Democrats would prefer to focus on other issues."

Why so? The reason has to do with a very flawed aspect of our political system. Ours is a system that allows a relatively small number of citizens (in this case gun zealots) to form a special interest, or lobby group, that raises and distributes great amounts of money nationwide and, in some parts of the country, exercises strong voting influence.

These lobbies can hold crazy ideas that demonstrably harm society and make us

look like an insane nation to the rest of the world, but that doesn't matter either. The politicians will positively respond anyway to get money and electoral support. In this sense, we live in a land devoid of "national interest." There is only the interest of lobby groups and the politicians controlled by them.

Nor is this situation unique to the problem of the nation's gun laws and the power of the NRA. If we look at foreign policy, we see that similar lobbies skew policy with disastrous results. The Zionist lobby has the entire U.S. government head over heels in support of the basically racist state of Israel. And, this position does demonstrable harm to our standing throughout the Middle East and Muslim world.

It's crazy, but it has been going on for at least 65 years. The Cuban lobby of anti-Castro fanatics has intimidated Washington to blockade, sanction and otherwise isolate Cuba even though the rest of the world is content to trade and have normal relations with the island nation. Our politicians say they take this stand because the Cuban government is a communist dictatorship. So what? Do we have normal relations with China? Do we trade with Vietnam?

These politicians are obviously being less than truthful. They take the stand because they are bought and bullied by a bunch of well-organized, well-funded fanatics. The whole thing is crazy and has been going on since 1960.

There is simply something wrong with our political system. Too few people can command too much power in the name of relatively small minority groups. We need campaign finance reform and much more transparency when it comes to the operations of special interests.

We need shorter electoral periods and limits on how much it can cost to run for any office. We need honest and open regional and national debates on both domestic and foreign policies that affect large numbers of our citizens (whether those citizens know it or not).

And, last but not least, we need a rational rethinking of what the word "freedom" means.

Does "freedom" mean that just about anyone is free to carry weapons that potentially put the rest of us in danger? Free to carry weapons that are most often going to be used to shoot off the carrier's foot, or shoot someone he or she imagines is acting abnormally, or shoot a family member in a heated argument, or, in a fit of depression, to blow one's own brains out? Does it mean that people are free to carry weapons that they may decide to use in an episode of mass murder?

Does “freedom” mean that if you have a lot of money you can use it to corrupt the nation’s politicians so that they distort the positions and policies of government to such a degree that they cease to have any connection to common sense definitions of community or national interest?

Sadly, the answer is yes. That is actually what freedom has come to mean in the U.S. And these stupid definitions of “freedom” are slowly but surely undermining the body politic. There are no super heroes out there to save us: no Superman, no Batman, no Catwoman, and the like. There is just us.

And if we don’t find a way to, in essence, work our way free of the pseudo “freedoms” that are ruining our political system, no one else will. Things will simply get worse.

Lawrence Davidson is a history professor at West Chester University in Pennsylvania. He is the author of *Foreign Policy Inc.: Privatizing America’s National Interest*; *America’s Palestine: Popular and Official Perceptions from Balfour to Israeli Statehood*; and *Islamic Fundamentalism*.

America: A Nation of Wildebeest

Exclusive: The slaughter of 12 moviegoers at the new Batman film in Aurora, Colorado, recalls other moments of horror known by names like Columbine, Virginia Tech, Tucson. But the repetition of such gun violence and the lack of a coherent response make Americans seem like a nation of Wildebeest, says Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Whenever some deranged gunman, armed with an assault rifle or some other combat weapon, slaughters young Americans at a college or a high school or a mall or, now, a movie theater I think of those documentaries showing Wildebeest on their migrations through crocodile-infested rivers.

In their frightened eyes, you can see that the herd knows that each crocodile will pick off an individual Wildebeest, flip it in the air, break its back and then drag it away to be devoured. But the herd still crashes through the river presumably with the understanding that most of them will survive. The Wildebeest may even be emotionally numbed to the fate of the unlucky ones.

In a way, that is what Americans have become. As we send our children off to

school or off to a party or off to the movies, we know instinctively that some of them may well die at the hands of some troubled person who has obtained a powerful weapon and has decided to avenge some imagined slight by murdering strangers.

Sometimes, the dead are in large numbers (like at the Aurora, Colorado, multiplex theater), but usually it's just one or two at a time. We just hope that it's not our kids.

We weep over the tragedy of strangers, but our secret thought is thank goodness it wasn't my son or daughter. We are like the Wildebeest continuing the migration hoping that at the next river it won't be our turn.

At such moments, it's also typical for news media pundits to wave their fingers at politicians for not having the "courage" to stop this mayhem by standing up to the ruthless National Rifle Association and its gun-obsessed fringe. But the harder truth is that the problem is not with America's politicians; it's with the American voters.

There have been politicians who have favored common-sense gun control, but most of them are now former politicians. Remember Michael Dukakis, the Democratic presidential nominee in 1988. He favored strong gun control, and his Republican rival, George H.W. Bush, clobbered him over the issue.

Bush accused Dukakis of wanting to disarm all private citizens. "That is not the American way," declared Bush at one campaign rally. "I feel just the opposite."

Some political observers believe that Dukakis's brave stand for gun control was a key factor in his landslide defeat. And, today, Dukakis is a punch line synonymous with "loser" while Bush is revered by Official Washington, recently honored with a flattering documentary on HBO.

Bush and other pro-gun Republican presidents then packed the U.S. Supreme Court with like-minded justices who reversed long-standing precedents and reinterpreted the Second Amendment as an individual right to bear arms, rather than a communal need to have a "well-regulated Militia."

There is merit to both sides of that argument. When the Second Amendment was adopted by the First Congress (and was then ratified in 1791), the young United States was a frontier nation where firearms also were important for hunting and for protection from such threats as outlaws, European rivals disputing America's boundaries, and Native Americans resisting encroachment into their lands.

But the Founders' real intent for the Second Amendment can be better understood from their actions in the Second Congress when the Militia Acts were passed,

mandating that every white man of military age must purchase a musket and other equipment. Black men were excluded from this provision.

In those early decades, the Second Amendment also wasn't regarded as a universal right. African-American slaves and even many free blacks were denied the right to own guns in Southern and border states under the so-called "Black Codes," laws largely affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1857 *Dred Scott* decision.

As the United States became more urban and even in some frontier towns of the Wild West laws were passed to reduce violence by placing restrictions on guns. During the Prohibition Era, when gangsters began using machineguns, the federal government stepped in with legislation to restrict these dangerous weapons.

However, the political tide began to turn in the 1980s as a resurgent Right saw a potent issue championing broader "gun rights." The National Rifle Association evolved from being mostly a gun club training young people in the safe use of firearms into a ruthless and feared political lobby.

The 1988 election with George H.W. Bush portraying Michael Dukakis as an un-American weakling for favoring gun control marked a turning point in the national debate, but Dukakis was far from alone as a politician whose career ended ignominiously because he crossed the NRA.

By the early 1990s, the anti-gun-control lobby was drawing populist support from right-wing "militias" who saw the violent standoffs at Ruby Ridge and Waco as signs of a massive federal (even global) conspiracy to disarm Americans. Right-wing radio talkers and pols recognized guns as another wedge issue to divide the nation.

Advocates for "common-sense gun laws" soon were reeling, as the NRA punched loophole after loophole in gun restrictions. Pro-gun politics also merged with the Right's larger strategy of undoing all kinds of federal regulations. In effect, the populist rhetoric of "gun rights" gave macho muscle to freeing Wall Street bankers to have the "freedom" to do whatever they wanted.

So, as the nation grieves the 12 dead moviegoers who were gunned down while watching the new Batman film as Aurora takes its place with Columbine, Virginia Tech, Tucson and other sites of infamous slaughters it's almost tiresome to see the various players reprise their predictable parts.

We have politicians offering prayers; celebrities expressing shock via Twitter; gun lobbyists blaming the latest deranged individual, not his weapons; and, yes, sanctimonious pundits lamenting the lack of "courage" among politicians (though many of the same pundits join in snickering whenever the name "Dukakis" is mentioned).

We also have the latest group of grieving families with that stunned look of disbelief in their eyes. The rest of us will join the candle-burning vigils and tear up over the stories of promising lives cut short. But privately we will thank goodness that the victims of this latest massacre (or the more numerous dead from the many daily examples of less-newsworthy gun violence) weren't our own children.

We know in our gut that it is really only a matter of luck. We are like the Wildebeest on migration, plunging into a crocodile-infested river hoping that we and our loved ones emerge on the other side.

To read more of Robert Parry's writings, you can now order his last two books, *Secrecy & Privilege* and *Neck Deep*, at the discount price of only \$16 for both. For details on the special offer, [click here.](#)]

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, was written with two of his sons, Sam and Nat, and can be ordered at neckdeepbook.com. His two previous books, *Secrecy & Privilege: The Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq* and *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & 'Project Truth'* are also available there.

The Long Night of Gun Violence

The well-organized anger of the Right in favor of guns has silenced many Americans who recognize the madness of letting mentally fragile human beings run around with assault rifles. Will the latest massacre in Colorado do anything to change this strange lethargy, asks Tom H. Hastings.

By Tom H. Hastings

According to Pew Research, white men care more about gun rights than keeping guns out of the hands of killers. What is our glitch, our spiritual void, my fellow white guys? Can nothing but our fear and lust for unearned power rule this land?

Will no amount of innocent blood touch our hearts enough to change? It is long overdue; time to feminize and colorize the gun debate in the US. Republicans desperately need to do some soul-searching. Where did they misplace theirs?

Gun nuts respond in three rhetorical ways whenever anyone has the temerity to

suggest that perhaps getting guns is a bit too easy in our hyper-armed nation.

One: "If more people had been there carrying guns the shooter could have been stopped faster."

Right. The Wild West featured that ethos and yet it was found that the more guns were restricted, the safer citizens actually were.

There were reasons we progressed out of Tombstone Territory. We are seeing why again and again and again, daily with shootings of one or two, punctuated by occasional rampages like we saw in Aurora, Colorado; Tucson, Arizona; Virginia Tech; Littleton, Colorado; Washington, DC; Jonesboro, Arkansas; Springfield, Oregon; and sadly, avoidably, many more

Two: "It's not the guns. Just look at the rate of gun ownership in places like North Dakota, yet there is little gun violence there. This is a people problem, not a gun problem."

True enough. So let states and local governments figure it out for themselves. Of course, the way to do that is to eliminate the stupid Second Amendment or change the makeup of the Supreme Court, since the dispositive ruling by the current majority took away states' rights in this regard.

Three: "See? These people want to take away your guns!" True. Time to melt them down and repurpose that material to plowshares. Long past time.

My real question here is: What happened to the spirits of those who are so addicted to guns? What is wrong with these people's souls? What would Jesus do? Surely no one calling himself or herself a Christian would own a gun, an instrument which has one purpose, to kill or threaten to kill. Love your guns or love Christ, but the two are mutually exclusive. Make your choice.

At least the politicians are standing up. Not. One did, Michael Bloomberg, mayor of New York. Thank you, mayor. Perhaps a few more will buck the trend back toward Deadwood Gulch. Americans seem resigned to more guns, toward lawlessness.

Perhaps America is just too sick to recover, but that hopelessness, that defeatism, isn't an option. The gun lobby, the NRA, the armed Tea Party, may not care about the three-month-old baby who was shot in the movie theater, but more of us should wake up and get involved, get rid of these killing machines.

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