

Newtown's Hidden Crime-Scene Photos

Exclusive: With solid Republican opposition and many Democrats scared of the gun lobby, Congress is turning its back on a renewed assault weapons ban, a collapse made easier by the refusal of Newtown officials to release crime-scene photos of the bullet-riddled bodies of 20 first-graders, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

As a father and grandfather, I appreciate the feelings of those Newtown, Connecticut, parents who don't want the gruesome crime-scene photos of last December's massacre released. But it is now imperative that the people of the United States and especially the Congress face up to the horrible realities resulting from the nation's cavalier attitude toward assault weapons.

If we are to prevent future Newtown massacres, we need as a country to study what actually happens to human beings when they are subjected to the violence of these powerful weapons. Yet, viewing these awful photos is equally necessary if we as a nation decide to place some twisted notion of what the Framers intended in the Second Amendment over the bodies of these 20 first-graders and the many other victims from mass killings.

It was unpleasant, too, for Americans to be confronted with photos of the My Lai massacre in Vietnam, but without the public release of those images, the reality of that war would never have been understood. Similarly, in the 1950s, the mother of 14-year-old lynching victim Emmett Till insisted that people see her son's mutilated body.

In both cases, the images galvanized the consciences of honorable Americans to do something to prevent recurrences of these atrocities. However, even those who wanted to continue the Vietnam War or who favored maintaining racial segregation in the South needed to look at the images so their beliefs could be measured against real human costs.

Similarly, we must all look at these bullet-riddled six-year-olds, some of them literally ripped to pieces by multiple gunshots from an AR-15 rifle. For some of us, such an experience as distressing as it would be would strengthen a determination to take action. For others who believe that the Second Amendment gives them the right to own any weapon they want and carry it wherever they please, seeing the dismembered school children would give them a new way to value their "right."

If, after all, the “right to bear arms” is so precious, it would be even more precious after seeing the torn flesh and the fresh blood of these 20 tiny schoolchildren and their six brave teachers. Each time, these “gun rights” enthusiasts shout out their truncated version of the Second Amendment leaving out the parts about “a well-regulated militia” and the “security of a free state” they could have these images of mangled children flash through their minds.

It would be a value-added to their Second Amendment pride. It would remind them that their “right” is even more valuable than the lives of innocent children.

Or, it might give these true-believers reason to rethink their absolutism and perhaps study the real history in which the Framers never viewed the Second Amendment as a “libertarian” right to rise up against the government, but rather as a practical necessity for states to maintain order and to put down armed rebellions. [For details, see Consortiumnews.com’s [“More Second Amendment Madness.”](#)]

Though some of the Newtown parents have understandably recoiled at the thought of seeing photos of their children’s shredded bodies piled together or scattered about their classroom, one mother, Veronique Pozner, grasped the importance of facing the grim truth. She [insisted](#) that Connecticut Gov. Dannel Malloy see the body of her son Noah at his open-casket funeral in December.

The bottom half of Noah’s face was covered by a cloth. That was because his mouth and jaw had been blown away as had his left hand. He had been shot 11 times.

“I owed it to him as his mother, the good, the bad, the ugly,” Pozner told a reporter. “It is not up to me to say I am only going to look at you and deal with you when you are alive, that I am going to block out the reality of what you look like when you are dead. And as a little boy, you have to go in the ground. If I am going to shut my eyes to that I am not his mother. I had to bear it. I had to do it.”

As painful as her message was, Pozner was right. The horrifying facts of the massacre like the 20 children who died that day belong to all of us since we live in a democratic Republic in which all citizens bear responsibility for the laws that do or don’t protect our society.

We owe it to the little victims of Newtown to view the crime-scene photos and to listen to their silent witness as to what “gun rights” actually mean.

[For a limited time, you can purchase Robert Parry’s trilogy on the Bush family for only \$34. For details, [click here.](#)]

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his new book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).

Bowing to Second Amendment Myths

Even as Democratic leaders propose gun-safety laws after the slaughter of 20 first-graders in Newtown they try to sound “reasonable” by genuflecting to the myth of Second Amendment “rights.” But this acceptance of right-wing propaganda is dooming these life-saving initiatives, says Beverly Bandler.

By Beverly Bandler

I sent a message to Vice President Joe Biden after reading [an article](#) by Josh Lederman in the *Huffington Post*, which quoted the Vice President as saying that: “the notion of registering guns crosses a cultural line, noting that unlike cars, which must be registered, guns are explicitly protected by the Constitution.”

But guns are *not* “explicitly protected by the Constitution.”

I am an ardent Democrat, but frankly, being an active member of the Democratic Party is increasingly frustrating in the extreme. We have so many intelligent, decent and hardworking progressives (*real* Democrats) in the party, but too frequently the impression left by prominent leaders is that either they are insufficiently educated about the Constitution and U.S. history (and Democratic principles). Or perhaps they have momentary lapses of memory and/or disconnects between brain and lip so typical of politicians with superficial “convictions.” Or maybe they are spinelessly intimidated by the National Rifle Association.

As Mark Twain once said: “A lie can travel half way around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes.” That the Second Amendment lie perpetrated by the NRA and others has been costly is an understatement. It is time to correct it.

It is comforting to see that at least one major U.S. newspaper is trying to set the record straight: The Newark, New Jersey, *Star-Ledger* interviewed law professor and author Adam Winkler last December. The *Star-Ledger* quotes Winkler:

“We think of gun control as a modern 20th century invention, but in fact we’ve had gun control since the beginning of America. The Founding Fathers had gun

laws so restrictive that the leaders of today's NRA wouldn't support them.

"The Founding Fathers did not view the Second Amendment as a libertarian license for anyone to have any gun, anywhere he wanted. They restricted large portions of the population who they thought to be untrustworthy from possessing firearms.

"Not only were slaves and free blacks barred from having guns, but at times even law-abiding white men. If you weren't willing to swear an oath of loyalty to the revolution, you were subject to disarmament. We're not talking about traitors here. We're talking about Americans who were exercising their freedom of conscience to oppose the war.

"The Founding Fathers also had very strict militia laws that required gun owners to appear at mandatory musters with their firearms in tow. The militiamen's guns would be inspected and even registered on public rolls."

A similar reality regarding gun control existed in Wild West towns, Winkler noted: "When you went into a frontier town where the civilized people lived, you had to check your guns at the marshal's office. The famous gun havens of Dodge City, Kan.; Tombstone, Ariz.; and Deadwood, S.D., had the most restrictive gun laws in the nation. They all banned carrying any firearms in public." [See "Why the NRA once led the fight for gun control."]

Here is my letter to Vice President Biden:

A key reason the Assault Weapons Ban bill failed and the nation continues to face an uphill battle for gun control as a means to help combat the crisis of gun violence is the mindless repetition of the falsehoods that: "guns are explicitly protected by the Constitution" and gun laws infringe on "rights" provided by the Second Amendment.

Conservatives in both political parties believe they have "gun rights" that they do not have. Article 1, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution and the Second Amendment do not give them the right to own and maintain personal firearms and arsenals of military design or any other kind. The Framers were clear:

Article 1, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution: "The Congress shall have Power...To provide for calling forth the Militia to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections and repel Invasions; To provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining, the Militia, and for governing such Part of them as may be employed in the Service of the United States, reserving to the States respectively, the Appointment of the Officers, and the Authority of training the Militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress;" (1787)

The Second Amendment: "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security

of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.” (1789)

The right “to keep and bear Arms” is in the context of a “well regulated Militia.” A “well regulated Militia” is defined by Congress in Article 1, Section 8. Today’s “Militia” is in effect the National Guard. The language is not ambiguous, neither is the historical record.

We appreciate your personal efforts and those of the President in the gun violence fight. But with all due respect, the President’s plan to reduce gun violence and all gun control efforts are undermined when the deliberate propaganda disseminated by the National Rifle Association and other radical, right-wing operatives is reinforced by Democratic leaders.

Beverly Bandler’s public affairs career spans some 40 years. Her credentials include serving as president of the state-level League of Women Voters of the Virgin Islands and extensive public education efforts in the Washington, D.C. area for 16 years. She writes from Mexico.

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Obama’s Three-Day Smile in Israel

President Obama seems determined to maintain a smile and bonhomie during his three-day trip to Israel, but the optics obscure deeper problems in the U.S.-Israeli relationship as Obama remains under pressure to bend U.S. policies in ways favored by Prime Minister Netanyahu, as ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar explains.

By Paul R. Pillar

Commentary yet to be written on President Barack Obama’s visit to Israel no doubt will be infused with readings of the congeniality meter, assessments of

whether meetings between the President and the Israeli prime minister show any evidence of warming of U.S.-Israeli relations.

Consensus expectations seem to be pretty low on this score, but that will not stop the meter-reading. There's nothing wrong with that on the face of it. What is wrong, however, is the prevalent assumption that warmth in this case is necessarily good, and lack of warmth necessarily bad. Warmth is good if it advances or protects U.S. interests, not if it doesn't.

In many alliances and friendships between nations this may seem almost like a distinction without a difference. There may be a reservoir of empathy, goodwill and, most important, a broad set of common or parallel interests that pays dividends to each side in ways that do not need to be connected explicitly with any one action or any one summit meeting at which leaders make nice to each other.

Keeping the reservoir filled can confidently be expected to be good for the interests of one's own nation over the long term. This generally characterizes, for example, the relationship that the United States has with Britain or Canada.

But the relationship between the United States and Israel is extraordinary and very different from any other, so much so in its nature and implications that it deserves to be called strange. The profuse provision of support and expressions that the larger country directs to the smaller one is not rooted in commonality of interests but instead in the larger country's internal politics.

Given the strangeness of the relationship, odd things are done about it and said about it every week, especially by American politicians. Consider an example from the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Robert Menendez, D-New Jersey, which also refers to something else this week, the ten-year anniversary of the start of the Iraq War, and extends as well to the issue of dealing with Iran, which as it is treated politically in the United States is at least as much an Israel issue as an Iran issue.

Menendez begins by noting that he opposed the Iraq War, which he correctly terms a war of choice. Good for him. Then he harks back to the earlier Gulf war in 1991 and recalls that Israel's restraint in not striking back for Iraqi Scud missile attacks, because "it knew America had its back," was an important factor in the failure of "Saddam's desperate attempt to divide the international coalition." He's right about that, too.

But then look at the implication he draws for current policy toward Iran. He says that "our security is enhanced when the United States stands with Israel," that "when it comes to Iran's nuclear program, it's clear there cannot be any

daylight between the United States and Israel,” and “that is why” Menendez and Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-South Carolina, introduced a resolution that would give a green light to Israel for launching a war against Iran and pledges to back Israel to the hilt if it does so.

Let’s get this straight. From the fact that it was in U.S. interests for Israel to stay out of one Persian Gulf war 22 years ago, we are supposed to welcome Israel not only getting involved in another conflict but also starting it and dragging the United States into a war it would not otherwise be fighting?

It is with good reason that some have called the Menendez-Graham measure the “backdoor to war” resolution. As I said, the strange relationship with Israel leads American politicians to do and say odd things.

The Israelis themselves come up with plenty of oddities. For example, they seem to have a flair for picking high-level U.S. visits as a good time to drive some more stakes into what is left of hope for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Last weekend the new Israeli housing minister said that he wants “many, many more” Israeli settlers in the West Bank and that “there can be only one state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, Israel.”

The Israelis are also said to be intent on pressing for release of the spy Jonathan Pollard. Never mind that Pollard, the perpetrator of one of the largest cases of wholesale selling of secrets in American history, reportedly spied not only for Israel but offered his services to other countries (including the maker of the first Islamic bomb, Pakistan) and was motivated largely by money.

Note the oxymoronic comments one hears that Pollard has been punished enough for someone who “spied for an ally.” Espionage is a hostile act; it is not the act of an ally.

Let’s go ahead and gauge the temperature of the President’s meetings in Israel and draw whatever conclusions we want. But let’s not confuse any apparent warmth we can detect with genuine friendship, commonality of interests, or an advance of U.S. interests.

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US Journalists and War Crime Guilt

From the Archive: Not only have George W. Bush and the Iraq War architects skated away from meaningful accountability, but so too have the media figures who provided the propaganda framework for the illegal invasion, a break with a principle sternly enforced at Nuremberg, Peter Dyer wrote in 2008.

By Peter Dyer (Originally published on Oct. 15, 2008)

On Oct. 16, 1946, Julius Streicher was hanged, a historical precedent that should hold considerable interest for American journalists who have written in support of "Operation Iraqi Freedom" the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Streicher was one of a group of 10 Germans executed that day following the judgment of the first Nuremberg Trial a 40-week trial of 22 of the most prominent Nazis. Each was tried for two or more of the four crimes defined in the Nuremberg Charter: crimes against peace (aggression), war crimes, crimes against humanity, and conspiracy.

All who were sentenced to death were major German government officials or military leaders. Except for Streicher. Julius Streicher was a journalist.

Editor of the vehemently anti-Semitic newspaper *Der Stürmer*, Streicher was convicted of, in the words of the judgment, "incitement to murder and extermination at the time when Jews in the East were being killed under the most horrible conditions clearly constituting a crime against humanity."

Presenting the case against Streicher, British prosecutor Lieutenant Colonel M.C. Griffith-Jones said: "My Lord, it may be that this defendant is less directly involved in the physical commission of the crimes against Jews. ... The submission of the Prosecution is that his crime is no less the worse that he made these things possible made these crimes possible which could never have happened had it not been for him and for those like him. He led the propaganda and the education of the German people in those ways."

The critical role of propaganda was affirmed at Nuremberg not only by the prosecution and in the judgment but also in the testimony of the most prominent Nazi defendant, Reichsmarschall Hermann Goering: "Modern and total war develops, as I see it, along three lines: the war of weapons on land, at sea and in the air; economic war, which has become an integral part of every modern war; and, third, propaganda war, which is also an essential part of this warfare."

Two months after the Nuremberg hangings, the United Nations General Assembly

passed Resolution 59(I), declaring: "Freedom of information requires as an indispensable element the willingness and capacity to employ its privileges without abuse. It requires as a basic discipline the moral obligation to seek the facts without prejudice and to spread knowledge without malicious intent."

The next year another General Assembly Resolution was adopted: Res. 110 which "condemns all forms of propaganda, in whatsoever country conducted, which is either designed or likely to provoke or encourage any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression."

Although UN General Assembly Resolutions are not legally binding, Resolutions 59 and 110 carry considerable moral weight. This is because, like the United Nations itself, they are an expression of the catastrophic brutality and suffering of two world wars and the universal desire to avoid future slaughter.

Propaganda Crimes

Most jurisdictions have yet to recognize propaganda for war as a crime. However several journalists have recently been convicted of incitement to genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. Because there is stiff resistance, especially from the United States, the effort to criminalize war propaganda faces an uphill battle.

However in legal terms it seems relatively straightforward: if incitement to genocide is a crime, then incitement to aggression, another Nuremberg crime, could and should be as well. After all, aggression starting an unprovoked war is "the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole," in the words of the judgment at Nuremberg.

Criminal or not, much of the world now sees incitement to war as morally indefensible. In this light and in light of Goering's three-part recipe for war (weapons, economic war and propaganda), it is instructive to look at the role which American journalists and war propagandists have recently played in bringing about and sustaining war.

The Bush administration began to sell the invasion of Iraq to the American public soon after 9/11. In order to coordinate this effort President Bush's chief of staff, Andrew Card, established the White House Iraq Group (WHIG) in the summer of 2002 expressly for the purpose of marketing the invasion of Iraq.

Among the members of WHIG were media figures/propagandists Karen Hughes and Mary Matalin. WHIG was remarkable not only for its recklessness with the truth but for the candor with which it acknowledged it was running an advertising campaign.

A Sept. 7, 2002, New York Times article entitled *TRACES OF TERROR: THE STRATEGY; Bush Aides Set Strategy to Sell Policy on Iraq* reported: "White House officials said today that the administration was following a meticulously planned strategy to persuade the public, the Congress and the allies of the need to confront the threat from Saddam Hussein.

" 'From a marketing point of view,' said Andrew H. Card Jr., the White House chief of staff who is coordinating the effort, 'you don't introduce new products in August.' " It was as if the "product" the unprovoked invasion of a sovereign state was a consumer good, like a car or a TV show. The sales pitch was the manufactured "imminent threat" of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

In other words, the business of WHIG was incitement to aggressive war primarily through the propaganda of fear. Along those lines WHIG's most prominent member, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, invoked the specter of an Iraqi-generated nuclear holocaust in a Sept. 8, 2002, CNN interview with Wolf Blitzer:

"We do know that there have been shipments going into Iran, for instance into Iraq, for instance, of aluminum tubes that really are only suited to high-quality aluminum tools that are only really suited for nuclear weapons programs, centrifuge programs. ... The problem here is that there will always be some uncertainty about how quickly he can acquire nuclear weapons. But we don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud."

The smoking gun/mushroom cloud images were among the most memorable of all the White House war propaganda. They were generated just a few days earlier in a WHIG meeting by speechwriter Michael Gerson.

The existence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction was central to the Bush administration's campaign for war. Other important elements were Saddam Hussein's ties with Al Qaeda and the strongly implied association of Iraq with the tragedies of 9/11. All were false. In propaganda, though, selling the product trumps truth.

Unquestioning Submission

The role played by American mainstream media during the run-up to the invasion of Iraq was marked by widespread unquestioning submission to the Bush administration and abandonment of the most fundamental journalistic responsibility to the public.

This responsibility is embodied not only in Resolution 59 but in the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics as well, which states: "Journalists should test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error."

The failure of influential American journalists, such as the New York Times' Judith Miller, to test the accuracy of information played a critical role in the Bush administration's successful effort to incite the American public to attack a country which was not threatening us.

Though she was far from alone in selling the case for war, Miller – through her seemingly uncritical reliance on dodgy informants – was probably responsible to a larger degree than any other American journalist for spreading the fear of nonexistent Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

As such she and other influential journalists who failed in this way bear a share of moral, if not legal, responsibility for hundreds of thousands of deaths, millions of refugees and all the other carnage, devastation and human suffering of "Operation Iraqi Freedom."

Some prominent American media figures, however, went considerably further than simple failure to check sources. Some actively and passionately encouraged Americans to commit and/or approve of war crimes, before and during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Prominent among these was Fox News' Bill O'Reilly who regarding both Afghanistan and Iraq advocated such crimes forbidden by the Geneva Convention as collective punishment of civilians (Gen. Con. IV, Art. 33); attacking civilian targets (Protocol I, Art. 51); destroying water supplies (Protocol I Art. 54 Sec. 2) and even starvation (Protocol I, Art. 54 Sec. 1).

Sept. 17, 2001: "The U.S. should bomb the Afghan infrastructure to rubble: the airport, the power plants, their water facilities, and the roads" in the event of a refusal to hand over Osama bin Laden to the U.S. Later, he added: "This is a very primitive country. And taking out their ability to exist day to day will not be hard. We should not target civilians. But if they don't rise up against this criminal government, they starve, period."

On March 26, 2003, a few days after the invasion of Iraq began, O'Reilly said: "There is a school of thought that says we should have given the citizens of Baghdad 48 hours to get out of Dodge by dropping leaflets and going with the AM radios and all that. Forty-eight hours, you've got to get out of there, and flatten the place." [See Peter Hart's "O'Reilly's War: Any rationale, or none, will do" Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting, May/June 2003]

Collective Punishment

Another tremendously influential journalist, Pulitzer Prize winner and former executive editor of the New York Times, the late A.M. Rosenthal, also advocated

attacking civilian targets and collective punishment in regard to waging war against Muslim nations in the Middle East.

In a Sept. 14, 2001, column, "How the U.S. Can Win the War," Rosenthal wrote that the U.S. should give Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Syria and Sudan three days to consider an ultimatum demanding they turn over documents and information related to weapons of mass destruction and terrorist organizations.

During these three days, "the residents of the countries would be urged 24 hours a day by the U.S. to flee the capital and major cities, because they would be bombed to the ground beginning the fourth day."

Right-wing media figure Ann Coulter, on the Sean Hannity Show on July 21, 2006, called for another war and more punishment of civilians, this time in Iran: "Well, I keep hearing people say we can't find the nuclear material, and you can bury it in caves. How about we just, you know, carpet-bomb them so they can't build a transistor radio? And then it doesn't matter if they have the nuclear material."

This pattern of the major U.S. news figures advocating aggressive wars even predated 9/11. Three-time Pulitzer Prize winner Thomas Friedman published a strident call for war crimes including collective punishment of Serbs and the destruction of their water supplies over the Kosovo crisis:

"But if NATO's only strength is that it can bomb forever, then it has to get every ounce out of that. Let's at least have a real air war. The idea that people are still holding rock concerts in Belgrade, or going out for Sunday merry-go-round rides, while their fellow Serbs are 'cleansing' Kosovo, is outrageous. It should be lights out in Belgrade: every power grid, water pipe, bridge, road and war-related factory has to be targeted.

"Like it or not, we are at war with the Serbian nation (the Serbs certainly think so), and the stakes have to be very clear: Every week you ravage Kosovo is another decade we will set your country back by pulverizing you. You want 1950? We can do 1950. You want 1389? We can do 1389 too." [New York Times, April 23, 1999]

These casual – even joking – comments about inflicting war on relatively weak countries came from American journalists and media figures at the very top of their profession. Each was addressing an audience of millions. It is difficult to overstate their influence.

Over the past decade alone, the massive destruction and carnage wreaked by American pursuit of "the supreme international crime" of aggression has been enabled by negligent, reckless and/or malicious use of this influence.

Sadly, the words of Nuremberg Prosecutor Griffith-Jones concerning the propaganda of German journalist Julius Streicher hold considerable meaning today for some of the most prominent journalists in the country which, after World War II, provided the guiding light at Nuremberg: Streicher “made these things possible made these crimes possible which could never have happened had it not been for him and for those like him.”

In 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 127 in which “the General Assembly invites the Governments of States Members to study such measures as might with advantage, be taken on the national plane to combat, within the limits of constitutional procedures, the diffusion of false or distorted reports likely to injure friendly relations between States.”

Unfortunately, more than six decades later, little progress has been made. War propaganda is still legal and very much alive flourishing, in fact, as demonstrated by periodic calls for one more invasion of a country which has never threatened the U.S.: Iran.

As matters stand today, with the United States still the world’s preeminent military power, the American propagandists who enabled Operation Iraqi Freedom and other wars of aggression have little need to worry about their legal responsibilities under the Nuremberg principles. A strong case can be made, though, that they have blood on their hands.

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