

Coming Attraction: Lunatic Loose in West Wing

As Uber-Hawk John Bolton prepares to take over as national security adviser on Monday, Ray McGovern looks back at when Bolton was one of the “crazies” in the George W. Bush administration.

By **Ray McGovern** *Special to Consortium News*

John Bolton’s March 22 appointment-by-tweet as President Donald Trump’s national security adviser has given “March Madness” a new and ominous meaning. There is less than a week left to batten down the hatches before Bolton makes U.S. foreign policy worse than it already is.

During a recent interview with *The Intercept*’s Jeremy Scahill (minutes 35 to 51) I mentioned that Bolton fits seamlessly into a group of take-no-prisoners zealots once widely known in Washington circles as “the crazies,” and now more commonly referred to as “neocons.”

Beginning in the 1970s, “the crazies” sobriquet was applied to Cold Warriors hell bent on bashing Russians, Chinese, Arabs – anyone who challenged U.S. “exceptionalism” (read hegemony). More to the point, I told Scahill that President (and former CIA Director) George H. W. Bush was among those using the term freely, since it seemed so apt. I have been challenged to prove it.

I don’t make stuff up. And with the appointment of the certifiable Bolton, the “the crazies” have become far more than an historical footnote. Rather, the crucible that Bush-41 and other reasonably moderate policymakers endured at their hands give the experience major relevance today. Thus, I am persuaded it would be best not to ask people simply to take my word for it when I refer to “the crazies,” their significance, and the differing attitudes the two Bushes had toward them.

George H. W. Bush and I had a longstanding professional and, later, cordial relationship. For many years after he stopped being president, we stayed in touch – mostly by letter. This is the first time I have chosen to share any of our personal correspondence. I do so not only because of the ominous importance of Bolton’s appointment, but also because I am virtually certain the elder Bush would want me to.

Scanned below is a note George H. W. Bush sent me eight weeks before his son, egged on by the same “crazies” his father knew well from earlier incarnations, launched an illegal and unnecessary war for regime change in Iraq – unleashing

chaos in the Middle East.

1-22-03

GEORGE BUSH

Dear Ray,

It is only "meet and right" that you speak out.

Thanks for your letter. Please do not worry that "crazies" have any influence on POTUS 43. I will admit that early reporting indicated that but it was not true then nor is it true now.

Shut Out of the Media

By January 2003, it was clear that Bush-43 was about to launch a war of aggression – the crime defined by the post-WWII Nuremberg Tribunal as “the supreme international crime differing from other war crimes only in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole.” (Think torture, for example.) During most of 2002, several of us former intelligence analysts had been comparing notes, giving one another sanity checks, writing op-eds pointing to the flimsiness of the “intelligence” cobbled together to allege a weapons-of-mass-destruction “threat” from Iraq, and warning of the catastrophe that war on Iraq would bring.

Except for an occasional op-ed wedged into the Christian Science Monitor or the Miami Herald, for example, we were ostracized from “mainstream media.” *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* were on a feeding frenzy from the government trough and TV pundits were getting high ratings by beating the drum for war. Small wonder the entire media was allergic to what we were saying, despite our many years of experience in intelligence analysis. Warnings to slow down and think were the last thing wanted by those already profiteering from a war on the near horizon.

The challenge we faced was how to get through to President George W. Bush. It had become crystal clear that the only way to do that would be to do an end run around “the crazies” – the criminally insane advisers that his father knew so well – Vice President Dick Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, and Undersecretary of State John Bolton.

Bolton: One of the Crazies

John Bolton was Cheney’s “crazy” at the State Department. Secretary Colin Powell was pretty much window dressing. He could be counted on not to complain loudly – much less quit – even if he strongly suspected he was being had. Powell had gotten to where he was by saluting sharply and doing what superiors told him to do. As secretary of state, Powell was not crazy – just craven. He enjoyed more credibility than the rest of the gang and rather than risk being ostracized like the rest of us, he sacrificed that credibility on the altar of the “supreme international crime.”

In those days Bolton did not hesitate to run circles around – and bully – the secretary of state and many others. This must be considered a harbinger of things to come, starting on Monday, when the bully comes to the china shop in the West Wing. While longevity in office is not the

hallmark of the Trump administration, even if Bolton’s tenure turns out to be short-lived, the crucial months immediately ahead will provide Bolton with ample opportunity to wreak the kind of havoc that “the crazies” continue to see as enhancing U.S. – and not incidentally – Israeli influence in the Middle East. Bear in mind, Bolton still says the attack on Iraq was a good idea. And he is out to scuttle the landmark agreement that succeeded in preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapon any time soon.

Trying to Head Off War

In August 2002, as the Bush-43 administration and U.S. media prepared the country for war on Iraq, the elder Bush’s national security advisor, Gen. Brent Scowcroft, and Secretary of State James Baker each wrote op-eds in an attempt to wean the younger Bush off the “crazies’” milk. Scowcroft’s *Wall Street Journal* op-ed of August 15 was as blunt as its title, “Don’t Attack Saddam.” The cautionary thrust of Baker’s piece in the *New York Times* ten days later, was more diplomatic but equally clear.

But these interventions, widely thought to have been approved by Bush-41, had a predictable opposite effect on the younger Bush, determined as he was to become the “first war president of the 21st Century” (his words). It is a safe bet also that Cheney and other “crazies” baited him with, “Are you going to let

Daddy, who doesn't respect ANY of us, tell you what to do?"

All attempts to insert a rod into the wheels of the juggernaut heading downhill toward war were looking hopeless, when a new idea occurred. Maybe George H. W. Bush could get through to his son. What's to lose? On January 11, 2003 I wrote a letter to the elder Bush asking him to speak "privately to your son George about the crazies advising him on Iraq," adding "I am aghast at the cavalier way in which the [Richard] Perles of the Pentagon are promoting the use of nuclear weapons as an acceptable option against Iraq."

My letter continued: "That such people have the President's ear is downright scary. I think he needs to know why you exercised such care to keep such folks at arms length. (And, as you may know, they are exerting unrelenting pressure on CIA analysts to come up with the "right" answers. You know how that goes!)"

In the letter I enclosed a handful of op-eds that I had managed to get past 2nd-tier mainstream media censors. In those writings, I was much more pointed in my criticism of the Bush/Cheney administration's approach to Iraq than Scowcroft and Baker had been in August 2002.

Initially, I was encouraged at the way the elder Bush began his January 22, 2003 note to me: "It is only 'meet and right' that you speak out." As I read on, however, I asked myself how he could let the wish be father to the thought, so to speak. (Incidentally, "POTUS" in his note is the acronym for "President of the United States;" number 43, of course, was George Jr.)

The elder Bush may not have been fully conscious of it, but he was whistling in the dark, having long since decided to leave to surrogates like Scowcroft and Baker the task of highlighting publicly the criminal folly of attacking Iraq. The father may have tried privately; who knows. It was, in my view, a tragedy that he did not speak out publicly. He would have been very well aware that this was the only thing that would have had a chance of stopping his son from committing what the Nuremberg Tribunal defined as "the supreme international crime."

It is, of course, difficult for a father to admit that his son fell under the influence – this time not alcohol or drugs, but rather the at least equally noxious demonic influence of "the crazies," which Billy Graham himself might have found beyond his power to exorcise. Maybe it is partly because I know the elder Bush personally, but it does strike me that, since we are all human, some degree of empathy might be in order. I simply cannot imagine what it must be like to be a former President with a son, also a former President, undeniably responsible for such widespread killing, injury and abject misery.

Speaking Out – Too Late

It was a dozen years too late, but George H.W. Bush finally did give voice to his doubts about the wisdom of rushing into the Iraq War. In Jon Meacham's biography, "Destiny and Power: The American Odyssey of George Herbert Walker Bush," the elder Bush puts most of the blame for Iraq on his son's "iron-ass" advisers, Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney, while at the same time admitting where the buck stops. With that Watergate-style "modified, limited hangout," and his (richly deserved) criticism of his two old nemeses, Bush-41 may be able to live more comfortably with himself, hoping to get beyond what I believe must be his lingering regret at not going public when that might have stopped "arrogant" Rumsfeld and "hardline" Cheney from

inflicting their madness on the Middle East. No doubt he is painfully aware that he was one of the very few people who might have been able to stop the chaos and carnage, had he spoken out publicly.

Bush-41's not-to-worry note to me had the opposite effect with those of us CIA alumni alarmed at the gathering storm and the unconscionable role being played by those of our former CIA colleagues still there in manufacturing pre-Iraq-war "intelligence." We could see what was going on in real time; we did not have to wait five years for the bipartisan conclusions of a five-year Senate Intelligence Committee investigation. Introducing its findings, Chairman Jay Rockefeller said: "In making the case for war, the Administration repeatedly presented intelligence as fact when in reality it was unsubstantiated, contradicted, or even non-existent."

Back to January 2003: a few days after I received President Bush's not-to-worry note of January 22, 2003, a handful of us former senior CIA officials went forward with plans to create Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPs). We had been giving one another sanity checks before finalizing draft articles about the scarcely believable things we were observing – including unmistakable signs that our profession of intelligence analysis was being prostituted. On the afternoon of February 5, 2003, after Powell misled the UN Security Council, we issued our first (of three) VIPs Memoranda for the President before the war. We graded Powell "C" for content, and warned President George W. Bush, in effect, to beware "the crazies," closing with these words:

"After watching Secretary Powell today, we are convinced that you would be well served if you widened the discussion ... beyond the circle of those advisers clearly bent on a war for which we see no compelling reason and from which we believe the unintended consequences are likely to be catastrophic."

Team B

When Gerald Ford assumed the presidency in August 1974, the White House was a center of intrigue. Serving as Chief of Staff for President Ford, Donald Rumsfeld (1974-75), with help from Dick Cheney (1975-76), engineered Bush's nomination to become CIA Director. This was widely seen as a cynical move to take Bush out of contention for the Republican ticket in 1976 and possibly beyond, since the post of CIA director was regarded as a dead-end job and, ideally, would keep you out of politics. (Alas, this did not turn out the way Rumsfeld expected – damn those “unknown unknowns.”)

If, at the same time, Rumsfeld and Cheney could brand GHW Bush soft on communism and brighten the future for the Military-Industrial Complex, that would put icing on the cake. Rumsfeld had been making evidence-impooverished speeches at the time, arguing that the Soviets were ignoring

the AMB Treaty and other arms control arrangements and were secretly building up to attack the United States. He and the equally relentless Paul Wolfowitz were doing all they could to create a much more alarming picture of the Soviet Union, its intentions, and its views about fighting and winning a nuclear war. Sound familiar?

Bush arrived at CIA after U.S.-Soviet detente had begun to flourish. The cornerstone Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty was almost four years old and had introduced the somewhat mad but stabilizing reality of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD). Crazies and neocons alike lived in desperate fear of losing their favorite enemy, the USSR. Sound familiar?

Bush was CIA Director for the year January 1976 to January 1977, during which I worked directly for him. At the time, I was Acting National Intelligence Officer for Western Europe where post-WWII certainties were unravelling and it was my job to get intelligence community-wide assessments to the White House – often on fast breaking events. We almost wore out what was then the latest technology – the “LDX” (for Long Distance Xerography) machine – sending an unprecedentedly high number of “Alert Memoranda” from CIA Headquarters to the White House. (“LDX,” of course, is now fax; there was no Internet.)

As ANIO, I also chaired National Intelligence Estimates on Italy and Spain. As far as I could observe from that senior post, Director Bush honored his incoming pledge not to put any political gloss on the judgments of intelligence analysts.

Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz, of course, had made no such pledge. They persuaded President Ford to set up a “Team B” analysis, contending that CIA and intelligence community analyses and estimates were naively rosy. Bush's predecessor as CIA director, William Colby, had turned the proposal down flat, but he had no political ambitions. I suspect Bush, though, saw a Rumsfeld trap

to color him soft on the USSR. In any case, against the advice of virtually all intelligence professionals, Bush succumbed to the political pressure and acquiesced in the establishment of a Team B to do alternative analyses. No one was surprised that these painted a much more threatening and inaccurate picture of Soviet strategic intentions.

Paul Warnke, a senior official of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency at the time of Team B, put it this way:

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“Whatever might be said for evaluation of strategic capabilities by a group of outside experts, the impracticality of achieving useful results by ‘independent’ analysis of strategic objectives should have been self-evident. Moreover, the futility of the Team B enterprise was assured by the selection of the panel’s members. Rather than including a diversity of views ... the Strategic Objectives Panel was composed entirely of individuals who made careers of viewing the Soviet menace with alarm.”

The fact that Team B’s conclusions were widely regarded as inaccurate did not deter Rumsfeld. He went about promoting them as valid and succeeded in undermining arms control efforts for the next several years. Two days before Jimmy Carter’s inauguration Rumsfeld fired his parting shot, saying, “No doubt exists about the capabilities of the Soviet armed forces” and that those capabilities “indicate a tendency toward war fighting ... rather than the more modish Western models of deterrence through mutual vulnerability.”

GHW Bush in the White House

When George H. W. Bush came into town as vice president, he got President Reagan’s permission to be briefed with “The President’s Daily Brief” and I became a daily briefer from 1981 to 1985. That job was purely substantive. Even so, my colleagues and I have been very careful to regard those conversations as sacrosanct, for obvious reasons. By the time he became president in 1989, he had come to know, all too well, “the crazies” and what they were capable of. Bush’s main political nemesis, Donald Rumsfeld, could be kept at bay, and other “crazies” kept out of the most senior posts – until Bush the younger put them in positions in which they could do serious damage. John Bolton had been *enfant terrible* on arms control, persuading Bush-43 to ditch the ABM Treaty. On Monday, he can be expected to arrive at the West Wing with his wrecking ball.

Even Jimmy Carter Speaks Out

Given how difficult Rumsfeld and other hardliners made it for President Carter to work with the Russians on arms control, and the fact that Bolton

has been playing that role more recently, Jimmy Carter's comments on Bolton – while unusually sharp – do not come as a complete surprise. Besides, experience has certainly shown how fo

olish it can be to dismiss out of hand what former presidents say about their successors' appointments to key national security positions. This goes in spades in the case of John Bolton.

Just three days after Bolton's appointment, the normally soft-spoken Jimmy Carter became plain-spoken/outspoken Jimmy Carter, telling USA Today that the selection of Bolton "is a disaster for our country." When asked what advice he would give Trump on North Korea, for example, Carter said his "first advice" would be to fire Bolton.

In sum, if you asked Bush-41, Carter's successor as president, how he would describe John Bolton, I am confident he would lump Bolton together with those he called "the crazies" back in the day, referring to headstrong ideologues adept at blowing things up – things like arms agreements negotiated with painstaking care, giving appropriate consideration to the strategic views of adversaries and friends alike. Sadly, "crazy" seems to have become the new normal in Washington, with warmongers and regime-changers like Bolton in charge, people who have not served a day in uniform and have no direct experience of war other than starting them.

Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He served as an Army Infantry/Intelligence officer and then as a CIA analyst for a total of 30 years. In January 2003, he co-founded Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS) and still serves on its Steering Group.

How Many People Has the U.S. Killed in its Post-9/11 Wars? Part 2: Afghanistan and Pakistan

The numbers of casualties of U.S. wars since Sept. 11, 2001 have largely gone uncounted, but coming to terms with the true scale of the crimes committed remains an urgent moral, political and legal imperative, argues Nicolas J.S. Davies, in part two of his series.

By Nicolas J.S. Davies

In the first part of this series, I estimated that about 2.4 million Iraqis have been killed as a result of the illegal invasion of their country by the United States and the United Kingdom in 2003. I turn now to Afghan and Pakistani deaths in the ongoing 2001 U.S. intervention in Afghanistan. In part three, I will examine U.S.-caused war deaths in Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. According to Ret. U.S. General Tommy Franks, who led the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan in reaction to 9/11, the U.S. government does not keep track of civilian casualties that it causes. “You know, we don’t do body counts,” Franks once said. Whether that’s true or a count is covered up is difficult to know.

As I explained in part one, the U.S. has attempted to justify its invasions of Afghanistan and several other countries as a legitimate response to the terrorist crimes of 9/11. But the U.S. was not attacked by another country on that day, and no crime, however horrific, can justify 16 years of war – and counting – against a series of countries that did not attack the U.S.

As former Nuremberg prosecutor Benjamin Ferencz told NPR a week after the terrorist attacks, they were crimes against humanity, but not “war crimes,” because the U.S. was not at war. “It is never a legitimate response to punish people who are not responsible for the wrong done.” Ferencz explained. “We must make a distinction between punishing the guilty and punishing others. If you simply retaliate en masse by bombing Afghanistan, let us say, or the Taliban, you will kill many people who don’t believe in what has happened, who don’t approve of what has happened.”

As Ferencz predicted, we have killed “many people” who had nothing to do with the crimes of September 11. How many people? That is the subject of this report.

Afghanistan

In 2011, award-winning investigative journalist Gareth Porter was researching night raids by U.S. special operations forces in Afghanistan for his article, “How McChrystal and Petraeus Built an Indiscriminate Killing Machine.” The expansion of night raids from 2009 to 2011 was a central element in Barack Obama’s escalation of the U.S. War in Afghanistan. Porter documented a gradual 50-fold ramping up from 20 raids per month in May 2009 to over 1,000 raids per month by April 2011.

But strangely, the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported a decrease in the numbers of civilians killed by U.S. forces in Afghanistan in 2010, including a decrease in the numbers of civilians killed in night raids from 135 in 2009 to only 80 in 2010.

UNAMA's reports of civilian deaths are based on investigations by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), so Noori Shah Noori, an Afghan journalist working with Porter on the article, interviewed Nader Nadery, a Commissioner of the AIHRC, to find out what was going on.

Nadery explained to Noori, "...that that figure represented only the number of civilian deaths from 13 incidents that had been fully investigated. It excluded the deaths from 60 other incidents in which complaints had been received, but had not yet been thoroughly investigated."

"Nadery has since estimated that the total civilian deaths for all 73 night raids about which it had complaints was 420," Porter continued. "But the AIHRC admits that it does not have access to most of the districts dominated by the Taliban and that people in those districts are not aware of the possibility of complaining to the Commission about night raids. So, neither the AIHRC nor the United Nations learns about a significant proportion – and very likely the majority – of night raids that end in civilian deaths."

UNAMA has since updated its count of civilians killed in U.S. night raids in 2010 from 80 to 103, still nowhere close to Nadery's estimate of 420. But as Nadery explained, even that estimate must have been a small fraction of the number of civilian deaths in about 5,000 night raids that year, most of which were probably conducted in areas where people have no contact with UNAMA or the AIHRC.

As senior U.S. military officers admitted to Dana Priest and William Arkin of *The Washington Post*, more than half the raids conducted by U.S. special operations forces target the wrong person or house, so a large increase in civilian deaths was a predictable and expected result of such a massive expansion of these deadly "kill or capture" raids.

The massive escalation of U.S. night raids in 2010 probably made it an exceptional year, so it is unlikely that UNAMA's reports regularly exclude as many uninvestigated reports of civilian deaths as in 2010. But on the other hand, UNAMA's annual reports never mention that their figures for civilian deaths are based only on investigations completed by the AIHRC, so it is unclear how unusual it was to omit 82 percent of reported incidents of civilian deaths in U.S. night raids from that year's report.

We can only guess how many reported incidents have been omitted from UNAMA's other annual reports since 2007, and, in any case, that would still tell us nothing about civilians killed in areas that have no contact with UNAMA or the AIHRC.

In fact, for the AIHRC, counting the dead is only a by-product of its main function, which is to investigate reports of human rights violations in Afghanistan. But Porter and Noori's research revealed that UNAMA's reliance on investigations completed by the AIHRC as the basis for definitive statements about the number of civilians killed in Afghanistan in its reports has the effect of sweeping an unknown number of incomplete investigations and unreported civilian deaths down a kind of "memory hole," writing them out of virtually all published accounts of the human cost of the war in Afghanistan.

UNAMA's annual reports even include colorful pie-charts to bolster the false impression that these are realistic estimates of the number of civilians killed in a given year, and that pro-government forces and foreign occupation forces are only responsible for a small portion of them.

UNAMA's systematic undercounts and meaningless pie-charts become the basis for headlines and news stories all over the world. But they are all based on numbers that UNAMA and the AIHRC know very well to be a small fraction of civilian deaths in Afghanistan. It is only a rare story like Porter's in 2011 that gives any hint of this shocking reality.

In fact, UNAMA's reports reflect only how many deaths the AIHRC staff have investigated in a given year, and may bear little or no relation to how many people have actually been killed. Seen in this light, the relatively small fluctuations in UNAMA's reports of civilian deaths from year to year in Afghanistan seem just as likely to represent fluctuations in resources and staffing at the AIHRC as actual increases or decreases in the numbers of people killed.

If only one thing is clear about UNAMA's reports of civilian deaths, it is that nobody should ever cite them as estimates of total numbers of civilians killed in Afghanistan – least of all UN and government officials and mainstream journalists who, knowingly or not, mislead millions of people when they repeat them.

Estimating Afghan Deaths Through the Fog of Official Deception

So the most widely cited figures for civilian deaths in Afghanistan are based, not just on "passive reporting," but on misleading reports that knowingly ignore many or most of the deaths reported by bereaved families and local officials, while many or most civilian deaths are never reported to UNAMA or the AIHRC in the first place. So how can we come up with an intelligent or remotely accurate estimate of how many civilians have really been killed in Afghanistan?

Body Count: Casualty Figures After 10 Years of the "War On Terror", published in

2015 by Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR), a co-winner of the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize, estimated deaths of combatants and civilians in Afghanistan based on UNAMA's reports and other sources. *Body Count's* figures for numbers of Afghan combatants killed seem more reliable than UNAMA's undercounts of civilian deaths.

The Afghan government reported that 15,000 of its soldiers and police were killed through 2013. The authors of *Body Count* took estimates of Taliban and other anti-government forces killed in 2001, 2007 and 2010 from other sources and extrapolated to years for which no estimates were available, based on other measures of the intensity of the conflict (numbers of air strikes, night raids etc.). They estimated that 55,000 "insurgents" were killed by the end of 2013.

The years since 2013 have been increasingly violent for the people of Afghanistan. With reductions in U.S. and NATO occupation forces, Afghan pro-government forces now bear the brunt of combat against their fiercely independent countrymen, and another 25,000 soldiers and police have been killed since 2013, according to my own calculations from news reports and this study by the Watson Institute at Brown University.

If the same number of anti-government fighters have been killed, that would mean that at least 120,000 Afghan combatants have been killed since 2001. But, since pro-government forces are armed with heavier weapons and are still backed by U.S. air support, anti-government losses are likely to be greater than those of government troops. So a more realistic estimate would be that between 130,000 and 150,000 Afghan combatants have been killed.

The more difficult task is to estimate how many civilians have been killed in Afghanistan through the fog of UNAMA's misinformation. UNAMA's passive reporting has been deeply flawed, based on completed investigations of as few as 18 percent of reported incidents, as in the case of night raid deaths in 2010, with no reports at all from large parts of the country where the Taliban are most active and most U.S. air strikes and night raids take place. The Taliban appear to have never published any numbers of civilian deaths in areas under its control, but it has challenged UNAMA's figures.

There has been no attempt to conduct a serious mortality study in Afghanistan like the 2006 Lancet study in Iraq. The world owes the people of Afghanistan that kind of serious accounting for the human cost of the war it has allowed to engulf them. But it seems unlikely that that will happen before the world fulfills the more urgent task of ending the now 16-year-old war.

Body Count took estimates by Neta Crawford and the Costs of War project at Boston University for 2001-6, plus the UN's flawed count since 2007, and

multiplied them by a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 8, to produce a range of 106,000 to 170,000 civilians killed from 2001 to 2013. The authors seem to have been unaware of the flaws in UNAMA's reports revealed to Porter and Noori by Nadery in 2011.

But *Body Count* did acknowledge the very conservative nature of its estimate, noting that, "compared to Iraq, where urbanization is more pronounced, and monitoring by local and foreign press is more pronounced than in Afghanistan, the registration of civilian deaths has been much more fragmentary."

In my 2016 article, "Playing Games With War Deaths," I suggested that the ratio of passive reporting to actual civilian deaths in Afghanistan was therefore more likely to fall between the ratios found in Iraq in 2006 (12:1) and Guatemala at the end of its Civil War in 1996 (20:1).

Mortality in Guatemala and Afghanistan

In fact, the geographical and military situation in Afghanistan is more analogous to Guatemala, with many years of war in remote, mountainous areas against an indigenous civilian population who have taken up arms against a corrupt, foreign-backed central government.

The Guatemalan Civil War lasted from 1960 to 1996. The deadliest phase of the war was unleashed when the Reagan administration restored U.S. military aid to Guatemala in 1981, after a meeting between former Deputy CIA Director Vernon Walters and President Romeo Lucas García, in Guatemala.

U.S. military adviser Lieutenant Colonel George Maynes and President Lucas's brother, General Benedicto Lucas, planned a campaign called Operation Ash, in which 15,000 Guatemalan troops swept through the Ixil region massacring indigenous communities and burning hundreds of villages.

CIA documents that Robert Parry unearthed at the Reagan library and in other U.S. archives specifically defined the targets of this campaign to include "the civilian support mechanism" of the guerrillas, in effect the entire rural indigenous population. A CIA report from February 1982 described how this worked in practice in Ixil:

"The commanding officers of the units involved have been instructed to destroy all towns and villages which are cooperating with the Guerrilla Army of the Poor [the EGP] and eliminate all sources of resistance," the report said. "Since the operation began, several villages have been burned to the ground, and a large number of guerrillas and collaborators have been killed."

Guatemalan President Rios Montt, who died on Sunday, seized power in a coup in

1983 and continued the campaign in Ixil. He was prosecuted for genocide, but neither Walters, Mayne nor any other American official have been charged for helping to plan and support the mass killings in Guatemala.

At the time, many villages in Ixil were not even marked on official maps and there were no paved roads in this remote region (there are still very few today). As in Afghanistan, the outside world had no idea of the scale and brutality of the killing and destruction.

One of the demands of the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), the Revolutionary Organization of Armed People (ORPA) and other revolutionary groups in the negotiations that led to the 1996 peace agreement in Guatemala was for a genuine accounting of the reality of the war, including how many people were killed and who killed them.

The UN-sponsored Historical Clarification Commission documented 626 massacres, and found that about 200,000 people had been killed in Guatemala's civil war. At least 93 percent were killed by U.S.-backed military forces and death squads and only 3 percent by the guerrillas, with 4 percent unknown. The total number of people killed was 20 times previous estimates based on passive reporting.

Mortality studies in other countries (like Angola, Bosnia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Kosovo, Rwanda, Sudan and Uganda) have never found a larger discrepancy between passive reporting and mortality studies than in Guatemala.

Based on the discrepancy between passive reporting in Guatemala and what the U.N. ultimately found there, UNAMA appears to have reported less than 5 percent of actual civilian deaths in Afghanistan, which would be unprecedented.

Costs of War and UNAMA have counted 36,754 civilian deaths up to the end of 2017. If these (extremely) passive reports represent 5 percent of total civilian deaths, as in Guatemala, the actual death toll would be about 735,000. If UNAMA has in fact eclipsed Guatemala's previously unsurpassed record of undercounting civilian deaths and only counted 3 or 4 percent of actual deaths, then the real total could be as high as 1.23 million. If the ratio were only the same as originally found in Iraq in 2006 (14:1 – before Iraq Body Count revised its figures), it would be only 515,000.

Adding these figures to my estimate of Afghan combatants killed on both sides, we can make a rough estimate that about 875,000 Afghans have been killed since 2001, with a minimum of 640,000 and a maximum of 1.4 million.

Pakistan

The U.S. expanded its war in Afghanistan into Pakistan in 2004. The CIA began launching drone strikes, and the Pakistani military, under U.S. pressure, launched a military campaign against militants in South Waziristan suspected of links to Al Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban. Since then, the U.S. has conducted at least 430 drone strikes in Pakistan, according to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, and the Pakistani military has conducted several operations in areas bordering Afghanistan.

The beautiful Swat valley (once called “the Switzerland of the East” by the visiting Queen Elizabeth of the U.K.) and three neighboring districts were taken over by the Pakistani Taliban between 2007 and 2009. They were retaken by the Pakistani Army in 2009 in a devastating military campaign that left 3.4 million people as refugees.

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism reports that 2,515 to 4,026 people have been killed in U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan, but that is a small fraction of total war deaths in Pakistan. Crawford and the Costs of War program at Boston University estimated the number of Pakistanis killed at about 61,300 through August 2016, based mainly on reports by the Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) in Islamabad and the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) in New Delhi. That included 8,200 soldiers and police, 31,000 rebel fighters and 22,100 civilians.

Costs of War’s estimate for rebel fighters killed was an average of 29,000 reported by PIPS and 33,000 reported by SATP, which SATP has since updated to 33,950. SATP has updated its count of civilian deaths to 22,230.

If we accept the higher of these passively reported figures for the numbers of combatants killed on both sides and use historically typical 5:1 to 20:1 ratios to passive reports to generate a minimum and maximum number of civilian deaths, that would mean that between 150,000 and 500,000 Pakistanis have been killed.

A reasonable mid-point estimate would be that about 325,000 people have been killed in Pakistan as a result of the U.S. War in Afghanistan spilling across its borders.

Combining my estimates for Afghanistan and Pakistan, I estimate that about 1.2 million Afghans and Pakistanis have been killed as a result of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.

Nicolas J.S. Davies is the author of *Blood On Our Hands: the American Invasion and Destruction of Iraq*. He also wrote the chapter on “Obama at War” in *Grading the 44th President: a Report Card on Barack Obama’s First Term as a Progressive Leader*.

Trump Finds Fellow Bully in Bolton

President Donald Trump's appointment of John Bolton as his national security adviser is his most dangerous move yet, argues Marjorie Cohn.

By Marjorie Cohn

Nothing Donald Trump has done since his inauguration 14 months ago is more dangerous – to the United States, and indeed, to the world – than his selection of John Bolton for National Security Adviser. It is not surprising the president would feel most comfortable receiving advice from a fellow bully.

Trump bullies people on a nearly daily basis, directing his ire at immigrants, Muslims, women, LGBTQ people, the poor and the environment. He hurls Twitter attacks at those who disagree with him.

The president has encouraged police brutality, suggesting in a Long Island speech that law enforcement officers bang suspects' heads against police car doors. "Please don't be too nice" when arresting people, Trump advised. "Like when you guys put somebody in the car, and you're protecting their head, you know, the way you put your hand over" their head, "I said, 'You can take the hand away, OK?'"

After being told someone might throw tomatoes at him at a campaign rally, Trump urged his supporters to "knock the crap out of them ... I promise you, I will pay for the legal fees." He stated on Fox News that a Black Lives Matter activist who was attacked at a Trump rally "should have been roughed up."

Trump's fellow bully Bolton also engages in abusive behavior. Melody Townsel, working on a USAID project in Kyrgyzstan, became the object of Bolton's wrath in 1994. Townsel had complained about incompetence, poor contract performance and inadequate funding of the project by a contractor Bolton represented.

In a letter to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Townsel wrote that Bolton "proceeded to chase me through the halls of a Russian hotel throwing things at me, shoving threatening letters under my door, and generally behaving like a madman." Townsel claimed Bolton threatened employees and contractors who refused to cooperate with him. She maintained Bolton's behavior "wasn't just unforgivable, it was pathological."

Carl W. Ford, former Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Research, and a conservative Republican, called Bolton a “kiss-up, kick-down sort of guy” who “abuses his authority with little people,” characterizing him as a “serial abuser.” Bolton chairs the Gatestone Institute, which publishes hateful, racist anti-Muslim rhetoric, calling refugees rapists and hosts of infectious diseases.

Bolton was such a lightning rod that in 2005, even the GOP-controlled Senate refused to confirm him as US ambassador to the United Nations. To avoid the need for Senate confirmation, George W. Bush named Bolton to the post in a recess appointment.

But Bolton doesn't just bully individuals. He pushed for the 2003 invasion of Iraq, advocates military attacks on North Korea and Iran, favors Israel's annexation of the Palestinian West Bank, and falsely claimed that Cuba had biological weapons.

As undersecretary of state for Arms Control and International Security in the Bush administration, Bolton was instrumental in withdrawing the United States from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which heightened the risk of nuclear war with Russia.

Anthony J. Blinken, deputy secretary of state in the Obama administration, wrote in The New York Times, “Mr. Bolton had a habit of twisting intelligence to back his bellicosity and sought to remove anyone who objected.”

Colin Kahl and Jon Wolf, writing in Foreign Policy, described Bolton's “pattern of warping and misusing intelligence to build the case for war with rogue states; a disdain for allies and multilateral institutions; a blind faith in US military power and the benefits of regime change; and a tendency to see the ends as justifying the means, however horrific.”

When he left his position at USAID in the late 1980s, Bolton's colleagues presented him with a bronzed hand grenade.

Bolton Eschews Diplomacy and Slams the UN

Bolton sees every international situation as an opportunity to make war, notwithstanding the United Nations Charter that mandates the peaceful resolution of disputes and forbids military force except in self-defense.

After two world wars claimed millions of lives, countries around the globe – including the United States – came together and established the United Nations system, “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.”

Yet in 1994, Bolton famously claimed, “there is no such thing as the United

Nations.” He stated caustically, “If the UN Secretariat building in New York lost 10 stories, it wouldn’t make a bit of difference.”

When Bolton officially withdrew the US signature from the International Criminal Court treaty, he declared it “the happiest moment of my government service.”

Bolton Led the Charge to Invade Iraq

Bolton led the charge to invade Iraq and forcibly change its regime in 2003, falsely claiming that President Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In 2002, former UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter affirmed that Hussein had destroyed 90-95% of its WMD; the remaining 5%, Ritter said, “doesn’t even constitute a weapons program . . . just because we can’t account for it doesn’t mean Iraq retains it. There’s no evidence Iraq retains this material.”

To bolster the case for war, Bolton pushed Bush to include in his State of the Union address the false statement that Iraq was seeking uranium from Niger, over the objection of the State Department.

Before the US invaded Iraq, Mohamed ElBaradei, director of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said there was no evidence Hussein had any viable nuclear program. Hans Blix, chief inspector of the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, verified that weapons inspectors had found no evidence of WMD.

In 2002, Bolton orchestrated the ouster of Jose Bustani, head of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, to prevent him from inspecting and revealing that Hussein had no chemical weapons. When Bustani argued he should stay in the post, Bolton threatened, “You have to be ready to face the consequences, because we know where your kids live.”

No WMD were found after the US invasion of Iraq. Some one million Iraqis were killed and the US-led regime change led to a vacuum of leadership that was filled by ISIS.

A 2006 report prepared under the direction of former Rep. John Conyers (D-Michigan) concluded that “members of the Bush Administration misstated, overstated, and manipulated intelligence with regards to linkages between Iraq and Al Qaeda; the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Iraq; the acquisition of aluminum tubes to be used as uranium centrifuges; and the acquisition of uranium from Niger.”

Those “misstatements were in contradiction of known countervailing intelligence information, and were the result of political pressure and manipulation.” A key source of that pressure and manipulation was Bolton.

In spite of the horror the US military unleashed on Iraq 15 years ago, Bolton wrote in 2016 that the removal of Hussein was “a military success of stunning scope and effectiveness, achieved in just three weeks.”

After the disastrous US invasion of Iraq, Bolton tried to get the Iran file removed from ElBaradei in order to lay the groundwork for an unjustified attack on Iran.

Bolton Wants to Rip Up the Iran Nuclear Agreement

Bolton favors bombing Iran and changing its regime and he opposes the Iran Nuclear Agreement. He has advocated an Israeli strike on Iran’s nuclear facilities and encouraged the United States to support it.

In the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran agreed to cut back its nuclear program and in return, received billions of dollars of relief from punishing sanctions. Iran has complied with its obligations under the deal, says a bipartisan group of over 100 national security veterans called the National Coalition to Prevent Nuclear Weapons.

Under the US Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act, the president must decide every 90 days whether Iran remains in compliance with the JCPOA and whether the agreement continues to serve US interests. Trump reluctantly certified Iran’s compliance in April and July 2017. But in October, to the consternation of his secretary of state, secretary of defense, and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Trump refused to certify Iran’s compliance with the agreement. He did not, however, pull out of the deal at that time.

On May 12, Trump will decide whether or not to end US participation in the agreement. Bolton and CIA director Mike Pompeo, Trump’s nominee for Secretary of State, both favor renouncing the deal. If the US breaches the agreement, Iran may well resume the unlimited production of nuclear fuel.

“Bolton is an unhinged advocate for waging World War III,” according to Trita Parsi, president of the National Iranian American Council. “Bolton now represents the greatest threat to the United States,” he added, stating, “Trump may have just effectively declared war on Iran.”

Bolton Wants to Attack North Korea

In February, contrary to the overwhelming weight of legal authority, Bolton argued in a Wall Street Journal op-ed that mounting a first strike on North Korea would comply with international law.

Bolton stated on Fox News, “I think the only diplomatic option left is to end

the regime in North Korea by effectively having the South take it over.” During another Fox appearance, Bolton declared, “the way you eliminate the North Korean nuclear program is to eliminate North Korea.” He maintained that North Korea having nuclear weapons was worse than the “millions” of North and South Koreans who would be killed if the US attacked North Korea.

If Trump destroys the Iran deal, it will send a dangerous message to Pyongyang that his word cannot be trusted. North and South Korea are slated to meet in April and Trump has indicated he will meet with North Korean President Kim Jong-Un. Diplomacy at this moment is critical.

Bolton has provocatively suggested a linkage between Iran and North Korea on nuclear weapons. In January, he wrote in the Wall Street Journal, “Little is known, at least publicly, about longstanding Iranian-North Korean cooperation on nuclear and ballistic-missile technology. It is foolish to play down Tehran’s threat because of Pyongyang’s provocations. They are two sides of the same coin.”

The dangers inherent in following Bolton’s favored policies in Iran and North Korea cannot be overestimated.

Bolton Falsely Claimed Cuba Had Biological Weapons

Bolton argued unsuccessfully for the inclusion of Cuba in Bush’s “axis of evil” (which consisted of Iraq, Iran and North Korea). Bolton advocated a military attack on Cuba one year before Bush invaded Iraq. After Bolton falsely claimed Cuba was developing a bio-warfare capacity, a congressional investigation found no evidence to support such an allegation.

As Nicole Deller and John Burroughs from the Lawyers’ Committee on Nuclear Policy have documented, Bolton is widely credited with the defeat of the Protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention, which would have created an inspection system to protect us against those deadly weapons.

Bolton Wants to Give “Pieces” of Palestine to Jordan and Egypt

Bolton’s solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is to give “pieces” of Gaza to Egypt and “pieces” of the West Bank to Jordan since, he thinks, Palestine is composed of “bits and pieces” of the former Ottoman Empire.

In January, Bolton wrote in The Hill: “Once it becomes clear the two-state solution is finally dead, Jordan should again be asked to exercise control over suitably delineated portions of the West Bank and have the monarchy’s religious role for holy sites like the Temple Mount reaffirmed. Accepting Jordan’s sovereignty would actually benefit Palestinians, as would Egyptian sovereignty

over Gaza, by tying these areas into viable, functioning states, not to the illusion of 'Palestine.'”

Neither Jordan nor Egypt supports this proposal, and Palestinians are vehemently opposed to it. Jewish Voice for Peace stated, “The appointment of Bolton is a complete disaster for the Middle East, the US, and the entire world.”

Bolton’s Appointment is “a Disaster for Our Country”

The National Security Adviser’s job is to inform the president of the different options that affect national security, briefing him on the National Security Council’s findings. Bolton is such an ideologue, he will invariably slant his advice toward waging war. Bolton is so extreme, he reportedly promised Trump he “wouldn’t start any wars” if appointed, according to CNN. In light of Trump’s aversion to reading daily intelligence reports, Bolton will play an even greater role in the formulation of policy.

Unfortunately, National Security Adviser is not a cabinet position, so Bolton doesn’t need Senate confirmation.

Former President Jimmy Carter said in an interview with USA Today that Bolton’s appointment is “a disaster for our country,” adding it may be “one of the worst mistakes” of the Trump presidency.

But as Stormy Daniels and Robert Mueller close in on Trump, the president will seek to create a major distraction. With bully Bolton egging him on, that may well be a military attack on North Korea or Iran. The consequences would prove disastrous.

Marjorie Cohn is professor emerita at Thomas Jefferson School of Law, former president of the National Lawyers Guild, and deputy secretary general of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers. She is the author of Cowboy Republic: Six Ways the Bush Gang Has Defied the Law, and her latest book, Drones and Targeted Killing: Legal, Moral, and Geopolitical Issues, was recently published in a second, updated edition. See <http://marjoriecohn.com/>.

How Many Millions of People Have Been Killed in America’s Post-9/11 Wars? – Part One: Iraq

The numbers of casualties of U.S. wars since Sept. 11, 2001 have largely gone

uncounted, but coming to terms with the true scale of the crimes committed remains an urgent moral, political and legal imperative, argues Nicolas J.S. Davies.

By Nicolas J.S. Davies

How many people have been killed in America's post-9/11 wars? I have been researching and writing about that question since soon after the U.S. launched these wars, which it has tried to justify as a response to terrorist crimes that killed 2,996 people in the U.S. on September 11th 2001.

But no crime, however horrific, can justify wars on countries and people who were not responsible for the crime committed, as former Nuremberg prosecutor Ben Ferencz patiently explained to NPR at the time.

"The Iraq Death Toll 15 Years After the U.S. Invasion" which I co-wrote with Medea Benjamin, estimates the death toll in Iraq as accurately and as honestly as we can in March 2018. Our estimate is that about 2.4 million people have probably been killed in Iraq as a result of the historic act of aggression committed by the U.S. and U.K. in 2003. In this report, I will explain in greater detail how we arrived at that estimate and provide some historical context. In Part 2 of this report, I will make a similar up-to-date estimate of how many people have been killed in America's other post-9/11 wars.

Mortality Studies vs Passive Reporting

I explored these same questions in Chapter 7 of my book, Blood On Our Hands: the American Invasion and Destruction of Iraq, and in previous articles, from "Burying the Lancet Report.. and the Children" in 2005 to "Playing Games With War Deaths" in 2016.

In each of those accounts, I explained that estimates of war deaths regularly published by UN agencies, monitoring groups and the media are nearly all based on fragmentary "passive reporting," not on comprehensive mortality studies.

Of the countries where the U.S. and its allies have been waging war since 2001, Iraq is the only country where epidemiologists have conducted mortality studies based on the best practices that they have developed and used in other war zones (like Angola, Bosnia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guatemala, Kosovo, Rwanda, Sudan and Uganda). In all these countries, as in Iraq, the results of comprehensive epidemiological studies revealed between 5 and 20 times more deaths than previously published figures based on passive reporting.

Body Count: Casualty Figures After 10 Years of the 'War on Terror' , a report

published by Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) in 2015 found that the 2006 Lancet study was the most comprehensive and reliable mortality study conducted in Iraq, based on its study design, the experience and independence of the research team, the short time elapsed since the deaths it documented and its consistency with other measures of violence in occupied Iraq. That study estimated that about 601,000 Iraqis were killed in the first 39 months of war and occupation in Iraq, while the war had also caused about 54,000 non-violent deaths.

In the other countries affected by America's post-9/11 wars, the only reports of how many people have been killed are either compiled by the UN based on investigations of incidents reported to local UN Assistance Missions (as in Iraq and Afghanistan), or by the UN or independent monitoring groups like the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, Iraq Body Count (IBC) and Airwars based on passive reports from government agencies, health facilities or local or foreign media.

These passive reports are regularly cited by UN and government agencies, media and even by activists as "estimates" of how many people have been killed, but that is not what they are. By definition, no compilation of fragmentary reports can possibly be a realistic estimate of all the people killed in a country ravaged by war.

At best, passive reports can reveal a minimum number of war deaths. But that is often such a small fraction of actual deaths that it is highly misleading to cite it as an "estimate" of the total number of people killed. This is why epidemiologists have instead developed scientific sampling methods that they can use to produce accurate estimates of war deaths through statistically valid mortality studies.

The huge disparities epidemiologists have found between the results of mortality studies and passive reporting (between 5:1 and 20:1) have been consistent across many different war zones all over the world. In countries where Western governments are not responsible for the state of war, there has been no political controversy over these results, and they are regularly cited by Western officials and media.

But Western politicians and media have dismissed and marginalized the results of mortality studies in Iraq for political reasons. The U.S. and U.K.'s responsibility for the state of war in Iraq means that the scale of the slaughter is a serious matter of political and criminal responsibility for senior officials who chose to ignore legal advice that the invading Iraq would be "a crime of aggression".

In 2006, British officials were advised by Sir Roy Anderson, the Chief Scientific Adviser to the U.K.'s Ministry of Defense, that "The (Lancet) study design is robust and employs methods that are regarded as close to 'best practice' in this area..."

The BBC obtained copies of emails in which British officials admitted that the study was "likely to be right," and "the survey methodology used here cannot be rubbished, it is a tried and tested way of measuring mortality in conflict zones." But the same officials immediately launched a campaign to discredit the study. President George W. Bush publicly declared, "I don't consider it a credible report," and the subservient U.S. corporate media quickly dismissed it.

In "Playing Games With War Deaths" in 2016, I concluded, "As with climate change and other issues, UN officials and journalists must overcome political pressures, come to grips with the basic science involved, and stop sweeping the vast majority of the victims of our wars down this Orwellian "memory hole."

Some have argued that it is not important to know whether our wars have killed tens of thousands of people or millions, since all deaths in war are a tragic loss of life and we should just mourn them, instead of quibbling over numbers. But as the authors of Body Count noted,

"The numbers relayed by the media should in themselves be terrifying enough... But apparently they are still perceived as tolerable and, moreover, easy to explain given the picture of excessive religiously motivated violence. The figure of 655,000 deaths in the first three war years alone, however, clearly points to a crime against humanity approaching genocide."

I agree with the authors of Body Count that it makes a difference whether our wars kill millions of people or only ten thousand, as most people in the U.K. and the U.S. seem to believe according to opinion polls.

Most Americans would say that it matters whether Germany's role in the Second World War led to millions of violent deaths or only ten thousand. Suggesting the latter is actually a crime in Germany and several other countries.

So American politicians, journalists and members of the public who say it doesn't matter how many Iraqis have been killed are consciously or unconsciously applying a morally untenable double standard to the consequences of our country's wars precisely because they are our country's wars.

A War That Keeps Killing

While the 2006 Lancet study of post-invasion mortality in Iraq is recognized by independent experts like the authors of PSR's Body Count report as the most

accurate and reliable estimate of war deaths in any of our post-9/11 wars, it was conducted nearly 12 years ago, after only 39 months of war and occupation in Iraq. Tragically, that was nowhere near the end of the deadly and catastrophic results of the U.S. and U.K.'s historic act of aggression.

The 2006 Lancet study documented ever-increasing violence in occupied Iraq between 2003 and 2006, and many other metrics indicate that the escalation of violence in Iraq continued at least until the end of the U.S. "surge" in 2007. The tide of mutilated bodies of death squad victims overwhelming morgues in Baghdad did not peak until late 2006 with 1,800 bodies in July and 1,600 in October. Then there was a five-fold increase in the U.S. aerial bombardment of Iraq in 2007, and January 2008 was the heaviest month of U.S. bombing since the invasion in 2003.

This pattern gives credibility to a survey conducted by a respected British polling firm, Opinion Research Business (ORB), in June 2007, one year after the Lancet study, which estimated that 1,033,000 Iraqis had been killed by that time.

The Lancet study estimated that 328,000, or more than half of the violent deaths it counted, had occurred between May 2005 and May/June 2006. So, if the ORB's estimate was accurate, it would mean that about another 430,000 Iraqis were killed in the year after the 2006 Lancet study was conducted.

While the figure of a million people killed was shocking, the continuing increase in deaths revealed by the ORB survey was consistent with other measures of the violence of the occupation, which continued to increase in late 2006 and 2007.

Violence in Iraq decreased in 2008 and for several years after that. But the Special Police death squads recruited, trained and unleashed in Iraq by the Iraqi Interior Ministry, U.S. occupation forces and the CIA between 2004 and 2006 (rebranded as National Police after the exposure of their Al-Jadiriya torture center in 2005, then as Federal Police in 2009) continued their reign of terror against Sunni Arabs in the North and West of the country. This generated a resurgence of armed resistance and led to large swathes of Iraq accepting the rule of Islamic State in 2014 as an alternative to the relentless abuses of the corrupt, sectarian Iraqi government and its murderous death squads.

U.K.-based Iraq Body Count (IBC) has compiled passive reports of civilian deaths in Iraq since the invasion, but it had only counted 43,394 deaths by June 2006 when the Lancet study found an estimated 601,000 violent deaths, a ratio of almost 14:1. Just Foreign Policy (JFP) in the U.S. created an "Iraqi Death

Estimator” that updated the Lancet study’s estimate by tracking deaths passively reported by Iraq Body Count and multiplying them by the ratio between the mortality study and IBC’s passive reporting in 2006.

Since IBC is based mainly on reports in English-language media, it may have undercounted deaths even more after 2007 as the the Western media’s interest in Iraq declined. On the other hand, as it became safer for government officials and journalists to travel around Iraq, its reporting may have improved. Or perhaps these and other factors balanced each other out, making JFP’s Iraqi Death Estimator quite accurate. It may have become less accurate over time, and it was discontinued in September 2011. By that point, its estimate of Iraqi deaths stood at 1.46 million.

Another mortality study was published in the PLOS medical journal in 2013, covering the period up to 2011. Its lead author told National Geographic its estimate of about 500,000 dead in Iraq was “likely a low estimate.” The study had a wider margin of error than the 2006 Lancet study, and the survey teams decided it was too dangerous to work in two of the 100 clusters that that were randomly chosen to survey.

The most serious problem with the PLOS study seems to be that so many houses were destroyed or abandoned and so many families wiped out or just disappeared, that nobody was left to report deaths in those families to the survey teams. At the extreme, houses or entire blocks where everyone had been killed or had fled were recorded as suffering no deaths at all.

After the extreme violence of 2006 and 2007 and several more years of lower level conflict, the effect of destruction and displacement on the PLOS study must have been much greater than in 2006. One in six households in Iraq was forced to move at least once between 2005 and 2010. The UNHCR registered 3 million refugees within or outside the country, but acknowledged that many more were unregistered. The authors added 55,000 deaths to their total to allow for 15% of 2 million refugee households losing one family member each, but they acknowledged that this was very conservative.

The authors of Body Count calculated that, if only 1% of houses surveyed were empty or destroyed and each of these households had lost two family members, this would have increased the PLOS study’s overall mortality estimate by more than 50%. Ignoring the two clusters that in effect represented the most devastated parts of Iraq must have had a similar effect. The cluster sample survey method relies on the effect of surveying a cross-section of different areas, from the worst affected to many that are relatively unscathed and report few or no deaths. Most violent deaths are often concentrated in a small number of clusters, making clusters like the two that were skipped disproportionately

important to the accuracy of the final estimate.

Since 2011, a whole new phase of the war has taken place. There was an Arab Spring in Iraq in 2011, but it was ruthlessly suppressed, driving Fallujah and other cities once more into open rebellion. Several major cities fell to Islamic State in 2014, were besieged by Iraqi government forces and then largely destroyed by U.S.-led aerial bombardment and U.S., Iraqi and allied rocket and artillery fire. Iraq Body Count and the UN Assistance Mission to Iraq have collected passive reports of tens of thousands of civilians killed in this phase of the war.

Former Iraqi foreign minister Hoshyar Zebari told Patrick Cockburn of the U.K.'s Independent newspaper that Iraqi Kurdish intelligence reports estimated that at least 40,000 civilians were killed in the bombardment of Mosul alone. Zebari said that there were probably many more bodies buried in the rubble, implying that the reports he saw were of actual bodies found and buried up to that point.

A recent project to remove rubble and recover bodies in just one neighborhood of Mosul yielded another 3,353 bodies, of whom 20% appeared to be IS fighters and 80% were civilians. Another 11,000 people are still reported as missing by their families in Mosul.

IBC has now updated its death count for the period up to June 2006 to 52,209, reducing its ratio to violent deaths in the 2006 Lancet study to 11.5:1. If we apply the method of JFP's Iraqi Death Estimator from July 2007 to the present using that updated ratio, and add it to ORB's estimate of 1.03 million killed by June 2007, we can arrive at a current estimate of the total number of Iraqis killed since 2003. This cannot possibly be as accurate as a comprehensive new mortality study. But, in my judgment, this is the most accurate estimate we can make based on what we do know.

That gives us an estimate of 2.38 million Iraqis killed since 2003, as a result of the criminal American and British invasion of Iraq.

Minimum and Maximum Range

With significant uncertainty underlying this estimate, it is also important to calculate a minimum and a maximum number based on possible variations in the numbers involved.

To arrive at a minimum and maximum number of people that may have been killed in Iraq, we can start with the minimum and maximum numbers of violent deaths that were each established with 97.5% probability by the 2006 Lancet study, which were 426,000 and 794,000. ORB in 2007 gave a narrower range for its minimum and

maximum based on its larger sample size, but ORB was not considered as rigorous as the Lancet study in other ways. If we apply the same margins as in the Lancet study to the ORB study's main estimate, that gives us a minimum of 730,000 and a maximum of 1.36 million people killed by June 2007.

To update those minimum and maximum figures to the present time using a variation of Just Foreign Policy's method, we must also allow for changes in the ratio between IBC's tally of deaths and the actual number of people killed. The ratios of the Lancet study's minimum and maximum figures to IBC's revised count for June 2006 are about 8:1 and 15:1 respectively.

These ratios are well within the ratios between comprehensive mortality studies and passive reporting found in other war zones around the world, which have varied from 5:1 to 20:1, as I noted earlier. But maybe IBC has counted more or less of the actual deaths since 2006 than it did before. It must surely have tried to keep improving the scope of its data collection. On the other hand, in the most recent phase of the war, many people were killed by U.S.-led bombing and shelling in areas ruled by Islamic State, where people were punished or even executed for trying to communicate with the outside world. So IBC's data for this period may be more fragmentary than ever.

To arrive at a realistic minimum and maximum, we must allow for both these possibilities. IBC's 8:1 ratio to the Lancet study's minimum number killed by 2006 may have fallen closer to the historic minimum ratio of 5:1, or its 15:1 ratio to the Lancet study's maximum number in 2006 may have risen closer to the historic maximum of 20:1. Using a ratio of 6.5:1 to arrive at the minimum number of deaths and 17.5:1 for the maximum allows for a lower minimum and a higher maximum than in 2006, without equaling the most extreme ratios ever seen in other conflicts. That gives us a minimum of 760,000 Iraqis killed since July 2007, and a maximum of 2.04 million.

Adding these figures to the minimums and maximums we calculated for the period up to June 2007 gives us total minimum and maximum figures for the entire period since the U.S.-U.K. invasion of Iraq in 2003. We can estimate that the number of Iraqis killed as a consequence of the illegal invasion of their country must be somewhere between 1.5 million and 3.4 million. As is generally the case with such statistical ranges, the actual number of people killed is likely to be closer to our main estimate of 2.38 million than to either the minimum or maximum end of this range.

Call for a New Mortality Study in Iraq

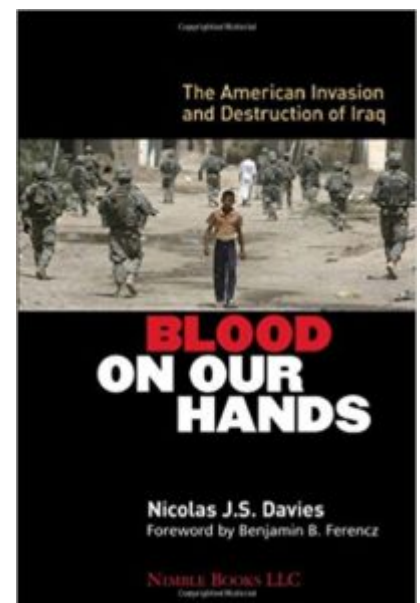
It is very important that the public health community provide the world with accurate and up-to-date mortality surveys of Iraq and other post-9/11 war zones.

A new mortality study for Iraq must find a way to survey even the most dangerous areas, and it must finally develop realistic procedures to estimate deaths in cases where entire families have been killed, or where houses or apartments have been destroyed or abandoned. This factor has been identified as a potential flaw in every mortality study in Iraq since 2004, and it is one that only becomes more significant as time passes. This cannot be ignored, and neither should compensating for it be left to guesswork.

Survey teams could compile records of empty and destroyed homes within the clusters they are surveying, and they could ask neighbors about empty or destroyed houses where large numbers of people or entire families may have been killed. They could also survey refugees and internally displaced people to estimate deaths among these populations.

Epidemiologists have overcome very serious dangers and difficulties to develop techniques to accurately measure the human cost of war. Their work must continue, and it must keep developing and improving. They must overcome powerful political pressures, including from the guilty parties responsible for the carnage in the first place, to politicize and discredit their incredibly difficult but noble and vital work.

On the 15th anniversary of the illegal invasion of Iraq, the Center for Constitutional Rights in the U.S. renewed its call for the U.S. to pay war reparations to the people of Iraq. This is one way countries that are guilty of aggression and other war crimes have traditionally fulfilled their collective responsibility for the death and destruction they have caused.



In *Blood On Our Hands*, I concluded my account of the U.S. war in Iraq with a similar call for war reparations, and for war crimes prosecutions of the senior U.S. and U.K. civilian and military officials responsible for the “supreme international crime” of aggression and other systematic war crimes in Iraq.

Coming to terms with the true scale of the crimes committed remains an urgent moral, political and legal imperative for the people of Iraq, the United States, the United Kingdom, and for the whole world. The world will never hold major

American and British war criminals accountable for their crimes as long as the public does not understand the full scale and horror of what they have done. And the world will not know peace as long as the most powerful aggressors can count on impunity for “the supreme international crime.”

Nicolas J.S. Davies is the author of *Blood On Our Hands: the American Invasion and Destruction of Iraq*. He also wrote the chapter on “Obama at War” in *Grading the 44th President: a Report Card on Barack Obama’s First Term as a Progressive Leader*.

The Iraq War and the Crisis of a Disintegrating Global Order

The following is a statement given by Inder Comar at a side event of the 37th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Committee in Geneva, Switzerland, on March 15, 2018.

By Inder Comar

Democracy is dying. As we convene to remember the 15th year anniversary of the Iraq War, the fundamental lesson of that war is that our democratic norms are at grave risk when judges and courts fail to hold government leaders accountable for a patently illegal war.

It is impossible to understand the lack of accountability over the Iraq War without understanding the defining crisis of our time. And that is the crisis of Empire; of a disintegrating global order where the rule of law is now being replaced with the rule of might.

Aggression: the supreme international crime.

A crime that was banned at Nuremberg.

A crime which sent Nazi leaders to the gallows.

The prohibition against aggression is a *jus cogens* norm of international law, meaning a norm from which no derogation is permitted, and which states are obligated to uphold.

There is overwhelming legal consensus that the United States and the United Kingdom committed the crime of aggression when they launched their invasion in 2003. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan concluded that the US-led war was

“illegal” in 2004 and in contravention of the UN Charter.

The Charter only allows acts of violence against another State under two circumstances. The first is in times of self-defense. The second is with explicit approval from the Security Council. Neither circumstance applied to the Iraq War.

There was no Security Council resolution that authorized the war. Language in Resolution 1441, passed in November 2002, threatening Iraq with “serious consequences” for failure to disarm was not enough.

The U.S. and the U.K. knew they needed a specific Security Council resolution to authorize an invasion. This is plainly evidenced by their frantic attempts to obtain a second resolution immediately prior to the war. That effort was abandoned when it became clear that a second resolution would be vetoed. The U.S. and the U.K. invaded Iraq anyway.

Where would we be if all States acted like this? What would be the purpose of the resolution process? What would be the purpose of the U.N.?

It is also clear the war was not conducted in self-defense. Self-defense is generally an immediate action against an imminent aggression. Iraq, which had been subject to more than a decade of crippling international sanctions, was not in any position to invade the strongest country on Earth. Iraq had no connection to al Qaeda, and had disarmed its weapons program—two truths the Bush Administration did not want to believe, and which they tried to cover up as they pushed for war.

In the 15 years since the U.S.-led invasion, there has been only one serious attempt to hold the responsible leaders accountable for this “supreme international crime.” Private Iraqi civilians who were affected by the war tried to hold Bush-era officials accountable in U.S. courts under a theory of aggression.

However, in 2017 a court of appeals ruled in the case *Saleh v. Bush* that former President Bush and other high officials were immune from civil investigation. The appellate court relied upon a domestic law that grants U.S. officials immunity for alleged crimes, including heinous international crimes.

This shows that, in the United States today, international legal obligations are inferior to the protection of government leaders, even when those leaders have committed grave offenses against others.

The Coalition also committed numerous other war crimes during the Iraq War that I would like to address:

o First, the Member States of the Coalition directed attacks against civilians who were not taking part in hostilities—a direct breach of the Geneva Conventions.

o Second, human rights organizations, news agencies, and official military inquiries found that U.S.-operated detention facilities used various forms of torture during the occupation.

§ For instance, the torture at Abu Ghraib prison included common physical abuse like punching, slapping, and kicking detainees, as well as arranging naked male detainees in a pile and then jumping on them.

§ There is a documented history of sexual abuse and rape at the prison.

These acts of torture are grave breaches under the Geneva Conventions. They are war crimes and should be addressed as such.

The U.S. has never prosecuted any high-ranking government employee for these war crimes, including for torture. And in light of that 2017 judgment in *Saleh v. Bush* there is virtually no chance that a civil inquiry will produce restitution for victims, or change anyone's behavior in high office. In fact, just this week, the woman who helped oversee the Bush-era torture program has been rewarded for her complicity and is now the nominee to run the Central Intelligence Agency.

A world in which government officials are immune from judicial scrutiny is a world of despotism and tyranny. The essence of the rule of law is that no one is above the law; and that the actions of all people, including chief executives, can be scrutinized by a judge.

Today the rule of law, everywhere, is in grave danger. And we are dangerously close to living in a world where imperial norms are ascendant—even in Western countries.

Fifteen years after the U.S. invasion, what chills me the most has been the rapid acceptance and glorification of Empire in the United States.

In matters of foreign policy, and increasingly, in matters of domestic policy, the American president is totally unaccountable, immune from inquiry, and hostile to inalienable freedoms.

Today, President Trump claims the authority and the power:

- To invade any country at will, or destroy it completely with nuclear weapons;
- To assassinate any person with a robotic drone;

- To gather and collect any and all electronic communications;
- To hold any suspected terrorist indefinitely, without charge, in Guantanamo Bay;
- And to disregard preexisting laws, constitutional rights or judicial review.

The powers of the American president today are greater than that of any English king, or any Roman emperor.

Like the ancient Romans, who were fed a steady diet of bread and circus, modern Americans are subject to some of the most pernicious forms of propaganda ever developed. Concentrated media power has resulted in corporate news programming which demonizes Muslims, foreigners, and people of color.

Meanwhile, concentrated economic power has resulted in the greatest systemic inequality of wealth in American history.

And concentrated political power has resulted in a neo-fascist and openly racist Republican Party, and a neo-liberal and systemically racist Democratic Party.

More than ever, Americans accept the slaughter of people in the Middle East in the name of their security. In Bagram, Guantanamo, and elsewhere people are indefinitely detained, without trial, and are subjected to torture.

Imperial garrisons encircle our planet with more than 800 American military bases in 80 countries on every major continent, from Diego Garcia to Okinawa to Rammstein to Samoa to the Azores. Just in the last month, the American Government announced its plans to develop a new class of nuclear weapons, furthering an arms race with the Russians, the Chinese and the North Koreans. It also seeks a 13% increase in its arms budget from 2017.

Not since Rome has the world borne witness to so few controlling so many.

But, "these violent delights have violent ends." American society—my society—is ever more crippled by moral, ethical and humanitarian crises that routinely shock visitors from other countries.

Students are drowning in student debt, unable to start their careers or build families.

Lack of affordable health care and an addiction crisis is dragging American life expectancy downward. America's obsession with war has now turned inward, as a gun violence crisis results in the weekly sacrifice of children, to the cult of the Second Amendment.

De facto apartheid keeps power in the hands of a privileged white elite, who

have destroyed labor unions, created enemies out of Muslims and blacks, have crippled millions of people into lives of debt servitude and destitution, and who buy and sell their favored elected officials by caprice and whim.

The country that produced the Iraq War 15 years ago is in far worse shape today.

There are three important reasons we need to urgently create accountability for the Iraq War.

First, we must restore an international order based on the rule of law.

Second, we must confront the bias of international law—holding only poor and non-Western countries liable for international crimes, while ignoring the crimes of Western powers. This bias is underscored and exacerbated if the international community declines to investigate and prosecute the Coalition's crimes in Iraq.

Third, we must provide justice to the victims of the Iraq War.

These three reasons are of course related.

The United Nations was manipulated as a tool to acquire wider support for the invasion—most prominently, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell's 2003 speech falsely claimed facts about the Iraqi weapons program. In so doing, the United States abused the United Nations, turning these halls into a house of lies — lies spread to support the annihilation of another member state.

This abuse of the United Nations to further a perverse agenda—an agenda that stands in direct contradiction to the purpose of the United Nations—makes it essential to restore accountability.

Without accountability, we invite future abuse of this precious international system. And we exacerbate the divisions in our world where non-Western crimes are treated with far more scrutiny than those committed by Western Powers. A just world order depends on consistent accountability, for all nations, for war crimes and the crime of aggression. International law needs to be applied equally to all nations.

Without accountability, we leave Iraqi victims to fend for themselves. We fail them—as lawyers, as diplomats, and as ethical beings.

There is a choice facing our species at this very moment. Humor me when I tell you that I have glimpsed our future. And it is a future that is dark.

I foresee a world beset by environmental problems, with numerous species going extinct, with plastic choking our waterways and forests, and with climate change creating global chaos for which our world is simply not prepared.

I foresee displacement and refugee crises, as people flee their homes in the wake of rising seas, more powerful storms, and historic heat waves and droughts—people movements that will make the Syrian crisis seem like a child's game.

I foresee a world where people, devastated by economic despair, turn to demagogues and authoritarians—as they are already doing—as ways of dealing with the desiccation of their ways of life.

I foresee a world where our democratic freedoms, already withering, are replaced with stark imperial values.

But this does not have to be our future.

There is another way.

And that way begins here, today, with each of us. It begins with imagining a world where the rule of law and democracy are the fundamental building blocks of our shared human rights, our shared freedoms, and our shared civilization.

It begins with us realizing that we deserve to live in a better world than one in which leaders who commit grave international crimes can walk free, while the victims of those outrageous acts are forced to recover in the solitude and pain of trauma.

There is a choice we face—a choice between civilization and chaos.

The Iraq War was the gravest international crime since the Second World War. It was a malicious act committed by leaders of the most powerful country in history, with the full resources of a multi-trillion dollar economy.

We cannot build a civilized future for ourselves and for our descendants unless we build a robust international legal order.

The people who commandeered my country and my government must be held to account before a judge—so that they know, and others may know, that the supreme crime cannot go unpunished.

Help me build that future. Help me in our shared quest for a civilized Earth.

I call today for the creation of an independent international tribunal, with jurisdiction to investigate and indict the British and American leaders who led the invasion, for the crime of aggression, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

I call for this tribunal to analyze, impartially, once and for all, the issue of

immunity as it relates to grave international crimes.

I call for due process for the accused, that they be advised of the charges against them and be given access to counsel so that they may mount a defense. If convicted, I call for them to serve out their sentences in humane conditions, where they can reflect on what they have done. I call on the tribunal to order restitution to the millions of victims who suffered on account of their conduct.

I call for every nation concerned with justice to open their courts to claims of aggression on the basis of universal jurisdiction. Those who commit aggression, like those who commit torture, slavery, and piracy, are *hostis humani generis* – enemies of humanity, who may be prosecuted and held to account in the court of any civilized country.

The hope of our shared civilization rests on a renewed commitment to the United Nations and its vision of collective security. World leaders must settle their disputes through dialogue.

Thus, I urge the Human Rights Council to appoint a Special Rapporteur for the human rights situation in Iraq. I urge the United Nations to condemn illegal acts of aggression, torture and mass killings, including those committed by powerful countries like the United States.

And I ask my countrymen and women, in America, to walk back from the abyss of Empire. We have a special duty to hold our leaders responsible, to make redress to the Iraqi people, and to promote and sustain the global peace.

This is the way back to civilization itself, towards a deep and fulfilling justice that enables all of us to live out our lives in dignity and in peace. This is a future worth imagining and a future worth creating. It starts with justice for Iraq.

Thank you.

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Iraq +15: Accumulated Evil of the Whole

Brushing aside warnings that he was about to unleash Armageddon in the Middle East, George W. Bush launched an unprovoked attack on Iraq on March 19-20, 2003, the ramifications of which we are still grappling with today, Nat Parry writes.

By Nat Parry

Robert Jackson, the Chief United States Prosecutor at the Nuremberg Trials of Nazi war criminals, once denounced aggressive war as “the greatest menace of our time.” With much of Europe laying in smoldering ruin, he said in 1945 that “to initiate a war of aggression ... is not only an international crime: it is the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of whole.”

When it comes to the U.S. invasion of Iraq 15 years ago today, the accumulated evil of the whole is difficult to fully comprehend. Estimates of the war’s costs vary, but commonly cited figures put the financial cost for U.S. taxpayers at upwards of a trillion dollars, the cost in Iraqi lives in the hundreds of thousands, and U.S. soldier deaths at nearly 5,000. Another 100,000 Americans have been wounded and four million Iraqis driven from their homes as refugees.

As staggering as those numbers may be, they don’t come close to describing the true cost of the war, or the magnitude of the crime that was committed by launching it on March 19-20, 2003. Besides the cost in blood and treasure, the cost to basic principles of international justice, long-term geopolitical stability, and the impacts on the U.S. political system are equally profound.

Lessons Learned and Forgotten

Although for a time, it seemed that the lessons of the war were widely understood and had tangible effects on American politics – with Democrats, for example, taking control of Congress in the midterm elections of 2006 based primarily on growing antiwar sentiment around the country and Barack Obama defeating Hillary Clinton in the 2008 primaries based largely on the two candidates’ opposing views on the Iraq War – the political establishment has, since then, effectively swept these lessons under the rug.

One of those lessons, of course, was that proclamations of the intelligence community should be treated with huge grain of salt. In the build-up to war with Iraq a decade and a half ago, there were those who pushed back on the politicized and “cherry-picked” intelligence that the Bush administration was using to convince the American people of the need to go to war, but for the most part, the media and political establishment parroted these claims without showing the due diligence of independently confirming the claims or even applying basic principles of logic.

For example, even as United Nations weapons inspectors, led by Swedish diplomat Hans Blix, were coming up empty-handed when acting on tips from the U.S. intelligence community, few within the mainstream media were willing to draw the

logical conclusion that the intelligence was wrong (or that the Bush administration was lying). Instead, they assumed that the UN inspectors were simply incompetent or that Saddam Hussein was just really good at hiding his weapons of mass destruction.

Yet, despite being misled so thoroughly back in 2002 and 2003, today Americans show the same credulousness to the intelligence community when it claims that "Russia hacked the 2016 election," without offering proof. Liberals, in particular, have hitched their wagons to the investigation being led by Special Counsel Robert Mueller, who is widely hailed as a paragon of virtue, while the truth is, as FBI Director during the Bush administration, he was a key enabler of the WMD narrative used to launch an illegal war.

Mueller testified to Congress that "Iraq has moved to the top of my list" of threats to the domestic security of the United States. "As we previously briefed this Committee," Mueller said on February 11, 2003, "Iraq's WMD program poses a clear threat to our national security." He warned that Baghdad might provide WMDs to al-Qaeda to carry out a catastrophic attack in the United States.

Mueller drew criticism at the time, including from FBI whistleblower Coleen Rowley, for conflating Iraq and al-Qaeda, with demands that the FBI produce whatever evidence it had on this supposed connection.

Today, of course, Mueller is celebrated by Democrats as the best hope for bringing down the presidency of Donald Trump. George W. Bush has also enjoyed a revival of his image thanks largely to his public criticisms of Trump, with a majority of Democrats now viewing the 43rd president favorably. Many Democrats have also embraced aggressive war – often couched in the rhetoric of "humanitarian interventionism" – as their preferred option to deal with foreign policy challenges such as the Syrian conflict.

When the Democratic Party chose Clinton as its nominee in 2016, it appeared that Democrats had also embraced her willingness to use military force to achieve "regime change" in countries that are seen as a threat to U.S. interests – whether Iraq, Iran or Syria.

As a senator from New York during the build-up for military action against Iraq, Clinton not only voted to authorize the U.S. invasion, but fervently supported the war – which she backed with or without UN Security Council authorization. Her speech on the floor of the Senate on Oct. 10, 2002 arguing for military action promoted the same falsehoods that were being used by the Bush administration to build support for the war, claiming for example that Saddam Hussein had "given aid, comfort, and sanctuary to terrorists, including al-Qaeda members."

"If left unchecked," she said, "Saddam Hussein will continue to increase his capacity to wage biological and chemical warfare, and will keep trying to develop nuclear weapons. Should he succeed in that endeavor, he could alter the political and security landscape of the Middle East, which as we know all too well affects American security."

Clinton maintained support for the war even as it became obvious that Iraq in fact had no weapons of mass destruction – the primary casus belli for the war – only cooling her enthusiasm in 2006 when it became clear that the Democratic base had turned decisively against the war and her hawkish position endangered her chances for the 2008 presidential nomination. But eight years later, the Democrats had apparently moved on, and her support for the war was no longer considered a disqualification for the presidency.

One of the lessons that should be recalled today, especially as the U.S. gears up today for possible confrontations with countries including North Korea and Russia, is how easy it was in 2002-2003 for the Bush administration to convince Americans that they were under threat from the regime of Saddam Hussein some 7,000 miles away. The claims about Iraq's WMDs were untrue, with many saying so in real time – including by the newly formed group Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, which was regularly issuing memoranda to the president and to the American people debunking the falsehoods that were being promoted by the U.S. intelligence community.

But even if the claims about Iraq's alleged stockpiles were true, there was still no reason to assume that Saddam Hussein was on the verge of launching a surprise attack against the United States. Indeed, while Americans were all but convinced that Iraq threatened their safety and security, it was actually the U.S. government that was threatening Iraqis.

Far from posing an imminent threat to the United States, in 2003, Iraq was a country that had already been devastated by a U.S.-led war a decade earlier and crippling economic sanctions that caused the deaths of 1.5 million Iraqis (leading to the resignation of two UN humanitarian coordinators who called the sanctions genocidal).

Threats and Bluster

Although the invasion didn't officially begin until March 20, 2003 (still the 19th in Washington), the United States had been explicitly threatening to attack the country as early as January 2003, with the Pentagon publicizing plans for a so-called "shock and awe" bombing campaign.

"If the Pentagon sticks to its current war plan," CBS News reported on January

24, "one day in March the Air Force and Navy will launch between 300 and 400 cruise missiles at targets in Iraq. ... [T]his is more than the number that were launched during the entire 40 days of the first Gulf War. On the second day, the plan calls for launching another 300 to 400 cruise missiles."

A Pentagon official warned: "There will not be a safe place in Baghdad."

These public threats appeared to be a form of intimidation and psychological warfare, and were almost certainly in violation of the UN Charter, which states: "All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations."

The Pentagon's vaunted "shock and awe" attack began with limited bombing on March 19-20, as U.S. forces unsuccessfully attempted to kill Hussein. Attacks continued against a small number of targets until March 21, when the main bombing campaign began. U.S.-led forces launched approximately 1,700 air sorties, with 504 using cruise missiles.

During the invasion, the U.S. also dropped some 10,800 cluster bombs on Iraq despite claiming that only a fraction of that number had been used.

"The Pentagon presented a misleading picture during the war of the extent to which cluster weapons were being used and of the civilian casualties they were causing," reported *USA Today* in late 2003. Despite claims that only 1,500 cluster weapons had been used resulting in just one civilian casualty, "in fact, the United States used 10,782 cluster weapons," including many that were fired into urban areas from late March to early April 2003.

The cluster bombs killed hundreds of Iraqi civilians and left behind thousands of unexploded bomblets that continued to kill and injure civilians weeks after the fighting stopped.

(Because of the indiscriminate effect of these weapons, their use is banned by the international Convention on Cluster Munitions, which the United States has refused to sign.)

Attempting to kill Hussein, Bush ordered the bombing of an Iraqi residential restaurant on April 7. A single B-1B bomber dropped four precision-guided 2,000-pound bombs. The four bunker-penetrating bombs destroyed the target building, the al Saa restaurant block and several surrounding structures, leaving a 60-foot crater and unknown casualties.

Diners, including children, were ripped apart by the bombs. One mother found her

daughter's torso and then her severed head. U.S. intelligence later confirmed that Hussein wasn't there.

Resistance and Torture

It was evident within weeks of the initial invasion that the Bush administration had misjudged the critical question of whether Iraqis would fight. They put up stiffer than expected resistance even in southern Iraqi cities such as Umm Qasr, Basra and Nasiriya where Hussein's support was considered weak, and soon after the fall of the regime on April 9, when the Bush administration decided to disband the Iraqi army, it helped spark an anti-U.S. insurgency led by many former Iraqi military figures.

Despite Bush's triumphant May 1 landing on an aircraft carrier and his speech in front of a giant "Mission Accomplished" banner, it looked as though the collapse of the Baathist government had been just the first stage in what would become a long-running war of attrition. After the Iraqi conventional forces had been disbanded, the U.S. military began to notice in May 2003 a steadily increasing flurry of attacks on U.S. occupiers in various regions of the so-called "Sunni Triangle."

These included groups of insurgents firing assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades at U.S. occupation troops, as well as increasing use of improvised explosive devices on U.S. convoys.

Possibly anticipating a long, drawn-out occupation and counter-insurgency campaign, in a March 2003 memorandum Bush administration lawyers devised legal doctrines to justify certain torture techniques, offering legal rationales "that could render specific conduct, otherwise criminal, not unlawful."

They argued that the president or anyone acting on the president's orders were not bound by U.S. laws or international treaties prohibiting torture, asserting that the need for "obtaining intelligence vital to the protection of untold thousands of American citizens" superseded any obligations the administration had under domestic or international law.

"In order to respect the President's inherent constitutional authority to manage a military campaign," the memo stated, U.S. prohibitions against torture "must be construed as inapplicable to interrogations undertaken pursuant to his Commander-in-Chief authority."

Over the course of the next year, disclosures emerged that torture had been used extensively in Iraq for "intelligence gathering." Investigative journalist Seymour Hersh disclosed in The New Yorker in May 2004 that a 53-page classified Army report written by Gen. Antonio Taguba concluded that Abu Ghraib prison's

military police were urged on by intelligence officers seeking to break down the Iraqis before interrogation.

“Numerous incidents of sadistic, blatant and wanton criminal abuses were inflicted on several detainees,” wrote Taguba.

These actions, authorized at the highest levels, constituted serious breaches of international and domestic law, including the Convention Against Torture, the Geneva Convention relative to the treatment of Prisoners of War, as well as the U.S. War Crimes Act and the Torture Statute.

They also may have played a role in the rise of the ISIS terror group, the origins of which were subsequently traced to an American prison in Iraq dubbed Camp Bucca. This camp was the site of rampant abuse of prisoners, one of whom, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, later became the leader of ISIS. Al-Baghdadi spent four years as a prisoner at Bucca, where he started recruiting others to his cause.

America’s Weapons of Mass Destruction

Besides torture and the use of cluster bombs, the crimes against the Iraqi people over the years included wholesale massacres, long-term poisoning and the destruction of cities.

There was the 2004 assault on Fallujah in which white phosphorus – banned under international law – was used against civilians. There was the 2005 Haditha massacre, in which 24 unarmed civilians were systematically murdered by U.S. marines. There was the 2007 “Collateral Murder” massacre revealed by WikiLeaks in 2010, depicting the indiscriminate killing of more than a dozen civilians in the Iraqi suburb of New Baghdad – including two Reuters news staff.

There is also the tragic legacy of cancer and birth defects caused by the U.S. military’s extensive use of depleted uranium and white phosphorus. In Fallujah the use of depleted uranium led to birth defects in infants 14 times higher than in the Japanese cities targeted by U.S. atomic bombs at close of World War II, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Noting the birth defects in Fallujah, Al Jazeera journalist Dahr Jamail told Democracy Now in 2013:

“And going on to Fallujah, because I wrote about this a year ago, and then I returned to the city again this trip, we are seeing an absolute crisis of congenital malformations of newborn. ... I mean, these are extremely hard to look at. They’re extremely hard to bear witness to. But it’s something that we all need to pay attention to, because of the amount of depleted uranium used by the U.S. military during both of their brutal attacks on the city of 2004, as well as other toxic munitions like white phosphorus, among other things.”

A report sent to the UN General Assembly by Dr. Nawal Majeed Al-Sammarai, Iraq's Minister of Women's Affairs, stated that in September 2009, Fallujah General Hospital had 170 babies born, 75 percent of whom were deformed. A quarter of them died within their first week of life.

The military's use of depleted uranium also caused a sharp increase in Leukemia and birth defects in the city of Najaf, which saw one of the most severe military actions during the 2003 invasion, with cancer becoming more common than the flu according to local doctors.

By the end of the war, a number of Iraq's major cities, including Fallujah, Ramadi, and Mosul, had been reduced to rubble and by 2014, a former CIA director conceded that the nation of Iraq had basically been destroyed.

"I think Iraq has pretty much ceased to exist," said Michael Hayden, noting that it was fragmented into multiple parts which he didn't see "getting back together." In other words, the United States, using its own extensive arsenal of actual weapons of mass destruction, had completely destroyed a sovereign nation.

Predictable Consequences

The effects of these policies included the predictable growth of Islamic extremism, with a National Intelligence Estimate – representing the consensus view of the 16 spy services inside the U.S. government – warning in 2006 that a whole new generation of Islamic radicalism was being spawned by the U.S. occupation of Iraq. According to one American intelligence official, the consensus was that "the Iraq war has made the overall terrorism problem worse."

The assessment noted that several underlying factors were "fueling the spread of the jihadist movement," including "entrenched grievances, such as corruption, injustice, and fear of Western domination, leading to anger, humiliation, and a sense of powerlessness," and "pervasive anti-U.S. sentiment among most Muslims all of which jihadists exploit."

But rather than leading to substantive changes or reversals in U.S. policies, the strategy agreed upon in Washington seemed to be to double down on the failed policies that had given rise to radical jihadist groups. In fact, instead of withdrawing from Iraq, the U.S. decided to send a surge of 20,000 troops in 2007. This is despite the fact that public opinion was decidedly against the war.

A Newsweek poll in early 2007 found that 68 percent of Americans opposed the surge, and in another poll conducted just after Bush's 2007 State of the Union Address, 64 percent said Congress was not being assertive enough in challenging the Bush administration over its conduct of the war.

An estimated half-million people marched on Washington on Jan. 27, 2007, with messages for the newly sworn in 110th Congress to “Stand up to Bush,” urging Congress to cut the war funding with the slogan, “Not one more dollar, not one more death.” A growing combativeness was also on display in the antiwar movement with this demonstration marked by hundreds of protesters breaking through police lines and charging Capitol Hill.

Although there were additional large-scale protests a couple months later to mark the sixth anniversary of the invasion, including a march on the Pentagon led by Iraq War veterans, over the next year the antiwar movement’s activities steadily declined. While fatigue might explain some of the waning support for mass mobilizations, much of the decline can also surely be explained by the rise of Barack Obama’s candidacy. Millions of people channeled their energies into his campaign, including many motivated by a hope that he represented real change from the Bush years.

One of Obama’s advantages over Clinton in the Democratic primary was that he had been an early opponent of the Iraq War while she had been one of its most vocal supporters. This led many American voters to believe in 2008 that they had elected someone who might rein in some of the U.S. military adventurism and quickly end U.S. involvement in Iraq. But this wasn’t to be the case. The combat mission dragged on well into President Obama’s first term.

War, War and More War

After its well-publicized failures in Iraq, the U.S. turned its attention to Libya, overthrowing the government of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 utilizing armed militias implicated in war crimes and backed with NATO air power. Following Gaddafi’s ouster, his caches of weapons ended up being shuttled to rebels in Syria, fueling the civil war there. The Obama administration also took a keen interest in destabilizing the Syrian government and to do so began providing arms that often fell into the hands of extremists.

The CIA trained and armed so-called “moderate” rebel units in Syria, only to watch these groups switch sides by joining forces with Islamist brigades such as ISIS and Al Qaeda’s affiliate the Nusra Front. Others surrendered to Sunni extremist groups with the U.S.-provided weapons presumably ending up in the arsenals of jihadists or sometimes just quit or went missing altogether.

Beyond Syria and Libya, Obama also expanded U.S. military engagements in countries including Yemen, Somalia, Pakistan, and sent a surge of troops to Afghanistan in 2009. And despite belatedly withdrawing U.S. forces from Iraq, with the last U.S. troops finally leaving on December 18, 2011, Obama also presided over a major increase in the use of drone strikes and conventional air

wars.

In his first term, Obama dropped 20,000 bombs and missiles, a number that shot up to over 100,000 bombs and missiles dropped in his second term. In 2016, the final year of Obama's presidency, the U.S. dropped nearly three bombs every hour, 24 hours a day.

Obama also had the distinction of becoming the fourth U.S. president in a row to bomb the nation of Iraq. Under criticism for allowing the rise of ISIS in the country, Obama decided to reverse his earlier decision to disengage with Iraq, and in 2014 started bombing the country again. Addressing the American people on Sept. 10, 2014, President Obama said that "ISIL poses a threat to the people of Iraq and Syria, and the broader Middle East including American citizens, personnel and facilities."

"If left unchecked," he continued, "these terrorists could pose a growing threat beyond that region, including to the United States. While we have not yet detected specific plotting against our homeland, ISIL leaders have threatened America and our allies."

Of course, this is precisely the result that many voices of caution had warned about back in 2002 and 2003, when millions of Americans were taking to the streets in protest of the looming invasion of Iraq. And, to be clear, it wasn't just the antiwar left urging restraint – establishment figures and paleoconservatives were also voicing concern.

Retired Gen. Anthony Zinni, for example, who served as a Middle East envoy for George W. Bush, warned in October 2002 that by invading Iraq, "we are about to do something that will ignite a fuse in this region that we will rue the day we ever started." Brent Scowcroft, national security adviser in the first Bush administration, said a strike on Iraq "could unleash an Armageddon in the Middle East."

No matter, Bush was a gut player who had made up his mind, so those warnings were brushed aside and the invasion proceeded.

Campaign 2016

When presidential candidate Donald Trump began slamming Bush for the Iraq War during the Republican primary campaign in 2015 and 2016, calling the decision to invade Iraq a "big fat mistake," he not only won over some of the antiwar libertarian vote, but also helped solidify his image as a political outsider who "tells it like it is."

And after Hillary Clinton emerged as the Democratic nominee, with her track

record as an enthusiastic backer of virtually all U.S. interventions and an advocate of deeper involvement in countries such as Syria, voters could have been forgiven for getting the impression that the Republican Party was now the antiwar party and the Democrats were the hawks.

As the late Robert Parry observed in June 2016, “Amid the celebrations about picking the first woman as a major party’s presumptive nominee, Democrats appear to have given little thought to the fact that they have abandoned a near half-century standing as the party more skeptical about the use of military force. Clinton is an unabashed war hawk who has shown no inclination to rethink her pro-war attitudes.”

The antiwar faction within the Democratic Party was further marginalized during the Democratic National Convention when chants of “No More War” broke out during former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta’s speech. The Democratic establishment responded with chants of “USA!” to drown out the voices for peace and they even turned the lights out on the antiwar section of the crowd. The message was clear: there is no room for the antiwar movement inside the Democratic Party.

While there were numerous factors that played a role in Trump’s stunning victory over Clinton in November 2016, it is no stretch of the imagination to speculate that one of those factors was lingering antiwar sentiment from the Iraq debacle and other engagements of the U.S. military. Many of those fed up with U.S. military adventurism may have fallen for Trump’s quasi-anti-interventionist rhetoric while others may have opted to vote for an alternative party such as the Libertarians or the Greens, both of which took strong stances against U.S. interventionism.

But despite Trump’s occasional statements questioning the wisdom of committing the military to far-off lands such as Iraq or Afghanistan, he was also an advocate for war crimes such as “taking out [the] families” of suspected terrorists. He urged that the U.S. stop being “politically correct” in its waging of war.

So, ultimately, Americans were confronted with choosing between an unreconstructed regime-changing neoconservative Democratic hawk, and a reluctant interventionist who nevertheless wanted to teach terrorists a lesson by killing their children. Although ultimately the neocon won the popular vote, the war crimes advocate carried the Electoral College.

Following the election it turned out that Trump was a man of his word when it came to killing children. In one of his first military actions as president, Trump ordered an attack on a village in Yemen on Jan. 29, 2017, which claimed the lives of as many as 23 civilians, including a newborn baby and an eight-

year-old girl, Nawar al-Awlaki.

Nawar was the daughter of the al-Qaeda propagandist and American citizen Anwar al-Awlaki, who was killed in a September 2011 U.S. drone strike in Yemen.

Normalized Aggression

2017, Trump's first year in office, turned out to be the deadliest year for civilians in Iraq and Syria since U.S. airstrikes began on the two countries in 2014. The U.S. killed between 3,923 and 6,102 civilians during the year, according to a tally by the monitoring group Airwars. "Non-combatant deaths from Coalition air and artillery strikes rose by more than 200 per cent compared to 2016," Airwars noted.

While this spike in civilian deaths did make some headlines, including in the *Washington Post*, for the most part, the thousands of innocents killed by U.S. airstrikes are dismissed as "collateral damage." The ongoing carnage is considered perfectly normal, barely even eliciting a comment from the pundit class.

This is arguably one of the most enduring legacies of the 2003 invasion of Iraq – an act of military aggression that was based on false pretenses, which brushed aside warnings of caution, and blatantly violated international law. With no one in the media or the Bush administration ever held accountable for promoting this war or for launching it, what we have seen is the normalization of military aggression to a level that would have been unimaginable 20 years ago.

Indeed, I remember well the bombing of Iraq that took place in 1998 as part of Bill Clinton's Operation Desert Fox. Although this was a very limited bombing campaign, lasting only four days, there were sizable protests in opposition to the military action. I joined a picket of a couple hundred people in front of the White House holding a hand-made sign reading "IMPEACH HIM FOR WAR CRIMES" – a reference to the fact that Congress was at the time impeaching him for lying about a blowjob.

Compare that to what we see today – or, more accurately what we don't see today – in regards to antiwar advocacy. Despite the fact that the U.S. is now engaged in at least seven military conflicts, there is little in the way of peace activism or even much of a national debate over the wisdom, legality or morality of waging war. Few even raise objections to its significant financial cost to U.S. taxpayers, for example the fact that one day of spending on these wars amounts to about \$200 million.

Fifteen years ago, one of the arguments of the antiwar movement was that the war on terror was morphing into a perpetual war without boundaries, without rules,

and without any end game. The U.S., in other words, was in danger of finding itself in a state of endless war.

We are now clearly embroiled in that endless war, which is a reality that even Senate war hawk Lindsey Graham acknowledged last year when four U.S. troops were killed in Niger. Claiming that he didn't know that the U.S. had a military presence in Niger, Graham – who chairs the Senate Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs – stated that “this is an endless war without boundaries, no limitation on time or geography.”

Although it wasn't clear whether he was lamenting or celebrating this endless and borderless war, his words should be taken as a warning of where the U.S. stands on this 15th anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq – in a war without end, without boundaries, without limits on time or geography.

Putin Claims Strategic Parity, Respect

Vladimir Putin's announcement of new weapons systems to achieve nuclear parity was the result of the erosion of arms control regimes, such as the ill-advised U.S. withdrawal from the ABM treaty in 2002, Ray McGovern explains.

By Ray McGovern

Russian President Vladimir Putin's State-of-the-Nation speech Thursday represents a liminal event in the East-West strategic balance – and an ominous one.

That the strategic equation is precarious today comes through clearly in Putin's words. The U.S. and Russia have walked backwards over the threshold of sanity first crossed in the right direction by their predecessors in 1972 with the signing of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

Amid the “balance of terror” that reigned pre-1972, sensible statesmen on both sides concluded and implemented the ABM treaty which, in effect, guaranteed “mutual assured destruction” – the (altogether fitting) acronym was MAD – if either side attempted a nuclear attack on the other. MAD might not sound much better than “balance of terror,” but the ABM treaty introduced a significant degree of stability for 30 years.

The treaty itself was the result of painstaking negotiation with considerable understanding and good faith shown by both sides. The formidable task

challenging us intelligence specialists was to be able to assure President Nixon that, if he decided to trust, we could monitor Soviet adherence and promptly report any violations. (Incidentally, the Soviets did cheat. In mid-1983 we detected a huge early warning radar installation at Krasnoyarsk in Siberia – a clear violation of the ABM treaty. President Reagan called them on it, and the Soviets eventually tore it down.)

During the U.S.-Soviet negotiations on the ABM treaty, a third of the CIA Soviet Foreign Policy Branch, which I led at the time, was involved in various supporting roles. I was in Moscow on May 26, 1972 for the treaty signing by President Richard Nixon and Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev. I recall not being able to suppress an audible sigh of relief. MAD, I believed, would surely be preferable to the highly precarious strategic situation that preceded it. It was.

Cornerstone of Stability

In his speech on March 1, President Putin included an accurate tutorial on what happened after three decades, noting that Moscow was “categorically against” the U.S. decision in 2002 to withdraw from the ABM treaty. He described the treaty as “the cornerstone of the international security system.”

Putin explained that under the treaty, “the parties had the right to deploy ballistic missile defense systems in only one of its regions. Russia deployed these systems around Moscow, and the U.S. around its Grand Forks land-based ICBM base [in North Dakota].” (He did not mention the aborted attempt to deploy a second installation at Krasnoyarsk.)

The Russian President explained: “The ABM treaty not only created an atmosphere of trust, but also prevented either party from recklessly using nuclear weapons ... because the limited number of ballistic missile defense systems made the potential aggressor vulnerable to a response strike.”

Putin was saying, in effect, that no matter how bad – even mad – the MAD concept may seem, it played a huge stabilizing role. He added that the U.S. rejected all Russian proposals toward constructive dialogue on the post-ABM treaty situation, and grossly underestimated Russia’s ability to respond. The Russian President then gave chapter and verse, cum video clips, on an array of new Russian weaponry which, he claimed, rendered missile defense systems “useless.” The show-and-tell segment of Putin’s speech has been widely reported.

New York Times Skeptical

David Sanger, the *New York Times*’ go-to guy on key issues, who is among the best in the trade on reporting as “flat facts” things like WMD in Iraq and “Russian

meddling,” wrote the lede on Putin’s speech in Friday’s *NY Times* together with Neil MacFarquhar. The meme this time is not flat fact, but skepticism: “Do these weapons really exist? Or is Putin bluffing?”

In support of their skepticism, Sanger and MacFarquhar blithely report that “analysts writing on Facebook and elsewhere leaned toward the bluff theory.” So, QED!

And echoing former National Intelligence Director James Clapper’s insight that Russians are “typically, almost genetically driven to co-opt, penetrate, gain favor, whatever,” Sanger and MacFarquhar remind NYT readers that “deception lies at the heart of current Russian military doctrine.”

The two NYT journalists did get one thing right at the very end of their article; namely, “For years, Mr. Putin has chafed at the perceived disrespect showed to him and Russia by the United States. ‘Nobody listened to Russia,’ he said near the end of his speech, to huge applause. ‘Well, listen now.’”

Russians, like all proud and gifted people, resent attempts to demean or marginalize them. Putin may have seen his speech, in part, as a blistering response to former President Barack Obama’s dismissive comments that “Russia doesn’t make anything” and is no more than “a regional power.”

Door Still Open to Talks

It is to be hoped that the Marine generals running U.S. defense policy, rather than calling Putin’s bluff, will now encourage President Donald Trump to take up Putin’s latest offer to “sit down at the negotiating table” and “work together ... to ensure global security” – taking into account that “strategic parity” is now a reality.

Referring to what he called “our duty to inform our partners” about Russia’s claimed ability to render ABM systems “useless,” Putin added: “When the time comes, foreign and defense ministry experts will have many opportunities to discuss all these matters with them, if of course our partners so desire.”

Putin also said, “We are greatly concerned by certain provisions of the revised Nuclear Posture Review,” which envisages a nuclear response to “conventional arms attacks and even to a cyber threat.”

He described Russia’s military doctrine, as “very clear and specific”: “Russia reserves the right to use nuclear weapons solely in response to a nuclear attack, or an attack with other weapons of mass destruction against the country or its allies, or an act of aggression against us with the use of conventional weapons that threatens the very existence of the state.”

With burgeoning threats against Iran and Syria, it is to be hoped that someone in Washington thinks to ask Putin which countries he includes among Russia's allies.

White Lies Nobody Believes

Dana White, Pentagon spokeswoman, told reporters Thursday, "Our missile defense has never been about" Russia. Now, as Harry Truman would have put it, the Russians "weren't born yesterday." Putin has been extremely derisive toward those promoting the bromide that ABM installations in and around Europe are designed to defend against missiles from Iran – or North Korea.

In an unusually candid remark on missile defense on April 17, 2014, the day before Crimea was annexed, Putin told a national TV audience: "*Missile defense ... is no less, and probably even more important, than NATO's eastward expansion. Incidentally, our decision on Crimea was partially prompted by this.*" (Emphasis added)

To take some liberties with Shakespeare, "The fault is not in our stars, but in our Star Wars." Ever since President Ronald Reagan was sold on the notion that a "Star Wars" ABM system could provide the U.S. with complete protection from missile attack, exceptional opportunities to restrain – or even put an end to – the nuclear arms race have been squandered. Victory has gone to the arms profiteers – those whom Pope Francis described to Congress as the "blood drenched arms merchants."

The ABM project has been called, with justification, the world's largest corporate welfare program. Jonathan Marshall today explains quite well what should scare us – still more billions likely to be thrown at the makers of systems that, most serious scientists and engineers agree, can always be defeated, and comparatively cheaply, way or another.

Three Decade-Old Conundrum

During the mid-80s, I had a front-row seat watching President Ronald Reagan blow what appeared to be a golden chance for a comprehensive peace. I had spent most of my CIA career focusing on Soviet foreign policy and was able to tell the senior U.S. officials I was briefing that Mikhail Gorbachev, in my view, was the real deal. Even so, I was hardly prepared for how far Gorbachev was willing to go toward disarmament. At the 1986 summit with President Ronald Reagan in Reykjavik, Iceland, Gorbachev proposed that all nuclear weapons be eliminated within ten years.

Reagan reportedly almost rose to the occasion, but was counseled to reject Gorbachev's condition that any research on anti-ballistic missiles be confined

to laboratories for that decade. “Star Wars,” the largest and most wasteful defense-industry program in recent memory, won the day.

I know the characters who, for whatever reason, danced to the tune of “Star Wars,” Reagan’s benighted, wistful wish for an airtight defense against strategic missiles.

The naysayers to peace included ideologues like CIA Director William Casey and Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, windsocks like CIA Deputy Director Robert Gates and one of his proteges, Fritz Ermarth, a viscerally anti-Russian functionary and former Northrop Corporation employee, during Reykjavik.

According to author Jim Mann, several years after Reykjavik, Ermarth reflected on how he had been wrong in being overly suspicious of Gorbachev and how the intuition of Ronald Reagan and Secretary of State George Shultz had been more perceptive.

What Now?

By all appearances, President Putin is as interested in stemming the strategic arms race as was Gorbachev. On Thursday, Putin talked about this particular moment being liminal – he called it “a turning point for the entire world.” Will there be anyone in Washington at the other end of the phone, if Moscow calls? If, in effect, the military-industrial-congressional-intelligence-media complex answers, ABM developers will continue to fatten their purses and squander our children’s future.

It may be time to recall the admonition of President Dwight D. Eisenhower in a speech he gave 65 years ago:

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. ...

We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people. ... This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron. [...] Is there no other way the world may live?

‘Nuff said.

Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Savior in inner-city Washington. He served 30 years as an U.S. Army

Intelligence and CIA analyst, and in retirement co-founded Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).

Katharine Gun's Risky Truth-telling

From the Archive: On March 2, 2003, British intelligence official Katharine Gun blew the whistle on a pre-Iraq War ploy. On today's 15-year anniversary of that event, we republish a 2014 article about Gun's truth-telling by Sam Hussein.

By Sam Hussein ([first published Nov. 19, 2014](#))

"I felt it was explosive, it really made me angry when I read it. ... I genuinely hoped that the information would strengthen the people's voice. ... It could derail the entire process for war." So said Katharine Gun recently when asked about information she leaked shortly before the invasion of Iraq.

It wasn't self-serving hyperbole. Daniel Ellsberg, who himself leaked the Pentagon Papers, has called Katharine Gun's leak "the most important and courageous leak I have ever seen. No one else – including myself – has ever done what Gun did: tell secret truths at personal risk, before an imminent war, in time, possibly, to avert it."

And indeed, Ellsberg had asked for such a leak during this period. He had been saying during the run-up to the Iraq invasion: "Don't wait until the bombs start falling. ... If you know the public is being lied to and you have documents to prove it, go to Congress and go to the press. ... Do what I wish I had done before the bombs started falling [in Vietnam] ... I think there is some chance that the truth could avert war."

Ellsberg leaked the Pentagon Papers – internal documents which showed a pattern of U.S. government deception about the Vietnam War – in 1971, though he had the information earlier. And while the Pentagon Papers, the leaks by Chelsea Manning to WikiLeaks and Edward Snowden's National Security Agency leaks were all quite massive, the Katharine Gun leak was just 300 words. Its power came from its timeliness.

In October of 2002, the U.S. Congress passed the so-called Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002. In November, the U.S. government had gotten the United Nations Security Council to pass a threatening resolution on Iraq, but in most people's view, it stopped short of actually authorizing force.

The U.S. ambassador to the U.N. at the time, John Negroponte, said when resolution 1441 was adopted unanimously: “There’s no ‘automaticity’ and this is a two-stage process, and in that regard we have met the principal concerns that have been expressed for the resolution.” That is, the U.S. would intend to come back for a second resolution if Iraq didn’t abide by a “final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations.”

On Feb. 5, 2003, Colin Powell claimed in his infamous presentation at the UN that Iraq was hiding weapons of mass destruction. Feb. 15, 2003 saw the greatest global protests in history, with millions around the world rallying against the impending Iraq invasion, including over a million near the UN headquarters in New York City.

It was around this time that Katharine Gun, who worked as a language specialist at the Government Communications Headquarters, the British equivalent of the NSA, got a memo from the NSA and then decided to – through intermediaries – leak it to the media. The brief email read in part:

“As you’ve likely heard by now, the Agency is mounting a surge particularly directed at the UN Security Council (UNSC) members (minus US and GBR of course) for insights as to how membership is reacting to the on-going debate RE: Iraq, plans to vote on any related resolutions, what related policies/ negotiating positions they may be considering, alliances/ dependencies, etc – the whole gamut of information that could give US policymakers an edge in obtaining results favorable to US goals or to head off surprises. ... to revive/ create efforts against UNSC members Angola, Cameroon, Chile, Bulgaria and Guinea, as well as extra focus on Pakistan UN matters.”

The memo outlined that U.S. and British assets should focus on getting information to pressure member of the UN Security Council to go vote for a war resolution – material for blackmail to put it bluntly. This internal government document could show people – especially those who tend to put stock in government pronouncements – that what President George W. Bush was claiming at the time: “We are doing everything we can to avoid war in Iraq” – was exactly backwards. The U.S. government in fact was doing virtually everything it possibly could to ensure war.

When the British reporters writing the story called the author of the memo, Frank Koza, a top official at the NSA, they were put through to his office. When they shared the nature of their phone call, they were told by an assistant they had “the wrong number.” The reporters noted: “On protesting that the assistant had just said this was Koza’s extension, the assistant repeated that it was an erroneous extension, and hung up.”

The story was ignored by the U.S. media, though we at the Institute for Public Accuracy put out a string of news releases about it. Gun has commented that Martin Bright, one of the reporters who broke the story for the British *Observer*, had been booked on several U.S. TV networks just after the story was published but they had all quickly cancelled. [See video of an interview with Gun and Larry Wilkerson, former chief of staff for Colin Powell, on German TV from last year.]

However, the story did cause headlines around the world – especially in the countries on the Security Council that the memo listed as targets of the surveillance. Through whatever combination of authentic anger or embarrassment at their subservience to the U.S. government being exposed, most of these governments apparently peeled away from the U.S., and no second UN resolution was sought by the war planners.

Rather, George W. Bush started the Iraq war with unilateral demands that Saddam Hussein and his family leave Iraq (and then indicated that the invasion would commence in any case.)

In 2004, the *Observer* reported that “surveillance played a role in derailing a compromise UN resolution in the weeks before the Iraq war. Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, Mexico’s UN ambassador at the time, has charged that the U.S. spied on a private meeting of six swing countries on the Security Council aimed at a compromise. Zinser told the *Observer*: ‘The meeting was in the evening. They [U.S. diplomats] call us in the morning before the meeting of the Security Council and they say: “We appreciate you trying to find ideas, but this is not a good idea.”’”

Meanwhile, Katharine Gun had been found out as the leaker shortly after the memo was published – she has a talent for telling the truth, not so much for covering up apparently – and spent many months awaiting trial. England has no First Amendment that might have protected Gun. It does have a repressive Official Secrets Act, under which she was being prosecuted by the Blair government.

Marcia Mitchell, co-author of *The Spy Who Tried to Stop a War: Katharine Gun and the Secret Plot to Sanction the Iraq Invasion*, notes however that at the last minute, the Blair government, which was about to face elections “with her signed confession in hand, chose not to present evidence that the invasion of Iraq was, in fact, legal, a demand by the Defense.”

That is, the British government was afraid of what could come out about the legality of the Iraq war in a trial. And so Gun, who was newly married when she exposed the NSA/GCHQ’s activities, was able to avoid jail and continue as a language instructor. She has since been supportive of Edward Snowden and others

who expose government wrongdoing.

At the UN

The subject of spying at the UN was again highlighted in 2010 from cables leaked to WikiLeaks by Chelsea (formerly Bradley) Manning. Reuters reported at the time: "According to one cable, the State Department asked U.S. envoys at U.N. headquarters and elsewhere to procure credit card and frequent flyer numbers, mobile phone numbers, email addresses, passwords and other confidential data from top U.N. officials and foreign diplomats."

Of course, spying on UN missions by the U.S. is illegal, Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations says: "The receiving State shall permit and protect free communication on the part of the mission for all official purposes... The official correspondence of the mission shall be inviolable."

Similarly, in 2013, the *Guardian* reported as G8 leaders meet in Northern Ireland: "Turkey, South Africa and Russia have reacted angrily to the British government demanding an explanation for the revelations that their politicians and senior officials were spied on and bugged during the 2009 G20 summit in London." The governments were responding to the *Guardian* story: "GCHQ Intercepted Foreign Politicians' Communications at G20 Summits," based on Edward Snowden's NSA leaks.

Lessons Learned

The Katharine Gun case give us many lessons. First off, it's a great example to rebut anyone parroting the establishment line that the NSA's activities are based on stopping terrorism, or that they are merely overzealous efforts at ensuring security, or perhaps typical diplomatic games. Here, the NSA and GCHQ were spying to try to facilitate an aggressive war – the highest war crime under the Nuremberg statutes.

Similarly, it highlights what great ideals some "whistleblowers" – the term doesn't really do justice – are motivated by. And of course, such revealers are much more threatening to war-makers and others when they are acting in parallel with movements. Those movements may also help ward off the government attempting to imprison the whistleblower.

The "rebuttal" that everybody spies and therefore it's no big deal when the U.S. or some other government is caught doing so similarly doesn't hold up. Yes, virtually every government spies – but you're not supposed to get caught. And if a government does get caught, it's an indication that it's own people – the very people who are paid to carry out the surveillance – don't believe in it and are willing to put themselves at risk to expose the spying and the underlying

wrongdoing.

Perhaps most importantly, the lesson is not that Katharine Gun's leak was futile because the U.S. invaded Iraq – any more than the lesson is that the Feb. 15 global protests were in vain. Rather, more of both could have really changed things. If global protests had started in 2002, then the congressional authorization for war in late 2002 could have been prevented. If more people within the war-making governments had their consciences moved by such movements and had leaked more critical information, war could have been forestalled.

And, even if the Iraq invasion happened, if global protests had continued and global solidarity were better coordinated, when it became clear to all that the WMDs not in Iraq were a contrived pretext for aggression, a sustained revulsion against the invasion could have led to the war-makers being held accountable, preventing much suffering in Iraq and elsewhere – and laying the basis for a world free of war.

Sam Hussein is communications director for the Institute for Public Accuracy. Follow him on twitter: [@samhusseini](https://twitter.com/samhusseini).

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Some of our special stories in January highlighted misrepresented historic events, analyzed shortcomings of the Democratic Party, and remembered Robert Parry's legacy.

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["Pesticide Use Threatens Health in California"](#) by Dennis J. Bernstein, Jan. 10, 2018

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["The FBI Hand Behind Russia-gate"](#) by Ray McGovern, Jan. 11, 2018

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“An Update to Our Readers on Editor Robert Parry” by Nat Parry, Jan. 19, 2018

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Iraq's 'Liberation Day'

From the Archive: Today is the 15-year anniversary of what was described as “the largest protest event in human history” – the Feb. 15, 2003 coordinated day of demonstrations against the U.S. invasion of Iraq. On this occasion we republish an article by Nat Parry detailing the concerns driving millions of people to take the streets.

By Nat Parry (first published on Feb. 5, 2003)

Iraq's “Day of Liberation” – as George W. Bush calls it – is set to begin with a bombardment of 3,000 U.S. missiles delivered over 48 hours, 10 times the number of bombs dropped during the first two days of the Persian Gulf War in 1991.

Officials who have been briefed on the plans say the goal is to so stun the Iraqis that they will simply submit to the overwhelming force demonstrated by the U.S. military.

Along with the destruction of buildings and the death of thousands from the explosive power of the weapons, the U.S. invasion force intends to paralyze Iraq's electrical and water systems, supposedly leaving Iraqi soldiers and civilians alike with no choice but to throw up their arms and surrender.

Never before in world history will a dominant world power have struck at a much weaker nation in a preemptive war with such ferocity. The strategy could be called liberation through devastation.

But the war plan also carries with it the potential of spiraling out of control, as Bush secretly brandishes nuclear weapons as a threat against the Iraqi government if it unleashes biological or chemical warfare against U.S. troops.

Civilian Dead

Even if the war does not bring the world a big step closer to the apocalypse, it is certain to mean the death of hundreds, if not thousands, of Iraqi non-combatants, no matter how targeted or precise the U.S. weapons. For those civilians, their end may come in the dark terror of crushing concrete or the blinding flash of high explosives, as it did for about 1,500 Iraqis who were crushed and incinerated in the early morning hours of Feb. 13, 1991.

These civilians were hiding in the al-Amariyah bomb shelter in a suburb of Baghdad at 4:30 a.m. when the first U.S. bomb ripped a hole in the shelter's roof. Neighborhood residents heard screams as people – mostly women and children

– struggled to push aside rubble and escape. Then, the second bomb zipped through the hole created by the first bomb. That explosion was followed by silence, with fewer than two dozen people surviving.

Although there are no precise figures on the total number of civilians who died during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, most estimates put the toll at between 5,000 and 15,000. Besides the civilian dead, Iraqi military casualties are placed at between 100,000 and 300,000. [See [Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists](#).]

According to international relief agencies, the suffering has continued over the following decade. Since the war's end, Iraqi civilians have continued to die as a result of a badly damaged civilian infrastructure, crippling economic sanctions and high cancer rates attributed to hazardous chemicals released during the war, including the Pentagon's use of radioactive depleted uranium shells.

The United Nations predicts that the civilian casualties of a new war will likely be even higher than in 1991, since the impoverished population is heavily dependent on government handouts to survive and those supplies will be disrupted by a U.S.-led invasion. In a confidential report, UN planners say the coming war and its aftermath could injure more than 500,000 civilians and leave nearly 1 million as refugees. About 3 million Iraqis – out of a population of 23 million – will suffer severe hunger, [the UN report](#) said.

As many as 7.4 million people will need immediate humanitarian relief. “The nutritional status of some 3.03 million persons countrywide will be dire,” the UN report said, adding that beyond hunger, disease will sweep the country in “epidemic, if not pandemic” proportions.

Other Warnings

Those warnings are echoed by other independent studies.

A report by the [International Study Team](#), a Canadian non-governmental organization, says “because most of the 13 million Iraqi children are dependent on food distributed by the Government of Iraq, the disruption of this system by war would have a devastating impact on children who already have a high rate of malnutrition.”

The report says the physical state of Iraqi children makes them much more vulnerable to war than they were in 1991. Besides their physical weakness, the children are already fearful, anxious and depressed, with many suffering from nightmares. The report concluded that war on Iraq will cause a “grave humanitarian disaster,” with potential casualties among children in “the tens of thousands, and possibly in the hundreds of thousands.”

According to a Boston Globe article, the combination of the 1991 war and a decade of UN sanctions has transformed Iraq from a relatively prosperous Middle Eastern country – where a chief health concern had been childhood obesity – into a Third World nation where even casual observers can't miss how Iraqis struggle to survive.

"In Baghdad, women with babies in their arms beg on the streets," the Globe reported. "In cities like Basra to the south, poverty is inescapable. Raw sewage and trash choke the streets of a city once known for its glimmering, Venetian-style canals."

"Iraq was not a Third World country in 1990," said Denis Halliday, a former UN assistant secretary general who quit over UN sanctions. "Now you have this vulnerability out there."

"We are already in a humanitarian crisis," said Margaret Hassan, Iraq director for CARE, the U.S. relief organization. "Frankly, these people can't take another one." [Boston Globe, Jan. 31, 2003]

Attacks on Infrastructure

Even in a short war, the civilian population will be put at risk. Pentagon planners have confirmed that shutting down important city services, such as water and electricity, will be one of the early goals of the U.S. assault. The planners say the strategy calls for using high-powered microwaves and other high-technology weapons to disable these vital services without permanently destroying them. [NYT, Feb. 2, 2003]

If the war doesn't end quickly, however, the interruption of these services can be expected to spread disease and death among the civilian population. If Iraqi troops withdraw into Baghdad and other major cities, forcing the U.S. military to wage time-consuming urban warfare, the lack of clean water and the absence of medicines could prove as deadly as the U.S. armaments.

The U.S. bombing campaign also will surely claim many civilian casualties. While the Bush administration stresses that its planned bombardment of ancient Baghdad and other cities will concentrate on military and government targets, the Pentagon's track record for precision bombing doesn't instill confidence. In recent conflicts, U.S. warplanes have inflicted substantial civilian death, either accidentally or on purpose.

For instance, in 1999 during the Kosovo crisis, U.S. warplanes killed non-combatants when going after civilian targets in Yugoslavia, such as bridges and even a television station that was deemed a government propaganda outlet. The lethal attack on the TV station was intentional. An international uproar

followed the apparently accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy. The CIA blamed an "outdated map" for that fatal attack.

In the Afghan bombing campaign, U.S. warplanes struck two wedding parties and twice bombed the headquarters of the International Red Cross. It is estimated that the U.S. bombardment of Afghanistan has killed about 4,000 civilians.

A major difference between Afghanistan and Iraq, however, is that Afghanistan consists of a mainly rural population and Iraq has a largely urbanized population, with Baghdad alone crammed with about 5 million people.

The Nuclear Option

There is also no telling how out of control the war could spin, with Bush determined to destroy Saddam Hussein's government to avenge what many conservatives view as George H.W. Bush's failure to finish the job in 1991.

The younger Bush even has approved the use of nuclear weapons if Iraq uses chemical or biological warfare. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Bush's Nuclear Gamble](#)."]]

Bush's order, signed last September, reverses a decades-old U.S. policy of creating deliberate ambiguity about how Washington would react to a situation in which unconventional weapons were deployed against U.S. forces or their allies. "The United States will continue to make clear that it reserves the right to respond with overwhelming force – including potentially nuclear weapons – to the use of [weapons of mass destruction] against the United States, our forces abroad, and friends and allies," the presidential document states. [Washington Times, Jan. 31, 2003]

In addition to an "overwhelming" retaliatory nuclear strike, Bush also is considering plans to use "tactical" nuclear weapons to destroy underground bunkers and similar critical targets.

The Los Angeles Times reported that the Pentagon is hastily developing computers to help decide when nuclear weapons would be used against fortified bunkers and how to measure collateral effects from radiation and fallout.

"From the start of the Bush administration, we have seen increasing interest in 'usable' nuclear weapons," said Christine Kucia, analyst at the Arms Control Association, a research group that studies proliferation issues.

By tailoring nuclear weapons for tactical warfare situations, such as bunker-busting, Kucia said the Bush administration is changing the status of nuclear devices that "have been reserved for decades as the absolute weapons of last

resort. ... To put them in the realm of usable weapons is to take on a whole new definition that has never been explored and, frankly, should not be explored.” [L.A. Times, Feb. 3, 2003]

‘Poor Man’s MAD’

Bush also may find that his goal of destroying Hussein and his government has been countered by Iraq’s suspected pre-positioning of chemical and biological weapons outside Iraq for use only if the United States invades. In other words, Bush’s strategy might touch off precisely the nightmare scenario that he says he is trying to prevent.

Last October, the CIA judged the likelihood of Iraq attacking the United States without U.S. provocation as “low” but rising dramatically if the U.S. prepared for a preemptive strike. “Baghdad for now appears to be drawing a line short of conducting terrorist attacks with conventional or C.B.W. [chemical or biological warfare] against the United States,” wrote CIA director George Tenet in an Oct. 7 letter to Congress. “Should Saddam conclude that a U.S.-led attack could no longer be deterred, he probably would become much less constrained in adopting terrorist actions.” [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Misleading the Nation to War.”](#)]

Since the CIA’s assessment, the Bush administration has received specific warnings from abroad that easily transportable stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons indeed have been moved outside Iraq so they can be deployed against Western targets as retaliatory weapons.

Though the U.S. news media has largely kept this devastating possibility away from the American people, the Washington Post made an oblique reference to this potential danger in a Feb. 4 article entitled “CIA, Allies Tracking Iraqi Agents.” The article states, “U.S. allies also are on alert for signs that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has sent agents abroad to arm Iraqis or terrorist groups with conventional, chemical or biological weapons, officials said. They said some of the weapons may already be in place outside Iraq’s borders.”

This “poor man’s MAD” – for mutual assured destruction – should be a major element in an informed debate inside the United States especially since Bush outlined the ease with which these weapons can be moved and deployed. In his State of the Union address on Jan. 28, Bush said “it would take one vial, one canister, one crate slipped into this country to bring a day of horror like none we have ever known.”

But what if the vial, canister or crate is already en route? Might that “day of horror” actually be precipitated by Bush’s invasion of Iraq, not delayed or prevented by going to war? Certainly, if one accepts the “evil” portrait of

Saddam Hussein as painted by Bush, you'd have to assume that Saddam has long ago moved these dangerous weapons into positions where they can be of the most use to him – as a retaliatory weapon against a U.S. invasion.

The Aftermath

Yet even assuming U.S. forces succeed in eliminating Saddam Hussein and his army without a catastrophic escalation, the post-war period promises to be complicated and dangerous. The Bush administration has sent out mixed and confusing signals about what a “liberated” Iraq will look like.

At times, the administration has outlined plans to occupy Iraq for at least 18 months, possibly installing a military governor in the style of Gen. Douglas MacArthur in Japan after World War II. But it is not clear how the U.S. will police a population that is certain to include anti-American radicals ready to employ suicide bombings and other terror tactics against an occupying force.

Some of Bush's political allies also have urged pumping Iraqi oil to compensate the U.S. government for the war's cost. While this idea might play well with Americans wary about paying billions of dollars in scarce tax dollars to occupy a foreign country, it won't sit well with many Iraqis and millions of others across the world, especially Islamic populations that already suspect a Western imperialist motive behind the war.

The war's devastation and the U.S. occupation also could play into the hands of the terrorist leader who had been the focus of the war on terror before Bush shifted his attention to Iraq.

The still-at-large Osama bin Laden spelled out in [a recent message](#) that he plans to gain a propaganda advantage from any U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq, by presenting himself as the defender of the Arab people.

“Anyone who tries to destroy our villages and cities, then we are going to destroy their villages and cities,” the al-Qaeda leader said. “Anyone who steals our fortunes, then we must destroy their economy. Anyone who kills our civilians, then we are going to kill their civilians.”

George W. Bush drew his own line in the sand during his State of the Union address. “Trusting in the sanity and restraint of Saddam Hussein is not a strategy, and it is not an option,” Bush declared as the U.S. built up a vast military force surrounding Iraq.

With that buildup in mind, Bush addressed what he called the “brave and oppressed people of Iraq.” He told them, “Your enemy is not surrounding your country – your enemy is ruling your country.” He then added, “the day [Saddam

Hussein] and his regime are removed from power will be the day of your liberation.”

Bush also pledged that while he would use the “full force and might of the United States military” to disarm the Iraqi government, the U.S. will fight “by just means – sparing in every way we can, the innocent.”

How many of those innocents are *not* spared in the impending invasion – and the numbers of dead are likely to horrify the world – may become the new measure of how dangerous the post-war period will be for both the American and the Iraqi people.
