

# A USS Liberty's Hero's Passing

On the 52nd anniversary of the attack on the USS Liberty, Ray McGovern focuses on Terry Halbardier, who sent the SOS that saved the ship from Israeli destruction.

*This article was written in 2014 on the occasion of Halbardier's death.*

**By Ray McGovern**

*Special to Consortium News*

**T**erry Halbardier, who as a 23-year old seaman in 1967 thwarted Israeli attempts to sink the USS Liberty, died on Aug. 11 in Visalia, California. It took the U.S. government 42 years after the attack to recognize Halbardier's heroism by awarding him the Silver Star, a delay explained by Washington's determination to downplay Israeli responsibility for the 34 Americans killed and the 174 wounded.

On June 8, 1967, during the Six-Day War, the Israeli military attacked the USS Liberty, an American spy ship which had been monitoring Israeli transmissions about the conflict. Intercepted Israeli communications indicated that the goal was to sink the Liberty and leave no survivors.

Warplanes and torpedo boats had already killed 34 and wounded 174, when Halbardier slid over the Liberty's napalm-glazed deck to jury-rig an antenna and get an SOS off to the Sixth Fleet. The Israelis intercepted the SOS and broke off the attack immediately. In effect, Halbardier prevented the massacre of all 294 onboard. Still, the infamy of the attack

on the Liberty was two-fold.

First, the Liberty, a virtually defenseless intelligence collection platform prominently flying an American flag in international waters, came under deliberate attack by Israeli aircraft and three 60-ton Israeli torpedo boats off the coast of the Sinai on a cloudless June afternoon during the six-day Israeli-Arab war. Second, President Lyndon Johnson called back carrier aircraft dispatched to defend the Liberty lest Israel be embarrassed, the start of an unconscionable cover-up, including top Navy brass, that persists to this day.

Given all they have been through, the Liberty survivors and other veterans who joined Halbardier to celebrate his belated receipt of the Silver Star on May 27, 2009 can be forgiven for having doubted that the day of the hero's recognition would ever come.

In the award ceremony at the Visalia (California) office of Rep. Devin Nunes, the Republican congressman pinned the Silver Star next to the Purple Heart that Halbardier found in his home mailbox three years ago. Nunes said, "The government has kept this quiet I think for too long, and I felt as my constituent he [Halbardier] needed to get recognized for the services he made to his country."

Nunes got that right. Despite the many indignities the Liberty crew has been subjected to, the mood in Visalia was pronouncedly a joyous one of Better (42 years) Late Than Never. And, it did take some time for the moment to sink in: Wow, a gutsy congressman not afraid to let the truth hang out on this delicate issue.

## **Treatment Accorded the Skipper**

I was present that day and I could not get out of my head the contrast between this simple, uncomplicated event and the earlier rigmarole that senior Navy officers went through to pin a richly deserved Medal of Honor on another hero of that day, the Liberty's skipper, Captain William McGonagle.

Although badly wounded by Israeli fire on June 8, 1967, McGonagle was able to keep the bombed, torpedoed, napalmed Liberty afloat and limping toward Malta, where what was left of the bodies of the 34 crewmen killed and the 174 wounded could be attended to. Do the math: yes, killed and wounded amounted to more than two-thirds of the Liberty crew of 294.

I remembered what a naval officer involved in McGonagle's award ceremony told one of the Liberty crew: "The government is pretty jumpy about Israel the State Department even asked the Israeli ambassador if his government had any objections to McGonagle getting the medal."

When McGonagle received his award, the White House (the normal venue for a Medal of Honor award) was all booked up, it seems, and President Lyndon Johnson (who would have been the usual presenter) was unavailable.

So it fell to the Secretary of the Navy to sneak off to the Washington Navy Yard on the banks of the acrid Anacostia River, where he presented McGonagle with the Medal of Honor and a citation that described the attack but not the identity of the attackers.

Please don't misunderstand. The Liberty crew is not big on ceremony. They are VERY-not-big on politicians who wink when

Navy comrades are killed and wounded at sea. The Liberty survivors are big on getting the truth out about what actually happened that otherwise beautiful day in June 1967.

The award of the Silver Star to Terry Halbardier marked a significant step in the direction of truth telling. Halbardier said he accepted his Silver Star on behalf of the entire 294-man crew. He and fellow survivor Don Pageler expressed particular satisfaction at the wording of the citation, which stated explicitly – with none of the usual fudging – the identity of the attackers: “The USS Liberty was attacked by Israeli aircraft and motor torpedo boats in the East Mediterranean Sea.”

In the past, official citations, like Captain McGonagle’s, had avoided mentioning Israel by name when alluding to the attack. I think former U.S. Ambassador Edward Peck put it best in condemning this kind of approach as “obsequious, unctuous subservience to the peripheral interests of a foreign nation at the cost of the lives and morale of our own service members and their families.” Strong words for a diplomat. But right on.

### **Just a Guy From Texas**

Were it not for Halbardier’s bravery, ingenuity, and technical expertise, the USS Liberty would surely have sunk, taking down much if not all of the crew.

You see, the first thing the Israeli aircraft bombed and strafed were the Liberty’s communications antennae and other equipment. They succeeded in destroying all the antennae that were functional. One antenna on the port side, though, had been out of commission and had escaped damage.

In receiving the Silver Star, Halbardier made light of his heroism, claiming that he was just a guy from Texas who could do a whole lot with simple stuff like baling wire. (In the infantry we called this kind of thing a "field expedient.")

In any case, with his can-do attitude and his technical training, he figured he might be able to get that particular antenna working again. But first he would have to repair a cable that had been destroyed on deck and then connect the antenna to a transmitter.

The deck was still being strafed, but Halbardier grabbed a reel of cable, ran out onto the deck, and attached new cable to the antenna so a radioman could get an SOS out to the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean.

Voila. "Mayday" went out; almost immediately the Israeli aircraft and torpedo ships broke off the attack and went back to base; the Israeli government sent a quick apology to Washington for its unfortunate "mistake;" and President Johnson issued orders to everyone to make believe the Israelis were telling the truth, or at least to remain silent.

To their discredit, top Navy brass went along, and the Liberty survivors were threatened with court martial and prison if they so much as mentioned to their wives what had actually happened. They were enjoined as well from discussing it with one another.

As Liberty crewman Don Pageler put it, "We all headed out after that, and we didn't talk to each other." The circumstances were ready-made for serious Post-Traumatic

Stress Disorder.

The stories shared by Liberty survivors after the award ceremony, including descriptions of the macabre but necessary effort to reassemble torpedoed body parts, and the plague of survivor's guilt, were as heart-rending as any I have heard. They are stories that should be shared more widely for those muzzled far too long.

These were the deep emotional scars to supplement the ones all over Halbardier's body, some of which he uncovered when asked by the local press gathered there in Visalia. Typically, Halbardier made light of the shrapnel that had to be plucked out of his flesh, emphasizing that he was lucky compared to some of the other crew.

### **No Mistake**

Despite Israeli protestations, the accumulated evidence, including intercepted voice communications, is such that no serious observer believes Israel's "Oops" excuse of a terrible mistake. The following exchanges are excerpts of testimony from U.S. military and diplomatic officials given to Alison Weir, founder of "If Americans Knew" and author of *American Media Miss the Boat*:

Israeli pilot to ground control: "This is an American ship. Do you still want us to attack?"

Ground control: "Yes, follow orders."

"But sir, it's an American ship, I can see the flag!"

Ground control: "Never mind; hit it!"

Haviland Smith, a CIA officer stationed in Beirut during the

Six-Day War, says he was told that the transcripts were "deep-sixed," because the U.S. government did not want to embarrass Israel.

Equally telling is the fact that the National Security Agency (NSA) destroyed voice tapes seen by many intelligence analysts, showing that the Israelis knew exactly what they were doing. I asked a former CIA colleague, who was also an analyst at that time, what he remembered of those circumstances. Here is his e-mail reply:

"The chief of the analysts studying the Arab-Israeli region at the time told me about the intercepted messages and said very flatly and firmly that the pilots reported seeing the American flag and repeated their requests of confirmation of the attack order. Whole platoons of Americans saw those intercepts. If NSA now says they do not exist, then someone ordered them destroyed."

One need hardly add at this point that the destruction of evidence without investigation is an open invitation to repetition in the future. Think the more recent torture-interrogation videotapes.

As for the legal side: the late Captain Ward Boston, unburdened himself on his accomplice role as the Navy lawyer appointed as senior counsel to Adm. Isaac Kidd, who led a one-week (!) investigation and then followed orders to pronounce the attack on the Liberty a case of "mistaken identity." Boston signed a formal declaration on Jan. 8, 2004, in which he said he was "outraged at the efforts of the apologists for Israel in this country to claim that this attack was a case of 'mistaken identity.'" Boston continued:

“The evidence was clear. Both Adm. Kidd and I believed with certainty that this attack was a deliberate effort to sink an American ship and murder its entire crew. Not only did the Israelis attack the ship with napalm, gunfire, and missiles, Israeli torpedo boats machine-gunned three lifeboats that had been launched in an attempt by the crew to save the most seriously wounded, a war crime

“I know from personal conversations I had with Adm. Kidd that President Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara ordered him to conclude that the attack was a case of ‘mistaken identity’ despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.”

W. Patrick Lang, Col., USA (ret.), who was the Defense Intelligence Agency’s top analyst for the Middle East for eight years, recounted the Israeli air attacks as follows: “The flight leader spoke to his base to report that he had the ship in view, that it was the same ship he had been briefed on, and that it was clearly marked with the U.S. flag

“The flight commander was reluctant. That was very clear. He didn’t want to do this. He asked them a couple of times, ‘Do you really want me to do this?’ I’ve remembered it ever since. It was very striking. I’ve been harboring this memory for all these years.”

Lang, of course, is not alone. So too Terry Halbardier, who told those assembled at his Silver Medal award ceremony, “I think about it [the attack on the Liberty] every day.”

**Why Sink the Ship?**

What we know for sure is, as the independent commission headed by former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Thomas Moorer put it, the attack “was a deliberate attempt to destroy an American ship and kill her entire crew.”

What we do not know for sure is why the Israelis wanted that done. Has no one dared ask the Israelis? One view is that the Israelis did not want the United States to find out they were massing troops to seize the Golan Heights from Syria and wanted to deprive the U.S. of the opportunity to argue against such a move.

James Bamford offers an alternative view in his excellent book, *Body of Secrets*. Bamford adduces evidence, including reporting from an Israeli journalist eyewitness and an Israeli military historian, of wholesale killing of Egyptian prisoners of war at the coastal town of El Arish in the Sinai.

The Liberty was patrolling directly opposite El Arish in international waters but within easy range to pick up intelligence on what was going on there. And the Israelis were well aware of that. But the important thing here is not to confuse what we know (the deliberate nature of the Israeli attack) with the ultimate purpose behind it, which remains open to speculation.

Also worth noting is the conventional wisdom prevalent in our Fawning Corporate Media (FCM) that Egypt forced Israel into war in June 1967. An excellent, authoritative source has debunked that, none other than former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin! In an unguarded moment in 1982, when he was prime minister, he admitted publicly:

“In June 1967, we had a choice. The Egyptian army concentrations in the Sinai approaches do not prove that [Egyptian President] Nasser was really about to attack us. We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him.”

Thus, the Israeli attack admittedly amounted to starting a war of aggression, and the occupied West Bank territories and the Golan Heights gained by the Israelis in the 1967 war remain occupied to this day. The post World War II tribunal at Nuremberg distinguished a “war of aggression” from other war crimes, terming it the “supreme international crime, differing from other war crimes only in that it contains the accumulated evil of the whole.”

Perhaps the attempt to sink the Liberty and finish off all survivors qualifies as one of those accumulated evils. Terry Halbardier summed it up this way when he was awarded his Silver Star: “There’s lots of theories but let’s just say they didn’t want us listening in to what they wanted to do.”

### **Getting Away With Murder**

In sum, on June 8, 1967, the Israeli government learned that it could get away with murder, literally, and the crime would be covered up, so strong is the influence of the Israel Lobby in our Congress, and indeed, in the White House. And those USS Liberty veterans who survived well enough to call for an independent investigation have been hit with charges of, you guessed it, anti-Semitism.

Does all this have relevance today? Of course. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu understands that there is little

that Israel could do that would earn the opprobrium of the U.S. Congress or retaliation from the White House, whether it's building illegal settlements or slaughtering civilians in Gaza. The Israelis seem convinced they remain in the catbird's seat, largely because of the Israel Lobby's influence with U.S. lawmakers and opinion makers.

One of the few moments when a U.S. official has had the audacity to face Israel down came from significantly a U.S. Navy admiral. In early July 2008, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Mike Mullen, was sent to Israel to read the riot act to then-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who seemed to be itching to start hostilities with Iran while President George W. Bush was in office.

We learned from the Israeli press that Mullen, fearing some form of Israeli provocation, went so far as to warn the Israelis not to even think about another incident like the attack on the USS Liberty on June 8, 1967, that the Israelis should disabuse themselves of the notion that U.S. military support would be knee-jerk automatic if Israel somehow provoked open hostilities with Iran.

This is the only occasion I am aware of in which a U.S. official of such seniority braced Israel about the Liberty incident. A gutsy move, especially with Vice President Dick Cheney and national security aide Elliott Abrams then in the White House, two hawks who might well bless, or even encourage, an Israeli provocation that would make it very difficult for Washington to avoid springing to the defense of its "ally."

The Israelis know that Mullen knows that the attack on the

Liberty was deliberate. Mullen could have raised no more neuralgic an issue to take a shot across an Israeli bow than to cite the attack on the Liberty. The *Jerusalem Post* reported that Mullen cautioned that a Liberty-type incident must be avoided in any future military actions in the Middle East.

Perhaps Mullen had learned something from the heroism of Terry Halbardier

**Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, the publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. After serving as an Army infantry/intelligence officer, he spent a 27-year career as a CIA analyst. He is co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).**

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## The Real Bob Mueller

Robert Mueller Wednesday implied he would have indicted Donald Trump if he could have, resurrecting his saint-like status among Democrats who will now likely go for impeachment. But who is the real Bob Mueller? Ex-FBI official Coleen Rowley explained on June 6, 2017.

**By Coleen Rowley**

*Special to Consortium News*

**June 6, 2017**



Mainstream commentators display amnesia when they describe former FBI Directors Robert Mueller and James Comey as stellar and credible law enforcement figures. Perhaps if they included J. Edgar Hoover, such fulsome praise could be put into proper perspective.

Although these Hoover successors, now occupying center stage in the investigation of President Trump, have been hailed for their impeccable character by much of Official Washington, the truth is, as top law enforcement officials of the George W. Bush Administration (Mueller as FBI Director and James Comey as Deputy Attorney General), both presided over post-9/11 cover-ups and secret abuses of the Constitution, enabled Bush-Cheney fabrications used to launch wrongful wars, and exhibited plain vanilla incompetence.

*TIME Magazine* would probably have not called my own disclosures a "bombshell memo" to the Joint Intelligence Committee Inquiry in May 2002 if it had not been for Mueller's having so misled everyone after 9/11. Although he bore no personal responsibility for intelligence failures before the attack, since he only became FBI Director a week before, Mueller denied or downplayed the significance of warnings that had poured in yet were all ignored or mishandled during the Spring and Summer of 2001.

Bush Administration officials had circled the wagons and refused to publicly own up to what the 9/11 Commission eventually concluded, "that the system had been blinking red." Failures to read, share or act upon important intelligence, which a FBI agent witness termed "criminal

negligence" in later trial testimony, were therefore not fixed in a timely manner. (Some failures were never fixed at all.)

Worse, Bush and Cheney used that post 9/11 period of obfuscation to "roll out" their misbegotten "war on terror," which only served to exponentially increase worldwide terrorism.

### **Unfulfilled Promise**

I wanted to believe Director Mueller when he expressed some regret in our personal meeting the night before we both testified to the Senate Judiciary Committee. He told me he was seeking improvements and that I should not hesitate to contact him if I ever witnessed a similar situation to what was behind the FBI's pre 9/11 failures.

A few months later, when it appeared he was acceding to Bush-Cheney's ginning up intelligence to launch the unjustified, counterproductive and illegal war on Iraq, I took Mueller up on his offer, emailing him my concerns in late February 2003. Mueller knew, for instance, that Vice President Dick Cheney's claims connecting 9/11 to Iraq were bogus yet he remained quiet. He also never responded to my email.

Beyond ignoring politicized intelligence, Mueller bent to other political pressures. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Mueller directed the "post 9/11 round-up" of about 1,000 immigrants who mostly happened to be in the wrong place (the New York City area) at the wrong time. FBI Headquarters encouraged more and more detentions for what seemed to be essentially P.R. purposes. Field offices were

required to report daily the number of detentions in order to supply grist for FBI press releases about FBI “progress” in fighting terrorism. Consequently, some of the detainees were brutalized and jailed for up to a year despite the fact that none turned out to be terrorists.

## **A History of Failure**

Long before he became FBI Director, serious questions existed about Mueller’s role as Acting U.S. Attorney in Boston in effectively enabling decades of corruption and covering up of the FBI’s illicit deals with mobster Whitey Bulger and other “top echelon” informants who committed numerous murders and crimes. When the truth was finally uncovered through intrepid investigative reporting and persistent, honest judges, U.S. taxpayers footed a \$100 million court award to the four men framed for murders committed by (the FBI-operated) Bulger gang.

Current media applause omits the fact that former FBI Director Mueller was the top official in charge of the Anthrax terror fiasco investigation into those 2001 murders, which targeted an innocent man (Steven Hatfill) whose lawsuit eventually forced the FBI to pay \$5 million in compensation. Mueller’s FBI was also severely criticized by Department of Justice Inspector Generals finding the FBI overstepped the law improperly serving hundreds of thousands of “national security letters” to obtain private (and irrelevant) metadata on citizens, and for infiltrating nonviolent anti-war groups under the guise of investigating “terrorism.”

For his part, Deputy Attorney General James Comey, too, went

along with the abuses of Bush and Cheney after 9/11 and signed off on a number of highly illegal programs including warrantless surveillance of Americans and torture of captives. Comey also defended the Bush Administration's three-year-long detention of an American citizen without charges or right to counsel.

Up to the March 2004 night in Attorney General John Ashcroft's hospital room, both Comey and Mueller were complicit with implementing a form of martial law, perpetrated via secret Office of Legal Counsel memos mainly written by John Yoo and predicated upon Yoo's singular theories of absolute "imperial" or "war presidency" powers, and requiring Ashcroft every 90 days to renew certification of a "state of emergency."

### **The Comey/Mueller Myth**

What's not well understood is that Comey's and Mueller's joint intervention to stop Bush's men from forcing the sick Attorney General to sign the certification that night was a short-lived moment. A few days later, they all simply went back to the drawing board to draft new legal loopholes to continue the same (unconstitutional) surveillance of Americans.

The mythology of this episode, repeated endlessly throughout the press, is that Comey and Mueller did something significant and lasting in that hospital room. They didn't. Only the legal rationale for their unconstitutional actions was tweaked.

Mueller was even okay with the CIA conducting torture programs after his own agents warned against participation.

Agents were simply instructed not to document such torture, and any “war crimes files” were made to disappear. Not only did “collect it all” surveillance and torture programs continue, but Mueller’s (and then Comey’s) FBI later worked to prosecute NSA and CIA whistleblowers who revealed these illegalities.

Neither Comey nor Mueller – who are reported to be “joined at the hip” – deserve their current lionization among politicians and mainstream media. Instead of Jimmy Stewart-like “G-men” with reputations for principled integrity, the two close confidants and collaborators merely proved themselves, along with former CIA Director George “Slam Dunk” Tenet, reliably politicized sycophants, enmeshing themselves in a series of wrongful abuses of power along with official incompetence.

It seems clear that based on his history and close “partnership” with Comey, called “one of the closest working relationships the top ranks of the Justice Department have ever seen,” Mueller was chosen as Special Counsel not because he has integrity but because he will do what the powerful want him to do.

Mueller didn’t speak the truth about a war he knew to be unjustified. He didn’t speak out against torture. He didn’t speak out against unconstitutional surveillance. And he didn’t tell the truth about 9/11. He is just “their man.”

**Coleen Rowley, a retired FBI special agent and division legal counsel whose May 2002 memo to then-FBI Director Robert Mueller exposed some of the FBI’s pre-9/11 failures, was named one of TIME magazine’s “Persons of the Year” in**

2002. Her 2003 letter to Robert Mueller in opposition to launching the Iraq War is archived in full text on the NYT and her 2013 op-ed entitled “Questions for the FBI Nominee” was published on the day of James Comey’s confirmation hearing. This piece will also be cross-posted on Rowley’s Huffington Post page.)

Relevant links:

<http://content.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,20020603,00.html>

[http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/911Report\\_Ch8.pdf](http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/911Report_Ch8.pdf)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/21/us/nationalspecial3/fbi-agent-testifies-superiors-didnt-pursue-moussaoui.html>

<http://www.truth-out.org/archive/component/k2/item/68973:the-iraq-effect-war-has-increased-terrorism-sevenfold-worldwide>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3322308/Number-people-killed-terrorists-worldwide-soars-80-just-year.html>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/05/politics/full-text-of-fbi-agents-letter-to-director-mueller.html>

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<http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2017/05/19/gregg-jarrett-why-robert-mueller-should-resign-as-special-counsel.html>

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The Revelations of WikiLeaks: No. 3—The Most Extensive Classified Leak in

# History

The “Iraq War Logs” disgorged an unprecedented profusion of documents, military reports and videos, reports Patrick Lawrence.

**By Patrick Lawrence**

*Special to Consortium News*



**F**or *WikiLeaks*, 2010 was an exceptionally eventful year. In April the transparency organization released “Collateral Murder,” the video of U.S. Army helicopters as they shot more than a dozen Iraqis in Baghdad. That proved a worldwide shock and put the 4-year-old publisher on the global media map.

“Afghan War Diaries,” a cache of 75,000 documents, followed in July.

Three months later, on Oct. 22, 2010, *WikiLeaks* released an even more explosive trove: 391,831 documents and videos it named “Iraq War Logs.” This superseded “Afghan War Diaries” as by far the most extensive leak of classified material in U.S. history. It shone a stark light on the U.S.–led coalition’s conduct in Iraq after its 2003 invasion, when the nation had erupted into a violent sectarian war. Julian Assange, *WikiLeaks* founder, said the Logs “constituted the most comprehensive and detailed account of any war ever to have entered the public record.”

The source for the “Iraq War Logs” was once again Chelsea Manning, who by then was in a military prison awaiting trial on charges connected to “Collateral Murder” that wound up including 22 counts of theft, assisting the publication of

classified intelligence and aiding the enemy.

## **The Documents**

With the publication of the “Iraq War Logs,” *WikiLeaks* disgorged an unprecedented profusion of documents, military reports and videos.

The Logs cover the six-year period from Jan. 1, 2004, (a matter of months after the 2003 invasion) to Dec. 31, 2009.

*WikiLeaks* partnered with *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, *Al Jazeera* and *Le Monde* to disseminate the Iraq Logs.

Taken together, the Logs portray Iraq under allied occupation as the scene of lawless mayhem and violence. Codes of conduct were routinely ignored, shootings were often indiscriminate and torture of detainees was regularly treated as acceptable practice. Innocent civilians were under constant threat of U.S.-led coalition gunfire and arrest, interrogation, and mistreatment by allied military units and the Iraqi army and police.

Among the Logs’ most significant revelations:

### **Torture of Detainees**

The Iraqi military and police systematically tortured prisoners – including women, children and other civilians – with the tacit approval (and at times the complicity) of U.S. forces. On numerous occasions U.S. troops were directly responsible for the torture of detainees. Here is a typical report of prisoner abuse by a Special Operations unit. The incident occurred on Feb. 2, 2006; the report conveys the routine fashion in which the coalition treated such events.

The detainees name, the Special Operations unit's name, and the location of the incident are deleted:

ALLEGED DETAINEE ABUSE BY TF \_\_\_ IN \_\_\_ 2006-02-02 17:50:00

AT 2350C, IN \_\_\_, WHILE CONDUCTING OUT-PROCESSING, DETAINEE # \_\_\_ REPORTED THAT HE WAS ABUSED DURING HIS CAPTURE. DETAINEE IS MISSING HIS RIGHT EYE, AND HAS SCAR\_\_\_ ON HIS RIGHT FOREARM. DETAINEE STATES THAT HIS INJURIES ARE A RESULT OF THE ABUSE THAT HE RECEIVED UPON CAPTURE. DIMS INDICATE THAT THE DETAINEE WAS CAPTURED ON \_\_\_ IN \_\_\_, AND THE CAPTURING UNIT WAS TASK FORCE \_\_\_. THE DETAINEES CAPTURE TAG NUMBER IS \_\_\_. IN PROCESSING PERSONNEL STATE THAT THE DETAINEE\_\_\_ CAPTURE PHOTO DEPICTS A BANDAGE OVER HIS RIGHT EYE, AND INJURY TO HIS RIGHT FOREARM. THE DETAINEE HAS COMPLETED THE DETAINEE ABUSE COMPLAINT FORM, AND WE ARE SEEKING A SWORN STATEMENT FROM THE DETAINEE. PER ORDER OF Task force \_\_\_, THE DETAINEE \_\_\_ TRANSFERRED AS SCHEDULED, AND CONTINUE CID INVESTIGATION UPON ARRIVAL AT \_\_\_ GHRAIB.

There are many thousands of similar reports detailing the violent misconduct of coalition and Iraqi forces.

Among *WikiLeak's* key revelations, scarcely mentioned in U.S. media reports, were the American army's secret orders effectively requiring U.S. military units to ignore thousands of cases of "green-green" torture, violence and murder – incidents involving Iraqi detainees held at Iraqi army bases, police stations and prisons. The list of common green-green practices makes repellent reading. Accounts of such incidents, sometimes accompanied by video shot as they occurred, detail beatings of blindfolded prisoners; stabbings; electrocutions; whippings with wires; and sodomy with hoses, water bottles and other objects.

The first U.S. orders covering these incidents were issued

in June 2004, two months after the torture practices of U.S. troops at Abu Ghraib broke into the news. The orders were called Frago 242, meaning “fragmentary orders.” Providing there was no U.S. involvement in an incident, American forces were told not to investigate it “unless directed by higher headquarters,” or HHQ. Frago 039, a subsequent order issued in April 2005, required U.S. troops to report green-green incidents; U.S. troops would report more than 1,300 cases of green-green torture to their commanding officers. But, once again, they were ordered to take no further action. Frago 242 and 039 were clear breaches of U.S. responsibility in Iraq.

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Here is an example of the reports U.S. forces routinely filed after Frago 242 and Frago 039 were issued. It recounts the apparent murder of a detainee while in Iraqi custody. The incident occurred on Aug. 9, 2009, in Ramadi. Iraqi officials termed the detainee’s death a suicide, while the U.S. report found the detainee’s injuries “consistent with abuse.” The U.S. military closed the case the following October; there is no indication any action was taken:

Date: 2009-08-27 09:00:00

Type: Suspicious Incident

Category: Other

Tracking no.: 20090827090038SLB413998

Title: (SUSPICIOUS INCIDENT) OTHER RPT RAMADI IRAQI CTU : 1 UE KIA

Summary: WHO: RAMADI PGC TT

WHAT: Reports possible detainee abuse

WHEN: 270900C AUG 09

WHERE: Iraqi CTU in Ramadi IVO (38S LB 413 998)

HOW: At 270900C AUG 09, the PGC TT reports possible detainee abuse IVO (38S LB 413 998). On 26 Aug 09, a PGC TT (which included a USN Corpsman) conducted a post mortem visual examination of JASIM MOHAMMED AHMED AL-SHIHAWI, an individual arrested in conjunction with a VBIED interdicted NE of Camp Taqaddum (SIGACT Entry DTG: 241130CAug09). The detainee was transferred from the IHP in Saqlawiah to the Iraqi CTU in Ramadi for questioning and while in custody, reportedly committed suicide. The PGC TT personnel conducting the post mortem examination found bruises and burns on the detainee's body as well as visible injuries to the head, arm, torso, legs, and neck. The PGC TT report the injuries are consistent with abuse. The CTU/IP have reportedly begun an investigation into the detainees death. An update will be posted when more information becomes available. The SIR is attached.

CLOSED 20091019

On Oct. 24, 2010, two days after *WikiLeaks* published the "Iraq War Logs," [Al Jazeera released](#) "U.S. Turns a Blind Eye to Torture." The video details the Frago 242 and 039 stipulations as revealed in the Logs. While some incidents were eventually investigated – apparently including the one in Ramadi – there is no record of Iraqi personnel receiving a sentence for misconduct. The *Al Jazeera* report traces knowledge of the orders to "the highest levels of the U.S. government" – including, the video makes plain, Donald Rumsfeld, then defense secretary.

## **Civilian Deaths**

For the first two years following the 2003 invasion, U.S. military authorities denied keeping records of civilian deaths in Iraq. Only in 2005, when the Defense Department began reporting statistics to Congress, did it emerge that the military had in fact compiled such records. But the DoD's reports were too imprecise to constitute a reliable record: Deaths and injuries were combined, as were civilian and Iraqi army casualties. And the official numbers were consistently lower than other contemporaneous figures, according to Iraq Body Count, an investigative nongovernmental group based in London. In the five-year period the Logs cover, U.S. military logs put the number of Iraqi casualties at 109,032, some 60,000 of whom were civilians.

The "Iraq War Logs" did much to clarify the casualty question. In a [detailed report](#), Iraq Body Count said the Logs made it possible, for the first time, to combine disparately sourced data to build a significantly more complete picture.

Iraq Body Count estimated that the Logs "will add in the order of 15,000 previously unrecorded Iraqi civilian deaths to the public record." It concluded: "A final accounting of the human tragedies contained in the Iraq War Logs will require much time and painstaking effort, but it is now at least possible."

### **Checkpoint Incidents**

"Iraq War Logs" include nearly 14,000 incidents the U.S. military labeled "escalation of force" events. This principle requires military units to take a series of non-

lethal steps before resorting to deadly force. These incidents occurred in a variety of circumstances. The Logs underscore the frequency of them at U.S. military checkpoints or near U.S. convoys and patrols. These incidents appear to reflect the U.S. military's often random, undisciplined use of force during the period covered in the Logs.

The Logs reveal that some 680 Iraqi civilians were fatally shot in such incidents; roughly 2,000 others were injured. Casualties included families, pregnant women, and physically or mentally impaired Iraqis. These incidents commonly involved innocent people who unwittingly strayed too close to a U.S. checkpoint. They very often reflected disproportionate use of force by U.S. troops.

*Al Jazeera* published a thorough [report](#) on checkpoint shootings on Oct. 23, 2010, the day after *WikiLeaks* released the Logs. The *Daily Telegraph* published a [report](#) on Oct. 24 detailing numerous similar cases. Both noted an incident described in the Logs and dating to September 2005. It is more typical than exceptional. Here is a portion of *Al Jazeera's* report:

“In September 2005, after going through an appropriate escalation, two soldiers from the 1-155<sup>th</sup> infantry opened fire on an approaching vehicle with M249 machine guns. Both poured 100 bullets into the car—five or six seconds of sustained fire from a gun capable of shooting 1,000 rounds per minute.”

The shooting killed a man and a woman in the car's front seat and wounded children aged 6 and 9 in the rear seat.

“Relatives of those killed,” *Al Jazeera* notes, “were later awarded \$10,000 compensation from the U.S. military, which found the soldiers violated their rules of engagement.”

*Al Jazeera*'s analysis of the Logs indicated that the number of escalation-of-force incidents fell sharply in 2008, to fewer than 1,600 from more than 3,500 the previous year. “That was due, in part, to new rules intended to protect civilians—but also because Iraqi security forces, instead of Americans, had taken over an increasing number of checkpoints,” *Al Jazeera*'s Gregg Carlstrom wrote. “‘Escalation of force’ incidents by Iraqi troops are not often reported by the U.S. military.”

### **Shootings from Helicopter Gunships**

The Apache helicopter videotaped and featured in “Collateral Murder” was known as Crazy Horse 18. The Logs reveal that several Apaches in the Crazy Horse unit conducted a series of fatal attacks in addition to the July 2007 incident recorded in the video released as “Collateral Murder” in April 2010. The most noted of these sheds light on the legal rationale U.S. forces often claimed to justify their conduct.

The incident occurred near Baghdad on Feb. 22, 2007, when Apache 18's crew identified two insurgents on the ground below the aircraft who were trying to surrender. While tracking the two men, Apache 18's crew radioed a military attorney at a nearby air base to seek legal guidance. “Lawyer states they cannot surrender to aircraft and are still valid targets,” the Logs entry reads. Crazy Horse

first launched a Hellfire missile at the insurgents. They were killed by a 30mm cannon in a subsequent strafing run.

“Iraq War Logs” comprises reports and other documents detailing a very wide range of incidents during the five years of military engagement they cover. In releasing the Logs, *WikiLeaks* classified them under various headings, indicating the number of incidents in each category. “Enemy Action” records 104,272 events. There were 31,234 “Criminal Events” and 1,328 reports of “Friendly Fire.” The *WikiLeaks* site includes a [search engine](#) that greatly facilitates research in the vast trove of [documents](#) it sent into the public domain on Oct. 22, 2010.

## **Official Reaction**

Because Assange had announced the imminent publication of “Iraq War Logs,” U.S. officials were able to brace for their release, although none knew the size and contents of the Logs or the planned date of publication. A Pentagon spokesman, Col. Dave Lapan, told CNN the Pentagon had a team of 120 experts “who are poised to immediately begin reading any documents on the *WikiLeaks* site.” He added: “We don’t know how these documents might be released, when these documents might be released, in what number they might be released. So we’re sort of preparing for all eventualities.”



Once the Logs were published, official reactions were mixed. While some American and British officials did focus on the troubling contents, most resorted to what amount to boilerplate condemnations of *WikiLeaks* for endangering the lives of military personnel serving in Iraq.

James F. Jeffrey, Washington’s ambassador to Baghdad at the time, said some of what *WikiLeaks* published “may or may not

be 100 percent correct.” As [quoted by The Associated Press](#), he added, “We are very troubled by any claim of any action undertaken – first of all by our own forces, or by our allies and partners, the Iraqi forces.” Jeffrey, it is to be noted, made these remarks before an audience of Iraqis.

Human rights officials at the U.N. called for the U.S. and Iraq to [investigate](#) the many indications of torture found in the Logs, including evidence that U.S. forces continued to turn over detainees to Iraqi authorities despite knowledge that Iraqis were torturing them. In London, Nick Clegg [supported calls](#) for an investigation. Speaking on a [BBC talk show](#), the deputy prime minister at the time added, “We can bemoan how these leaks occurred, but I think the nature of the allegations made are extraordinarily serious. I think anything, anything that suggests that you know basic rules of war and conflict and of engagement have been broken or that torture has in any way been condoned are extremely serious and need to be looked at.”

Many other officials summarily condemned *WikiLeaks* for releasing “Iraq War Logs” – typically without addressing the revelations. In a [videotaped statement](#), Hillary Clinton, as U.S. secretary of state, asserted, “We should condemn in the most clear terms the disclosure of any classified information ... which puts the lives of United State and partner service members at risk.” In a [Twitter message](#) the day of the release, Mike Mullen, then chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, stated flatly, “Another irresponsible posting of stolen classified documents by WikiLeaks puts lives at risk and gives adversaries valuable information.”

Elsewhere, Britain’s Defense Ministry released [an emailed](#)

statement. “We condemn any unauthorized release of classified material,” it read. “This can put the lives of UK service personnel and those of our allies at risk and make the job of Armed Forces in all theaters of operation more difficult and more dangerous. It would be inappropriate to speculate on the specific detail of these documents without further investigation while the Iraq Inquiry is ongoing. There is no place for mistreatment of detainees and we investigate any allegation made against our troops...”

In Baghdad, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki accused WikiLeaks of attempting to undermine his effort to form a new government by provoking public animosity “against national parties and leaders, especially against the prime minister.” The Interior Ministry responded more directly to the contents of the Logs. “We will not turn a blind eye to any of these matters,” Deputy Minister Hussein Kamal stated in a Reuters interview. “Everyone responsible for any crimes will be prosecuted and justice will take its course.”

## **Media Response**

The reactions of global media to “Iraq War Logs” were also mixed. All of the media given advance access to the Logs reported on their findings in multiple stories and videos. Notable among these were *Al Jazeera* and *The New York Times*.

*The New York Times* set up an interactive site called “The War Logs,” which featured a search mechanism enabling readers to sift through the Logs’ immense inventory of documents according to topic.

At the same time, the *Times*’ treatment of the Logs was in important respects defective. Alone among major global

media, it effectively erased the complicity of U.S. forces in the torture of Iraqi detainees, sanitizing its reports of such incidents to suggest Iraqi military and police units acted autonomously and without the knowledge of U.S. authorities.

Al Jazeera featured print and video pieces, an index by subject, and a glossary to help readers and viewers decipher often-difficult military terminology.

In the run-up to the release of the “Iraq War Logs,” many news outlets began to focus as much on the *WikiLeaks* organization and Assange’s personality as they did on the publisher’s latest (and most extensive) release – a pattern that has been evident ever since. “Since the publication of the ‘Afghan War Diaries,’ internal strife has wracked *WikiLeaks*,” CNN reported the day the Iraq documents were published. “Some in the mostly secretive group of volunteers – computer security specialists, journalists, aid workers, many with day jobs – have quit, citing disagreements with the way the group conducts business.”

Such reports were numerous and consistently portrayed *WikiLeaks* and its founder in the most unfavorable light possible. Assange and those around him acknowledged “growing pains,” as Assange put it shortly before releasing “Iraq War Logs.” In addition to staff and organizational changes, money had become a challenge by this time. Examining leaks is “a very expensive process,” Assange said at an August press conference in London. Assange’s reference was to roughly 15,000 documents that were withheld awaiting review when *WikiLeaks* released the initial 75,000 documents comprising the “Afghan War Diaries.”

Two pieces of journalism deserve to be singled out.

On the day before *WikiLeaks* published "Iraq War Logs," *Democracy Now!* countered the widespread official accusations that *WikiLeaks*' publications endanger Americans and U.S. national security. "*WikiLeaks* sparked condemnation from the U.S. government when it released the 91,000 Afghan war logs in July," host Amy Goodman noted. "The White House and the Pentagon accused the website of irresponsibility. They claimed they were putting people's lives in danger. But The Associated Press recently obtained a Pentagon letter reporting that no U.S. intelligence sources or practices were compromised by the leak."

The featured guest on the program that day was Daniel Ellsberg, who was passing through New York en route to London, where he was to join Assange in a press conference. The *Democracy Now!* program's virtue lay in connecting *WikiLeaks* to the history of whistleblowing in the U.S.

The man who in 1971 leaked the hidden history of the Vietnam War was eloquent in his defense of Assange and *WikiLeaks* in this context. "I've waited 40 years for a release on this scale," he told Goodman and Juan Gonzalez. "I think there should have been something on the scale of the Pentagon Papers every year. How often do we need this kind of thing? We haven't seen it. So I'm very glad that someone is taking the risk and the initiative to inform us better now."

On the day the Logs were released, *The New York Times* sent Iraqi journalists working in its Baghdad bureau around the country to record the reactions of ordinary Iraqis. The *Times* was careful to explain that it was not a

scientifically conducted opinion poll, but “rather a snapshot of the feelings expressed by some ordinary Iraqis on the streets in the first few hours after the publication.”

The results were published in the *Times*' [“At War” blog](#). They constitute a brief but salient record of how events appeared among people on the receiving end of them – a rarity in American reporting from abroad. Not surprisingly, the *Times* reporters found that most of the Iraqis they interviewed – reports on 34 were published – were grimly aware of the events the “Iraq War Logs” documented and saw justice in their release into the public realm.

“I do not think that what is there is a surprise to Iraqis,” Umm Taha, a 30-year-old translator, said. “What is important is that the facts have become legally installed, and there are documents that no one can deny.”

“These are shameful crimes, and I am sure that the worst were hidden,” said Yahoo Raaid, 38, an engineer in Mosul. “America said that it sent its troops from afar to spread democracy and freedom for Iraqis, but what happened is that Iraq became a center and base for terrorists to settle their problems with their enemies in Iraq.”

Zubaida Hatem, a pharmacist aged 26, said, “I was not shocked by what I heard. Of course it will be a big deal in other countries, but the reason we see it as it is, not as something huge, is because of what we are suffering here inside Iraq. We have witnessed terrible things, so this is nothing compared with the reality on the streets .... It made [me] remember the ones that I lost. My uncle died in the

sectarian violence during 2006, and this reminded me of him. Whenever we want to forget something happens and brings back all the pain.”

**Patrick Lawrence**, a correspondent abroad for many years, chiefly for the *International Herald Tribune*, is a columnist, essayist, author, and lecturer. His most recent book is “Time No Longer: Americans After the American Century” (Yale). Follow him @thefloutist. His web site is [www.patricklawrence.us](http://www.patricklawrence.us). Support his work via [The Floutist](#).

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## Bolton Leading Trump on Reckless War Agenda

The president’s advisers are orchestrating policies that have quickly destabilized the world and jeopardized the security of the United States, says Colonel Ann Wright.

By [Ann Wright](#)

*Special to Consortium News*



**F**or a person who claims to be a deal maker and business guru, President Donald Trump is getting rolled by John Bolton and Bolton’s long-standing regime change and war agenda, which run in opposition to what Trump may have envisioned when he appointed Bolton as his national security advisor.

For decades, Bolton has railed against Iran, Iraq, North

Korea, Cuba and now Venezuela. He was a major voice for the disastrous invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq during the Bush One administration.

Now Bolton has become the voice of Trump on very important and dangerous issues. Bolton, not Trump, is seen more and more on international networks on issues of Iran, Cuba and Venezuela.

Most recently, Bolton preempted Trump on announcing that the U.S. was sending an aircraft carrier to the Persian Gulf "to defend U.S. interests and its allies." Trump might wish to double check Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's statements on the threat coming from Iran's actions against interests of the U.S. and its allies. Special Envoy for Iran Brian Hooks on CNN on May 9 said that "the U.S. defensive actions of deploying an aircraft carrier to the Persian Gulf area is for actions of Iran from 2009 to 2016." When challenged by the CNN anchor, Becky Anderson, Hooks was unable to name any threats from Iran for the past three years from 2016-2019. Instead he repeated Bolton's talking points for the day that there were "threats that U.S. must defend itself against."

However, should the U.S. or its proxy Israel attack Iran, the U.S. installations in Iran's region that Iran could target in retaliation are many:

- Twenty major U.S. military installations and a large U.S. embassy compound in neighboring Afghanistan;
- The enormous Green Zone that contains the largest U.S. embassy complex in the world in neighboring Iraq;

-17 U.S. military installations in the northern part of neighboring Syria.

There are U.S. targets for Iran in every country along the Persian Gulf:

-the forward headquarters of the U.S. Central Command located in Qatar:

-homeport of the U.S. Fifth Fleet in Bahrain;

-U.S. contractors and U.S. military personnel in Saudi Arabia;

-U.S. military installations in Djibouti, the UAE and Somalia.

Bolton, Pompeo and Trump should be reminded that various groups in the region have retaliated against U.S. policies in the past:

In April 1983, the U.S. embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, was blown up and 63 embassy staff were killed. Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah claimed responsibility.

-In June 1996, 19 Americans were killed when the U.S. Air Force Khobar Towers barracks were blown up in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. The U.S. government said Iran was responsible and Iran said that al-Qaeda was responsible. In 2006, a U.S. District Court held that Iran and Hezbollah were responsible although Iran had no representation at the trial.

- In 2000 the USS Cole was blown up in Aden, Yemen, with 17 U.S. sailors killed. Al Qaeda claimed responsibility.

Bolton was one of the advisers to President George W. Bush

who orchestrated the lies about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq in 2002-2003 and the lies that Saddam Hussein's army in Iraq had thrown babies out of their incubators during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait that triggered Bush One to bomb Iraqi cities and send an armored force into Iraq in 1991 in Gulf War One.

Bolton and his gang demanded that President Bill Clinton impose land and air blockades on Iraq. The U.S. blockade caused over 500,000 Iraqi children to die and the 400,000 air strikes on Iraq in the next eight years targeted every important military installation. The events of Sept. 11, 2001, provided Bolton and his Neocon gang the opportunity to push President Bush Two to invade and occupy Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq two years later in 2003.

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Bolton is part of the swamp that I think Trump thought he was draining, yet Trump has allowed himself to be taken in by advisers who wanted Bolton, the swamp monster, into power again to wreak havoc on the world.

I resigned 16 years ago from the Bush W. administration in opposition to Bush's war on Iraq. Tragically another administration led by the same swamp monsters are propelling the U.S. into an unnecessary and horrific military confrontation with Iran.

Trump probably does not know that Iran is a country of 80 million people that has withstood 40 years of sanctions from the U.S. after the Iranian revolution in 1979 and it has a

military that has as much battle experience in Syria as the U.S.. Iran is a country that battled a U.S. sponsored war from Iraq from 1980-1988 and Trump probably doesn't remember that Donald Rumsfeld handed chemical weapons to Saddam to use on Iran. Iran suffered over 1 million deaths from that war.

Trump probably does not know that Iran is a large country, definitely not on the small scale of countries that the U.S. normally attacks, invades and occupies.

Iran is no Grenada that had 96,000 persons when the U.S. invaded in 1983

Iran is no Somalia that had a population of 6 million in 1993 when the U.S. invaded.

Iran is no Panama that had 2.5 million inhabitants in 1989 when the U.S. invaded.

Iran is no Afghanistan that had 20 million in 2001 when the U.S. invaded.

Iran is no Iraq that had 20.6 million persons in 2003 when the U.S. invaded.

Iran is no Libya with 6.2 million citizens when the U.S. and NATO bombed it in 2011

Iran is no Syria with 20.5 million citizens in 2011 when the U.S. began its war on the Assad government.

Looking at the Western Hemisphere, Trump's advisers have put him in a situation with Venezuela, a country with a population of 32.7 million in 2019, that should remind him of the disaster that President John F. Kennedy caused when

his advisors told him in 1961 that the invasion of Cuba with a population of 7.2 million in 1961 would be a “cakewalk” to borrow a phrase from Bush One’s advisers on the invasion of Iraq sixteen years ago.

Trump probably does not realize that the country of Cuba that seems to be a massive threat to the U.S. (or to the wealthy, influential Cuban-American exiles in Miami and South Florida) has a population in 2019 of only 11.3 million and a land area 89 times smaller than the U.S., about the size of Florida, and has been under the most severe sanctions and blockade the U.S. has put on any country, for almost 60 years.

Trump’s advisers, headed by John Bolton, are taking over and orchestrating his policies that have quickly destabilized the world and has jeopardized the security of the United States.

Ann Wright served 29 years in the U.S. Army/Army Reserves and retired as a colonel. She was a U.S. diplomat for 16 years and served in U.S. Embassies in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Micronesia, Afghanistan and Mongolia. She resigned from the U.S. government in March 2003 in opposition to President George W. Bush’s war on Iraq. She is co-author of “Dissent: Voices of Conscience.”

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# 'Turnkey Tyranny' on the Streets of Washington

We are at the point Edward Snowden described as “turnkey tyranny.” And on Wednesday night the key was turned a bit more dramatically. Ray McGovern explains.

**By Ray McGovern**



**G**erry Condon, President of Veterans For Peace, was bloodied and “taken to ground,” on Wednesday night for trying to get food to people inside the Venezuelan Embassy in Washington. The activists inside, some of whom have lived in the embassy for weeks with permission from the Venezuelan government, are protecting the premises from protestors who support the self-declared president Juan Guaido.

With the acquiescence of Washington police and the Secret Service, the protestors have been able to block food from entering the embassy. On Wednesday night electricity was cut to the building. One activist tossing a loaf of bread to a window was arrested earlier this week for using a “missile.” Now Condon has been manhandled and nabbed for throwing a cucumber.

We are at the point Edward Snowden described as “turnkey tyranny.” On Wednesday night the key was turned a bit more dramatically. Until now it has been an almost imperceptibly gradual process, like the proverbial frog in boiling water.

*Photo and video of Condon's arrest (story continues below):*

My friend and colleague [@RealAlexRubi](#) captured much clearer video of the moment US [@SecretService](#) savagely arrested Vets for Peace President Gerry Condon: <https://t.co/ODIDmVVRxK>

– Anya Parampil ([@anyaparampil](#)) [May 8, 2019](#)

Of course, this has happened before. I [quoted](#) these words in this [article](#) I wrote for *Consortium News* on December 27, 2007:

“There are few things as odd as the calm, superior indifference with which I and those like me watched the beginnings of the Nazi revolution in Germany, as if from a box at the theater. ... Perhaps the only comparably odd thing is the way that now, years later...”

The words are those of Sebastian Haffner (pen name for Raimund Pretzel), who as a young lawyer in Berlin during the 1930s experienced the Nazi takeover, and wrote a first-hand [account](#). His children found the manuscript when he died in 1999 and published it the following year as “Geschichte eines Deutschen” (The Story of a German).

The book became an immediate bestseller and has been translated into 20 languages—in English as “Defying Hitler.”

I recently learned from his daughter Sarah, an artist in Berlin, that [today](#) is the 100th [anniversary](#) of Haffner’s birth. She had seen an earlier article in which I quoted her father and e-mailed to ask me to “write some more about the book and the comparison to Bush’s America. ... This is almost unbelievable.”

More about Haffner below. Let’s set the stage first by recapping some of what has been going on here in the U.S. that may have resonance for readers familiar with the Nazi ascendancy, noting how “odd” it is that the frontal attack on our Constitutional rights is met with such “calm, superior indifference.”

After suppressing for two and a half years the explosive story of the Bush/Cheney surveillance of Americans in gross violation of the Fourth Amendment, top *New York Times* officials decided to let the rest of us in on the fact that the George W. Bush administration had been eavesdropping on American citizens without the court warrants required by the [Foreign Intelligence](#) Surveillance Act (FISA) of 1978. Not to mention the U.S. Constitution.

The *Times* had learned of this well before the election in 2004 and acquiesced to White House entreaties to suppress the damaging information.

In late fall 2005 when *Times* correspondent James Risen's book, "State of War: the Secret History of the CIA and the Bush Administration," revealing the warrantless eavesdropping was being printed, *Times* publisher, Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., recognized that he could procrastinate no longer.

It would simply be too embarrassing to have Risen's book on the street, with Sulzberger and his associates pretending that this explosive eavesdropping story did not fit Adolph Ochs's trademark criterion: All The News That's Fit To Print.

(The *Times*' own ombudsman, Public Editor Byron Calame, branded the newspaper's explanation for the long delay in publishing this story "woefully inadequate.")

When Sulzberger told his friends in the White House that he could no longer hold off on publishing in the newspaper, he was summoned to the Oval Office for a counseling session with the president on Dec. 5, 2005. Bush tried in vain to talk him out of putting the story in the *Times*.

The truth would out; part of it, at least.

### **Unnamed Program**

What followed struck me as bizarre. The day after the Dec. 16 *Times* feature article exposing the Fourth-Amendment-trashing program, the president of the United States publicly admitted to a demonstrably impeachable offense.

Authorizing illegal electronic surveillance was a key provision of the second article of impeachment against President Richard Nixon. On July 27, 1974, this and two other articles of impeachment were approved by bipartisan votes in the House Judiciary Committee.

Bush took a frontal approach, Far from expressing regret, he bragged about having authorized the surveillance “more than 30 times since the September the 11th attacks,” and said he would continue to do so. The president also said:

“Leaders in Congress have been briefed more than a dozen times on this authorization and the activities conducted under it.”

On Dec. 19, 2005, then-Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and then-NSA Director Michael Hayden held a press conference to answer questions about the as yet unnamed surveillance program.

Gonzales was asked why the White House decided to flout FISA rather than attempt to amend it, choosing instead a “backdoor approach.” He answered:

“We have had discussions with Congress...as to whether or not FISA could be amended to allow us to adequately deal with this kind of threat, and we were advised that that would be difficult, if not impossible.”

### **It Had to Do With Us**

It was not difficult to infer that the surveillance program must have been of such scope and intrusiveness that, even amid highly stoked fear, it didn't have a prayer for passage.

It turns out we didn't know the half of it.

Bear in mind that when this illegal surveillance program began, it had nothing to do with terrorism, an issue that did not really appear on the new administration's radar screen until a week before 9/11. ... So this until-recently-unknown pre-9/11 facet of the “Terrorist Surveillance Program” was not related to Osama bin Laden or to whomever he and his associates might be speaking. It had to do with us.

We know that the Democrats briefed on the “Terrorist Surveillance Program” include House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-CA, (the one with

the longest tenure on the House Intelligence Committee), Rep. Jane Harman, D-California, and former and current chairmen of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Bob Graham, D-FL, and Jay Rockefeller, D-WV, respectively.

May one interpret their lack of public comment on the news that the snooping began well before 9/11 as a sign they were co-opted and then sworn to secrecy?

It is an important question. Were the appropriate leaders in Congress informed that within days of George W. Bush's first inauguration the NSA electronic vacuum cleaner began to suck up information on you and me, despite the FISA law and the Fourth Amendment?

Are they all complicit? And are Democratic leaders about to cave in and grant retroactive immunity to those telecommunications corporations—AT&T and Verizon—which made millions by winking at the law and the Constitution?

(Qwest, to its credit, heeded the advice of its general counsel who said that what NSA wanted done was clearly illegal.)

What's going on here? [December 2007] Have congressional leaders no sense for what is at stake?

Lately the adjective "spineless" has come into vogue in describing congressional Democrats—no offense to invertebrates.

### **Nazis and Their Enablers**

You don't have to be a Nazi. You can just be, well, a sheep.

In his journal, Sebastian Haffner decries what he calls the "sheepish submissiveness" with which the German people reacted to a 9/11-like event, the burning of the German Parliament (Reichstag) on Feb. 27, 1933.

Haffner finds it quite telling that none of his acquaintances "saw

anything out of the ordinary in the fact that, from then on, one's telephone would be tapped, one's letters opened, and one's desk might be broken into."

But it is for the cowardly politicians that Haffner reserves his most vehement condemnation. Do you see any contemporary parallels here?

In the elections of March 4, 1933, shortly after the Reichstag fire, the Nazi party garnered only 44 percent of the vote. Only the "cowardly treachery" of the Social Democrats and other parties to whom 56 percent of the German people had entrusted their votes made it possible for the Nazis to seize full power. Haffner adds:

"It is in the final analysis only that betrayal that explains the almost inexplicable fact that a great nation, which cannot have consisted entirely of cowards, fell into ignominy without a fight."

The Social Democratic leaders betrayed their followers—"for the most part decent, unimportant individuals." In May, the party leaders sang the Nazi anthem; in June the Social Democratic party was dissolved.



The middle-class Catholic party Zentrum folded in less than a month, and in the end supplied the votes necessary for the two-thirds majority that “legalized” Hitler’s dictatorship.

As for the right-wing conservatives and German nationalists: “Oh God,” writes Haffner, “what an infinitely dishonorable and cowardly spectacle their leaders made in 1933 and continued to make afterward. ... They went along with everything: the terror, the persecution of Jews. ... They were not even bothered when their own party was banned and their own members arrested.”

In sum: “There was not a single example of energetic defense, of courage or principle. There was only panic, flight, and desertion. In March 1933, millions were ready to fight the Nazis. Overnight they found themselves without leaders. ... At the moment of truth, when other nations rise spontaneously to the occasion, the Germans collectively and limply collapsed. They yielded and capitulated, and suffered a nervous breakdown. ... The result is today the nightmare of the rest of the world.”

This is what can happen when virtually all are intimidated.

Our Founding Fathers were not oblivious to this; thus, James Madison wrote:

“I believe there are more instances of the abridgment of freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments by those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations. ... The means of defense against foreign danger historically have become the instruments of tyranny at home.”

We cannot say we weren't warned.

Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner city Washington. He was a CIA analyst for 27 years and presidential briefer and is co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity.

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## US Executive Power and the 'State of Exception'

After decades of global integration, Dan Steinbock sees imperial presidential policies based on “national security interests” producing majestic mistakes.

## How Carl Schmitt Took Over the White House

By [Dan Steinbock](#)

*Special to Consortium News*



As the controversial German jurist [Carl Schmitt](#) saw it in the interwar Third Reich, legal order ultimately rests upon the decisions of the sovereign, who alone can meet the needs of an “exceptional” time, transcending the law so that order can then be reestablished. “Sovereign is he who decides on the exception,” [he wrote](#). “All law is situational law.”

In post-Weimar Germany, such ideas contributed to the eclipse of liberal democracy. Following Sept. 11, 2001, similar arguments renewed neoconservative interest in Schmitt and the “state of exception.” In this world the status quo is in a permanent state of exception, as enemies – “adversaries, others and strangers” – will unite “us” against “them.”

In this view, the U.S. response to 9/11 was not unusual because liberal wars are “exceptional.” Rather, it was a manifestation of ever-more violent types of war within the very attempt to fight wars that would end “war” as such.

Similarly, it is politically expedient to legitimize a trade war and other political battles in the name of “national security,” which allows the sovereign to redefine a new order on the basis of a state of exception. Subsequently, a new national security strategy redefines “friends” as “enemies” and “us” as victims who are thus justified to seek justice from our “adversaries” – “them.”

The logic of the state of exception leaves open the question how the White House could establish such a trade war as a sovereign, when such trade wars have not been supported by most of President Donald Trump’s constituencies and have

been opposed by much of the Congress and by most Americans.

## **Unitary Executive Theory**

What looms behind the Schmittian White House is a tradition of conservative thought relying on the unitary executive theory in American constitutional law, which deems that the president possesses the power to control the entire executive branch.

The first administration to make explicit reference to the “unitary executive” was the Reagan administration. Typically, the practice has evolved since the 1970s, when President Richard Nixon decoupled the U.S. dollar from the Bretton Woods gold standard and trade deficits began to rise.

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 allowed the George W. Bush administration to make the unitary executive theory a common feature of signing statements, particularly in the execution of national-security decisions, which divided Capitol Hill and were opposed by most Americans.

In the case of Trump, the need for inflated unitary executive power arose with Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation, which restricted the president’s strategic maneuverability to operate with the Republican Congress in 2017-18 but permitted actions that required only executive power, typically in tax and trade policy.

In this view, efforts at a U.S.-Sino trade compromise may prove more challenging than anticipated, as evidenced by the extended truce talks. Even a trade compromise may prove unlikely to deter subsequent bilateral technology wars,

which have been heralded by U.S. actions in the case of Huawei and longstanding efforts to sustain American primacy in 5G technologies. As U.S. production capacity has been offshored since the 1980s, such efforts rely on national security considerations.

If the trade war is less about trade than about a U.S. effort at economic and strategic primacy, no “concession” may prove enough for the Trump White House, which may be more likely to re-define the status quo on the basis of a national emergency.

### **‘Costly, Mysterious Wars’**

The idea of the “imperial presidency” in America is hardly new, as historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. demonstrated in the Nixon era:

“The weight of messianic globalism was indeed proving too much for the American Constitution .... In fact, the policy of indiscriminate global intervention, far from strengthening American security, seemed rather to weaken it by involving the United States in remote, costly and mysterious wars.”

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Ostensibly moderate administrations, including that of President Barack Obama, have conformed to this rule. During Obama’s first term in office, America expanded its military presence in Afghanistan and increased drone missile strikes across Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia. The administration also

deployed the military to combat piracy in the Indian Ocean, engaged in a sustained bombing operation in Libya, and deployed U.S. Special Forces in Central Africa. In these cases, Obama decided to use force without congressional approval.

During the past half century, amid a series of asset bubbles, a slate of new foreign interventions, the Iraq War debacle and the \$22 trillion U.S. sovereign debt, the imperial presidency has become a target of broader criticism. But why has it grown even harder to challenge?

Certainly, one critical force has been campaign finance and the increasing role of “big money” in American politics. In particular, the Supreme Court’s 5-4 decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, which struck down a federal prohibition on independent corporate campaign expenditures, paved the way for corporate power to override democratic power in the White House.

At the same time, the ultra-rich have begun to play a more active part in politics, with serious consequences for American democracy, as many American political scientists have warned.

In the new status quo, neither 20<sup>th</sup> century American Empire nor 21<sup>st</sup> century Third Reich is needed for majestic policy mistakes. Imperial Presidency will do. Indeed, even the sovereign’s executive power may suffice.

### **Emergency Powers in Time of Peace**

The uses of executive power are likely to go far beyond the current rivalry for artificial intelligence (AI), as

evidenced by Trump's efforts to re-define, re-negotiate or reject major U.S. trade deals on the basis of national security. By the same token, foreign investment reviews will be overshadowed by national security considerations.

As postwar multilateralism has been replaced with unilateralism, the White House sees itself in international strategic competition with other great powers, particularly Russia and China, yet old allies – including Europe and Japan – are not excluded.

Since the U.S. Constitution ensures the president a relatively broad scope of emergency powers that may be exercised in the event of crisis, exigency or emergency circumstances (other than natural disasters, war, or near-war situations), it matters *how* the White House chooses to apply its definition of a “state of exception.”

Under the current, wide definition, it is prudent to expect escalated international trade disputes between the U.S. and other members of the World Trade Organization, even against the WTO itself. Citing diffuse national security reasons, the White House defends its tariffs under the GATT Article XXI; the so-called national security exception.

There is a big difference between the repercussions of such executive decisions in the postwar era and the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the past, policy mistakes could penalize the U.S. economy and democracy. After half a century of increasing global interdependency, they can derail global economic prospects.

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This commentary draws in part from his new analysis, “U.S.-Sino Futures,” released by Chinese Quarterly of International Studies (CQISS).

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## New CN Series: The Revelations of WikiLeaks: No. 1—The Video that Put Assange in US Crosshairs

“[Collateral Murder](#)” created a media sensation in 2010 and led to Chelsea Manning’s imprisonment and to a DOJ investigation of Julian Assange, reports Elizabeth Vos. But the war crimes the video exposed got no one else in trouble.

**Consortium News** today begins a series of articles, “The Revelations of WikiLeaks,” that will look back on the major works of the publication that have altered the world since its founding in 2006. This series is an effort to counter mainstream media coverage, which is ignoring WikiLeaks’ work, and instead is focusing on Julian Assange’s personality. It is the uncovering by WikiLeaks of governments’ crimes and corruption that set the U.S. after Assange and which ultimately led to his arrest on April 11. The “Collateral Murder” video was just the first of many major WikiLeaks revelations that made the journalist one of

*the world's most wanted men, simply for the act of publishing.*

# The Video that Put Julian Assange in the Crosshairs of the United States

By [Elizabeth Vos](#)

*Special to Consortium News*



*WikiLeaks* was founded in 2006, but it was the April 5, 2010, publication of "[Collateral Murder](#)" that made the whistleblower-publisher a world-wide phenomenon, attracting admirers and enemies.

[WikiLeaks](#) wrote of the film: "The video, shot from an Apache helicopter gun-sight, clearly shows the unprovoked slaying of a wounded Reuters employee and his rescuers. Two young children involved in the rescue were also seriously wounded."

*WikiLeaks* noted that Reuters had unsuccessfully attempted to gain access to the video through the Freedom of Information Act in the years after the strike.

The day after the release of the footage, [The New York Times](#) described *WikiLeaks* as a once-fringe website that had moved into the big time. "The site has become a thorn in the side of authorities in the United States and abroad," it said. "With the Iraq attack video, the clearinghouse for sensitive documents is edging closer toward a form of investigative journalism and to advocacy."

Before 2010 *WikiLeaks* received a few high-profile journalism awards. But in the years since the publication of the video, it has received a slew of honors, including The Sam Adams Award for Integrity.

On April 16, *WikiLeaks* announced a fresh award for its founder, Julian Assange, even as he remains isolated in a London prison.

The Sydney Morning Herald: Julian Assange wins EU journalism award established in honour of an assassinated journalist.<https://t.co/FlA6DpNzc9?pic.twitter.com/y0pda8pgwR>

– WikiLeaks (@wikileaks) [April 16, 2019](#)

## Chelsea Manning

“Collateral Murder” was one of the most prominent releases sourced from then-Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning, who served seven years in a military prison as a result.

Manning, who had access to the video, having a Top Secret clearance, first offered the video to *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, which both turned her down. Manning then turned to *WikiLeaks*.

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Manning described the events that led up to her decision to submit the footage to the press in leaked audio of her testimony during her 2013 court-martial.

She said Reuters’ inability to get the footage via a freedom-of-information request contributed to her decision

to leak it. “The most alarming aspect of the video for me, was the seemingly delight of bloodlust they [the pilots] appeared to have. They dehumanized the individuals they were engaging with, and seemed to not value human life in referring to them as ‘dead bastards,’ and congratulating each other on the ability to kill in large numbers.”

Marjorie Cohn, a legal analyst, is one of those who has described the contents of the footage as evidence of U.S. war crimes. As such she argues that Manning was legally obligated to expose such information. In a 2013 column for *Truthout*, she cites the Geneva Conventions, the Army Field Manual and the Uniform Code of Military Justice as all setting forth the duty of a service member to disobey unlawful orders.

None of the pilots, military officials nor policy-makers have ever been charged or otherwise held responsible for the events shown in the video.

### **U.S. Army 2007 Apache Helicopter Attack**

The film depicts the July 12, 2007, shooting of over a dozen Iraqis by U.S. Army Apache helicopters armed with 30mm cannons in the Al-Amin al-Thaniyah neighborhood of New Baghdad, a district of Iraq’s capital city. The dead included Reuters’ photographer Namir Noor-Eldeen and his assistant, Saeed Chmagh. *WikiLeaks* has said as many as 25 people were killed as a result of the incident.

After the initial attack, the helicopters fired on and killed people who stopped to try to rescue the wounded. A

U.S. tank reportedly drove over a body, cutting it in half. Assange identified the individual run over by the tank as Namir Noor-Eldeen in an [interview](#) with Al Jazeera days after the publication of “Collateral Murder.”

After receiving the encrypted footage, Assange and his associates spent a [week working non-stop](#) in Reykjavik, Iceland, to break the U.S. military’s [encryption](#) of the video.

Kristinn Hrafnsson, who now serves as editor-in-chief of *WikiLeaks*, went to Iraq as an investigative journalist to locate victims’ families and confirm details of the event prior to the film’s publication. [The New Yorker](#) reported:

“He [Hrafnsson] claims to have found the owner of the building, an old man named Jabbar Abid Rady, born in 1941, a retired English teacher. Abid Rady told Hrafnsson that his wife and daughter had died in the attack. He said that five other people who had been living in the building died, too. Buildings under construction often serve as housing in war-ravaged places; people live in the lower floors, which are often built first and are inhabitable before construction ends. Abid Rady told Hrafnsson that three families had been living in this particular structure.”

Assange noted how the moving images had stirred public attention far more than any printed matter. “It’s very easy for people to see what’s going on,” he is quoted as saying in the April 2010 video interview with [Al Jazeera](#). “It’s not too complex, there’s no language barriers with visual

material. We released the policies behind this material as far back as 2007, classified US military policies.”

At one point in the video, American personnel can be heard laughing, saying: “The tank just drove over a body.” Assange commented on that, saying, “That was Namir’s body.”

## **Military’s Response**

Shortly after the 2007 killings – and three years before the video was released – the U.S. military was quoted as underreporting the death toll and context of the incident.

Assange argued that the military’s reports of a “firefight” preceding the events shown on tape had been misrepresented in order to justify the killings.

After *WikiLeaks*’ release of “Collateral Murder,” the Pentagon acknowledged the authenticity of the video but said it did not contradict the official finding that the helicopters’ crew acted within the rules of engagement,” *The Daily Telegraph* reported.

The U.S. military rejected calls to discipline the crew for the deaths of the Reuters journalists because it said the men could not be distinguished from suspected insurgents. “The RPG in the video is real,” *The Telegraph* quoted a Pentagon spokesman as saying. “We had insurgents and reporters in an area where U.S. forces were about to be ambushed. At the time we weren’t able to discern whether (Reuters employees) were carrying cameras or weapons.”

Retired Lieutenant Colonel Chris Walach, commander of the

Apache helicopter pilots, in 2013, spoke with [Democracy Now](#) about the footage. “In Iraq, you can’t put pink gloves on Apache helicopter pilots and send them into the Ultimate Fighting ring and ask them to take a knee,” he said. “These are attack pilots wearing gloves of steel, and they go into the ring throwing powerful punches of explosive steel. They are there to win, and they will win.”

Shortly after “Collateral Murder’s” publication, Assange appeared on the [“Colbert Report.”](#) At one point, host Stephen Colbert joked that Assange is “a dead man.” Colbert asked Assange about allegations of a firefight preceding the events shown on the tape. “That’s a lie,” Assange responded. [05.20/11:39] He said that 28 minutes earlier there had been a report of small arms fire and that the Apache helicopters circling New Baghdad “came across these men and killed them.”

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## The Politicians React

On April 11, 2019, the day Assange was arrested, Reuters’ reporter Alistair Smout wrote in hindsight: “*WikiLeaks* incensed Washington by publishing hundreds of thousands of secret U.S. diplomatic cables, and in 2010 a classified U.S. military video showing a helicopter attack in Baghdad in 2007 that killed a dozen people, including two Reuters news staff.”

Within days of the publication of “Collateral Murder,” Obama Whitehouse Press Secretary Robert Gibbs [answered questions](#) from reporters on the contents of the video. When asked whether the actions of the U.S. personnel were “appropriate,” Gibbs said that he was not sure whether then-

President Barack Obama had seen the video, adding:

“Many of you all have traveled with the President – this President or other Presidents in war zones. Many of you know colleagues that have reported from exceedingly dangerous places in the world. Our military will take every precaution necessary to ensure the safety and security of civilians, and particularly those that report in those dangerous places on behalf of news organizations. I honestly do not know enough about what was done previous, which is why I’d point you to the Department of Defense.”

Then U.S. Defense Secretary [Robert Gates](#) blasted *WikiLeaks* for not providing context for the video. “These people can put out anything they want, and they’re never held accountable for it. There’s no before and there’s no after,” Gates said, likening the video as seeing warfare “through a soda straw.”

Gates said: “They’re in a combat situation. The video doesn’t show the broader picture of the firing that was going on at American troops. It’s obviously a hard thing to see. It’s painful to see, especially when you learn after the fact what was going on. But you—you talked about the fog of war. These people were operating in split second situations.”

The strongest response to the video came in the form of a U.S. Department of Justice investigation of Assange, by at most six months after “Collateral Murder,” and subsequent releases of the Afghan and Iraq War Logs, the next subject

of CN's series, that ultimately culminated in his arrest on April 11, 2019.

"The investigation has been quietly gathering material since at least October 2010, six months after the arrest of Pfc. Bradley Manning, the army enlistee who is accused of providing the bulk of the leaks," *The New York Times* reported in June 2013.

The FBI had begun investigating Assange and *WikiLeaks* as early as 2009, according to an affidavit given by Assange in September 2013.

While the Obama DOJ stopped short of crossing a red line to criminalize journalism, the Trump DOJ has stomped over it using the same evidence abandoned by the previous administration.

## Media Response

"Collateral Murder" was unveiled at a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington on April 5, 2010. *The New York Times* reported:

"There is no question that coalition forces were clearly engaged in combat operations against a hostile force," Lt. Col. Scott Bleichwehl, a spokesman for the multinational forces in Baghdad, said then.

But the video does not show hostile action. Instead, it begins with a group of people milling around on a street, among them, according to WikiLeaks, Mr. Noor-Eldeen and Mr. Chmagh. The pilots believe them to be insurgents, and mistake Mr. Noor-Eldeen's camera for a weapon. They aim

and fire at the group, then revel in their kills.”

The media’s reaction to the video’s release was mixed. The day after it was published, the *Times* ran a [report](#), titled: “Iraq Video Brings Notice to a Web Site.” It described criticism *WikiLeaks* received for publishing an edited version of the footage:

“Critics contend that the shorter video was misleading because it did not make clear that the attacks took place amid clashes in the neighborhood and that one of the men was carrying a rocket-propelled grenade.”

Within months of the video’s release, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation [noted](#) the sentiments of journalist David Finkel of *The Washington Post*: “They [WikiLeaks] provided artificial agenda driven context. There was an operation underway in reaction to an ongoing war. Not that apache helicopters were circling looking for a bunch of guys to just shoot up and kill.” Finkel was stationed in Iraq in 2007 when the incident occurred and included the event in his book, “The Good Soldiers.”

In response to such criticism, Assange told [Al Jazeera](#) that the decision to give the film its title hinged on the moment where the Apache helicopter pilots shot at the van and individuals who had stopped to aid the wounded. He said:

“This is why we called it ‘Collateral Murder.’ In the first example, maybe it’s a collateral exaggeration or incompetence, when they strafe this initial gathering. This was recklessness bordering on murder, but we couldn’t

say for sure that was murder. But this particular event, this is clearly murder.”

Media that have since turned on Assange, at the time praised him and *WikiLeaks*.

On the day the video was released, *The Guardian*, which has lately been on an anti-Assange campaign, was quick to write an article that referred to the problems the video posed for military authorities: “The release of the video from Baghdad also comes shortly after the US military admitted that its special forces attempted to cover up the killings of three Afghan women in a raid in February by digging the bullets out of their bodies.”

Two days after “Collateral Murder’s” publication, *The Guardian*, then under editor Alan Rusbridger, published an opinion piece saying the footage was “heralded by some as the most important revelation since Abu Ghraib, and challenges not only the effectiveness of the US military’s rules of engagement policy, but also the integrity of the mainstream media’s coverage of similar incidents.”

James Fallows of The Atlantic called “Collateral Murder” the “most damaging documentation of abuse since the Abu Ghraib prison-torture photos” 12 hours after the video’s release.

“The Collateral Murder video is one of the best known and most widely recognized results of the ongoing WikiLeaks project,” Christian Christensen, a University of Stockholm journalism professor wrote in 2014. “These particular images were, in many ways, the crystallization of the horrors of war.”

Within days of the video’s publication, Haifa Zangana, a

novelist and former prisoner of Saddam Hussein's regime, wrote an [op-ed](#) for *The Guardian*, saying her family lived in the area where the events took place, which she described as having previously been "safe for children to play outdoors."

Zangana continued:

"Witnesses to the slaughter reported the harrowing details in 2007, but they had to wait for a western whistleblower to hand over a video before anyone listened. Watching the video, my first impression was, I have no impression. But the total numbness gradually grows into a now familiar anger. I listen to the excited voices of death coming from the sky, enjoying the chase and killing. I whisper: do they think they are God?"

**Elizabeth Vos is a freelance reporter and regular contributor to *Consortium News*. She co-hosts the #Unity4J online vigil.**

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## Assange's Judge a Disgrace to the Bench, Ex-UK Ambassador Says

Craig Murray asks you to imagine Western media reaction if a Russian opposition politician were dragged out by armed police, and within three hours convicted on a political charge by a patently biased judge.

By [Craig Murray](#)

[CraigMurray.org.uk](http://CraigMurray.org.uk)



**B**oth Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange are now in jail, both over offenses related to the publication of materials specifying U.S. war crimes in Afghanistan and Iraq, and both charged with nothing else at all. No matter what bullshit political and MSM liars try to feed you, that is the simple truth. Manning and Assange are true heroes of our time, and are suffering for it.

If a Russian opposition politician were dragged out by armed police, and within three hours had been convicted on a political charge by a patently biased judge with no jury, with a lengthy jail sentence to follow, can you imagine the Western media reaction to that kind of kangaroo court? Yet that is exactly what just happened in London.

District Judge Michael Snow is a disgrace to the bench who deserves to be infamous well beyond his death. He displayed the most plain and open prejudice against Assange in the 15 minutes it took for him to hear the case and declare Assange guilty last week, in a fashion which makes the dictators' courts I had witnessed, in Ibrahim Babangida's Nigeria or Isam Karimov's Uzbekistan, look fair and reasonable, in comparison to the gross charade of justice conducted by Michael Snow.

One key fact gave away Snow's enormous prejudice. Julian Assange said nothing during the whole brief proceedings, other than to say "Not guilty" twice, and to ask a one-sentence question about why the charges were changed midway

through this sham “trial.” Yet Judge Michael Snow condemned Assange as “narcissistic.” There was nothing that happened in Snow’s brief court hearing that could conceivably have given rise to that opinion. It was plainly something he brought with him into the courtroom, and had read or heard in the mainstream media or picked up in his club. It was in short, the very definition of prejudice, and “Judge” Michael Snow and his summary judgement is a total disgrace.

I am part of the *Wikileaks* media and legal team and the whole team, including Julian, is energized rather than downhearted. At last there is no more hiding for the pretend liberals behind ludicrous Swedish allegations or bail jumping allegations, and the true motive – revenge for the Chelsea Manning revelations – is now completely in the open.

To support the persecution of Assange in these circumstances is to support absolute state censorship of the internet. It is to support the claim that any journalist who receives and publishes official material which indicates U.S. government wrongdoing, can be punished for its publication. Furthermore, this U.S. claim involves an astonishing boost to universal jurisdiction. Assange was nowhere near the USA when he published the documents, but nonetheless U.S. courts are willing to claim jurisdiction. This is a threat to press and internet freedom everywhere.

These are scary times. But those may also be the most inspiring of times.

**Craig Murray is an author, broadcaster and human rights activist. He was British Ambassador to Uzbekistan from August 2002 to October 2004 and Rector of the University of**

Dundee from 2007 to 2010. This article first appeared on his [website](#).

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## 7 Years of Lies About Assange Won't Stop Now

One of the few towering figures of our time was reduced to nothing more than a sex pest and scruffy bail-skipper, writes Jonathan Cook.

By [Jonathan Cook](#)

[Jonathan-Cook.net](#)



For seven years, from the moment Julian Assange sought refuge in the Ecuadorean embassy in London, they have been telling us we were wrong, that we were paranoid conspiracy theorists. We were told there was no real threat of Assange's extradition to the United States, that it was all in our fevered imaginations.

For seven years, we have had to listen to a chorus of journalists, politicians and "experts" telling us that Assange was nothing more than a fugitive from justice, and that the British and Swedish legal systems could be relied on to handle his case in full accordance with the law. Barely a "mainstream" voice was raised in his defense in all that time.

From the moment he sought asylum, Assange was cast as an outlaw. His work as the founder of *Wikileaks* – a digital platform that for the first time in history gave ordinary

people a glimpse into the darkest recesses of the most secure vaults in the deepest of Deep States – was erased from the record.

Assange was reduced from one of the few towering figures of our time – a man who will have a central place in history books, if we as a species live long enough to write those books – to nothing more than a sex pest, and a scruffy bail-skipper.

The political and media class crafted a narrative of half-truths about the sex charges Assange was under investigation for in Sweden. They overlooked the fact that Assange had been allowed to leave Sweden by the original investigator, who dropped the charges, only for them to be revived by another investigator with a well-documented political agenda.

They failed to mention that Assange was always willing to be questioned by Swedish prosecutors in London, as had occurred in dozens of other cases involving extradition proceedings to Sweden. It was almost as if Swedish officials did not want to test the evidence they claimed to have in their possession.

The media and political courtiers endlessly emphasized Assange's bail violation in the U.K., ignoring the fact that asylum seekers fleeing legal and political persecution don't usually honor bail conditions imposed by the very state authorities from which they are seeking asylum.

### **Ignoring Mounting Evidence**

The political and media establishment ignored the mounting

evidence of a secret grand jury in Virginia formulating charges against Assange, and ridiculed *Wikileaks'* concerns that the Swedish case might be cover for a more sinister attempt by the U.S. to extradite Assange and lock him away in a high-security prison, as had happened to whistleblower Chelsea Manning.

They belittled the 2016 verdict of a panel of United Nations legal scholars that the U.K. was "arbitrarily detaining" Assange. The media were more interested in the welfare of his cat.

They ignored the fact that after Ecuador changed presidents – with the new one keen to win favor with Washington – Assange was placed under more and more severe forms of solitary confinement. He was denied access to visitors and basic means of communications, violating both his asylum status and his human rights, and threatening his mental and physical wellbeing.

Equally, they ignored the fact that Assange had been given diplomatic status by Ecuador, as well as Ecuadorean citizenship. Britain was obligated to allow him to leave the embassy, using his diplomatic immunity, to travel unhindered to Ecuador. No "mainstream" journalist or politician thought this significant either.

They turned a blind eye to the news that, after refusing to question Assange in the U.K., Swedish prosecutors had decided to quietly drop the case against him in 2015. Sweden had kept the decision under wraps for more than two years.

It was a freedom of information request by an ally of Assange, not a media outlet, that unearthed documents

showing that Swedish investigators had, in fact, wanted to drop the case against Assange back in 2013. The UK, however, insisted that they carry on with the charade so that Assange could remain locked up. A British official emailed the Swedes: “Don’t you dare get cold feet!!!”

### **Documents Destroyed**

Most of the other documents relating to these conversations were unavailable. They had been destroyed by the U.K.’s Crown Prosecution Service in violation of protocol. But no one in the political and media establishment cared, of course.

Similarly, they ignored the fact that Assange was forced to hole up for years in the embassy, under the most intense form of house arrest, even though he no longer had a case to answer in Sweden. They told us – apparently in all seriousness – that he had to be arrested for his bail infraction, something that would normally be dealt with by a fine.

And possibly most egregiously of all, most of the media refused to acknowledge that Assange was a journalist and publisher, even though by failing to do so they exposed themselves to the future use of the same draconian sanctions should they or their publications ever need to be silenced. They signed off on the right of the U.S. authorities to seize any foreign journalist, anywhere in the world, and lock him or her out of sight. They opened the door to a new, special form of rendition for journalists.

This was never about Sweden or bail violations, or even about the discredited Russia-gate narrative, as anyone who

was paying the vaguest attention should have been able to work out. It was about the U.S. Deep State doing everything in its power to crush WikiLeaks and make an example of its founder.

It was about making sure there would never again be a leak like that of “Collateral Murder,” the military video released by *Wikileaks* in 2007 that showed U.S. soldiers celebrating as they murdered Iraqi civilians. It was about making sure there would never again be a dump of U.S. diplomatic cables, like those released in 2010 that revealed the secret machinations of the U.S. empire to dominate the planet whatever the cost in human rights violations.

Now the pretense is over. The British police invaded the diplomatic territory of Ecuador – invited in by Ecuador after it tore up Assange’s asylum status – to smuggle him off to jail. Two vassal states cooperating to do the bidding of the U.S. empire. The arrest was not to help two women in Sweden or to enforce a minor bail infraction.

No, the British authorities were acting on an extradition warrant from the U.S. And the charges the U.S. authorities have concocted relate to Wikileaks’ earliest work exposing the U.S. military’s war crimes in Iraq – the stuff that we all once agreed was in the public interest, that British and U.S. media clamored to publish themselves.

Still the media and political class is turning a blind eye. Where is the outrage at the lies we have been served up for these past seven years? Where is the contrition at having been gulled for so long? Where is the fury at the most basic press freedom – the right to publish – being trashed to

silence Assange? Where is the willingness finally to speak up in Assange's defense?

It's not there. There will be no indignation at the *BBC*, or the *Guardian*, or *CNN*. Just curious, impassive – even gently mocking – reporting of Assange's fate.

And that is because these journalists, politicians and experts never really believed anything they said. They knew all along that the U.S. wanted to silence Assange and to crush *Wikileaks*. They knew that all along and they didn't care. In fact, they happily conspired in paving the way for today's kidnapping of Assange.

They did so because they are not there to represent the truth, or to stand up for ordinary people, or to protect a free press, or even to enforce the rule of law. They don't care about any of that. They are there to protect their careers, and the system that rewards them with money and influence. They don't want an upstart like Assange kicking over their applecart.

Now they will spin us a whole new set of deceptions and distractions about Assange to keep us anaesthetized, to keep us from being incensed as our rights are whittled away, and to prevent us from realizing that Assange's rights and our own are indivisible. We stand or fall together.

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# Whose Blood, Whose Treasure?

America's senior generals find no exits from endless war, writes William J. Astore for TomDispatch.

By [William J. Astore](#)

[TomDispatch.com](#)



*“Veni, Vidi, Vici,”* boasted Julius Caesar, one of history's great military captains. “I came, I saw, I conquered.”

Then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton echoed that famed saying when summing up the Obama administration's military intervention in Libya in 2011 – with a small alteration. “We came, we saw, he died,” she [said](#) with a laugh about the killing of Muammar Gaddafi, that country's autocratic leader. Note what she left out, though: the “*vici*” or victory part. And how right she was to do so, since Washington's invasions, occupations, and interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and elsewhere in this century have never produced anything faintly like a single decisive and [lasting victory](#).

“Failure is not an option” was the stirring 1995 movie catchphrase for the dramatic 1970 rescue of the Apollo 13 moon mission and crew, but were such a movie to be made about America's wars and their less-than-*vici*-esque results today, the phrase would have to be corrected in Clintonian fashion to read “We came, we saw, we failed.”

Wars are risky, destructive, unpredictable endeavors, so it would hardly be surprising if America's military and

civilian leaders failed occasionally in their endless martial endeavors, despite the overwhelming superiority in firepower of “the world’s greatest military.” Here’s the question, though: Why have all the American wars of this century gone down in flames and what in the world have those leaders learned from such repetitive failures?

The evidence before our eyes suggests that, when it comes to our senior military leaders at least, the answer would be: nothing at all.

Let’s begin with General David Petraeus, he of “the surge” fame in the Iraq War. Of course, he would briefly fall from grace in 2012, while director of the CIA, thanks to an affair with his biographer with whom he inappropriately shared highly classified information. When riding high in Iraq in 2007, however, “King David” (as he was then dubbed) was widely considered an example of America’s best and brightest. He was a soldier-scholar with a doctorate from Princeton, an “insurgent” general with the perfect way – a revival of Vietnam-era counterinsurgency techniques – to stabilize invaded and occupied Iraq. He was the man to snatch victory from the jaws of looming defeat. (Talk about a fable not worthy of Aesop!)

Though retired from the military since 2011, Petraeus somehow remains a bellwether for conventional thinking about America’s wars at the Pentagon, as well as inside the Washington Beltway. And despite the quagmire in Afghanistan (that he had a significant hand in deepening), despite the widespread destruction in Iraq (for which he would hold some responsibility), despite the failed-state chaos in Libya, he continues to relentlessly plug the idea of pursuing a

“sustainable” forever war against global terrorism; in other words, yet more of the same.

Here’s how he typically put it in a [recent interview](#):

“I would contend that the fight against Islamist extremists is not one that we’re going to see the end of in our lifetimes probably. I think this is a generational struggle, which requires you to have a sustained commitment. But of course you can only sustain it if it’s sustainable in terms of the expenditure of blood and treasure.”

His comment brings to mind a World War II quip about General [George S. Patton](#), also known as “old blood and guts.” Some of his troops responded to that nickname this way: yes, his guts, but our blood. When men like Petraeus measure the supposed sustainability of their wars in terms of blood and treasure, the first question should be: Whose blood, whose treasure?

When it comes to Washington’s Afghan War, now in its 18th year and looking ever more like a demoralizing defeat, Petraeus admits that U.S. forces “never had an exit strategy.” What they did have, he claims, “was a strategy to allow us to continue to achieve our objectives... with the reduced expenditure in blood and treasure.”

Think of this formulation as an upside-down version of the notorious “body count” of the Vietnam War. Instead of attempting to maximize enemy dead, as General William Westmoreland sought to do from 1965 to 1968, Petraeus is suggesting that the U.S. seek to keep the American body count to a minimum (translating into minimal attention back home), while minimizing the “treasure” spent. By keeping

American bucks and body bags down (Afghans be damned), the war, he insists, can be sustained not just for a few more years but generationally. (He cites 70-year troop commitments to NATO and South Korea as reasonable models.)

Talk about lacking an exit strategy! And he also speaks of a persistent “industrial-strength” Afghan insurgency without noting that U.S. military actions, including drone strikes and an increasing reliance on air power, result in ever more dead civilians, which only feed that same insurgency. For him, Afghanistan is little more than a “platform” for regional counterterror operations and so anything must be done to prevent the greatest horror of all: withdrawing American troops too quickly.

In fact, he suggests that American-trained and supplied Iraqi forces collapsed in 2014, when attacked by relatively small groups of ISIS militants, exactly because U.S. troops had been withdrawn too quickly. The same, he has no doubt, will happen if President Trump repeats this “mistake” in Afghanistan. (Poor showings by U.S.-trained forces are never, of course, evidence of a bankrupt approach in Washington, but of the need to “stay the course.”)

Petraeus’s critique is, in fact, a subtle version of the stab-in-the-back myth. Its underlying premise: that the U.S. military is always on the generational cusp of success, whether in Vietnam in 1971, Iraq in 2011, or Afghanistan in 2019, if only the rug weren’t pulled out from under the U.S. military by irresolute commanders-in-chief.

Of course, this is all nonsense. Commanded by none other than General David Petraeus, the Afghan surge of 2009-2010 proved a dismal failure as, in the end, had his Iraq surge of 2007. U.S. efforts to train reliable indigenous forces

(no matter where in the embattled Greater Middle East and Africa) have also consistently failed. Yet Petraeus's answer is always more of the same: more U.S. troops and advisers, training, bombing, and killing, all to be repeated at "sustainable" levels for generations to come.

The alternative, he suggests, is too awful to contemplate:

"You have to do something about [Islamic extremism] because otherwise they're going to spew violence, extremism, instability, and a tsunami of refugees not just into neighboring countries but... into our western European allies, undermining their domestic political situations."

No mention here of how the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq spread destruction and, in the end, a "tsunami of refugees" throughout the region. No mention of how U.S. interventions and bombing in Libya, Syria, [Somalia](#), and elsewhere help "spew" violence and generate a series of failed states.

And amazingly enough, despite his lack of "*vici*" moments, the American media still [sees](#) King David as the go-to guy for advice on how to fight and win the wars he's had such a hand in losing. And just in case you want to start worrying a little, he's now offering such advice on even more dangerous matters. He's started to comment on the new "cold war" that now has Washington abuzz, a coming era – as he [puts it](#) – of "renewed great power rivalries" with China and Russia, an era, in fact, of "multi-domain warfare" that could prove far more challenging than "the asymmetric abilities of the terrorists and extremists and insurgents that we've countered in Iraq and Syria and Afghanistan and a

variety of other places, particularly since 9/11.”

For Petraeus, even if Islamic terrorism disappeared tomorrow and not generations from now, the U.S. military would still be engaged with the supercharged threat of China and Russia. I can already hear Pentagon cash registers going ka-ching!

And here, in the end, is what’s most striking about Petraeus’s war lessons: no concept of peace even exists in his version of the future. Instead, whether via Islamic terrorism or rival great powers, America faces intractable threats into a distant future. Give him credit for one thing: if adopted, his vision could keep the national security state funded in the staggering fashion it’s come to expect for generations, or at least until the money runs out and the U.S. empire collapses.

### **Two Senior Generals’ Lessons from Iraq War**

David Petraeus remains America’s best-known general of this century. His thinking, though, is anything but unique. Take two other senior U.S. Army generals, Mark Milley and Ray Odierno, both of whom recently contributed forewords to the Army’s official history of the Iraq War that tell you what you need to know about Pentagon thinking these days.

Published this January, the Army’s history of Operation Iraqi Freedom is detailed and controversial. Completed in June 2016, its publication was pushed back due to internal disagreements. As the *Wall Street Journal* put it in October 2018: “Senior [Army] brass fretted over the impact the study’s criticisms might have on prominent officers’ reputations and on congressional support for the service.” With those worries apparently resolved, the study is now

available at the Army War College [website](#).

The Iraq War witnessed the overthrow of autocrat (and former U.S. ally) Saddam Hussein, a speedy declaration of "[mission accomplished](#)" by President George W. Bush, and that country's subsequent descent into occupation, insurgency, civil war, and chaos. What should the Army have learned from all this? General Milley, now Army chief of staff and President Trump's [nominee](#) to serve as the next Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, is explicit on its lessons:

"OIF [Operation Iraqi Freedom] is a sober reminder that technological advantages and standoff weapons alone cannot render a decision; that the promise of short wars is often elusive; that the ends, ways, and means must be in balance; that our Army must understand the type of war we are engaged with in order to adapt as necessary; that decisions in war occur on the ground in the mud and dirt; and that timeless factors such as human agency, chance, and an enemy's conviction, all shape a war's outcome."

These aren't, in fact, lessons. They're military banalities. The side with the best weapons doesn't always win. Short wars can turn into long ones. The enemy has a say in how the war is fought. What they lack is any sense of Army responsibility for mismanaging the Iraq War so spectacularly. In other words, mission accomplished for General Milley.

General Odierno, who commissioned the study and served in Iraq for 55 months, spills yet more ink in arguing, like Milley, that the Army has learned from its mistakes and adapted, becoming even more agile and lethal. Here's my

summary of his "lessons":

\* Superior technology doesn't guarantee victory. Skill and war craft remain vital.

\* To win a war of occupation, soldiers need to know the environment, including "the local political and social consequences of our actions... When conditions on the ground change, we must be willing to reexamine the assumptions that underpin our strategy and plans and change course if necessary, no matter how painful it may be," while developing better "strategic leaders."

\* The Army needs to be enlarged further because "land power" is so vital and America's troops were "overtaxed by the commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the decision to limit our troop levels in both theaters had severe operational consequences."

\* The Iraq War showcased an Army with an "astonishing" capacity "to learn and adapt in the midst of a war that the United States was well on its way to losing."

The gist of Odierno's "lessons": the Army learned, adapted, and overcame. Therefore, it deserves America's thanks and yet more of everything, including the money and resources to pursue future wars even more successfully. There would, however, be another way to read those lessons of his: that the Army overvalued technology, that combat skills were lacking, that efforts to work with allies and Iraqi forces regularly failed, that Army leadership lacked the skills needed to win, and that it was folly to get into a global war on terror in the first place.

On those failings, neither Milley nor Odierno has anything of value to say, since their focus is purely on how to make the Army prevail in future versions of just such wars. Their limited critique, in short, does little to prevent future disasters. Much like Petraeus's reflections, they cannot envision an end point to the process – no victory to be celebrated, no return to America being “a normal country in a normal time.” There is only war and more war in their (and so our) future.

### **The Undiscovered Country**

Talk of such future wars – of, that is, more of the same – reminded me of the sixth *Star Trek* movie, “The Undiscovered Country.” In that space opera, which appeared in 1991 just as the Soviet Union was imploding, peace finally breaks out between the quasi-democratic Federation (think: the USA) and the warmongering Klingon Empire (think: the USSR). Even the Federation's implacable warrior-captain, James T. Kirk, grudgingly learns to bury the phaser with the Klingon “bastards” who murdered his son.

Back then, I was a young captain in the U.S. Air Force and, with the apparent end of the Cold War, my colleagues and I dared talk about, if not eternal peace, at least “peace” as our own – and not just *Star Trek's*– undiscovered country. Like many at the time, even we in the military were looking forward to what was then called a “peace dividend.”

But that unknown land, which Americans then glimpsed ever so briefly, remains unexplored to this day. The reason why is simple enough. As Andrew Bacevich put it in his book “Breach of Trust,” “For the Pentagon [in 1991], peace posed a

concrete and imminent threat” – which meant that new threats, “rogue states” of every sort, had to be found. And found they were.

It comes as no surprise, then, that America’s generals have learned so little of real value from their twenty-first-century losses. They continue to see a state of “[infinite war](#)” as necessary and are blind to the ways in which endless war and the ever-developing war state in Washington are the enemies of democracy.

The question isn’t why they think the way they do. The question is why so many Americans share their vision. The future is now. Isn’t it time that the U.S. sought to invade and occupy a different “land” entirely: an undiscovered country – a future – defined by peace?

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