

"Exposing the true costs of war"

The War Crimes Times

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Donations Welcome

America's Rain of Terror



9/11/2013

What they did was a crime,
Whether brave men or fanatics,
Attempting to destroy

Two symbols of American
Imperialism: the Pentagon
And the World Trade Center.

What they did was a crime.
Our response was a greater crime,
A crime against humanity.

How many innocent
Men, women, and children
Have been killed or injured?

In Iraq, In Afghanistan?
A hundred thousand? Two
Hundred thousand? We call it

Dismissively, collateral damage.
Apparently only Americans bleed,
Apparently only Americans suffer.

We call ourselves Christians, yet
Strike with the merciless fury
Of Roman legions. Yet those

Who have read their history
Will tell you: Rome fell, Alexander
Perished, Napoleon & Hitler

Were ultimately defeated.
No different than individuals,
All empires eventually die.

—Joe Michaud
Iowa City



Cluster Bomb—by valentinoseggi

Page one images by Mark Runge except as noted

In this issue: The Slaughter of the Innocents

Showers of cluster bomblets, rain of Hell-fire missiles, hail of bullets. Delivered from a distance, often remotely controlled, often targeting heavily populated areas. Impersonal. Indiscriminate. Technology has distanced the destroyer from the destruction. Munitions fall from the sky (Yoder, page 1)—“steel rain” (p.4)—and now directed from space (p.20). Collateral damage, destruction incidental to the intended target, is routine.

The 4th Geneva Convention in 1949 specified that the killing of civilians and wilfully causing great suffering is a war crime.

John Pilger's film *The War You Don't See* cites these grim statistics: In World War I, 10% of all casualties were civilians; World War II: 50%; the Vietnam War: 70%; and in the Iraq War, 90% of all deaths were civilians—that is, **non-combatant** human beings: men, women, and children!

Emotions, irrational fear—and mindless patriotism (p.3)—lead us into war. Could we end war by appealing to the emotion of compassion? Pilger's film has a scene of an Iraqi woman and her three children, hands held high, being forced out of their home at gunpoint by American troops. Only the hardest heart would not be melted by the fear and terror in the face of the young daughter. But again, this is *The War You Don't See*. If Americans knew, would they care? Or do we have less compassion for **other** children (pp.4,5)? For those who do have compassion, how to respond? Work with the children of war-torn countries (p.9)? Memorialize victims (p.12)? Learn the past to inform the present (pp.10,13,16)? Speak out; make amends (p.17)? Blow whistles (p.18)?

We explore these topics with articles, images, and poetry.

Pressure-cooker bombs and cluster bombs...

...both rip through human flesh causing maximum pain, injury, and death!

Go to RootsAction.org and TAKE ACTION -- tell the President and Congress ban cluster bombs.

Munir was injured by a cluster bomb while playing soccer in Baghdad in 2003. (Photo: Victor R. Calvano/AP Photo/SCANPIX)

Underlying the glamour of the Blue Angels and the precision of drones we find “bug splat”—dead and maimed women and children

Peeling Back the Masks of the War on Terror

by Robert Yoder

I have always loved airplanes. As a child, as a young man, I wanted to fly. I first saw the Blue Angels perform in 1955. They flew F9F Cougar jets then, sleek and powerful, in close, heart-stopping formation, their aerobatics precise and thrilling to watch.

Like most young men, when I dreamed of flying jet fighters, I never went beyond the glamorous mask of the Blue Angels, never thought about what these young men in their flying machines were trained to do: to kill the other.

Like most 18-year-olds, I didn't look beyond the myth of honor and glory, of duty and patriotism, to the consequences and horrors of war, to the victims of war's violence, both combatants and civilians killed and maimed and, ultimately, to the ones who suffer the most, the children. Nor did I question the causes of war, the politicians who dream of empire or the profiteers' raw greed or the insanity of war itself. It took Vietnam for me to see the lies and manipulation on which war is based. Iraq stripped away the last illusion that there might be such a thing as a just war but we seem incapable of learning anything and Afghanistan is Obama's Vietnam.

Every war has its own flavor, its own twists, its own technology, and each new generation of weapons is said to be more “advanced” which simply means more powerful and destructive, a more lethal and horrific way of killing.

World War II ushered in big bombers, the Superfortresses, and the A-bomb; Korea, jet fighters, the F-86, and the MiG-15; the Cold War, B52s, nuclear and hydrogen bombs, and Mutual Assured Destruction; Vietnam, counter-terrorism (the Phoenix Program: “infiltration, capture, terrorism, torture, and assassination”) and the use of defoliants—Agent Orange—on a massive scale; the first Gulf War and Kosovo, Depleted Uranium which mutates DNA and has a half-life of 4.468 billion years; Afghanistan and Iraq, armed drones that kill at long distance with Hellfire missiles that dismember, shred, incinerate, and vaporize anyone within a blast radius of 60 feet.

The first time I saw a picture of a drone, I was repelled. Predator drones, Reaper drones, Global Hawk

(continued on page 14)

Letters

WCT Helps Vet

Thanks for all your help in the past. You guys helped me to turn my life around. Four months ago I was homeless, you guys sent me the paper so I could have an income. I now have my own apartment and I have a grant from the VA to go to school. I want to continue circulating the paper so I am placing an order. Please update my address.

Frank Parish
Santa Rosa, CA

Your letter made our day. Thank you! And may your good fortune continue. —Eds.

Thank You But Don't Thank Me

War Crimes Times,

Thanks! Sometimes I feel like I'm the only one who cares, and then I find a publication like yours. I'll be distributing copies around Chicago.

Peace—Gandhi-style,

Army Stieber
Chicago
Army infantry, Vietnam, 1970
WarisSlavery.blogspot.com

P.S. My card—I got tired of the “Thank you for your service” line and the “patriotic smile.”

Army's card:

Please don't thank me
for my “service.”

I was in the military, not the “service.” Service is doing something good. Service is what the person does who fixes your car. When the word “service” is applied to the military, it helps to justify violence as a method of conflict resolution. Like “defending our freedom” or “bringing democracy,” the word “service” is used to lower the barriers of aggression.

The military solution to conflict is death and destruction.

That's not “service.” Call it what it is—the military.

If you have to hurt someone to solve a problem, you are the problem.

Wonderful WCT

Dear WCT Team,

You are so wonderful, inspiring, heart-breaking, and generous to have sent me the 25 pass-around copies for free. They went easily almost—library, bookshops, Resource Center for Nonviolence events, etc. We also have a new veterans group, “Bridging Warriors,” I am connecting with peace (they teach meditation, yoga—work on PTSD...all we need! I am 78 and was in WWII—Poland, Germany—I am so close to all of you!).

Marjorie Cohn (“The Uncommon Courage of Bradley Manning,” *WCT*, Spring 2013) spoke here recently—very, very—?—touching? Hopeless? Full of faith?

If you have leftover Spring issues, I'll pass them around happily. Please send me 25 copies or more—50—we can use them here—much openness.

Thank you for being! Bless you!

Nina Christina
Santa Cruz, CA

Bravo Zulu (Well Done)

Thanks for the *WCT*s which arrived yesterday. I passed out 40 of them in downtown Easton, then treated my dehydration to four Yuengling Lagers on the rocks (an old fart has to dilute or get drunk). I keep reading *WCT* and saying to myself, “How the hell can this paper get any better?” And each subsequent edition gets better. I know it won't last (no good newspaper has lasted for very long; as somebody put it, “News is something somebody wants to suppress. The rest is advertising.” Plan to pass out 40 more today at a different intersection. We are having good weather. Bravo Zulu to you and the *WCT* gang (as CinCPAC) would say.

Comrade Bernardo
Bernard Berg
Easton, PA

P.S. Your article on Warring Warming (*WCT*, Spring 2013) is 4.0 as they used to say at OCS.

United Space

Thank you very much for the Spring 2013 issue of *WCT*. I was especially struck by the front page graphic revealing that the U.S. has divided up the world into military commands. This is similar to what I wrote in the prologue of my unpublished feminist science fiction novel, *Zohu, A Land Ruled by Women*. The prologue was written in 2006 and subsequently excised by my editor on the grounds that it is too vulgar and unpatriotic. I reprint the offending material here so you may judge for yourself. Perhaps life imitates art after all.

After bombing, invading, and occupying Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States went on to do the same in Iran and Syria. When a handful of continental European countries complained, the U.S. silenced them by threatening nuclear retaliation. It received its usual slavish support from the governments of England, Israel, and Saudi Arabia, in the midst of massive anti-government protests in Israel and England. Authorities violently suppressed protests in both countries.

Not many years later, the U.S. arranged for its vassals to come to power in the opposing nations. U.S. allies England, Israel, and Saudi Arabia, gloated rather than complained. When the vassal nations declared their sovereignty dissolved—that they had transformed into U.S. protectorates—the Israeli press timidly began muttering of the danger to world freedom. The U.S. instigated a war between Israel and Saudi Arabia by revealing the identity of the undercover double agent Prince Valiant. This war ended in the destruction of both countries. At the exact moment that the British ambassador was in Washington toasting this glorious victory, U.S. troops invaded and occupied Britain. Now that the entire world was the United States, serious effort was devoted to the conquest of space, and United Space became the new name of the country. The initials were the same.

All scientific pursuit became a military secret. A new method of travel was invented—discovered, really—known unofficially as the Network Method. It allowed for the arrival at

destinations by bypassing conventional notions of dimensionality, no longer bound by the speed of light. No one except a handful of top politicians knew of it. Military leaders of the Supreme Council chose those politicians for life-long tenure—and removed them at will. Elections, even fraudulent ones, had long since ceased to be.

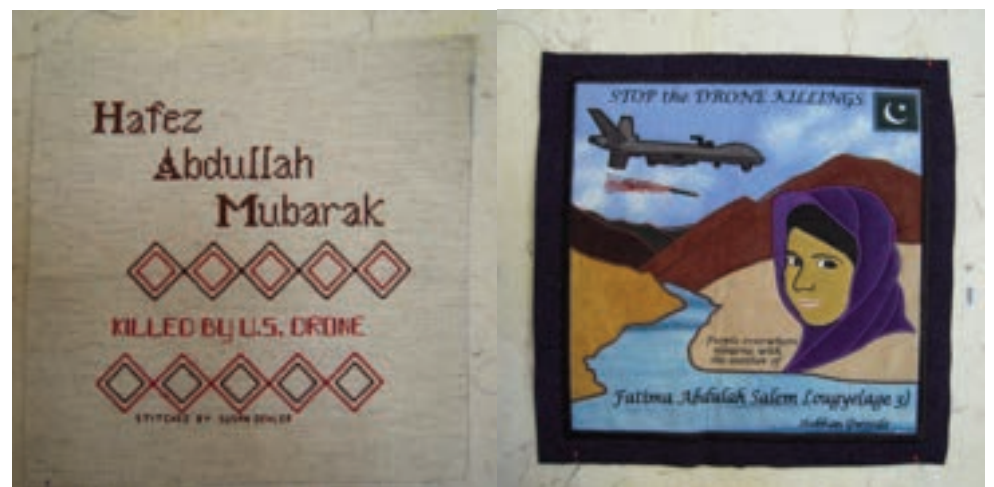
Thank you again for an inspiring and informative, though sadly often religious, publication.

Yours for justice and peace,

Farrell Winter
via email

WCT has been called a few things in its time, but religious (sadly) hasn't been one of them. We do admit to using religion to argue against war. We also use morality, legality, fiscal responsibility, rationality, pragmatism, humanism, spirituality, ethics, ecology, efficacy—whatever it takes, by God! United Space? — see page 20. —eds.

IMPORTANT—The WCT has put out calls for help since our growth has outpaced the capacity of our volunteers. The VFP National office has responded and will now be handing WCT orders and finances. Thanks VFP!



Hafez Abdullah Mubarak
by Susan Oehler

see page 12

Fatima Abdullah Mokbel Salam Louqye
by Siobhan Gwozdz

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The *War Crimes Times* exposes the truth about war, its crimes, and its many costs—including our war culture's effects on our national character and international reputation. Additionally and importantly, we report on the efforts of the many people who sacrifice their time, money, and comfort to work for peace.

Our contributors—journalists, legal experts, academics, poets, artists, and veterans speaking from experience—may not always present viewpoints entirely consistent with ours, but their topics address the concerns of the *War Crimes Times*.

Order copies and make donations online at WarCrimesTimes.org or by mail: *War Crimes Times, Veterans For Peace, 216 South Meramec Ave, St. Louis MO 63105.*

We welcome submissions (guidelines at WarCrimesTimes.org) of original articles, poetry, artwork, cartoons, and letters at editor@WarCrimesTimes.org or WCT c/o VFP Chapter 099, PO Box 356, Mars Hill, NC 28754.

This issue was produced and distributed by: Kim Carlyle, Susan Carlyle, Susan Oehler, Lyle Petersen, Mark Runge, and Robert Yoder.



veteransforpeace.org

Keeping the World Safe for Hypocrisy

by James Rothenberg

Skepticism is a special way of regarding commonly accepted opinions such that doubt plays a central and overriding role. By definition it must always be a minority view. By definition, also, it is the impetus for change. As such it is the attitude that has guided investigators across a wide range of disciplines.

At cross purposes are those that wish to perpetuate orthodoxy. In the interests of preservation, systems of control must be developed. Authority, if it is to remain absolute, cannot allow itself to be questioned.

Control systems range from the more obvious, like that found in the ever-present display of force in totalitarian or police states, to the subtle, like that found in what are regarded as liberal democracies, where persuasion is relied on as a tool of control.

So long as young men and women believe that the U.S. is a force for good in the world, capitalist imperialist war will remain a fixture. So long as young men and women believe they are fighting for freedom and democracy, they will rally to the cry. And so long as they are treated as heroes, others wait to take their place.

Ruling by persuasion is more clever, more cunning. When done effectively, the target population ends up controlling itself. This cannot be admitted by the state doing the controlling or it would give the game away. The targeted population must be completely unaware. What develops is a sophisticated propaganda regime with an apparatus capable of disseminating the proper information, namely, state-supported information. The case to be made is that the United States Government (USG) is just such a regime.

Control of information is necessarily imperfect. At any time there will be information that contradicts that which is put out by the state. An unskeptical population works in the state's interest by providing a counterbalance against this type of disturbance. Contradictory information gradually runs aground in an unquestioning environment.

Standing up for your country—or what amounts to the same, rooting for the home team—is the default position. It is the position one would be expected to take in the absence of compelling factors in an opposite direction. The reason for its default position is that our country—or our team—becomes an extension of ourselves. When we cheer it, we cheer ourselves. It's quite natural but also meaningless.

While the question of meaning is of little consequence for the sports team rooster, this is certainly not the case for building national patriotic spirit. The state must thoroughly imbue itself with meaning precisely because even though we are psychologically predisposed to support the state (because it is us), the meaninglessness of it would proscribe unquestioned support.

To this end, a magnificent construct is created, that of, for the long and short of it, a country that serves as a beacon of light for the rest of the world. We decimated the redskin, subjugated the brownskin, enslaved the blackskin, persecuted the yellowskin, and target the oliveskin. Ours is a land of opportunity.

The ruling elite possess vast fortunes. All are equals under the law. The poor are sick and hungry. Blessed are the meek. Security, eavesdropping, surveillance up/privacy down. The land of the free.

We imprison one quarter of the world's prisoners. Justice is blind. Corporate profits up/wages down. Protecting the American way of life. We spread democracy throughout the world. We don't target innocents.

So long as our people are oblivious to the capitalist exploitation of the worker, workers will remain imperiled. So long as young men and women believe that the U.S. is a force for good in the world, capitalist imperialist war will remain a fixture. So long as young men and women believe they are fighting for freedom and democracy, they will rally to the cry. And so long as they are treated as heroes, others wait to take their place.

An argument is unconvincing if it avoids serious counter-argument, so let's answer a strong argument for why more people do not become dissidents. It's "if we don't do it to them, they'll do it to us." We're just getting



Patriotic and Ignorant. How many times throughout history have troops marched abroad to fight heathens, communists, terrorists or "weapons of mass destruction," ignorant of the bigger picture or the long-lasting effects of their actions? Does war really lead to peace? Or just more fear, hate and terrorism?
(Photo and caption by Peter Blanchard)

them first. Virtual self-defense. However murderous we may seem to be, that cannot be measured outside of a context that takes into consideration the utter barbarity of the other side.

This philosophy will easily draw adherents. Who wouldn't rather get, than be gotten? It's a simple proposition. So simple it was used with effect by George W. Bush. You're either with us, or with the terrorists...to which an appealing response to Bush was, well I'm certainly not with you.

So why doesn't the USG drop the pretense for its serial aggression and lay it on the line for the rabid flag wavers that would support it anyway? Why all the hypocrisy about fighting for freedom and democracy? Why the dance?

A good answer is that an aggressive state will never willingly surrender its most effective weapons. In this case the target is the home population and the weapon is propaganda. We're on the side of the angels.

James Rothenberg is a life member of the Professional Golfers Association of America, and the author of the book, The Skeptical Golfer. He appreciates the irony of belonging to what may be the most conservative association in the country.

Veteran's Lament

*Our country has betrayed us.
Its leaders have deceived us.
We have willingly given our hearts
And our good will in support
Of its machinations.*

*For the sake of national security,
It reduces our civil rights.*

*For the sake of democracy,
It makes a mockery of our votes.*

*In the name of freedom,
It invades country after country,
Destroys their armies,
Makes puppets of their leaders.*

*How many brown-skinned
Men, women, and children has it led
To the sacrificial altars
Of corporatism and profit?*

*Our country has betrayed us.
It has dragged the flag
We so faithfully served
Through the mud of moral decadence.*

*Our leaders have deceived us,
Pursuing war
For the sake of power,
For the sake of status,
For the sake of plunder.*

*Driven by insatiable greed,
It orders our young
Men and women
Into harm's way.*

*Who among the corporate
Rich are true patriots?
Who among the rich,
Will lay down his life
And his wealth for his
Needy fellow citizens?
Yet we are expected
To lay down our lives
For their bottom line.*

*Our country has betrayed us.
The rich and powerful have
Lied to us and exploited us.
It has debased itself
In the gutters of Wall Street,
And the labyrinthine corridors
Of pentagonal power.
The hem of the robe
Of Our Lady of Liberty
Is stained with the blood
Of the world's innocents.*

*As for myself,
I feel nothing but shame.*

—Joe Michaud
VFP chapter 161, Iowa City

The Orwellian Warfare State of Carnage and Doublethink

By Norman Solomon

After the bombings that killed and maimed so horribly at the Boston Marathon, our country's politics and mass media were awash in heartfelt compassion—and reflexive “doublethink,” which George Orwell described as willingness “to forget any fact that has become inconvenient.”

In sync with media outlets across the country, the *New York Times* put a chilling headline on Wednesday's front page: “Boston Bombs Were Loaded to Maim, Officials Say.” The story reported that nails and ball bearings were stuffed into pressure cookers, “rigged to shoot sharp bits of shrapnel into anyone within reach of their blast.”

Much less crude and weighing in at 1,000 pounds, CBU-87/B warheads were in the category of “combined effects munitions” when put to use 14 years ago by a bomber named Uncle Sam. The U.S. media coverage was brief and fleeting.

One Friday, at noontime, U.S.-led NATO forces dropped cluster bombs on the city of Nis, in the vicinity of a vegetable market. “The bombs struck next to the hospital complex and near the market, bringing death and destruction, peppering the streets of Serbia's third-largest city with shrapnel,” a dispatch in the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported on May 8, 1999.

And: “In a street leading from the market, dismembered bodies were strewn among carrots and other vegetables in pools of blood. A dead woman, her body covered with a sheet, was still clutching a shopping bag filled with carrots.”

Pointing out that cluster bombs “explode in the air and hurl shards of shrapnel over a wide radius,” BBC correspondent John Simpson wrote in the *Sunday Telegraph*: “Used against human beings, cluster bombs are some of the most savage weapons of modern warfare.”

Savage did not preclude usage. As a matter of fact, to Commander in Chief Bill Clinton and the prevailing military minds in Washington, savage was bound up in the positive attributes of cluster bombs. Each one could send up to 60,000 pieces of jagged steel shrapnel into what the weapon's maker described as “soft targets.”

An unusually diligent reporter, Paul Watson of the *Los Angeles Times*, reported from Pristina, Yugoslavia: “During five weeks of airstrikes, witnesses here say, NATO warplanes have dropped cluster bombs that scatter smaller munitions over wide areas. In military jargon, the smaller munitions are bomblets. Dr. Rade Grbic, a surgeon and director of Pristina's main hospital, sees proof every day that the almost benign term bomblet masks a tragic impact. Grbic, who saved the lives of two ethnic Albanian boys wounded while other boys played with a

cluster bomb found Saturday, said he had never done so many amputations.”

The *LA Times* article quoted Dr. Grbic: “I have been an orthopedist for 15 years now, working in a crisis region where we often have injuries, but neither I nor my



CBU-87 Cluster bomb (USAF photo). It's bomblets are designed for use against armor, personnel, and softskin targets. List price: \$13,941.

Orthopedic surgeon Rade Grbic: “Neither I nor any colleagues have ever seen such horrific wounds as those caused by cluster bombs....It's awful, awful.”

colleagues have ever seen such horrific wounds as those caused by cluster bombs.” He added: “They are wounds that lead to disabilities to a great extent. The limbs are so crushed that the only remaining option is amputation. It's awful, awful.”

The newspaper account went on: “Pristina's hospital alone has treated 300 to 400 people wounded by cluster bombs since NATO's air war began March 24, Grbic said. Roughly half of those victims were civilians, he said. Because that number doesn't include those killed by cluster bombs and doesn't account for those wounded in other regions of Yugoslavia, the casualty toll probably is much higher, he said. ‘Most people are victims of the time-activated cluster bombs that explode some time after they fall,’ he said.”

Later, during invasions and initial periods of occupation, the U.S. military dropped cluster bombs in Afghanistan and fired cluster munitions in Iraq.

Today, the U.S. State Department remains opposed to outlawing those weapons, declaring on its official website: “Cluster munitions have demonstrated military utility. Their elimination from U.S. stockpiles would put the lives of its soldiers and those of its coalition partners at risk.”

The State Department position statement adds: “Moreover, cluster munitions can often result in much less collateral damage than unitary weapons, such as a larger bomb or larger artillery shell would cause, if used for the same mission.” Perhaps the bomber(s) who stuffed nails and ball bearings into pressure cookers for use in Boston had a similarly twisted rationale.

But don't expect explorations of such matters from the USA's daily papers or commercial networks—or from the likes of NPR's “Morning Edition” and “All Things Considered,” or the PBS “NewsHour.” When the subject is killing and maiming,

such news outlets take as a given the presumptive moral high ground of the U.S. government.

In his novel *1984*, Orwell wrote about the conditioned reflex of “stopping short, as though by instinct, at the threshold of any dangerous thought . . . and of being bored or repelled by any train of thought which is capable of leading in a heretical direction.”

The doublethink—continually reinforced by mass media—remains within an irony-free zone that would amount to mere self-satire if not so damaging to intellectual and moral coherence.

Every news report about the children killed and injured at the finish line in Boston, every account of the horrific loss of limbs, makes me think of a little girl named Guljumma. She was seven years old when I met her at an Afghan refugee camp one day in the summer of 2009.

At the time, I wrote: “Guljumma talked about what happened one morning last year when she was sleeping at home in southern Afghanistan's Helmand Valley. At about 5 a.m., bombs exploded. Some people in her family died. She lost an arm.”

In the refugee camp on the outskirts of Kabul, where several hundred families were living in squalid conditions, the U.S. government was providing no help. The last time Guljumma and her father had meaningful contact with the U.S. government was when it bombed them.

War thrives on abstractions, but Guljumma was no abstraction. She was no more or less of an abstraction than the children whose lives have been forever wrecked by the bombing at the Boston finish line.

But the same U.S. news media that are conveying the preciousness of children so terribly harmed in Boston are scarcely interested in children like Guljumma.

I thought of her again when seeing news reports and a chilling photo on April 7, soon after 11 children in eastern Afghanistan were even more unlucky than she was. Those children died from a U.S./NATO air strike. For mainline American journalists, it wasn't much of a story; for American officials, it was no big deal.

“Circus dogs jump when the trainer cracks his whip,” Orwell observed, “but the really well-trained dog is the one that turns his somersault when there is no whip.”

Norman Solomon is founding director of the Institute for Public Accuracy and co-founder of RootsAction.org. His books include War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death. He writes the Political Culture 2013 column. This article was reprinted with his permission.

Iraqi soldiers first coined the name “steel rain” to describe cluster bombs in the 1991 Kuwait War. In the 2003 conflict, the U.S. and the U.K. dropped nearly 13,000 cluster munitions, containing an estimated 1.8 to 2 million submunitions within three weeks of combat. Cluster bomb strikes were a major cause of civilian casualties with hundreds of civilian deaths and injuries around the country. In the six months after the war, cluster bombs continued to terrorize people, injuring 1,000 and killing 1,000 civilians.

While the number of cluster bombs used is daunting, the fact that they were used extensively in populated areas is equally disturbing. In the case of the U.S., cluster strikes in populated areas were often made using radar to remotely hone in on targets, without any visual confirmation whether civilians were present in the target area.

Ahmed Kamel was 12 years old, living near Kerbala, Iraq when he was injured. The area had been bombarded and many unexploded cluster bombs were left scattered around.

Several months after the end of the conflict, Ahmed was walking with his nine-year-old brother when they were attracted by a shiny object. Ahmed picked it up and the cluster bomb exploded.

His right hand and three fingers of the left hand were torn off. He also lost his eye and received many shrapnel wounds to his torso and head. Ahmed underwent four operations. His younger brother was “luckier,” having only suffered injuries to his legs.

Their parents had to sell all their belongings to pay for medical care.



Ahmed in the hospital
© Alexandre Carle / Handicap International

Co-winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, Handicap International is the world's most comprehensive mine action charity, providing victim assistance, weapons clearance, risk education—to prevent injuries from explosive remnants of war—stockpile management, and advocating to ban landmines and cluster bombs. Handicap International coordinates the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines (USCBL) from its Maryland office. More broadly, the charity works in 60-plus countries supporting people with disabilities and vulnerable populations in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster. Learn more at www.handicap-international.us.

Two Obamas, Two Classes of Children

by Ralph Nader

An Associated Press photograph brought the horror of little children lying dead outside of their home to an American audience. At least 10 Afghan children and some of their mothers were struck down by an airstrike on their extended family household by order of President Barack Obama. He probably decided on what his aides describe as the routine weekly “Terror Tuesday” at the White House. On that day, Mr. Obama typically receives the advice about which “militants” thousands of miles away should live or die from drones or aircraft. Even if households far from war zones are

cluster bombs, that killed 14 women and 21 children. Again and again “so sorry terrorism” ravages family households far from the battlefields.

If this is a war, why hasn’t Congress declared war under Article 1, Sec. 8 of the U.S. Constitution? The 2001 Congressional Authorization to Use Military Force is not an open-ended authorization for the president. It was restricted to targeting only nations, organizations, or persons that are determined to have been implicated in the 9/11 massacres, or harbored complicit organizations or persons.

For several years, White House officials, including retired General James

our allies. The drone kill list goes on and on—over 3,000 is the official fatality count, not counting injuries.

In a few weeks, *The Nation* magazine will issue a major report on U.S.-caused civilian casualties in Afghanistan that should add new information.

Now switch the scene. The president, filled with memories of what his secret drone directives as prosecutor, judge, jury, and executioner have done to so many children, in so many places, traveled on Monday [April 8] to Newtown, Connecticut for the second time. He commiserated with the parents and relatives of the 20 children and six adults slain by a lone gunman. Here he became the compassionate president, with words and hugs.

What must be going through his mind as he sees the rows of 10 Afghan little children and their parents blown apart in that day’s *New York Times*? How can the president justify this continued military occupation for what is a civil war? No wonder a majority of the American people want out of Afghanistan, even without a close knowledge of the grisly and ugly things going on there in our name that are feeding the seething hatred of Obama’s war.

Sometime after 2016 when Barack Obama starts writing his lucrative autobiographical recollections, there may be a few pages where he explains how he endured this double life ordering so-called precision attacks that kill many innocent children and their mothers and fathers, while mourning domestic mass killings in the U.S. and advocating gun controls. As a constitutional law teacher, he may wonder why there have been no “gun controls” on his lawless, out-of-control presidency and his reckless attacks that only expanded the number of al-Qaeda affiliates wreaking havoc in Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Mali, North Africa, and elsewhere.

Al-Qaeda of Iraq is now merging with an affiliate called “al-Nusra” in Syria that will give Obama more futile exercises on Terror Tuesdays. The CIA calls the reaction to such operations “blowback” because the unintended consequences undermine our long-term national security.

Obama is not like the official criminal recidivist, ex-Vice President Dick Cheney, who misses no chance to say he has no regrets. Obama worries even as he greatly escalates the aerial attacks started by George W. Bush. In his State of the Union speech he called for a “legal



President Barack Obama greets the family of a victim in the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School, during a trip to Newtown High School in Connecticut on Sunday, December 16, 2012. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza).

On the next day, December 17, ten Afghan girls were killed when an unexploded bomb or land mine detonated as they were out gathering firewood. That same month, the *Military Times* reported that following an incident in which an airstrike killed three children (aged 8, 10, and 12) who the Marines suspected were planting an improvised explosive device, but their family later said they were gathering dung for fuel, a U.S. Army lieutenant colonel said, “In addition to looking for military-age males, [his unit is] looking for children with potential hostile intent.”

and policy framework” to guide “our counterterrorism operations,” so that “no one should just take my word that we’re doing things the right way.” Granted, this is a good cover for his derelictions, but it probably reflects that he also needs some restraint. Last year he told CNN it was “something you have to struggle with.”

Not that our abdicatory Congress would ever take him up on his offer for such legal guidance should he ever submit a proposed framework. Nor would Congress move to put an end to secret laws; secret criteria for targeting; indefinite imprisonment; no due process, even for American citizens; secret cover-ups of illegal outsourcing to contracting corporations; or enact other preventive reforms.

Mr. Obama recognized in his CNN interview that “it’s very easy to slip into a situation in which you end up bending rules thinking that the ends always justify the means. That’s not who we are as a country.”

Unfortunately, however, that’s what he has done as a president.

Unless the American people come to realize that a president must be subject to the rule of law and our Constitution, our statutes and treaties, every succeeding president will push the deficit-financed lawlessness further until the inevitable blowback day of reckoning. That is the fate of all empires.

Ralph Nader is a consumer advocate, lawyer, and author of Only the Super-Rich Can Save Us! and a contributor to Hopeless: Barack Obama and the Politics of Illusion.

When Barack Obama starts writing his lucrative autobiographical recollections, there may be a few pages where he explains how he endured this double life ordering so-called precision attacks that kill many innocent children and their mothers and fathers, while mourning domestic mass killings in the U.S. and advocating gun controls.

often destroyed in clear violation of the laws of war, the president is not deterred.

These Obama airstrikes are launched knowing that very often there is “collateral damage,” that is a form of “so sorry terrorism.” How can the president explain the vaporization of a dozen pre-teen Afghan boys collecting firewood for their families on a hillside? The local spotter-informants must have been disoriented by all those \$100 bills in rewards. Imagine a direct strike killing and injuring scores of people in a funeral procession following a previous fatal strike that was the occasion of this processional mourning. Remember the December 2009 Obama strike on an alleged al-Qaida training camp in Yemen, using tomahawk missiles and—get this—

Jones, have declared that there is no real operational al-Qaeda left in Afghanistan to harbor anyone. The Pakistani Taliban is in conflict with the Pakistani government. The Afghan Taliban is in brutal conflict with the Afghanistan government and wants to expel U.S. forces as their members view occupying-invaders, just as their predecessors did when they expelled the Soviet invaders. The Taliban represent no imminent threat to the U.S.

President Obama’s ambassador to Pakistan, Cameron P. Munter, used to complain to his colleagues about the CIA’s drone attacks saying “he didn’t realize his main job was to kill people.” He knew how such attacks by whining drones, hovering 24/7 over millions of frightened people and their terrified children produce serious backlashes that fester for years.

Even a loyalist such as William M. Daley, Mr. Obama’s chief of staff in 2011, observed that the Obama kill list presents less and less significant pursuits. “One guy gets knocked off, and the guy’s driver, who’s No. 21, becomes 20?” Daley said, describing the internal discussion. “At what point are you just filling the bucket with numbers?”

Yet this unlawful killing by a seemingly obsessed Obama, continues and includes anyone in the vicinity of a “suspect” whose name isn’t even known (these are called “signature strikes”), or mistakes, like the recent aerial killings of numerous Pakistani soldiers and four Afghan policemen—considered

I was in the Navy when my daughter was born. I realized that I was involved with killing someone else's sons and daughters. I thought about how it would feel to lose my daughter.

I became a conscientious objector.



Afghanistan, Ecology and the End of War

by Dana Visalli

The United States has spent over \$600 billion dollars on its Afghan war effort¹, but most of the money has gone to military infrastructure and sophisticated weaponry; little of it has gone to the education of Afghan youth or to addressing the degradation of Afghan land.



A US soldier using the \$35,000 XM25 Individual Airburst Weapon System. The US Army plans to purchase 12,500 of the units in 2013. The current XM25 recently completed a 14-month battlefield assessment in Afghanistan. The XM25 grew out of its predecessor, the XM29—an over-and-under system with a 5.56mm carbine on the bottom and the 20mm airburst weapon on top. It stalled in the face of technical challenges that made the 18-pound weapon too heavy and bulky. The program ended up costing about \$100 million.

The children I am working with had never heard the word 'ecology.' They can only conjecture at the species of animals and plants that might co-inhabit their nation, guessing at camels, elephants and lions, all of which are wrong. One student suggested the word 'snake'; when I asked her if she knew what a snake was, she said that she thought it was "some kind of bug."

This is one small indicator of the level of ignorance that humanity faces about the physical world that we inhabit and ecological basis of life on earth.

Traveling around Afghanistan, one impression that dominates is the absence of vegetation and the abundance of rocks. It has been estimated that 50% of the country was swathed in forests 2000 years ago², but today tree cover is reduced to 0.25% of the land.³

The loss is driven by an ancient and growing human population and its attendant herds of domestic sheep, goats, cows, and pigs. The removal of a large portion of

the biomass from the landscape means far less moisture is transpired into the atmosphere, reducing precipitation. Thus, human impacts have initiated a negative feedback loop that has reduced the productive capacity of Afghanistan's ecosystems.

The ecological deterioration has reached crisis proportions, as the human population has grown from 10 million to 35 million in the past 50 years, and is projected to reach 82 million by 2050.⁴ The impoverishment of the land has led to the deepening impoverishment of the Afghan people, with one quarter of the total population, many of them children, living on less than a dollar a day.⁵

The American response to this basic lack of ecological insight has been a military one; an attempt to eradicate poverty and environmental degradation with a massive influx of bullets and bombs

Our irrational behavior in Afghanistan reflects a pattern that extends well back into history. It is a little known fact for example that the genesis of the Korean War was the U.S. military occupation of the country two days after South Korea declared its independence. Korea's issues at the time were social and environmental; the U.S. response was to drop 600,000 tons of napalm on

The United States has dropped 15,000,000 tons—that's 30,000,000,000 (thirty billion) pounds—of bombs on the planet's ecosystems in the last 60 years, along with 1,000,000 tons of napalm, and at least 20,000,000 gallons of defoliants sprayed on rainforests and crops with the intention of destroying them.

North Korea—more than we dropped during the entire Vietnam War⁶—and another 660,000 tons of explosives, virtually atomizing the human infrastructure and inflicting immeasurable damage to the biological foundations of North Korea's ecosystems.⁷

A similar dynamic unfolded in Vietnam at nearly the same time. In September of 1945, Vietnam declared its independence from both the French, who had occupied the country for 100 years, and the Japanese, who invaded during World War II.

The United States responded to this declaration by entering into a protracted war with this impoverished nation of rice farmers, dropping 6 million tons of bombs (far more than we dropped in all of WW II) on Vietnam over the next 20 years, along

with igniting 400,000 tons of napalm and spraying 19 million gallons of carcinogenic and teratogenic defoliant on one of the richest tropical rainforests on the planet.⁷ The spraying program, called Operation Ranch Hand, had a motto, "Only you can prevent forests." At the same time that we were assaulting Vietnam, we carpet-bombed Laos and Cambodia, dropping 3 million tons of bombs and spraying two million gallons of defoliant on these rural, agricultural societies.⁸



Crying children, including 9-year-old Kim Phuc, center, run down Route 1 near Trang Bang, Vietnam after an aerial napalm attack on suspected Viet Cong hiding places as South Vietnamese forces from the 25th Division walk behind them. The United States dropped over 400,000 tons of napalm on Vietnam.

War has become a way of life for the United States. Our country funded the civil wars in Central America in the 1970s and 1980s (Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua), funded the fundamentalist Islamic Mujahideen fighting against the Russians in the 1979-1989 war with Afghanistan, funded both sides in the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, and then went to war ourselves, with Iraq in 1990, with Afghanistan from 2001 until the present, with Iraq again from 2003 until 2012, and now covertly with Pakistan and Yemen. Vietnam veteran Mike Hastie characterizes the United States as "a non-stop killing machine." This country also maintains a nuclear arsenal of 7,000 hydrogen bombs, many times more than enough to destroy the majority of life on earth.

Because American war-making is so persistent and pervasive, and because every bomb that is dropped, whether it be on Korea or Vietnam or Afghanistan, in the end falls on the earth and damages the life-enhancing capacity of the biosphere, the realization slowly dawns that this unending aggression is actually a war against the earth itself. The United States has dropped 15,000,000 tons—that's 30,000,000,000 (thirty billion) pounds—of bombs on the planet's ecosystems in the last 60 years, along with 1,000,000 tons of napalm, and at least 20,000,000 gallons of defoliants sprayed on rainforests and crops with the intention of destroying them.⁹

The irony is that the physical earth and the life-sustaining qualities of the biosphere are the very foundation of human life. The elements that make up the human body are derived from the earth and the atmosphere; the food we eat, the water we drink and the air we breathe are all dependent upon an interrelated web of living organisms. If the earth is the source of our lives, why are we expressing so much violence against it?

We can only speculate. Most male mammals have an inherent urge for power, and humans have an inherent fear of death. The genetically-induced emotions related to these passions may be the subconscious forces that are driving our dysfunctional and self-destructive aggressive



behavior. There is also a genetically driven proclivity for humans to submit to external authority.

But modern warfare is clearly suicidal. The great paradox of the current drama is that the very people who understand the ecological basis of our existence are spending their entire lives funding and otherwise supporting the psychosis of war and the attendant destruction of the biosphere. The current fear-driven model of endless war makes a mockery of the lives of those who are drawn to live a compassionate and intelligent existence and find all of their resources being stolen by the alpha males of the dominant paradigm of power and aggression.

Human consciousness has changed dramatically over time; there is no reason to think that this will not continue in the future. One major shift that has already occurred is the locus of the individual's sense of personal identity, which has transitioned over time from the family to the clan, thence to the village, city-state, and nation. Our distant ancestors had no way of knowing that we live

on planet earth; now that we do know, the recognition is dawning that the earth is the source of our lives and is our true home. Once this reality takes root in the human mind and heart, destruction of the "ecos"—the homeland—through modern warfare will be recognized for what it is; as an unimaginably perverse and psychotic act.

Dana Visalli is a professional botanist and an organic market gardener in Washington State. He redirects his financial resources away from war and toward life-sustaining endeavors because it seems like the intelligent thing to do. More of his reading material is available at www.methownaturalist.com

Authors Note: I am currently [March 2013] spending two weeks teaching biology and ecology at a private school in Kabul to young Afghan students who are being prepared to go to college abroad, in hopes that improved education of youth can improve Afghanistan's future.

Notes

1. <http://www.costofwar.com/>.
2. *A Green History of the World*, Clive Ponting
3. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_forest_area.
4. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demography_of_Afghanistan & <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/afghanistan/population>.
5. <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/86889/In-Brief-Nine-million-Afghans-living-on-less-than-a-dollar-a-day-survey>.
6. *North Korea: Another Country* by Bruce Cummings. A detailed discussion of the damage sustained by Korea in the Korean war.
7. "War, Ecology, and Emerging Intelligence," <http://www.methownaturalist.com/20-War,Ecology&Intelligence.pdf>.
8. "Bombing Civilians: An American Tradition," <http://www.japanfocus.org/-marilyn-young/3125>.
9. "War, Ecology, and Emerging Intelligence."

Uncle Sham

Every day 1 active duty military personnel commits suicide.
 Every day 22 American military veterans commit suicide.
 It is widely believed that more Vietnam veterans have committed suicide than were killed in the war. 58,220 American soldiers were killed in Vietnam.
 From the senior prom to Vietnam.
 There are hundreds of thousands of veterans who are addicted to drugs and alcohol across America.
 These veterans affect millions of American lives across this country who are close friends and relatives of these veterans.
 It only takes a split second for a veteran or an active duty soldier to put a bullet in their head.
 That one bullet travels through the lives of countless people.
 That is what Uncle Sham does every single day, while the American people are entertained by violent movies and violent computer games, and thousands of other distractions.
 Ever see an American soldier commit suicide with an M-16?
 Ever see an American soldier commit suicide with a 9mm pistol?
 Ever take an American soldier off of a helicopter who had half his head gone?
 Ever see countless American soldiers destroy their lives every day with heroin?
 Ever take an innocent dead civilian off of a helicopter?
 Ever see an American soldier kill another American soldier with an M-16?
 Ever see an American soldier try to kill another American soldier with a knife?
 Ever see an American soldier try to commit suicide with drugs, because he got a "Dear John" letter?
 Ever go back to Vietnam, and stand next to a ditch where 150 innocent Vietnamese civilians were massacred by the U.S. Government?
 Ever have a close friend from Vietnam hang himself in a motel room?
 Ever have a close friend from Vietnam die in a head-on car collision, because he was tremendously depressed?

Ever have a close friend from Vietnam die homeless?
 Ever have a brother-in-law dying from Agent Orange exposure?
 Ever find yourself in a padded cell of a psychiatric hospital, screaming your lungs out because you hated Uncle Sham so bad for sending you to a war that was an absolute lie?
 An absolute sham.
 Ever have panic attacks day in and day out because you didn't recognize your country anymore?
 Ever find yourself in a dark closet crying your heart out?
 Ever plan your suicide with a car going over a cliff?
 Ever plan to buy a one-way plane ticket out of the United States, because you couldn't stand Uncle Sham bombing another country for corporate profit?
 I have had all of these experiences.
 And,
 hundreds of thousands of other veterans have had the same experiences, and much worse.
 Uncle Sham is bleeding us all to death.
 He is worse than a man who goes into a school and massacres 20 first graders.
 In Vietnam, first graders were killed every single day by U.S. saturation bombing.
 Anyone who does not believe this, lives in a fantasy world.

—Mike Hastie
 Army Medic Vietnam
 April 15, 2013

A nation that year after year spends more money on military defense than it does on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death. —Martin Luther King Jr., Riverside Church New York City April 4, 1967

Photograph by Mike Hastie
 1968 recruitment poster superimposed over the names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.



Soraj Ghulam Habib lost both his legs when he was just 10, because of a submunition.

Afghanistan, 2011. “My name is Soraj Ghulam Habib. Until recently, I lived in the Herat province in Afghanistan. I was born during the war and I grew up in a country facing a crisis, in a climate of violence and conflict. I started school at eight years old, and I dreamed of one day being able to work and help my family and society in general.

“I was 10 when I lost both my legs. I am now disabled and I have long forgotten all my dreams.

“I am now in a wheelchair. I am a victim of cluster munitions, this hidden enemy of humanity. One day, when I was very young, I got really excited as I was going to play with my friends in our neighborhood. Suddenly I touched an object I didn’t recognize and it claimed half of my body. I lost both my legs. Some of my friends were also injured in the accident.

“Games and leisure activities stopped altogether. I was thrown into suffering and difficulties, and my family received a son without legs, a wheelchair user forever. I had to stop my studies.

“I now speak out for the thousands of innocent victims from my country, people who have lost parts of their bodies and suffered due to mines, cluster bombs, and the destruction of war. These victims are now in critical situations, without any possibility to study. Who will take care of us?

“When I speak at conferences on people with disabilities, I don’t ask for my legs back – no one can do that – but I ask to be given a chance to get my self-confidence back, as a human being, and for the means to study. I don’t want my children to face the same problems as me.

“As a victim of cluster munitions, having lost both legs, I address people who produce, use and transfer these harmful weapons: I am begging you, please stop cluster munitions. You would stop them for sure if your own children faced a destiny as tragic as ours. Please sign and agree upon a total ban on cluster munitions and join the courageous States that have already signed this treaty. Let’s work to achieve PEACE, PEACE, PEACE, not just for me, but for the whole of humanity.”

Take action at www.uscbl.org/get-involved.

Learn about Ban Advocates at www.handicapinternational.be/en/banadvocates.



© Alison Locke

Soraj Ghulam Habib served as a Handicap International Ban Advocate. Ban Advocates include individuals and communities affected by cluster bombs who share their personal stories, insight and outrage during ban negotiations and discourse about this indiscriminate weapon.

In December 2008, dozens of nations in Oslo signed a treaty banning cluster bombs. Non-signers included some of the world’s biggest military powers, among them the United States, Russia and China.... Washington, Moscow and other non-signers, including India, Pakistan and most Middle Eastern states, say cluster bombs have legitimate military uses such as repelling advancing troop columns. But according to the group Handicap International, 98 percent of cluster-bomb victims are civilians, and 27 percent are children. (*Source: NewYorkTimes.com*)

“Forty-six people were killed, and I think 35 or 36 of them were women and children.... [O]ne tribal leader, Sheikh Saleh bin Fareed, who’s the head of the Aulaq tribe in Yemen, went there right after the attack. And he said to me, ‘If someone had weak heart, they would collapse, because you saw meat, and you couldn’t tell if it was goat meat or human meat. And you saw limbs of children.’.... They used a Tomahawk cruise missile, and they used cluster bombs. And the cluster bombs are—they are like flying land mines. And they drop in these parachutes, and they explode, and they can shred people...they’re probably the most horrifying weapon I have ever seen the aftermath of in a war zone.” (*Jeremy Scahill, DemocracyNow!, April 23, 2013*)

On March 1, 2011, troops in attack helicopters of the U.S.-led coalition in Afghanistan, using machine-gun and rocket fire, killed boys collecting firewood in the Pech Valley in Kunar Province.

Little Children

I will read the names:

Khalid, son of Bismillah, 13 years old, gathering firewood to warm the family, gathering attention to warm the enemy, red-hot bullets to warm the blood, hot blood freezing hard and icy red, dead.

Abid, son of Bismillah, 10 years old, brother to Khalid, dutiful son to father, loving son to mother, target to another, running, laughing, believing that the sun will shine forever, never knowing never, dead.

Khalid, son of Ahmad Khan, 10 years old, he looks into the sky and confirms the sky is blue, the clouds are white; looks down, the earth is solid, almost solid, shaking slightly now, shaking more, spitting dust, dead.

Zialrahman, son of Nisbah, 12 years old, playing with a stick, playing with a stone, mountain games he learned to play alone; together now with friends upon a hill, he kicks a stone to hone his soccer skill, dead.

Jawad, son of Sabhanullah, 11 years old, goofy like a good kid’s often goofy, hyper, always moving, always talking, smiling, sweet, wants a cell phone, wants to tweet a message to America, closer, ever closer, dead.

Ihsanullah, son of Sabhanullah, 11 years old, twin of Jawad, twin of Afghanistan, son of Afghanistan, prince of the mountains, king of the hill, closes his eyes to escape the kill, to escape staring identical eyes, dead.

Shahidullah, son of Rahman, 7 years old...
...7 years old

My Grandson 7 years old

7

Shake the dice, 7 come 11, he will never see 11, never see, never see his mother hold him close, never see his father cry, dead.

Jawed, son of Wali Mohammad, 11 years old, hungry, food is scarce; cold, warmth is rare; winter schools unheated, he would gladly sit inside one shivering through the day to read the books that feed him happiness and hope, dead.

Umra Khan, son of Safiullah, 10 years old, he runs to his left, stops, runs to his right, stops, raises his arms in supplication, raises his head toward the sky, sinks to his knees, lowers his head to the ground, prays, cries, dead.

Umad, son of Shir Mohammad, 10 years old, injured, he hid behind a tree and watched, witness for the children working on the hill, playing as they worked, laughing, screaming, dying as their killers smugly started lying — Umad!

Umad, son of Shir Mohammad, 10 years old, had a shocking, contradicting story to be told, and their killers bowed their heads in sorrow false and from their mouths they falsely asked forgiveness, thinking, Umad, sorry you are now alive.

© Fred Norman, Pleasanton, CA

Playwright Lia Gladstone's response to America's invasion of Afghanistan: "I was shocked by the invasion and particularly concerned about what the consequences were going to be for the people living there. I organized a charity event for Afghan refugees, and wrote a play that focused on the lives of three famous Afghan women from history. It's strange that here in the West, Afghanistan has dominated our news for years and most people are still completely ignorant of the country and its rich history."

What is Political?

by Lia Gladstone

Sometimes when I'm invited to speak about my experiences in Afghanistan, the host is concerned the presentation will not be sufficiently political. Is getting educated a political act? What does it mean to be a Hazara in Afghanistan? Are little girls dancing on stage political? What if they are wearing turbans? Is anyone dancing on stage political?

During the time of Taliban rule, the Hazara were the most victimized and massacred. Susana, our Pashtun translator in Herat, told me that when she and her family were fleeing to Iran, their car was repeatedly stopped and searched for Hazara. "They would have been summarily executed had they been in the car," she says. One of my Hazara students writes: "Have you noticed the karachiwans—those grizzled men pulling carts to haul other people's goods, construction materials, etc. They are Hazara, the 'blacks' of Afghanistan, the old guys deprived of education as I have been right now in the dawn of the 21st century."

The Hazara are among the best and most serious students at American University in Kabul, the least likely to act entitled. Like most Hazara, Hassan's family fled their home in Bamyian for Iran during the Taliban era. He grew up there and was educated through high school; but as a foreigner, continuing his education in Iran was not an option. Neither was voting or being politically active. The only work he could get was in construction. He wanted to have other options, to continue his education so he decided to return to his own country, but he had no passport. The only choice was traveling across the mountains from the Iranian border east to Bamyian. It's worth looking at a map to have an idea of how daunting this is. Between Herat on the Iranian border and Bamyian, there is almost nothing but snow-capped mountains. Hassan graduated from American University in Kabul last year with a degree in Sociology.

Simorgh Theater Company has been based in the Hazara ghetto of Jebraiel outside Herat on the Afghan border with Iran. The only choice for trained actors in Afghanistan is TV, but there are no Hazaras on Afghan TV; it's one of Simorgh's frustrations: that they spend years training good actors who eventually give it up. A group of very skilled young women form the core of the company. One of the most startling things are the masks the young women have constructed, complete with mustaches, and their very convincing

performance on stage as men and soldiers, complete with male gestures and body language.

There are 60,000 street children in Kabul and many more confined in orphanages throughout the country. Adoption is illegal in Afghanistan. Many of these children have parents that are still alive but their fathers may be dead or in prison. Prison is often also where their mothers are—for forced drug trafficking with no other option to support their children, or for running away from abusive husbands and in-laws, or simply because they have no means of support. Ironically, their lives may be better inside a prison.

The intention of American Voices' projects, my second employer in Afghanistan, was to work with already established theater groups. We proposed spreading the opportunity and working at an orphanage.

The Al Ansari orphanage in Herat is heated by diesel; the toxic fumes add to the long ledger of things these intrepid girls must survive. The weather is good so we move to work outside. Since the United States Consulate (our sponsor) expects the children's participation in the weekend performance, in addition to theater games and improv, we work on a traditional wedding dance. When I return the following day, I'm informed there will be no dancing outside nor dancing of older girls inside or out. We can teach the four-year-olds the wedding dance, inside only. The neighbors have complained: Islamic tradition does not approve. The neighborhood and the government came down hard on the director of the orphanage, a weathered woman in her thirties looking more like fifty. "Afghanistan, for women, it's like a prison sentence for life," she said.

In one theater game, a scene is improvised using a scarf; it is the scene with a turban that inspires about 10 four-year-olds to wrap their headscarves around their heads in the style of men. When I comment, Fausia, a precocious fourteen-year-old, states matter of factly, "All women in Afghanistan want to be men."

The four-year-olds at the orphanage work hard learning the dance for the Friday performance. My Afghan translators Susana and Fatimah visit the bazaar early in the morning to buy costumes but the orphanage girls never have a chance.



Acting students at play and in costume. (photos by Lia Gladstone)



The Council of Mullahs has written to the Minister of Culture declaring that if there is any dancing onstage all cultural events will be banned for a year. They said it is because the time coincided with the anniversary of the departure of the Soviets and it would be wrong to dance on this occasion.

In retrospect, it seems that most actions we participated in were political: working with a Hazara theater company; female orphans imitating men; attempting to stage a public event that includes dancing; satisfying the requirements of U.S. diplomacy. What good can come of teaching theater to children and young adults in Afghanistan? Is it helping anyone? It probably won't land them a job. In a country with an 85% illiteracy rate, where the soldiers the U.S. troops are training (so the U.S. can pull out) can't even write their own names, any educationally positive experience for young people whose lives have only known war seems worthwhile.

Postscript

I continue to work with and be in touch with my Afghan students. In 2012, collaborating with one of my students now in the U.S. on a Fulbright fellowship, we wrote BURN, a one-woman play about a young, educated, unhappily married Afghan woman who is considering setting herself on fire. (This is a common form of suicide among Afghan women because the fuel is obviously handy in the kitchen where they spend most of their lives.) My collaborator insisted that all references to where she grew up and her family, no matter how oblique, be deleted. BURN premiered in the U.S. last year and will be translated into Spanish as part of a theater festival in Mexico in the fall of 2013.

In August 2012, thanks to Swedish generosity, seven of my Afghan students from Simorgh Theater Company were able to

join me in Stockholm for an international theater conference and festival, and to perform original work in the headline performance. A video of the event was briefly posted on the internet; when Simorgh's director returned to Kabul, she (and her family) were continually harassed, threatened, and forced into hiding. Three other members of the group were invited to stop in Berlin on the return journey and have not been able to return to Afghanistan since.

Another student was also forced to flee to Germany because of work she had been doing in Afghanistan to help register young voters. Only my collaborator on BURN is able to return to Afghanistan because she has kept a very low profile. These are stories I am personally familiar with, but many others have been in the news, about women who have been threatened and murdered for everything from helping women register to vote to merely accepting a job as a TV actress.

What does this have to do with war? Much of what has happened in the last 30 years of war in Afghanistan can be attributed to U.S. intervention. The Taliban are the result of Mujahidin the U.S. supported in their fight against the Soviets. Under the last Afghan ruler, and even under the Soviets and before the Taliban, Afghanistan—and it's women—at least in Kabul, were becoming more westernized, with many of the associated freedoms. In the 1960s women did not cover their heads in public. They did not wear burkas. They did not have to leave their country to have a voice.

Learn more about Lia Gladstone and her work and see more photos of her students, Afghanistan, and its people at www.liagladstone.weebly.com.

Africa: Imperialism's High Mark of Conquest in the 21st Century

by Glen Ford

At present, nothing stands in the way of the militarization and occupation of Africa by the United States and its junior imperialist partners. Every global and multinational organization of any consequence on the continent has been suborned to the service of the neocolonial military project. AFRICOM, the United States Military Command in Africa, has become the headquarters of recolonization, augmented by the militaries of NATO and legitimized by the African Union itself, and the global credentials of the United Nations.

It is vital to note this great feat of imperialism and international white supremacy reached its zenith during first term of the Obama administration, which roughly coincides with the birth of AFRICOM in 2008. Imperialism with a Black face has been fantastically successful in Africa. In fact, Af-

of Congo into a vast killing field that has, so far, claimed the lives of 6 million people—the greatest holocaust since World War Two. All the while, successive U.S. administrations shielded their Ugandan and Rwandan hirelings from international censure—even as nearly 20,000 United Nations troops were stationed in the killing fields.

But eventually, Rwanda and Uganda's role in the carnage could no longer be hidden. Now the United States—the superpower overlord of the Congolese genocide—drapes itself in the clothing of humanitarian savior of the Congo. It has pushed through the United Nations Security Council the creation of a new,

3,000-man force to aggressively intervene in Congo. Like the United Nations-African Union force in Somalia, the UN Congo “intervention brigade” will not move an inch without U.S. arms, training, and supervision. The U.S., which has choreographed the Congolese genocide for the past 17 years, will now pose as the great peacemaker and life-giver, through the offices of the United Nations and participating African countries. And

the bought and paid for governments of the continent will bow, and applaud, and then bow again.

Glen Ford is executive editor of the Black Agenda Report (blackagendareport.com). This transcript of his Black Agenda Radio commentary was printed with his permission.



CHEIK MOUSSA, Djibouti—U.S. Marine Gunnery Sergeant Josh Guffey, Marine Corps Martial Arts Program instructor trainer, briefs members of the Group d' Intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale on combat fitness events for the day during MCMAP training. (DOD photo by Supunnee Ulibarri)

rica is U.S. imperialism's only generalized success story of the 21st century, to date.

Bizarrely costumed in the garb of “human rights” interveners, the greatest genociders and enslavers in human history—Europe and its superpower offspring, the United States—have nearly completed their reconquest of the African continent. Only a few patches of land are free of their military entanglements and treaties—notably, Zimbabwe and tiny Eritrea, among the few nations on the African continent that have not yet been absorbed into the AFRICOM matrix.

The United Nations and the African Union have become mere annexes of the AFRICOM military complex, under the fictitious banner of human rights.

The African Union definitively sold itself to the Devil in Somalia, where an AU-accredited force of almost 20,000 troops fights a U.S. and European Union-armed and -financed war to subjugate the Somali nation. The greatest crime of the late 20th and early 21st centuries is now in the process of being sanitized, globalized, and Pan-Africanized in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Since 1996, under Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama, the United States has armed and financed the de facto annexation and bloody depopulation of the mineral rich eastern Congo. U.S. client states Uganda and Rwanda turned the eastern provinces



“This piece is meant to illustrate the pain and suffering experienced by the women and children of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The senseless killing and the fate of these poor children soldiers inspired me to make this piece. Depicted are a few victims and political officials. At the top it reads in French, the official language of the DRC; ‘What will you do?’”

—Aaren Johnson



Palestinian child — photo by Mike Hastie

10th Anniversary of the Iraq War

First of all, it was never a war.
It was a slaughter.
It is the most magnificent lie of the 21st Century.
500,000 Iraqi children executed with economic sanctions, contaminated water, filth, firepower, and depleted uranium. Iraq will be contaminated forever. And America...
the earth will never forget what 5% of the world's population did for greed.
As I travel throughout my day in the land of the killing,
I see Americans wrapped in their flag, ready to be dumped at sea.

—Mike Hastie
Army Medic Vietnam
March 22, 2013

Afghan children on a rooftop watch a U.S. Army Soldier below as he performs perimeter security during a mission in the village of Miricalai, Khowst province, Afghanistan, Nov. 11, 2009. The soldiers are assigned to the 25th Infantry Division's Company D, 1st Battalion, 501st Regiment, 4th Brigade. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Christopher Nicholas.)



Seven year-old Iman Koubaisi shows her mutilated hand. On September 29, 2006, six-year-old Iman and her friends were playing with a cluster bomblet they had found in a yard. When it exploded, Iman's family ran to see what had happened, finding Iman's whole body burned. Iman was taken to Najim Hospital in Tyre where she spent four days recovering. Since the accident happened, Iman can't speak. Doctors suggest the explosion trauma as the cause of her impediment. (Photo: Kike Amal)

"We need to decide that we will not go to war, whatever reason is conjured up by the politicians or the media, because war in our time is always indiscriminate, a war against innocents, a war against children."

—Howard Zinn

"If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children."

—Mahatma Ghandi

Tan Son Nhut, Vietnam, 1968. A twelve-year-old Vietnamese ARVN Airborne trooper who had been "adopted" by the Airborne Division, holding a M-79 grenade launcher. The picture was taken during a sweep of an Airborne Task Force Unit through the devastated area surrounding the French National Cemetery on Plantation Road after a day long battle there.



Ayad Ali Brissam Karim (below) was born in Baghdad in 1991. In 2003, during the Gulf War, the farm of his parents gets into the frontline and is attacked by American helicopters. His uncle Mohammad loses his leg. His grandmother Telba is injured, too, when trying to help Ayad. Ayad's face is badly burned and his right eye becomes blind.

"He left school because the other boys teased him," says his 42-year-old father, Ali Brissam Karim. "He can speak, however, he cannot read. He cannot help us with field work."

Worse than the physical injuries are the psychological consequences. "Many times a day he asks the same question and becomes aggressive for no obvious reason," his mother says. In the meantime, Ayad has undergone medical treatment in the U.S., however, his eyesight could not be recovered. (Photo: Mauricio Lima, Brazil)



Your blood is on their hands, dear child...
Politicians who are so vicious,
Who kill with a swiftness,
Such ambivalence to the destruction of nations and their children.

These suits and ties tell lies to sell the story,
Of all the justice and glory that "we the people" should feel...
Their conscience surely lacking,
Sending soldiers to do the attacking,
While sitting in office chairs
Without the slightest hint of care.

They call you a casualty,
If they call you anything at all.
Your torn, lifeless body, insignificant, written off.
Safe and secure they snicker and scoff...
Behind closed doors...
You lie there, blood pours,
Mothers scream and tear at their clothes and hair...
This is beyond injustice, beyond unfair.

I wish you peace and justice for your life taken away,
The government should have to pay,
They violate ours and international law every single day,
Crimes committed through soldiers and drones,
Targets are shot up, bombed, names unknown.

You live in my mind,
Whether dead or alive,
Such an aching sickness inside.

When I kiss my son, I wish you that same love,
If you're a thousand miles away or with the angels above.

I feed my son and wish your belly full,
You're not mine and yet you are,
The same mother's heartstrings tug and pull.

I hold my son, his small hand gripping mine,
And wish you this comfort if even for a short time.
If you are orphaned,
I hope someone takes you in,
That even without parents you can feel loved again.

I want for you what I want for my own child,
As if I had bore you myself.

Those responsible for war crimes will be made to stop and be punished,
Regardless of their status and wealth.
The truth will prevail,
In the end it always does...

—Jessie Ryan



Drones Quilt Project Memorializes Victims and Educates Public

Activists opposed to the U.S. combat drone program have come up with a creative way to demonstrate against drones, memorialize the victims, and educate the public all with one project.

A group of British women affiliated with the Fellowship of Reconciliation have invited participants to create individual quilt blocks to include the name of a drone victim as well as their own. By doing so, the artist becomes an advocate for that victim, and the quilt block becomes a visual sign of solidarity. The blocks are then sewn together to create what they call “a visual petition” which they intend to present to Parliament as a protest to what they consider Britain’s barbaric and unacceptable involvement in the drones industry.

After hearing about the project, American peace activist Leah Bolger created a block and sent it for inclusion in the UK quilt. She knew there would be a lot of interest in the U.S. for a similar project and has since become the coordinator of the American Drones Quilt Project. Plans for the American version of the quilt include creating educational materials, photographs, and information that together with the quilt panels will create an exhibit that will travel the country, informing and educating the American public. She hopes to premier the exhibit at the Veterans For Peace convention in Madison, Wisconsin, August 7-11th.

Leah was part of the Code Pink-led delegation to Pakistan in the fall of 2012, and has been traveling the country speaking against the U.S. combat drone program that has killed thousands of innocent people. She hopes that the drones quilt project will raise

awareness about the U.S. combat drone program that she believes equates to systematic extrajudicial assassinations.

Creating the quilt blocks has been a deeply moving experience for many of the participants. Laurie Childers, who is a member of the National Board of the Fellowship of Reconciliation offers this reflection:

For me, to work on this quilt square and think about one twelve-year-old boy’s life being suddenly taken from him and from his family and from this world, by a machine up in the sky, personalized the impact of the drones. It could have been my son. Joseph Stalin said, “One death is a tragedy, and a million is a statistic.” To maintain our humanity, we need to remember that each victim of war was a real person, a beating heart, someone who laughed and loved and had dreams. Working on this piece of fabric was a meditation in our shared humanity.

The U.S. Drones Quilt Project has received the endorsement of nine peace and justice organizations including Code Pink, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, On Earth Peace, Peace Action, Veterans For Peace, War is a Crime, Women Against Military Madness, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom and World Can’t Wait.

For more information about the U.S. Drones Quilt Project, see www.dronesquiltproject.wordpress.com, and Twitter: @dronesquilt.



New York Times, sarin and skepticism

Iraq Then, Syria Now?

from Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting

During the run-up to the Iraq War, the *New York Times* amplified erroneous official claims about weapons of mass destruction. Looking at the paper's coverage of allegations of chemical weapons use by Syria, some of the same patterns are clear: an over-reliance on official sources and the downplaying of critical or skeptical analysis of the available intelligence.

In "Syria Faces New Claim on Chemical Arms" (*NYT*, 4/19/13), the paper told readers that, according to anonymous diplomats, Britain and France had sent letters to the United Nations about "credible evidence" against Syria regarding chemical weapon use. On April 24, the *Times* reported that Israel had "evidence that the Syrian government repeatedly used chemical weapons last month."

The next day (4/25/13), the *Times* reported that, according to an unnamed "senior official," the White House "shares the suspicions of several of its allies that the Syrian government has used chemical weapons." The article spoke of the "mounting pressure to act against Syria," adding, "Some analysts say they worry that if the United States waits too long, it will embolden President Bashar al-Assad."

And then on April 26, under the headline "White House Says Syria Has Used Chemical Arms," the *Times* reported:

The White House, in a letter to Congressional leaders, said the nation's intelligence agencies assessed "with varying degrees of confidence" that the government of President Bashar al-Assad had used the chemical agent sarin on a small scale.

The story included a source, Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D.-Calif.), who presented the intelligence as more definitive: She "said the agencies actually expressed more certainty about the use of these

weapons than the White House indicated in its letter."

An April 27 *Times* report warned

that there were dangers in waiting too long to respond to the charges that Syria has used chemical weapons:

If the president waits for courtroom levels of proof, what has been a few dozen deaths from chemical weapons—in a war that has claimed more than 70,000 lives—could multiply.

In following days, the accusations of chemical weapons use were presented uncritically as the premise for political stories: pondering how the White House would "respond to growing evidence that Syrian officials have used chemical weapons" (4/28/13) or noting Republican attacks on the White House following "revelations last week that the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, is believed to have used chemical weapons against his own people" (4/29/13).

On May 5, the *Times* was again weighing in on the political ramifications:

Confronted with evidence that chemical weapons have been used in Syria, President Obama now finds himself in a geopolitical box, his credibility at stake with frustratingly few good options.

Then, on May 5 came an unusual shift: Carla Del Ponte, a member of a United Nations team investigating human rights abuses in the Syrian civil war, claimed that the UN had collected evidence that chemical weapons had been used in Syria—but by the rebels, not by the government.

After running a Reuters dispatch on May 6, the *Times* published its own piece on May 7, a report that talked about "new questions about the use of chemical weapons." But the emphasis was clearly on rebutting the charges: The paper reported that the White House had "cast doubt on an assertion by a United Nations official that the Syrian rebels...had used the nerve agent sarin." The piece included three U.S. sources—one named, two unnamed—who questioned the Del Ponte claims.

The article went on to reiterate that the White House was weighing other options based on "its conclusion that there was a strong likelihood that the Assad government has used chemical weapons on its citizens."

Outside the *New York Times*, though, doubts about the evidence pointing to Syrian use of poison gas were evident from the very start. McClatchy's Jonathan Landay (4/26/13) reported that one source characterized the U.S. intelligence as "tiny little data points" that were of "low to moderate" confidence.

An April 30 report from GlobalPost noted that a "spent canister" at the scene of one attack "and the symptoms displayed by the victims are inconsistent with a chemical weapon such as sarin gas." A subsequent GlobalPost dispatch (5/5/13) reported that blood samples tested in Turkey were not turning up evidence of sarin exposure.

NBC reporter Richard Engel (5/8/13) traveled to Syria with rebel forces to examine evidence they had collected. He seemed to concur with the GlobalPost reports that the chemical exposure could very well have been from a type of tear gas.

By May 7, McClatchy was reporting that the case was looking weaker, noting that

no concrete proof has emerged, and some headline-grabbing claims have been discredited or contested. Officials worldwide now admit that no allegations rise to the level of certainty....Existing evidence casts more doubt on claims of chemical weapons use than it does to help build a case that one or both sides of the conflict have employed them.



"All the News That's Fixed the Facts" (NYT building photo by Haxorjoe)

It is clear that the *Times* has promoted a storyline that treats the chemical weapons claims as more definitive than they are, and has given scant attention to subsequent revelations about the evidence.

In a recent column (5/5/13), *Times* public editor Margaret Sullivan argued that the paper still faces problems with its credibility based on its reporting about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction over 10 years ago. The *Times* "pledged more skeptical and rigorous reporting" going forward, and Sullivan argues that the *Times* "has taken important steps" in that direction.

But does the paper's handling of the Syria chemical weapons stories demonstrate that the paper has learned lessons? Or is it repeating the same mistakes?

This article was posted on the Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting website (fair.org) on May 15, 2013, and is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License.

ACTION:

Ask the *New York Times* public editor to evaluate the paper's reporting on Syria and chemical weapons.

CONTACT:

New York Times
Margaret Sullivan, Public Editor
public@nytimes.com



Paul Gavarni (French, 1804-1866).
Peasant Woman with Two Young Children

Women's Work

Send the camouflaged men home

Array the women in silver

Ship the guns back

daughters of the world's Great Goddesses

Let the metal rust

bearing medicines and gruel

Defuse the bombs

seeing their hidden sisters in the shadows

Detonate the mines

Hear them shout across the line

Sands shifting with a new wind.

"Do your children have enough to eat?"

Gone! Gone! Gone are the ghosts.

--Lyrion Ap Tower, 2008

Women's Work was also printed in the *We'Moon*
Woman Calendar (www.wemoon.ws)

Peeling Back the Masks of the War on Terror

(continued from page 1)

drones—all are unbelievably ugly. They are neither sleek nor graceful; there is nothing about them that pleases the eye. They are skeletons of death; blind and lumbering, dealing Hell-fire from on high with-out conscience or consciousness, controlled by

human drones comfortable and safe thousands of miles away. Introduced by Bush in Afghanistan and Iraq, armed drones quickly became Obama's weapon of choice and he has used them with murderous lethality in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, the Philippines, Libya, and elsewhere. Cheap, effective, and with no American lives in harm's way, they are a technocrat's dream. But at what cost?

Consider this:

"Distance is of essential importance. It renders responsibility invisible and retaliation impossible."
(*Master of the Eclipse*, Etel Adnan)

"Bug Splat": military jargon for someone killed in a drone strike.

"For a new generation of young guns, the experience of piloting a drone is not unlike the video games they grew up on. ... drone operators kill at the touch of a button, without ever leaving their base—a remove that only serves to further desensitize the taking of human life." ("The Drone Wars," Michael Hastings, *Rolling Stone*, April 26, 2012)

The use of drones is seductive, spreading like a mutating cancer. In 2012, for the first time, the Air Force trained more drone "pilots" than jet fighter pilots. Drones have killed over 3,000 people in Pakistan alone. On February 20, 2013, Senator Lindsey Graham said U.S. drones have killed 4,700 people in Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen. (If Afghanistan and Iraq were included, the figures would be much higher.) Drones give the illusion of certainty and precision; some in the administration argue they are more humane than traditional air strikes since drones can hover overhead and track suspected insurgents for days or weeks and thereby be certain of their intended target.

But as the above quotes imply, there is something inherently immoral and evil about a drone operator sitting in an air conditioned cubicle thousands of miles away, observing an individual or an entire village for signs of what the operator interprets as "suspicious activity." He or she has no knowledge of the customs, culture, history, language, or relationships of those on the ground; they appear only as objects on a screen with no more humanity than an avatar in a Nintendo video game. For the watched, however, there is no defense and intelligence is faulty, mistakes are made, civilians are killed, and lives, families and communities are shattered.

Drones, it turns out, are really weapons of terror (see below, the Stanford/NYU report *Living Under Drones*) and everywhere we use them, anti-U.S. sentiment rises significantly. Seventy-five percent of Pakistanis now view the U.S. as their enemy; the number of militants in Yemen has increased sharply since 2009 when drone strikes escalated there; and in spite of "decimating," "crippling,"

and "disrupting" Al Qaeda and the Taliban for the past 11 years, the lists of insurgents never seems to grow shorter or the threat of terrorism less. New terrorist organizations appear with regularity, new plots are discovered and terrorist acts occur everywhere—including here at home—with disconcerting frequency.

How effective are drones as a recruiting tool for militants? On April 23, 2013, Farea al-Muslimi told the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights that a single unnecessary drone strike in his vil-

lage in Yemen the week before instantly turned the entire village anti-American, something militants had failed to do preaching jihad.

A Stanford/NYU report, *Living Under Drones*, released in September 2012, concludes that "In the United States, the dominant narrative [that] the use of drones in Pakistan is of a surgically precise and effective tool that makes the U.S. safer by enabling 'targeted killing' of terrorists, with minimal downsides or collateral impacts... is false."

It finds that in spite of the U.S. government's secrecy, denials, and absurd claims that civilian casualties are "in the single digits," evidence shows that as many as 880 civilians, including at least 176 children, have been killed in drone strikes and that "Drones hover twenty-four hours a day over communities in northwest Pakistan, striking homes, vehicles, and public spaces

without warning. Their presence terrorizes men, women, and children, giving rise to anxiety and psychological trauma among civilian communities. Those living under drones ... are powerless to protect themselves.... The U.S. practice of striking one area multiple times, and evidence that it has killed rescuers, makes both community members and humanitarian workers afraid or unwilling to assist injured victims. Some community members shy away from gathering in groups... parents... keep their children home, and children injured or traumatized by strikes have dropped out of school.... [T]he strikes have undermined cultural and religious practices related to burial, and made family members afraid to attend funerals. In addition, families who lost loved ones or their homes in drone strikes now struggle to support themselves."

Further, the study found that less than 2% of those killed in drone strikes were High Value Targets, that drone strikes are the leading recruitment tool for militants, and that the lack of transparency by the U.S. government undermines the rule of law and may set dangerous precedents. Here are just three of many incidents in the report:

On January 23, 2009, a drone strike in Waziristan killed nine "militants" who turned out to be civilians. Relatives and neighbors had gathered for tea and conversation at the home of an elder when the missile struck, a direct hit on the room in which the men were gathered. Faheem Quereshi, a 14-year-old boy, was the sole survivor of the blast; he lost his left eye and suffered a fractured skull, shrapnel wounds, and burns over the left side of his body. He was hospitalized for 23 days, lost hearing in one ear, and has limited mobility. A top student who loved soccer and school before the attack, he suffers from PTSD and is unable to study or concentrate. His

A secondary missile fired into a crowd of first-responders is not uncommon. Nor is an attack on a funeral procession for a strike victim. They are both classified as war crimes. The CIA calls it "double-tapping."

Mirror Image

An American child looks at a picture of a Vietnamese child leaned up against the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Thousands of Vietnamese children like this child, were killed during the Vietnam War.

Or,
as the Vietnamese people would say:

The American War.

Thousands of Iraqi children have been killed in the two Iraq Wars.

Or,
as the Iraqi people would say:
The American Wars.

Then,
there is the Afghanistan War.

Or,
as the Afghanistan people would say:
The American War.

Millions of children all across America are living in poverty as a result of the billions of dollars that the U.S. Government is spending on war after war after war.

It is right in front of us.

Or,
as some American people would say:
The American Wars.



Photograph by Mike Hastie 2008

Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
May 19, 2011

extended family has been economically devastated by the loss of primary wage earners.

Sadaullah Wazir was 15 when a Hellfire missile killed 3 members of his family in Waziristan in September 2009 and mangled both his legs so badly they had to be amputated. No one killed or wounded in that attack was a militant either, but the U.S. has never acknowledged the injustice or offered compensation to Sadaullah or Faheem, so they've joined a lawsuit against the CIA for these illegal acts. So far, the courts of Pakistan and the U.S. have refused to hear their case.

On March 17, 2011, in Datta Kel, at least three Hellfire missiles slammed into a group of village elders and government officials gathered in a jirga to settle a dispute over a chromite mine. Forty-two people were killed, twelve injured. Four Taliban members were present to help resolve the issue. U.S. officials still insist all were insurgents despite conclusive evidence to the contrary.

The U.S. counts every male of military age within a strike zone an insurgent.

Reports of errors and faulty intelligence resulting in civilian deaths are everywhere—except government reports and the mainstream American media. Vivian Salama provided this account in “Living in Terror Under a Drone-Filled Sky in Yemen” (*The Atlantic*, April

one Tomahawk cruise missile, launched from a U.S. warship off the coast of Yemen, struck the mountain village of al-Ma'jalah, a suspected Al Qaeda training camp. The missile was armed with a cluster bomb that releases 166 bomblets over a wide area, each one exploding into more than 200 sharp steel fragments—shrapnel not unlike the crude pressure cooker bombs used at the Boston Marathon recently—that shred flesh and have a kill zone of 450 feet. A Yemeni commission of inquiry determined that the intended target, Saleh Mohammed al-Anbouri, along with 13 other militants, was killed by the missile or missiles, but so were 41 civilians including 22 children and 12 women. Three more people were killed after stepping on unexploded bomblets. Diplomatic cables published by WikiLeaks document a meeting between Yemen's President Saleh and Gen. David Petraeus agreeing on a cover story that Yemeni forces acting on U.S. intelligence carried out the raid. Petraeus claimed (and maybe believed) all but three of the dead were militants in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. President Obama sent a letter to President Saleh congratulating him on the successful raid against Al Qaeda, further covering up the role of the U.S.

On August 1, 2010, the Convention on Cluster Munitions went into effect banning cluster bombs. One hundred and twelve nations have signed the treaty. The U.S., China, Russia, Israel, Pakistan, India and Brazil oppose the ban.

From *Der Spiegel* Online, “The Woes of an American Drone Operator,” December 14, 2012:

Bryant saw a flash on the screen: the explosion. Parts of the building collapsed. The child had disappeared. Bryant had a sick feeling in his stomach.

“Did we just kill a kid?” he asked the man sitting next to him.

“Yeah, I guess that was a kid,” the pilot replied.

“Was that a kid?” they wrote into a chat window on the monitor.

Then, someone they didn't know answered, someone sitting in a military command center somewhere in the world who had observed their attack. “No. That was a dog,” the person wrote.

They reviewed the scene on video. A dog on two legs?

On February 8, 2013, the U.S. military “strongly rejected reports cited by a United Nations committee indicating that American forces had killed hundreds of children in Afghanistan over the last four years. The U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child said it was alarmed by reports that hundreds of children had died in U.S. attacks and airstrikes due to a ‘reported lack of precautionary measures and indiscriminate use of force.’ The U.S. military called the reports ‘categorically unfounded.’” (*LA Times*, February 8, 2013) But in just the first 8 days of April, three air strikes in Afghanistan killed at least twenty civilians—thirteen of them children—and

Child Prisoners

During the Bush administration, the U.S. rounded up some 2,500 children and detained at least 500 in Iraqi detention centers, some at Bagram in Afghanistan and 15 to 20 in Guantanamo. Some of those children at Guantanamo were as young as 13 when they were detained. At least one committed suicide. Another, a 15-year-old Canadian boy, Omar Ahmed Kadr, spent 10 years in Guantanamo before being released in September 2012; he is the first child ever convicted as a war criminal by a military tribunal.

wounded dozens more. On April 7, eleven children, ages 1 to 8 were killed when an airstrike fired a missile into a Taliban commander's home in the village of Damdara near the Pakistan border (*New York Times*, April 8, 2013).

After more than eleven years, the so-called Global War on Terror has evolved into a Global War of Terror that has no end, no clear enemy and no borders. Enemies are everywhere and nowhere. The entire globe is a battle.

In America's blood lust and ignorance we kick down doors in the night, rain Hellfire and misery from the sky, and terrorize people in far-off lands who have no knowledge of us, of our culture, our politics or religion, our customs or language, just as we have no knowledge of theirs. And no one asks the right questions—What caused all this carnage? and When is enough enough?

There is no public discussion of the root causes of 9/11, of Iraq, of why we're still in Afghanistan, of the use of armed drones to kill people who pose no imminent threat. There is no attempt to distinguish the real enemy. Were any of the villagers of Ma'jalah a threat to national security? Was Faheem Quereshi's family? Sadaullah Wazir's? Was Omar Ahmed Kadr? Were the thousands killed in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia really a threat to us? What are we doing to ourselves? What are we doing to the children?

The enemies are real enough but they are not hiding in the mountains of Waziristan or the village of Ma'jalah, they are in plain sight: injustice and inequality, poverty and hunger, ignorance and poor health, and our own lack of compassion and understanding.

We should be fighting pollution of the planet and global warming, not each other. Afghanistan and Iraq, the drone wars, the War on Terror, the War of Terror, have ushered in a new era of disregard for human life so repugnant that war should finally be rejected by every nation, tribe and individual on earth. But alas, it may be the beginning of a new, more terrifying and savage way of war. We may be on the verge of a new Dark Age.

No torturers, no “double-tappers,” no mas-terminds of secret CIA prisons have ever been called to account for their war crimes.

Robert Yoder is a WCT contributing editor. He writes a letter each day to President Obama at dearmrpresident-letters.blogspot.com.

The U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child said it was alarmed by reports that hundreds of children had died in U.S. attacks and airstrikes due to a “reported lack of precautionary measures and indiscriminate use of force.”

29, 2013): In May 2011, a small house in Jaar, a town in South Yemen. was struck by a drone. “Some believe the sole occupant, a man named Anwar Al-Arshani, may have been linked to Al Qaeda, although he kept to himself, so no one knows for sure. As Al-Arshani's house smoldered, townspeople frantically rushed to inspect the damage and look for survivors. And then, just as the crowd swelled, a second missile fired. Locals say 24 people were killed that day, all of them allegedly innocent civilians. Eighteen-year-old Muneer Al-Asy was among them. His mother Loul says she knows nothing about America—not of its democracy or politics or people or values. All she knows is that *it* killed her son. She cannot read and does not own a television. Like many in her village, she says Al-Qaeda is ‘very bad,’ but the thought of her youngest son being killed by an American missile haunts her dreams at night. She screams in fury at the people who took her son: ‘criminals!’ She rocks anxiously back and forth on her sole piece of furniture—a long cushion in her single-room home—recalling the day her son was ‘martyred’ by a U.S. drone. ‘I am like a blind person now,’ she said. ‘Muneer was my eyes.’”

A secondary missile fired into a crowd of first-responders is not uncommon. Nor is an attack on a funeral procession for a strike victim. They are both classified as war crimes. The CIA calls it “double-tapping.”

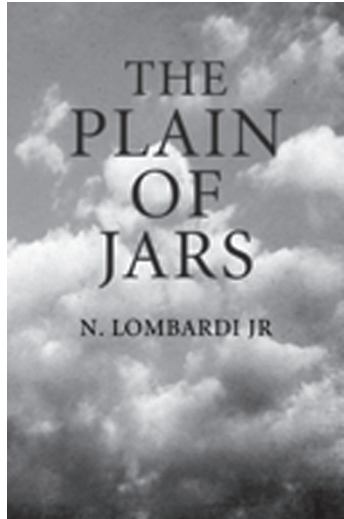
From a March 29, 2013, Bureau of Investigative Journalism article, “The civilian massacre the U.S. neither confirms nor denies”: On December 17, 2009, at least

“If those who support aggressive war had seen a fraction of what I've seen, if they'd watched children fry to death from napalm and bleed to death from a cluster bomb, they might not utter the claptrap they do.”

—John Pilger

Aerial bombardment of Laos set the precedent for the wars of today**Two Books about the Plain of Jars****Press release from Nick Lombardi**

The publication date of two different books, released on May 31, 2013, is a coincidence that could turn out to be a fortuitous one for each, in that both deal with the same topic, the secret war in Laos that took place during the 1960s, and whose geographical focus is the same area of northern Laos. One is a novel, *The Plain of Jars*



(Roundfire Books), while the other is a reprint of a 1972 anthology of bombing survivor stories, *Voices from the Plain of Jars: Life under an Air War* (University of Wisconsin Press).

It has been just about fifty years since undeclared war was waged in Laos, the tiny country sandwiched between Vietnam and Thailand.

Although the roots of this war were entangled in the complex and reckless politics of U.S. foreign policy at that time, the results are clearer: after nine years of war, seven billion dollars, three and a half million tons of bombs, a half-million dead, and 750,000 homeless, the U.S. had failed to achieve any of the objectives it had aimed for.

There are still millions of live cluster munitions lying in the ground, which have caused more than 50,000 casualties, including 30,000 dead, and still continue to kill and maim 100 people each year. More than half of the victims are children who pick up the brightly colored, yet deadly little balls.

There are several grave aspects of this war which still have relevance today. The most tragic was the bombing of unarmed civilians, the worst case of this having taken place in the plateau known as the Plain of Jars, its name derived from two-thousand-year-old stone urns made by a forgotten civilization. Here, a scorched earth policy was carried out by the U.S. Air Force, with the objective of population removal. Firsthand accounts of the horrors of the bombing campaigns are given in *Voices from the Plain of Jars*, where those who had made it to refugee camps told their stories to a young American volunteer, now a freelance columnist, Fred Branfman, who subsequently compiled the narratives and children's drawings into this classic book.

As a consequence of the air war, there are still millions of live cluster munitions lying in the ground, which have caused more than 50,000 casualties, including 30,000 dead, and still continue to kill and maim 100 people each year. More than half of the victims are children who pick up the brightly colored, yet deadly little balls.

The Plain of Jars, a novel by N. Lombardi Jr., is an adventure story about a sixty-four-year-old widow trying to unravel the mystery of the fate of her son, a pilot who was shot down over Laos twenty-two years earlier; and in the second part of the book, about a mysterious man who becomes a local legend as he clears the cluster bombs with the aid of an elephant and a self-designed flailer, a device that whips the ground and detonates the little ball-like grenades. The novel uses entertainment value to educate people about a military conflict that only few today know had ever occurred. Using action, suspense, even humor, and other fictional devices, the author has created a vehicle to convey a strong anti-war message without beating the reader over the head with it.

Does recalling the events of that time and place have any contemporary significance? Both authors feel that indeed it does, for the secret war in Laos had set the precedent for tactics used in making war today, such as aerial bombardment of civilian targets, CIA involvement in military operations, the use of proxy armies, and the testing of new aerial weapons in combat situations.

Both books are available at all major outlets, both online and many brick and mortar shops.

For more information on the history and culture of the Laotian people, and an introduction to the secret war, visit www.plainofjars.net.



APERS (Anti-Personnel) submunitions
 "It looked like the ball boys and girls toss to each other during Hmong New Year festivities. [Six-year-old] Sia Ya threw it to her [4-year-old] brother. He couldn't catch it and it landed behind him, exploding and killing him instantly. Sia Ya died after two agonizing days and nights in the provincial hospital."

—Account of Laotian cluster bomblet accident in 1993 (<http://plainofjars.net/UXO.htm>)

The Poet Laureate of Vietnam

A woman in the trees
 changed his mind about the war.
 "I'm an unhung murderer. What
 saved my mind
 was becoming a poet."

He led them into the jungle village.
 They killed all the men.
 Leaving by sampan he looked up
 to where they had allowed
 the women and children to flee.
 Stony, silent, still sentinels
 but for one movement

a tear running down the face
 of a young woman
 he could have loved.

—Sharon Doubiago for Steve Mason (1940-2005),
 Poet Laureate of the Vietnam Veterans Association

from *Body and Soul* (Mena, AR: Cedar Hill Publications, 2000); and *Love on the Streets* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008)

Note: Steve Mason was the poet chosen to read at the 1984 dedication of the Wall; he read "The Wall Within." He published three highly popular books from Bantam Dell, *Johnny's Song*, *Warrior for Peace*, *Journey Toward Peace and Mutual Healing*. His main sales were tape cassettes of reading from the books to cross country truck driver vets. I knew him when we both lived in Ashland, Oregon, in the '90s where annually he presented The Steve Mason Show. One year, after this magnificent event, focused mainly on being a feminist father raising daughters, I asked him the question I kept waiting to be addressed in his shows, "What changed your mind about Vietnam?" My poem is his answer, word for word.

Steve was working on the father-feminist theme for his next book when he succumbed to Agent Orange cancer. —SD

Sharon Doubiago has described herself as countercultural mother, an anti-war activist, and a Joycean scholar. She has published more than two dozen books of poetry and prose and over a hundred essays. Learn more about Sharon at sharondoubiago.com.

Why I Spoke Out at Obama's Foreign Policy Speech

by Medea Benjamin

Having worked for years on the issues of drones and Guantanamo, I was delighted to get a pass (the source will remain anonymous) to attend President Obama's speech at the National Defense University. I had read many press reports anticipating what the President might say. There was much talk about major policy shifts that would include transparency with the public, new guidelines for the use of drones, taking lethal drones out of the purview of the CIA, and in the case of Guantanamo, invoking the "waiver system" to begin the transfer of prisoners already cleared for release.

Sitting at the back of the auditorium, I hung on every word the President said. I kept waiting to hear an announcement about changes that would represent a significant shift in policy. Unfortunately, I heard nice words, not the resetting of failed policies.

Instead of announcing the transfer of drone strikes from the CIA to the exclusive domain of the military, Obama never even mentioned the CIA—much less acknowledge the killing spree that the CIA has been carrying out in Pakistan during his administration. While there were predictions that he would declare an end to signature strikes, strikes based merely on suspicious behavior that have been responsible for so many civilian casualties, no such announcement was made.

The bulk of the president's speech was devoted to justifying drone strikes. I was shocked when the President claimed that his administration did everything it could to capture suspects instead of killing them. That is just not

true. Obama's reliance on drones is precisely because he did not want to be bothered with capturing suspects and bringing them to trial. Take the case of 16-year-old Pakistani Tariz Aziz, who could have been picked up while attending a conference at a major hotel in the capital, Islamabad, but was instead killed by a drone strike, with his 12-year-old cousin, two days later. Or the drone strike that 23-year-old Yemini Farea al-Muslimi talked about



He said: "...there is no justification, beyond politics, for Congress to prevent us from closing a facility that should have never been opened."

She said: "Excuse me, Mr. President, but you're the Commander in Chief. You could close Guantanamo tomorrow..."

when he testified in Congress. He said the man targeted in his village of Wessab was a man who everyone knew, who met regularly with government officials and who could have easily been brought in for questioning.

When the President was coming to the end of this speech, he started talking about Guantanamo. As he has done in the past, he stated his desire to close the prison, but blamed Congress. That's when I felt compelled to speak out. With the men in Guantanamo on hunger strike, being brutally forced fed and bereft of all hope, I couldn't

let the President continue to act as if he were some helpless official at the mercy of Congress.

"Excuse me, Mr. President," I said, "but you're the Commander in Chief. You could close Guantanamo tomorrow and release the 86 prisoners who have been cleared for release." We went on to have quite an exchange.

While I have received a deluge of support, there are others, including journalists, who have called me "rude." But terrorizing villages with Hellfire missiles that vaporize innocent people is rude. Violating the sovereignty of nations like Pakistan is rude. Keeping 86 prisoners in Guantanamo long after they have been cleared for release is rude. Shoving feeding tubes down prisoners' throats instead of giving them justice is certainly rude.

At one point during his speech, President Obama said that the deaths of innocent people from the drone attacks will haunt him as long as he lives. But he is still unwilling to acknowledge those deaths, apologize to the families, or compensate them. In Afghanistan, the U.S. military has a policy of compensating the families of victims who they killed or wounded by mistake. It is not always done, and many families refuse to take the money, but at least it represents some accounting for taking the lives of innocent people. Why can't the President set up a similar policy when drone strikes are used in countries with which we are not at war?

There are many things the President could and should have said, but he didn't. So it is up to us to speak out.

Medea Benjamin, cofounder of Global Exchange and CODEPINK: Women for Peace, is the author of Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control.

When I learned I was a war criminal

Dear friends,

Our work has brought information about the crimes committed against Fallujah and the subsequent health crisis to many in the U.S. who wouldn't normally hear anything but celebratory tales of U.S. military operations.

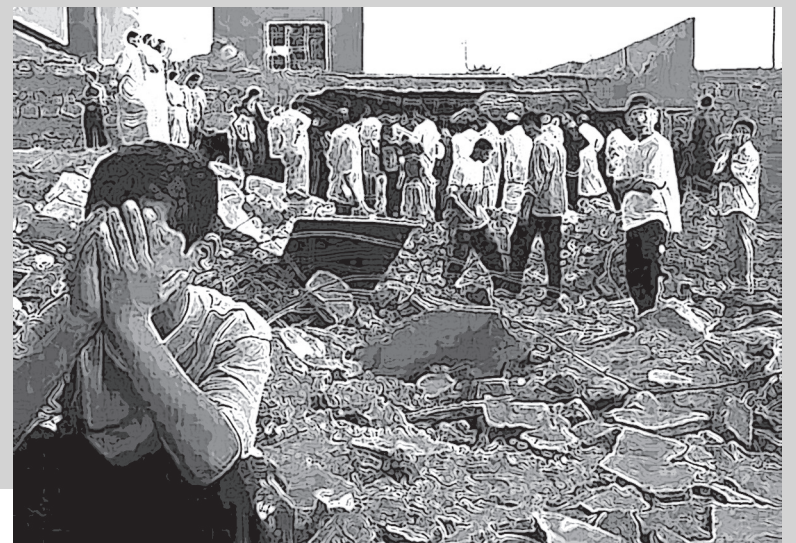
But we have not reached enough people to be able to change policy or bring justice to Fallujah.

It is imperative that we step things up before what progress we have made in informing the American public fades away from collective memory.

The name of "Fallujah" must be made into an enduring symbol of the wickedness of war and occupation. When Fallujah is spoken of, it should immediately be associated with similar atrocities, like the massacre at Wounded Knee, the carpet bombing of Dresden, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Mai Lai massacre, and Sabra and Shatila.

In order to broaden our reach, the Justice For Fallujah Project is making a documentary film about Fallujah, which we intend to distribute for free on the internet and at film festivals. We are currently conducting interviews with Fallujans, journalists, scholars, activists, and veterans.

The narrative of the film follows my own personal story as a veteran of the 2nd siege of Fallujah, as I search for answers about what I participated in. The working title of the film is *When I learned I was a war criminal: Peace be upon you, O Fallujah.*



Please support us with whatever means you have available. Your donation will significantly enhance the quality of our documentary (we need funds to buy stock footage of the media coverage of Fallujah, and to cover travel expenses). You can also help by just spreading the word.

We appreciate your solidarity.

Sincerely,

Ross Caputi

The Justice For Fallujah Project
www.thefallujahproject.org

The “good” Americans are getting prosecuted

Bradley Manning: Prisoner of Conscience

by Professor Francis A. Boyle

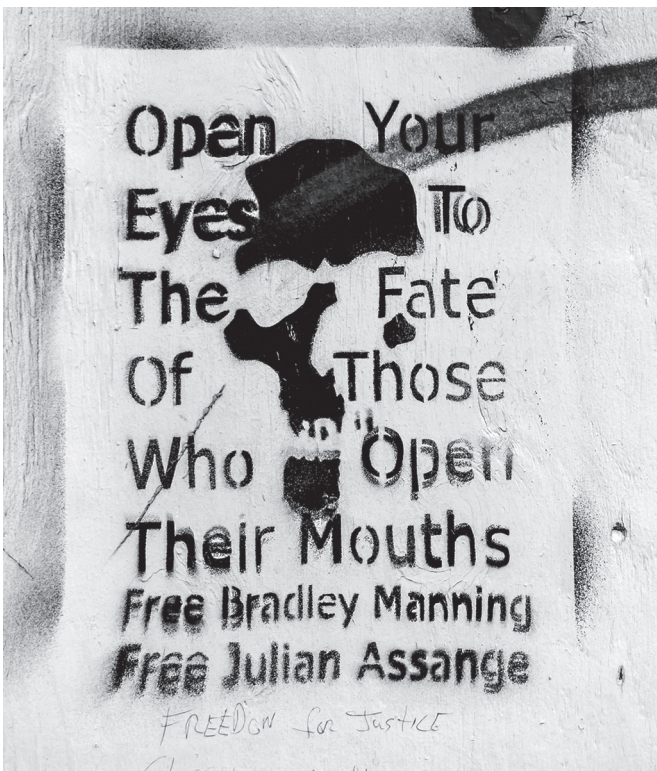
Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the peoples of the world have witnessed successive governments in the United States that have demonstrated little if any respect for fundamental considerations of international law, human rights, and the United States Constitution itself.

Instead, the world has watched a comprehensive and malicious assault upon the integrity of the international and domestic legal orders by groups of men and women who are thoroughly Machiavellian in their perception of international relations and in their conduct of both foreign affairs and American domestic policy.

One generation ago the peoples of the world asked themselves: Where were the “good” Germans?

Even more seriously, in many instances specific components of the U.S. government’s foreign policies constitute ongoing criminal activity under well recognized principles of both international law and United States domestic law, and in particular the Nuremberg Charter, the Nuremberg Judgment, and the Nuremberg Principles, as well as the Pentagon’s own *U.S. Army Field Manual 27-10 on The Law of Land Warfare* (1956), which applies to the President as Commander in Chief of United States Armed Forces under Article II, Section 2 of the United States Constitution.

Depending on the substantive issues involved, these international and domestic crimes typically include but are not limited to numerous Nuremberg offences of “crimes against peace.” Their criminal responsibility also concerns Nuremberg “crimes against humanity” and war crimes as well as grave breaches of the Four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the 1907 Hague Regulations on land warfare.



“Open Your Eyes To The Fate Of Those Who Open Their Mouths. Free Bradley Manning. Free Julian Assange” Dublin, Ireland, street graffiti photo by William Murphy (www.streetsofdublin.com)

Furthermore, various officials of the United States government have committed numerous inchoate crimes incidental to these substantive offences that under the Nuremberg Charter, Judgment, and Principles as well as *U.S. Army Field Manual 27-10* (1956) are international crimes in their own right: planning and preparation, solicitation, incitement, conspiracy, complicity, attempt, aiding, and abetting.

Of course the terrible irony of today’s situation is that over six decades ago at Nuremberg the U.S. government participated in the prosecution, punishment, and execution of Nazi government officials for committing some of the same types of heinous international crimes that these officials of the United States government have inflicted upon people all over the world. To be sure, I personally oppose the imposition of capital punishment upon any human being for any reason no matter how monstrous their crimes.

According to basic principles of international criminal law set forth in paragraph 501 of *U.S. Army Field Manual 27-10*, all high level civilian officials and military officers in the U.S. government who either knew or should have known that soldiers or civilians under their control (such as the C.I.A. or mercenary contractors), committed or were about to commit international crimes and failed to take the measures necessary to stop them, or to punish them, or both, are likewise personally responsible for the commission of international crimes.

This category of officialdom who actually knew or should have known of the commission of these international crimes under their jurisdiction and failed to do anything about them include at the very top of America’s criminal chain-of-command the President, the Vice-President, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, Director of National Intelligence, the C.I.A. Director, National Security Advisor, and the Pentagon’s Joint Chiefs of Staff along with the appropriate Regional Commanders-in-Chief, especially for U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM). These U.S. government officials and their immediate subordinates are responsible for the commission of crimes against peace, crimes against humanity, and war crimes as specified by the Nuremberg Charter, Judgment, and Principles as well as by *U.S. Army Field Manual 27-10* of 1956.

One generation ago the peoples of the world asked themselves: Where were the “good” Germans? Well, there were some good Germans. The Lutheran theologian and pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer was the foremost exemplar of someone who led a life of principled opposition to the Nazi-terror state even unto death.

Today the peoples of the world are likewise asking themselves: Where are the “good” Americans? Well, there are some good Americans. They are getting prosecuted for protesting against and resisting illegal U.S. military interventions and war crimes around the world. Private Bradley Manning is America’s equivalent to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Vaclav Havel, Andrei Sakharov, Wei Jingsheng, Aung San Suu Kyi, and others. He is the archetypal American Hero whom we should be bringing into our schools and teaching our children to emulate, not those wholesale purveyors of gratuitous violence and bloodshed adulated by the U.S. government, America’s financial power elite, the mainstream corporate news media, and its interlocked entertainment industry.

Today in international legal terms, the United States government itself should now be viewed as constituting an

EXPOSING CRIMES IS NOT A CRIME
FREE
BRADLEY MANNING

ongoing criminal conspiracy under international criminal law in violation of the Nuremberg Charter, the Nuremberg Judgment, and the Nuremberg Principles, because of its formulation and undertaking of serial wars of aggression, crimes against peace, crimes against humanity, and war crimes that are legally akin to those perpetrated by the former Nazi regime in Germany.

As a consequence, American citizens and soldiers such as Bradley Manning possess the basic right under international law and United States domestic law, including the U.S. Constitution, to engage in acts of civil resistance designed to prevent, impede, thwart, or terminate ongoing criminal activities perpetrated by U.S. government officials in their conduct of foreign affairs policies and military operations purported to relate to defense and counter-terrorism. If not so restrained, the United States government could very well precipitate a Third World War.

Francis A. Boyle is a professor of international law at the University of Illinois College of Law. He served on the board of directors of Amnesty International USA from 1988 to 1992.

Court Martial Begins: What Would You Do?

After a grueling 3 years in prison awaiting trial, three-time Nobel Peace Prize nominee Bradley Manning’s court martial has begun.

On the first day of the trial the defense and prosecution faced off with opening statements that both asked “What would you do” if you were given access to evidence of the true nature of the war, civilian murders, illegal torture, unnecessary secrecy and thousands of documents revealing government corruption? What would you do if your reports to superiors were ignored, and if you learned that the American people had been lied to?

Defense lawyer David Coombs highlighted that Bradley Manning is not your typical soldier—rather he is a conscientious soldier who cared more than most about people, fellow soldiers and Iraqi civilians alike. Bradley Manning, he explained, is a “Humanist” who, prior to deploying to Iraq, had that printed on his dog tags as his religious preference. For Bradley Manning, the horrors of civilian and his fellow soldiers’ deaths were troubling and transforming: inspiring him to learn the truth about the war, a war that we now know, thanks in part to Bradley and the whistleblower website WikiLeaks, has been based on lies.

Source: *Bradley Manning Support Network*
www.bradleymanning.org

U.S. Space Forces

(continued from page 20)

shuttle are perfect symbols of our worship of the gods of metal.

Military satellites and downlink stations on the ground also make it possible for so-called “missile defense” (MD) systems to function. The Obama administration has ramped up deployment of MD to surround Russia and China with Navy Aegis ship-based and Army ground-based interceptor systems. MD actually has nothing to do with defense, as these interceptor missiles are key elements in Pentagon first-strike attack planning. They are the “shield” that would be used to take out Russian or Chinese nuclear retaliatory strikes after the U.S. first-strike “sword” is plunged into the heart of those nations.

(R-Ohio) and other such prominent politicians from both parties.

All of this won't come cheap. Some years ago in Space News there was an editorial that said, “We've got to be responsible corporate citizens and come up with a dedicated funding source for our expensive space projects. And we have. We are now sending our lobbyists to Washington to secure it.” The sources of funds are called “entitlement programs”; and today we see the vigorous attempts by Congress, and President Obama, to cut Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, and what is left of other programs of social uplift to free up their funds.

The Pentagon says that our role in the U.S. under corporate globalization of the world economy will be “Security export”—thus, we won't have conventional

the police and military should have these additional snooping and repression powers because we've already been so conditioned to accept such measures—Boston being the latest example, as we saw an entire city shut down without the blink of an eye. Likely another field test—this time of the domestic surveillance and control system.

Global Network co-founder Bill Sulzman (Citizens for Peace in Space) says, “The U.S. military space program continues to evolve. Cyber war has been fully integrated with other facets of space war and space enhancement of ground war. The blanket of secrecy over the whole enterprise is more prominent than ever. The U.S. does not acknowledge any international law constraints on any of its activities. Public awareness of the issue is almost nonexistent.”

In fact, Russia and China have been trying for years to get the U.S. to agree to negotiate a new treaty called Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) but all U.S. administrations since Reagan have blocked the process at the United Nations.

The militarization of everything around us is a spiritual sickness. Lakota holy man Lame Deer talked about the green frog skin—the dollar bill—and how the white man was blinded by his love for the dollar. His spiritual connection to the Mother Earth is broken.



The Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space protests in Washington, DC

We need a transformation of the heart and our entire way of thinking.

We should repeatedly be calling for the conversion of the military industrial complex—to home weatherization, rail systems, a solar society, wind turbines, and hiring unemployed workers to plant public gardens in our communities.

The UMASS-Amherst Economics Department has done the definitive study that shows if the nation spent our tax dollars on anything other than military production, in every case we'd create many times more jobs. When we build rail systems we create twice as many jobs as military production does.

We all live on a tiny satellite flying through space. Our challenge is to develop the necessary consciousness and culture to survive this journey. Viewing our Mother Earth and the vastness of space as sacred will help us to plant a seed that will flourish in time.

Bruce Gagnon is Coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space and lives in Bath, Maine. www.space4peace.org

Join the Action

Each fall the Global Network holds a week of local actions called Keep Space for Peace Week. In 2013, the week will be October 5-12 and the theme this year will be the vital connection between drones and military satellites. We urge folks to hold a local event in solidarity with actions around the world during that week of protests.

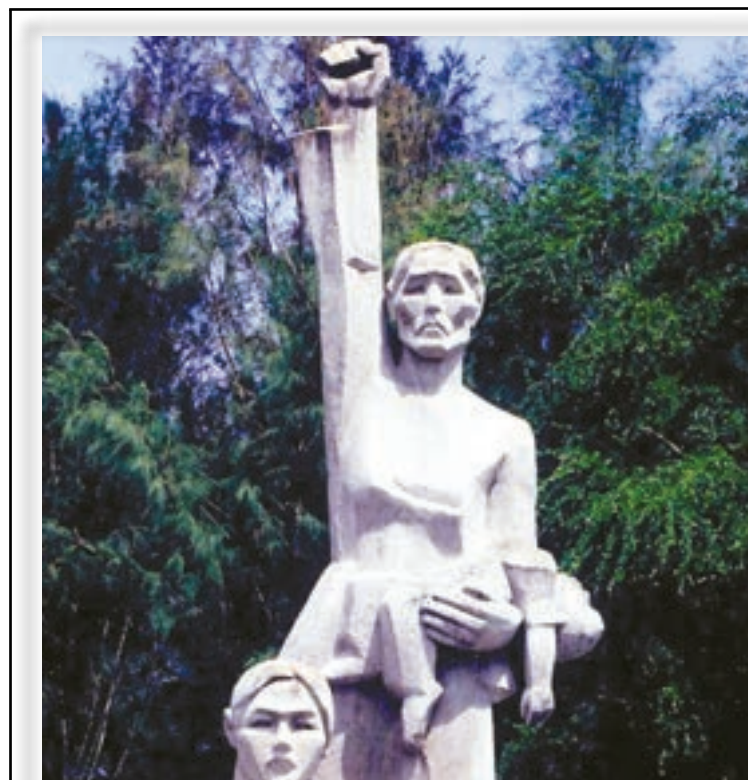
The Space Command appears to have three primary missions: to provide global surveillance (the eyes and ears of corporate control), to project global power using space-directed technologies, and to create the capability to control the pathway (called the gravity well) to and from Earth. NASA, with our tax dollars, continues to develop the necessary technologies to successfully “mine the sky” for precious resources. We've already seen Obama privatize some aspects of the space program as the technology matures. The plan is ultimately for full privatization of space mining operations with the Space Command ensuring control of the gateway to outer space on behalf of particular corporate interests.

In a Congressional study published in 1989 called “Military Space Forces: The Next 50 Years” it was acknowledged that control of this mining pathway was a key element in U.S. long-range planning. The study concluded that armed space stations at certain “stable libration points” could theoretically dominate Earth and the moon. Referring to the return of unauthorized future space mining shipments the study said, “Armed forces might lie in wait at that location to hijack rival shipments on return.”

Space piracy? But seriously, who was behind such a provocative study? The foreword of the study was signed by the likes of former astronaut and Sen. John Glenn (D-Ohio), then congressman and now Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Florida), then congressman and now Gov. John Kasich

jobs making products useful to our communities anymore. (It's more profitable to make shoes, clothes, TV's, cell phones, or cars overseas with cheaper labor.) Instead we will build weapons for endless war and send our kids overseas to die for the oil and precious mineral extraction corporations.

Superfluous populations at home and overseas have become the enemy. The global surveillance system is being developed to track and control us. The Native Americans used to say “Put your ear to railroad tracks and hear the train coming.” It is just presumed by the corporate oligarchy that the public will accept that



Academy Awards--Best Picture

This photograph is a cropped version of the statue at the My Lai Massacre site in Vietnam.

The envelope should read:

The United States continues to be the Cop of the world, spreading its Imperialistic Democracy like a raging virus.

Let's see...

what part of the world has the U.S.

Government not left a dead child?

And then, we wonder why it is happening in America.

Your town.

My town.

Newtown.

—Mike Hastie
Army Medic Vietnam
January 31, 2013

U.S. SPACE FORCES — SURVEILLANCE, DOMINATION, AND FIRST-STRIKE ATTACK

by Bruce Gagnon

I started paying attention to space issues on June 12, 1982, when I watched Ronald Reagan's head of Star Wars, Lt. Gen. Daniel Graham (Strategic Defense Initiative), say on C-SPAN that we should let the disarmament movement keep talking about nuclear weapons because—"we're moving into space and they don't have a clue." Graham got my attention in that moment.

In 1983, I went to work for the Florida Coalition for Peace & Justice and for 15 years we kept taking people to the space center for protests against military satellite launches, nuclear-powered space missions, and ballistic missile tests. In 1987, we had our biggest protest when over 5,000 people from around the country marched on Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. One hundred and eighty-six people were arrested for climbing over the base fence in a symbolic attempt to sit on the launch pad of the first Trident II missile test.

In 1992, the Florida Coalition and the Colorado Springs-based group called Citizens for Peace in Space created the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space. Journalism professor Karl Grossman, long an anti-nuclear power activist, was also instrumental in the founding of the Global Network and he has always been key in our opposition to the nuclear industry agenda of space as their new market. (For some years I coordinated both the Florida Coalition and the Global Network. Now I exclusively focus on space issues with the Global Network.)

In 1997, the U.S. Space Command came out with their controversial planning document called "Vision for 2020" that proclaimed they would become the Masters of Space and would dominate space and "deny others the use of space." The plan also stated "Although unlikely to be challenged by a global peer competitor, the U.S. will continue to be challenged regionally. The globalization of the world economy will also continue, with a widening between 'haves' and 'have-nots.'"

The message was clear—the Space Command would become the military arm of corporate globalization.

Subsequent Space Command documents, like the "Strategic Master Plan FY2006 and Beyond," painted an even clearer picture: "[T]he ability to gain space superiority (the ability to exploit space while selectively disallowing it to adversaries) is critically important and maintaining space superiority is an essential prerequisite for success in modern warfare. Every military operation since the Gulf War has powerfully demonstrated the vital importance of SFE [Space Force Enhancement] to military operations."

Before the Gulf War began, the Space Command pre-identified all of Iraq's military targets using military satellites. In the first 2 or 3 days of the war, 95% of those targets were hit.

The Gulf War, code named Operation Desert Storm (January 17 to February 28, 1991), was called the first space war by the Pentagon. It was then that they field-tested the entire military space warfare system that had been put into place since the end of World War II—with major augmentation during the Reagan-Bush years.

Before the Gulf War began, the Space Command pre-identified all of Iraq's military targets using military satellites. In the first 2 or 3 days of the war, 95% of those targets were hit. The war was essentially over at that point but dragged on for weeks. During those remaining days, the Pentagon launched 100 cruise missiles, costing \$1 million each, and used up lots more military hardware that kept production lines humming round-the-clock back at home. But most importantly, the Space Command was learning how to tie all warfare—whether ground-based, sea-based, or air-based into the Space Command system.

It was out of this field test of the program that the tag "Full Spectrum Dominance" would come. The idea was that space technology would direct all warfare on the planet, at every level of conflict, and that the U.S. would not allow anyone else to achieve that capability.

Today, drones buzzing over Afghanistan, Pakistan, or Mali are "flown" by pilots back in the U.S. at places like Creech AFB,



Military satellites in orbit link the pilot in the U.S. to the drone in Afghanistan or Pakistan in "real time"

Nevada, or Hancock Air Field, New York. This is possible because the military satellites in orbit link the pilot to the drone in "real time"—split-second time. Space Command downlink ground stations spread around the globe help relay those signals. The Pentagon brags that this high-tech warfare increases "the kill chain."

In a way you could call the military satellites the "triggers" that make the drone kills work. These satellites allow the military to see everything, hear everything, and to target every place on the planet.

Infrared and radio-band sensors used by the military can peer through clouds and foliage and can even detect and hear people inside their homes. During the last few years of the U.S. military occupation of Iraq, unmanned aircraft monitored Baghdad 24/7, turning the entire city into the equivalent of a convenience store crammed full of security cameras. This technology is called "persistent surveillance" and is made possible by new generations of very expensive military satellites. It costs huge amounts of money to build these satellites and then launch them on rockets that blow up from time to time.

By 2020, the Pentagon hopes to have a new, layered, space surveillance architecture in place that will be able to integrate space, cyberspace, and ground combat through robotics for the delivery of a seamless web of global domination.

A two-billion-dollar, one-million-square-foot facility is being built by the National Security Administration (NSA) outside of Salt Lake City, Utah. It's a phone, fax, email, data storage and analysis warehouse called Utah Data Station—everything about the facility is secret. It is scheduled to open this summer. It is the Taj Mahal of the police state.

In June 2012, the second flight of the new military space plane (X-37) touched down at Vandenberg AFB after 469 days in orbit. This unmanned super-drone is a first-strike attack system, part of the Global Strike doctrine now underway at the Strategic Command in Omaha, Nebraska. In annual computer war games at the Space Command, set in the year 2016, the Pentagon launches a first-strike on China's nuclear forces and the new military space plane is the first weapon used. It's called the "successor" to the recently retired space shuttle, which was paraded through streets of Los Angeles in late 2012—400 trees were cut down to prepare its red-carpeted path to a waiting museum. The X-37 and the retired space

(continued on page 19)

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