
INSIDE: BEHIND THE MASK OF THE EXECUTIONER
● AMERICA'S HOLY WARRIORS ● RAPTORS, ROBOTS
AND RODS FROM GOD ● FOOTBALL & VIOLENCE

The^{ColdType} READER

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SHOOT THE MESSENGER

By **JESSELYN RADAK**

DO YOU remember the famous 2001 trophy photo of John Walker Lindh – the American Taliban – the most prominent prisoner of the Afghan war? Although he was seriously wounded, starving, freezing, and exhausted, U.S. soldiers handcuffed him naked, scrawled “shithead” across the blindfold, duct-taped him to a stretcher in an unheated and unlit shipping container, threatened him with death, and posed with him for pictures. Parts of his ordeal were captured on videotape. Sound familiar? – **SEE PAGE 22**



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3. BEHIND THE MASK OF THE EXECUTIONER

By Mara Verheyden-Hilliard

11. EXECUTION IN THE NAME OF FREEDOM

By Felicity Arbuthnot

15. AMERICA'S HOLY WARRIORS

By Chris Hedges

19. FOOTBALL AND VIOLENCE GO TOGETHER

By Robert Fisk

22. COVER STORY – SHOOT THE MESSENGER

By Jesselyn Radack

27. SHOW ME THE INTELLIGENCE

By Ray McGovern

31. LOOKING FOR AN EXTREME MAKEOVER

By Bill Berkowitz

34. RAPTORS, ROBOTS AND RODS FROM GOD

By Frida Berrigan

41. JOHNNY GOT HIS GUN

By William Blum

48. BUSH ANTI-TERROR SUCCESSES ARE ALL FICTION

By David Swanson

51. MONEY VERSUS THE MONSOON

By Stan Cox

57. KILLING JOURNALISTS IS A WAR CRIME

By Amy Goodman

59. WHITE HOUSE PRESS CORPS LEARNS ITS LESSON

By David Walsh

BEHIND THE MASK OF THE EXECUTIONER

BY MARA VERHEYDEN-HILLIARD

On Dec. 26, 2006, the Appellate Court of the Iraqi Special Tribunal announced that Judge Awad Hamad al-Bandar, along with Saddam Hussein, was to be put to death. With an initial filing made immediately that night and over the next two weeks, the writer and Carl Messineo of the Partnership for Civil Justice, working with former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark, sought emergency relief to stop the US government from transferring Judge Bandar to what was an extra-judicial killing. Judge Bandar was sentenced to death in a show trial, along with Hussein, in the absence of a competent tribunal or due process of law. The federal courts, including the US Supreme Court, refused to prohibit the transfer of Bandar, who was undisputedly in US physical custody, based on the US government's argument that its operations are beyond the reach of US courts when acting as, or as in this case renaming itself to be, a multi-national force. Judge Bandar was hanged in the early Monday morning of January 15, 2007

The issue for Bush is not really the hangings, but rather the reality of the hangings that was revealed to the world

President Bush has announced he is “disappointed” with the hangings of Saddam Hussein, Judge Awad Hamad al-Bandar and Barzan Ibrahim, adding that it “looked like kind of a revenge killing.” This might be seen as strange from the man who hung them. Bush added that the real problem with the hangings was the appearance, that it made it harder for him to “make the case to the American people.” This part was true.

The issue for Bush is not really the

hangings, but rather the reality of the hangings that was revealed to the world. The government was concerned that protest and even rebellion could spread in Iraq and throughout the Arab world. But the Bush Administration was also worried about the dynamically evolving domestic political scene. The people of the United States, having seen something other than the edited and packaged presentation of the hangings, may question the US's fictional story of the situation in Iraq and

VICTOR'S JUSTICE

The US war machine, which has already sought to exempt itself from restraint or accountability worldwide, has now untethered itself from the one last legal hold on it, the US courts

rightly hold the US government responsible. Condoleezza Rice clarified the government's displeasure with the situation, calling for punishment of those who made and released unauthorized video images.

First one hanging, and then two more, and the press has filled columns with the US government's self-serving protestations. The media dutifully reports this fiction of concerns, regret and criticisms. To read these protestations was remarkable to us, as we were simultaneously reading the US government's briefs filed in federal court opposing our emergency attempts to obtain due process for our client Judge Bandar, who was to be hung.

Judge Bandar, a civilian, was being held in the exclusive physical custody of the US government at Camp Cropper. The US government controlled his fate, whether he lived or died. Had it really any concerns about the hangings, the fact that the federal court system in the United States was being presented with such matters was easily enough to stave off execution. But, the US government actually wanted them dead. Further, it is adamantly opposed to there being any restraint on its lawless conduct in Iraq.

The US government in its military operations has sought to neutralize itself from the authority of the US courts simply by renaming itself as the Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I). It presented this fiction to the court claiming that the US government did not control military operations in Iraq. This may be news to you, news to most of the world; especially news to the Iraqis.

That assertion may be news even to General George W. Casey, Jr., identified as the commander of MNF-I who has said repeatedly that he is subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Commander, US Central Command (CENTCOM) and that the MNF-I is "a subordinate command to CENTCOM." Asked in his Senate confirmation hearing whether there would be any limits on CENTCOM's authority due to the international nature of the MNF-I, he replied that there were "none at all." He added, there is "no reporting chain that goes back to the United Nations. . . . My chain of command is through the secretary of defense and the President."

The US war machine, which has already sought to exempt itself from restraint or accountability worldwide, has now untethered itself from the one last legal hold on it, the US courts. By so doing, it asserts that the US courts do not have jurisdiction to address claims lodged against it. It can take up arms anywhere against any civilians, capture, hold them, torture them, have them killed, and merely by renaming itself can eliminate any threat of judicial oversight or intervention.

The US government also simultaneously argued that any stay in the rendition to death of Judge Bandar would interfere with the "exclusive authority" of the President as Commander in Chief and "unitary chief executive." Maintaining its open rejection of any check or balance against imperial authority, the government argued this was a matter of foreign affairs and military operations exclusively for Presi-

dent Bush to determine with no oversight.

US puppets and propaganda

Continuing his fiction spun to the people of the United States, Bush has launched a component campaign of his decision to inflict deeper death and destruction on Iraq and US servicepeople. He has begun to publicly criticize his puppet, Prime Minister Maliki. This is to ensure that any failure of the puppeteer's actions and plans, and resulting public outcry, can be laid at the feet of the puppet. Thus, his critique of the hangings.

Scapegoating their own puppet is not an unfamiliar program to the White House and Pentagon. The US government supported its puppet Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines until the people rose up and drove him out. The United States supported its puppet Jean Claude Duvalier in Haiti until the people rose up and drove him out. A little repudiation of the failing regime, at the stage of its dethronement, is a tactic borne of practicality.

Had things gone according to plan in Iraq, minus the all-revealing video of the execution, all three men would have been strung up by the US government, and it would have been reported as a sovereign act of their puppet Iraqi government and asserted to have been carried out with appropriate gravitas and "dignity." We would have been spoonfed the fiction of the conquerors' honorable execution of the captured head of state – a romantic notion of barbaric "victor's justice," harkening back to the Roman Empire.

News of the hangings was fed to and reprinted by the press, mostly lies except the fact of death – all reported with just as little responsibility as the war and the show trial that preceded them. The carefully packaged and edited news of the first hanging was betrayed by the cell phone video, its grisly appeal overwriting the accepted constructed news story.

Because of a reporting quirk, the plan of the official propaganda machine was exposed. The initial news stories on the date of Saddam Hussein's death, broadcast throughout the US media in orderly fashion, contained so much "truth" as to report that there were three hangings at first. This proves that the coverage was not coverage at all but rather another example of reporters delivering a script obviously written in advance and handed to them earlier by government agencies. Our client, Judge Bandar, was reported to have been killed on Dec. 30 along with Saddam Hussein. This was reported as a fact by virtually all the media outlets. But the plan had changed at the last minute and the reporters in the propaganda machine were not informed so they all reported his death as a fact.

But Judge Bandar was kept alive only to be brutally killed on the morning of January 15 instead. The timing of the execution was a political calculation just as the whole trial that led to his conviction was pure political calculation. Political executions should never be confused with justice.

When it comes to Iraq the Bush Administration has a serious credibility

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problem. The show trial followed by the grisly executions has compounded the problem for the White House. The fictional story fed to the American people has run into serious problems.

The administration largely succeeded with its fictional trial story in the corporate media. Major newspapers and television shows have repeated the government-approved mantra that there was due process in Iraq, that the “trial” was a major act for a fledgling democracy. Where there was international outcry, the propaganda of the United States was firm. On the day we filed an emergency appeal in the US Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, the Washington Post announced by editorial that while “the trial was imperfect,” the resulting deaths would “still be justice,” adding that there was “something unreal about the cries of foul from human rights groups.”

The fact that there was no apparent competent tribunal or trial that resulted in the conviction and execution of these men was of little concern. The Iraqi Special Tribunal (IST) itself was a creation of the US government, a violation of the Geneva Convention that prohibits an occupying power from altering an existing court system. It is not legal, legally competent or independent and it is financed by the US government. As written in our brief to the Court, “There is nothing juridical about the proceedings to which Al-Bandar has been subjected except the fact that it has taken place in a courtroom. It has been a political proceeding with a predetermined outcome that has been enforced by the repeated pressure and

intervention of the Prime Minister, acting to serve the occupying powers.”

The show trial

Judge Bandar was forced to wear a Guantanamo style prison jumpsuit when he was put to death on January 16. He was convicted of the “crime” of having been the presiding judge over a two-year-long trial against those accused in the assassination attempt on Saddam Hussein at Dujail in 1982, during the Iran-Iraq war. That was his accused crime, being the judge at the trial. Yet, the Court refused to allow Judge Bandar to access or present the record of the underlying trial. He repeatedly pled, “Give me the records of the trial and I’ll prove that it was fair.” He was not allowed to have them, nor was the prosecution required to present them. The US government was acknowledged to possess those records.

At the start of invasion of Iraq in 2003 the Pentagon released its infamous “deck of cards” with the name and picture of the top 52 Baathist government officials that it was determined to capture or kill or both. Judge Bandar was not included in this list. He was targeted and killed for one reason. He was deemed by US “legal” authorities as a necessary conduit for the killing of the primary target, Saddam Hussein. The only “evidence” presented against Hussein about the executions from the Dujail assassination attempt was that he signed 148 death warrants after a three-year-long trial and review process. The signing of death warrants, an executive function carried out by George Bush himself 152

times as governor of Texas, was not enough “show” in the show trial as a base for execution. Thus, Judge Bandar was put on trial for the two-year trial that led to the death sentences. He was himself accused of presiding over a show trial. Making it clear that the Iraqi Special Tribunal possessed the best knowledge of the form and function of a show trial, the defense was not advised what charges were actually being leveled against their clients until after the prosecution had called witnesses for seven months. They were then given a few minutes to begin their case.

In the midst of the defense trial, after receiving a written note passed to him from American officials outside the courtroom, the Chief Judge suddenly announced that the defense would be barred from calling any more witnesses and that its case was closed. “You’ve presented 26 witnesses. If that is not enough to present your case, then 100 won’t work.” The defense had presented less than 20. The prosecution had called more than 50 witnesses. The court then announced its verdict, sentencing three of the defendants to death, on Nov. 4, 2006.

This “independent” and “sovereign” trial took place in the Green Zone, the US government’s garrisoned mini-state carved out of the middle of Baghdad. All participants had to rely on the US government for their security – in other words, to stay alive. As such, three defense lawyers were murdered in the course of the trial, the first killed the night after the first day of trial. Another attorney was taken by men who said they were from the Ministry of the In-

terior. He was found the next day. He had holes drilled in his head. But this was asserted to be no impediment to a fair trial. Defense witnesses were reportedly tortured and killed. The IST ordered that such allegations not be raised at the proceedings and threatened surviving defense counsel with their own arrests.

The current puppet leadership of Iraq is drawn from the Dawa Party. The Dawa Party was the political force that organized and carried out the 1982 assassination attempt against Saddam Hussein in Dujail. During the trial, the judges were replaced repeatedly by the executive branch if they felt their statements were not sufficiently harsh toward the defendants. Others were told that they would be fired and that they and their families would be “put outside of the Green Zone” if they didn’t take a hard enough line against the defendants. Placement outside the Green Zone under these conditions would amount to a virtual death sentence for the wayward judges. Certainly, the hallmark of a competent tribunal is that it be part of an independent judiciary.

The United States acknowledged that it had the defendants, including Judge Bandar in their exclusive physical custody at Camp Cropper. Only the US military personnel had control over him. The prisoners could not be visited, touched, spoken to or seen – let alone murdered – without the direction and agreement of the United States.

Legal struggle in US court

On Dec. 26, 2006, the appellate panel of

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the Iraqi Special Tribunal upheld the convictions with a bloodthirsty statement, demanding even that more be killed than these three men.

Working with former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark, we immediately turned to file an emergency Petition for a Writ of Habeas Corpus and a Motion for a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) by that evening in the US District Court for the District of Columbia, seeking to keep the US from transferring custody of Judge Bandar to his certain death. We had an emergency TRO hearing the next day in which the United States acknowledged that it possessed custody of Judge Bandar.

But the government claimed it could not be bound by the US courts because it did not possess legal custody. The US government was not in control of the military operations in Iraq, according to the representations of government attorneys. Also, they asserted that the US government was loath to interfere in the sovereign affairs of the Iraqi state. US law is accustomed to fictions that allow it to proceed in protecting interests as needed – such as the fiction that corporations are the same as people and therefore have constitutional rights.

The judge accepted the US government's assertions. Citing only two cases, those from World War II victor's trials, the judge denied the relief we sought. The composition, authority, relationships and function of the Allied Forces in the Pacific Theater of World War II and the forces in Iraq, the circumstances of custody, and the nature of the courts involved were vastly dif-

ferent. That there have been nearly 60 years of intervening legal developments and pertinent case law, and also the binding Geneva Conventions that came into force after those cases, was not of moment.

We then went to file a Motion for a Stay or Injunction Enjoining Transfer of Petitioner Outside US Custody in the US Court of Appeals. The District Court judge gave us until close of business two days later to file with the appellate court, requiring the US government to agree that it would not send Judge Bandar to his death before 5 p.m. on Friday.

How the United States could agree not to send Judge Bandar to his death when it said it did not have the ability to control his being sent to death while he was in US custody was apparently of no legal moment either.

The temporary stay defied the fiction that the US government's operations in Iraq are not under the control of the US court. But this fiction, like the rest of the Iraq story spun for the people of the United States for the past four years – and the twelve years of genocidal sanctions that preceded the war – relies on others' active support. It is a false logic based upon false facts and can only be sustained if the media and the courts and the people accept the fictions at face value.

Extrajudicial murder

At about 6 p.m. on January 15, the appellate court too ordered the United States not to hand Judge Bandar to his death for another hour. Then, after 7 p.m. the same day, the court an-

nounced that Judge Bandar had not met the stringent standards for a stay pending appeal.

These standards include the “prospect of irreparable injury to plaintiff if relief is withheld” – in other words, what harm will be caused if the relief is not granted pending a determination on the merits. The harm caused to Judge Bandar was his life being ended. To most observers, this would seem to be a great harm. It is difficult to imagine a greater harm.

However, the US government asserted a greater harm: were the court to order a temporary stay to keep Judge Bandar from being killed while his rights were sorted out in court, it would undermine Bush’s authority. Further, keeping Judge Bandar from being killed, even temporarily, would undermine the US efforts to provide, “the Iraqi government with critical support at a time when it is fending off attacks both physical and ideological.”

We learned that night that Judge Bandar had been hung when it was morning in Iraq. The “free press” told us so. The next morning, we learned that the press was wrong, having been fed a pre-prepared hanging scenario and description, which was obediently reported as news.

We then filed a request for an en banc review in the appellate court. That was denied with one line. We sought relief from the Supreme Court. That was denied by Chief Justice Roberts. We exercised the right to make a second petition to the Supreme Court, which was referred by Justice Stevens to the Court as a whole and

then denied.

Then we waited. Again we read that Judge Bandar was to be killed. But he was not. The delay created a space for protest. The international outcry became louder and louder calling for the execution of Bandar not to take place. The U.N. Secretary General, the Secretariat and U.N. human rights agencies opposed the surrender of the defendants. This is the same U.N. that the US government asserted to the court was the supreme authority over military actions in Iraq, including the transfer of Judge Bandar to death.

Simultaneously, all the protestations from the US government appeared, served up for the US public’s consumption. We learned from the media how distressed the US government was; its hour by hour struggle and wrangling over the hangings; its public relations campaign at distancing themselves from responsibility. All of which acknowledged that the US government fully controlled the condemned men’s custody.

When they hung Judge Bandar they did so suddenly without notice to his family or to his lawyers. He was just taken out and killed. On the morning that we learned he had been killed, we opened the New York Times to read an article that had been fed to the press. It declared again the concerns and protestations of the US government, stating that the government was avoiding handing over the men for death absent assurances. They were already dead when it was being printed, perhaps even written.

The Times created the image of the

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VICTOR'S JUSTICE

History may never know who was behind the executioner's mask, but we need not lift the balaclava to know who really carried out these executions

besieged jailers with the mob calling for hangings and the jailers negotiating to ensure that the stringing up would conform to the best tales of honor in the Old West. Or the Roman Empire.

The truth is that had the international outcry succeeded in stopping these hangings it would have been a significant setback for the United States and would have opened up all the questions over the illegality of the underlying proceedings, the US government's puppeteering, and, at its core, the overwhelming and ever-present lies about the US occupation of Iraq. This needed to end for the US government as soon as possible. The United States captured them, it gave them a show trial; it hung them.

The end hasn't come yet, however. The lives of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have ended because of the US invasion. The lives of over 3,000 soldiers have ended and tens of thousands more devastatingly altered.

With each "milestone" we are told that the end of trouble is here. With the invasion, it was to be over. With the capture of Saddam Hussein, it was to be over. With the trial, it was to be over. With the hangings, it was to be over. But it will not be over until the United

States leaves. This is the malignancy that is destroying the lives of the Iraqi people.

History may never know who was behind the executioner's mask, but we need not lift the balaclava to know who really carried out these executions. If the US government and the Pentagon cannot be stopped by the courts from carrying out extrajudicial murder, what is the supreme authority that will constrain them? There is only one, and it is the very concern that Bush has expressed in his ruminations over the hangings gone wrong. The people of the United States, once they have become convinced that the government is lying to them, can awaken and become the most powerful force in the political equation. This is the government's greatest fear, and rightly so. **CT**

Verheyden-Hilliard is the co-founder of the Partnership for Civil Justice and co-chair of the National Lawyers Guild Mass Defense Committee. For more information on the Habeas and TRO filings and on the IST, go to www.JusticeOnline.org/Bandar. This essay first appeared on the web site of the Party for Socialism and Liberation, <http://www.pslweb.org/>

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EXECUTION IN THE NAME OF FREEDOM

BY FELICITY ARBUTHNOT

*“You angels,
Pure ones,
Liberators,
Leaders ...*

*At this moment all I ask of you is a
miracle,
Just for you to know how to say Goodbye,
GOODBYE,
Just a miracle: a Goodbye.”*

– Adonis (Ali Ahmed Said) “Victims of a Map”, Saqi Books.

All wars (and invasions) have one image which is forever the blood-soaked whole. The naked child, traumatised to beyond terror, fleeing in Viet Nam; Robert Capa’s 1936, “Falling Soldier”, in the Spanish civil war, taken at Cerro Muriano. Guantanamo Bay’s orange jump-suited, shackled victims, will surely be how history depicts US policy and commitment to humanity, in the second millenium. The infamous jump suits

are, ironically, it seems, made by prisoners at Fort Worth jail, in George W. Bush’s Texas. Britain, as ever, has a hand in this obscenity. Hiatt and Company of Birmingham, in the Midlands of England, has been proudly making shackles, since they made “nigger collars” for the slave trade and now supply the shackles for the lost souls of Guantanamo Bay.

On Wednesday, 10th January, the fifth anniversary of the opening of this “gulag of our times”, protests were held across the globe – and outside Hiatt where former detainees of this abomination, relations of those held and campaigners demonstrated – in orange jump suits.

Renowned human rights lawyer, Clive Stafford Smith, M.P. Clare Short, Dr. Adnan Siddiqui of *Caged Prisoners* and author and arms activist, Mark Thomas had written in a letter to the (London) Observer (7th January) explaining the forthcoming actions, and concluding: “As the abolitionist William Wilberforce put it: ‘If to be feelingly alive to the sufferings

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The real fanatics in Guantanamo Bay, it transpires, have been dressing up as priests and "baptizing" Muslim detainees, deprived of all normality – and wrapping them in the Israeli flag

of my fellow creatures is to be a fanatic, I am one of the most incurable fanatics ever permitted to be at large.' To this we will also plead guilty – outside the Hiatt factory." They also cite a further 100 secret prisons globally and 14,000 prisoners unaccounted for. (www.guantanamo.org.uk)

Further, the real fanatics in Guantanamo Bay, it transpires, have been dressing up as priests and "baptizing" Muslim detainees, deprived of all normality – and wrapping them in the Israeli flag.

'Liberated' blood and gore

Iraq's ongoing, 'liberated' blood and gore, continues to flow through the haunting, ancient, spiritual land. Is Iraq under occupation, the image of the tiny blood spattered child in Tel Afar, witness to the massacre of her entire family by America's finest? Is it the wistful, beautiful face of the five-year-old Abeer Qassim Al Janabi, raped at 14, then burned, with her family, at Mahmudiya in June, by retards in US uniforms? Reportedly the ring leader, Pfc., Steven D. Green had been diagnosed with an "anti-social personality disorder" (you could say that again) but clearly his four colleagues cannot have been too well bolted down on all four corners. Perhaps US Army recruiting screening needs a bit of an overhaul. Such crazies would surely be on death row in the "land of the free".

"Any animal in the West lives better than any Iraqi under occupation", an Iraqi who had fled to Amman told the BBC, on "Guantanamo Wednesday".

And American values, from which Iraq, Afghanistan and now Somalia – bombing nomadic herdsman there seems to have become popular – are spreading rapidly. Within days of the hanging of Iraq's legitimate President, after a trial which made the Spanish Inquisition look benign, eight children across the globe had hung themselves, emulating the grizzly, shameful spectacle, which heralded the New Year. One was a 10-year-old in the US oil capitol, Houston, Texas, geographically just up the road from Crawford, home to the President and former State Governor, who invaded Iraq for oil. What an irony.

In Algeria, a group of schoolchildren hung a 12-year-old, in a "game". The US Army is mooting taking on non-nationals, since recruitment is plunging. These kids clearly have attributes which should fit well, in a few years.

A 15-year-old in India, could not eat for two days in her distress at Saddam's hanging, saying she wanted to feel his pain. "We didn't take her seriously", said her distraught father, after she did just that. Her heart-rending empathy is in stark contrast to Britain's dour Prime Minister in waiting, Gordon Brown (forget democracy, voting for a new Prime Minister, even Iraq style, we are to have him and that is that) commented eventually, that the method of the hanging, was "deplorable". Is such mediaeval barbarism ever other?

Lord Blair of Kut Al Amara – 1917 site of "the most humiliating defeat in British military history" (they went

there to protect the oilfields) as dubbed by the Independent's Robert Fisk, busy in Florida, with his tan, said nothing for some days, finally regretting; "the manner of his execution", by the US/UK's "coalition's" appointed low-life thugs in the "New Iraq". Apart from the shameful, malevolent savagery itself, it appears Saddam Hussein's throat was cut immediately afterwards, which seems to have passed Blair by. Perhaps when a being has slaughter on such an unimaginable scale on their hands, further horrors fail to register.

Texas justice?

President Bush, never a man to be squeamish when it comes to signing a death warrant, said the hanging could have been done, "...in a more dignified way", but "nevertheless he was given justice". Texas justice, maybe? There will, he says, be a "full investigation". A bit late. Oh, and is not the Iraqi government "sovereign" and "independent" of the US?

Now the world is to be treated to another "new strategy" in Iraq, a final "surge" to clear "insurgents", home by home, street by street, district by district. Baghdad's gracious Haifa Street has become a "hotbed" and is being bombed mercilessly. It was never a "hotbed", pre-invasion, when, as in the rest of the great, ancient capitol, visitors and residents drove and walked, at all hours, in this formerly late night city, without a glance over the shoulder. Districts are to be, chillingly: "cleansed". Bush's "surge" sounds more like: "the final solution".

And again: "We are determined to rid Iraq of foreign fighters". Duh? And yet again, defeat "is not an option". Indeed. It is a certainty.

There is a relevant and memorable quote from a Viet Nam veteran. Thomas Hastie: "One day while I was in a bunker in Vietnam, a sniper round went over my head. The person who fired that weapon was not a terrorist, a rebel, an extremist, or a so-called insurgent. The Vietnamese individual who tried to kill me was a citizen of Vietnam, who did not want me in his country. This truth escapes millions."

Meanwhile, Tony Blair lectured experienced military and naval experts on H.M.S. Albion, based in Plymouth, from where Sir Francis Drake (1540-1596) an early "privateer", set off to plunder the Andes silver. He got away with that, defeated the Spanish, tried to ferment an uprising in Portugal, failed, was disgraced by a furious Queen and died of yellow fever, in another failed plunder in Panama.

"Albion" was the early name for Britain, ever immortalised by Napoleon Bonaparte's scathing: "Perfidious Albion". ("Perfidious Albion" – "perfidious": Dict: treacherous or deceitful.) History also records an earlier quote from Bossuet (1627-1704) "L'Angleterre, ah! La perfide Angleterre". Symbolism stalks Tony Blair, as delusion, it seems. It was the first in a series of addresses Downing Street call his "big picture", prior to departure, talks. Given the glazed, slumped demeanor of his distinguished audience, it appeared anything but.

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VICTOR'S JUSTICE

And for Blair the final confirmation of the utterly delusional: he sees his future as being a global "envoy for peace"

March, the fourth anniversary of the apocalyptic disaster of the illegal invasion of Iraq, heralds the 90th anniversary of British General Stanley Maude's "Declaration of Baghdad" (11th March 1917.) "Our armies do not come in to your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators." He lies in Baghdad's North Gate Cemetery, along with his invader's ambitions. 29th April 2007, marks 91 years since the defeat of the British at Kut. 28th April 2007, marks the 70th birthday of a legal and assassinated elderly Iraqi President, hung in perfidy; he had to be disposed of before the New Year, a clean start, the world was told, in "independent" largely Muslim Iraq. The Islamic New Year is 20th January. Prime Minister Maliki's decision? Never. A puppet on a string, or perhaps, later, a noose.

And as President Bush and An-

thony Blair QC., seek to walk in sunset, anywhere, as they scuttle from their disgraced tenures, their image will be forever a lynched legitimate leader, at the end of a noose. And for Blair the final confirmation of the utterly delusional: he sees his future as being a global "envoy for peace".

Time for men in white coats. **CT**

Felicity Arbuthnot is a journalist and activist who has visited the Arab and Muslim world on numerous occasions. She has written and broadcast on Iraq, her coverage of which was nominated for several awards. She was also senior researcher for John Pilger's award-winning documentary "Paying the Price: Killing the Children of Iraq"; and author, with Nikki van der Gaag, of "Baghdad" in the "Great Cities" series, for World Almanac Books (2006.) worldalmanac.com



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AMERICA'S HOLY WARRIORS

BY CHRIS HEDGES

The engine that drives the radical Christian Right in the United States, the most dangerous mass movement in American history, is not religiosity, but despair. It is a movement built on the growing personal and economic despair of tens of millions of Americans, who watched helplessly as their communities were plunged into poverty by the flight of manufacturing jobs, their families and neighborhoods torn apart by neglect and indifference, and who eventually lost hope that America was a place where they had a future.

This despair crosses economic boundaries, of course, enveloping many in the middle class who live trapped in huge, soulless exurbs where, lacking any form of community rituals or centers, they also feel deeply isolated, vulnerable and lonely. Those in despair are the most easily manipulated by demagogues, who promise a fantastic utopia, whether it is a worker's paradise, fraternite-egalite-liberte, or the second coming of Jesus Christ. Those in despair search desperately for a solution, the

warm embrace of a community to replace the one they lost, a sense of purpose and meaning in life, the assurance they are protected, loved and worthwhile.

During the past two years of work on the book *American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America*, I kept encountering this deadly despair. Driving down a highway lined with gas stations, fast food restaurants and dollar stores I often got vertigo, forgetting for a moment if I was in Detroit or Kansas City or Cleveland. There are parts of the United States, including whole sections of former manufacturing centers such as Ohio, that resemble the developing world, with boarded up storefronts, dilapidated houses, potholed streets and crumbling schools. The end of the world is no longer an abstraction to many Americans.

Small gold crosses

Jeniece Learned is typical of many in the movement. She stood, when I met her, amid a crowd of earnest-looking men and women, many with small gold

Those in despair are the most easily manipulated by demagogues, who promise a fantastic utopia, whether it is a worker's paradise, fraternite-egalite-liberte, or the second coming of Jesus Christ

RADICAL CHRISTIANITY

Her life, before she was saved, was, like many in this mass movement, chaotic and painful. Her childhood was stolen from her. She was sexually abused by a close family member

crosses in the lapels of their jackets or around their necks, in a hotel lobby in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. She had an easy smile and a thick mane of black, shoulder length hair. She was carrying a booklet called “Ring in a Culture of Life.” The booklet had the schedule of the two day event she is attending organized by The Pennsylvania Pro-Life Federation. The event was “dedicated to the 46 million children who have died from legal abortions since 1973 and the mothers and fathers who mourn their loss.”

Learned, who drove five hours from a town outside of Youngstown, Ohio was raised Jewish. She wore a gold Star of David around her neck with a Christian cross inserted in the middle of the design. She stood up in one of the morning sessions, attended by about 300 people, most of them women, when the speaker, Alveda King, niece of Dr. Martin Luther King, asked if there were any “post-abortive” women present.

Learned ran a small pregnancy counseling clinic called Pregnancy Services of Western Pennsylvania in Sharon, where she attempted to talk young girls and women, most of them poor, out of abortions. She spoke in local public schools, promoting sexual abstinence, rather than birth control, as the only acceptable form of contraception. And she had found in the fight against abortion, and in her conversion, a structure, purpose and meaning that previously eluded her. The battle against abortion is one of the Christian Rights’s most effective recruiting tools. It plays on the guilt and shame of

woman who had the abortions, accusing them of committing murder, and promising redemption and atonement in the “Christian” struggle to make abortion illegal, in the fight for life against “the culture of death.”

Her life, before she was saved, was, like many in this mass movement, chaotic and painful. Her childhood was stolen from her. She was sexually abused by a close family member. Her mother periodically woke Learned and her younger sister and two younger brothers in the middle of the night to flee landlords who wanted back rent. The children were bundled into the car and driven in darkness to a strange apartment in another town. Her mother worked nights and weekends as a bartender. Learned, the oldest, often had to run the home. Her younger sister, who was sexually abused by another member of the family, eventually committed suicide as an adult, something Learned also considered. As a teenager she had an abortion.

She was taking classes at Pacific Christian College several years later when she saw an anti-abortion film called *The Silent Scream*.

“You see in this movie this baby backing up trying to get away from this suction tube,” she said. “And, its mouth is open and it is like this baby is screaming. I flipped out. It was at that moment that God just took this veil that I had over my eyes for the last eight years. I couldn’t breathe. I was hyperventilating. I ran outside. One of the girls followed me from Living Alternative. And she said, ‘Did you commit

your life to Christ?’ And I said, ‘I did.’ And she said, ‘Did you ask for your forgiveness of sins?’ And I said, ‘I did.’ And she goes, ‘Does that mean all your sins, or does that mean some of them?’ And I said, ‘I guess it means all of them.’ So she said, ‘Basically, you are thinking God hasn’t forgiven you for your abortion because that is a worse sin than any of your other sins that you have done.’“

The film brought her into the fight to make abortion illegal. Her activism became atonement for her own abortion. She struggled with depression after she gave birth to her daughter Rachel. When she came home from the hospital she was unable to care for her infant. She thought she saw an 8-year-old boy standing next to her bed. It was, she is sure, the image of the son she had murdered.

“I started crying and asking God over and over again to forgive me,” she says. “I had murdered His child. I asked Him to forgive me over and over again. It was just incredible. I was possessed. On the fourth day I remember hearing God’s voice. ‘I have your baby, now get up!’ It was the most incredibly freeing and peaceful moment. I got up and I showered and I ate. I just knew it was God’s voice.”

Pernicious assault

In the United States we have turned our backs on the working class, with much of the worst assaults, such as NAFTA and welfare reform, pushed though during President Clinton’s Democratic administration. We stand passively and watch an equally pernicious

assault on the middle class. Anything that can be put on software, from architecture to engineering to finance, will soon be handed to workers overseas who will be paid a third what their American counterparts receive and who will, like some 45 million Americans, have no access to health insurance or benefits. There has been, along with the creation of an American oligarchy, a steady Weimarization of the American working class. The top 1 percent of American households have more wealth than the bottom 90 percent combined. This figure alone should terrify all who care about our democracy. As Plutarch reminded us “an imbalance between the rich and poor is the oldest and most fatal ailment of all republics.”

The stories believers such as Learned told me of their lives before they found Christ were heartbreaking. These chronicles were about terrible pain, severe financial difficulties, struggles with addictions or childhood sexual or physical abuse, profound alienation and often thoughts about suicide. They were chronicles without hope. The real world, the world of facts and dispassionate intellectual inquiry, the world where all events, news and information were not filtered through this comforting ideological prism, the world where they were left out to dry, abandoned by a government hostage to corporations and willing to tolerate obscene corporate profits, betrayed them.

They hated this world. And they willingly walked out on this world for the mythical world offered by these radical preachers, a world of magic, a

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RADICAL CHRISTIANITY

Believers, of course, clinging to this magical belief, which is a bizarre form of spiritual Darwinism, will be raptured upwards while the rest of us will be tormented with horrors by a warrior Christ and finally extinguished

world where God had a divine plan for them and intervened on a daily basis to protect them and perform miracles in their lives. The rage many expressed to me towards those who challenge this belief system, to those of us who do not accept that everything in the world came into being during a single week 6,000 years ago because it says so in the Bible, was a rage born of fear, the fear of being plunged back into a reality-based world where these magical props would no longer exist, where they would once again be adrift, abandoned and alone.

Dangerous theology

The danger of this theology of despair is that it says that nothing in the world is worth saving. It rejoices in cataclysmic destruction. It welcomes the frightening advance of global warming, the spiraling wars and violence in the Middle East and the poverty and neglect that have blighted American urban and rural landscapes as encouraging signs that the end of the world is close at hand.

Believers, of course, clinging to this magical belief, which is a bizarre form of spiritual Darwinism, will be raptured upwards while the rest of us will be tormented with horrors by a warrior Christ and finally extinguished. This obsession with apocalyptic violence is an obsession with revenge. It is what the world, and we who still believe it is worth saving, deserve.

Those who lead the movement give their followers a moral license to direct this rage and yearning for violence against all those who refuse to submit

to the movement, from liberals, to “secular humanists,” to “nominal Christians,” to intellectuals, to gays and lesbians, to Muslims. These radicals, from James Dobson to Pat Robertson, call for a theocratic state that will, if it comes to pass, bear within it many of the traits of classical fascism.

All radical movements need a crisis or a prolonged period of instability to achieve power. And we are not in a period of crisis now. But another catastrophic terrorist attack on American soil, a series of huge environmental disasters or an economic meltdown will hand to these radicals the opening they seek.

Manipulating our fear and anxiety, promising to make us safe and secure, giving us the assurance that they can vanquish the forces that mean to do us harm, these radicals, many of whom have achieved powerful positions in the Executive and legislative branches of government, as well as the military, will ask us only to surrender our rights, to pass them the unlimited power they need to battle the forces of darkness. They will have behind them tens of millions of angry, disenfranchised Americans longing for revenge and yearning for a mythical utopia, Americans who embraced a theology of despair because we offered them nothing else. **CT**

Chris Hedges, a graduate of Harvard Divinity School and former Pulitzer-prize winning foreign correspondent for The New York Times, is the author of American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America.

FOOTBALL AND VIOLENCE GO TOGETHER

BY ROBERT FISK

When I was at school, I was once beaten by a prefect for reading a book on Czech history at a football match. Sutton Valence was – and remains – a minor public school whose straw boaters and long-distance runs along snow-covered roads and brutal punishments were supposed to mimic those wealthier but even more sadistic character-building sweatshops such as Rugby and Eton. Sutton Valence has since moderated its ways.

But back in 1960, screaming “Come on, Sutton!” at a bunch of grunting, muddled idiots in blue, black and white shirts was deemed more important than the 1948 defenestration of Jan Masaryk in Prague. A prefect later lashed me with a cane on the orders of a spectacularly cruel housemaster whose unwillingness to prevent the most vicious beatings almost equalled his love of soccer and rugby football.

His memory returned to me as I read the first sports book of my life over Christmas, Franklin Foer’s American best-seller *How Soccer Explains the*

World. It confirmed for me what I have always suspected: that football and violence are intimately linked in cause and effect and that – far from the first being an outlet to avoid the second – they are mutually interchangeable.

Foer wades in at the deep end with a visit to Belgrade’s top-scoring Red Star, a team nurtured by Serbia’s equally top war criminal Arkan, who took his well-armed footballers down the Drina Valley in 1992 on an orgy of killing, plunder and mass rape. Arkan drove a pink Cadillac and sported a football wife – the gorgeous retro singer Ceca – whom he married in full Serb uniform. Red Star’s pre-war match against the Croatian Partizans – beloved of its fascist president Franjo Tudjman who had adorned the team he once led with wartime Ustashe icons – ended in a pitched battle.

It was Margaret Thatcher who famously described football hooligans as “a disgrace to civilised society” – the very words we later used about the murderers of Serbia. In Glasgow, Protestant supporters of Rangers

Arkan drove a pink Cadillac and sported a football wife – the gorgeous retro singer Ceca – whom he married in full Serb uniform

"Right there, in front of the Croats who had brought along their Serbian corpses, the Serbs began playing football with the heads of the dead Croatians. They were laughing because they knew how much this would enrage the Croats"

would sit in separate stands – “We’re up to our knees in Fenian blood,” they would roar in unison – from fans of the Catholic Celtic football club.

I well remember, covering the beat in Belfast in the early Seventies, how during Rangers or Celtic matches I would see more RUC cops patrolling the bridge over the Lagan than I would ever come across in a weekday sectarian riot.

Come to think of it, the first time I ever saw a uniformed British policeman in France was from the window of the Eurostar; he was patrolling the platform at Lille station before an England-France match.

Vandalism, assault and murder have now become so much a part of European football that it has become a habit. “Football fan shot dead after racist mob attack,” read a headline as I passed through Paris the other day. Typically, the story – of an off-duty French cop who killed a white supporter of the Paris Saint-Germain team as he screamed anti-Semitic insults while trying to murder a French Jewish fan of Israel’s Tel-Aviv’s Hapoel – was printed on page 27. It is quite normal, you see, for racist football fans to try to kill their opponents – and for the police to open fire.

Creepy connections

The connections between football and violence – and, by extension, sadism – are truly creepy. An Irish friend who was a member of the European Union monitoring team in the Balkans recounted to me during the Bosnian war how he witnessed an exchange of bod-

ies between Serb and Croatian armies near the city of Mostar.

“Both sides brought their corpses in sacks on lorries and they backed them up to a small field. But when the Serbs emptied the sacks, it was evident that the heads of their Croatian bodies had been chopped off. I didn’t believe what I would see. Right there, in front of the Croats who had brought along their Serbian corpses, the Serbs began playing football with the heads of the dead Croatians. They were laughing because they knew how much this would enrage the Croats.”

Odd, isn’t it, how football gets mud-died by armies. Whenever an Iraqi soldier or a Druze militiaman or an Egyptian Islamist wants to hold out the hand of friendship to me in the Middle East, he will always announce that he is a fan of Manchester United. In Lebanon, needless to say, teams represent the Shia, Sunni and Christian sects; murdered ex-prime minister Rafiq Hariri was the backer of one, just as Berlusconi became the owner of Milan and just as the Russian oligarchs branched out into football ownership – including British football ownership – as a symbol of their power.

Individual players could disgrace themselves – George Best could sink into alcoholism, Zidane could headbutt his opponent for insulting his sister – but the team went on for ever. The immense wealth accrued by football’s stars – £10m in sponsorship reportedly picked up by the Brazilian Pelé – is regarded by the poorest of the poor as a tribute to the human worth of Edson Arantes do Nascimento (the future

Pelé) who grew up in the dirt-poor town of Tres Coracoes west of Rio.

It's not all bad, I know. I remember flying into Tehran with the Iranian soccer team in 1997 after they had beaten Australia in a World Cup qualifier and the outburst of joy which greeted them – the thousands of Iranian women who poured illegally into the Azadi stadium afterwards, the political support the team gave to the reforming but tragically impotent president, Mohamed Khatami – constituted what Franklin Foer calls the Middle East “football revolution”.

Maybe. But I remember a more disturbing moment in the Middle East when I was investigating one of the many – and all too true – incidents of

brutality by British soldiers against Iraqi prisoners. In a Basra hospital, I listened to a badly wounded ex-prisoner of the British Army as he described how his tormentors had entered the room in which he and his friends were being held.

“Before they assaulted us, your soldiers gave us all names – the names of world-famous footballers,” he said. “Then they started beating and kicking us until we screamed and begged for mercy. Why would they do that?”

I suspect I know.

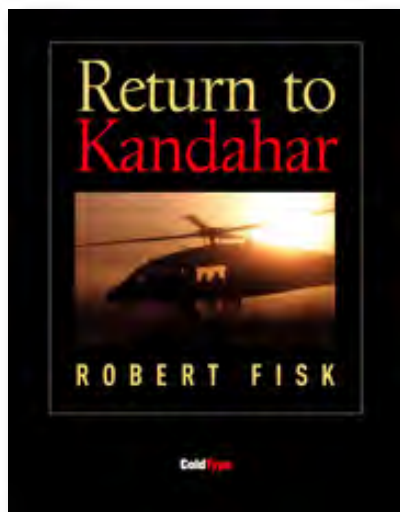
CT

“Before they assaulted us, your soldiers gave us all names – the names of world-famous footballers. Then they started beating and kicking us until we screamed and begged for mercy”

Robert Fisk is the author of The Great War For Civilisation.

This article originally appeared in The Independent newspaper of London

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ROBERT FISK

RETURN TO KANDAHAR

To mark the anniversary of the Sept 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon and US-led 'war on terror,' Robert Fisk, Middle East correspondent of London's *Independent* returned to Afghanistan where he wrote scathing essays on a bombing offensive to rid the country of its Taliban rulers and Bin Laden's al-Qa'ida leaders.

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SHOOT THE MESSENGER

BY JESSELYN RADACK

That was our first glimpse of American-led torture and we didn't even flinch. Lindh was found barely alive, shot in the leg, and suffering from dehydration, hypothermia and frostbite

*This book excerpt is Chapter 1 of the book, *Canary in the Coalmine*, by Jesselyn Radack, available from the website www.patriotictruthteller.net – cost is \$16, plus postage*

I am the Justice Department attorney who blew the whistle on government misconduct in the case of John Walker Lindh, the “American Taliban.”

You remember the famous December 2001 trophy photo of John Walker Lindh – one of the most prominent prisoners of the Afghan war – naked, blindfolded, tied up and bound to a board. That was our first glimpse of American-led torture and we didn't even flinch. Lindh was found barely alive, shot in the leg, and suffering from dehydration, hypothermia and frostbite.

Although Lindh was seriously wounded, starving, freezing, and exhausted, US soldiers blindfolded and handcuffed him naked, scrawled “shithead” across the blindfold, duct-taped him to a stretcher for days in an

unheated and unlit shipping container, threatened him with death, and posed with him for pictures. Parts of his ordeal were captured on videotape. Sound familiar?

The Lindh case foreshadowed what would occur on a much larger scale at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere. Like an aggressive, contagious and deadly virus, this first outbreak of lawless behavior was spread by the CIA and Army intelligence teams to the entire archipelago of American-controlled detention centers throughout the world.

The scandal is not, in President George W. Bush's words, the “disgraceful conduct by a few American troops” at Abu Ghraib, or in Rumsfeld's words, “grievous and brutal abuse and cruelty.” It's that the Bush Administration thought it could torture people and get away with it.

When I, a 30-year-old Justice Department lawyer and legal ethics advisor, recommended against interrogating “American Taliban” John Walker Lindh without his lawyer, and



THE CANARY IN THE COALMINE

Blowing the Whistle in the Case of 'American Taliban' John Walker Lindh

By Jesselyn Radack

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later blew the whistle when evidence of my advice was destroyed and withheld from the court, the Justice Department forced me out of my job, put me under criminal investigation, got me fired from my next job, reported me to the state bars in which I am licensed, and put me on the “no-fly” list.

I don’t wear the label “whistle-blower” comfortably. Why should I get some special moniker for doing what I would have done anyway? The vast majority of civil servants labeled as “whistleblowers” never thought of themselves in that role. In their minds, they were simply doing their jobs. Increasingly, the line between simply doing what is right and being a whistleblower has become

blurred, particularly as society changes its expectations about how government employees should serve the public.

Our nation’s top leaders pay lip service to the importance of whistleblowers, but the conscientious employee is not welcome in the Bush Administration. Few paths are more treacherous than the one that challenges abuse of power and tries to make a meaningful difference. The conscientious employees who take career risks to address problems are precisely the kind of people who best serve the public, but they are invariably the first casualties.

Our country has a love-hate relationship with whistleblowers. When one thinks of a “whistleblower,” images from movies like “The Insider” or “Erin Brockavich” spring to mind. Or more recently, Colleen Rowley of the FBI, Sherron Watkins of Enron, and Cynthia Cooper of Worldcom, Time Magazine’s “Persons of the Year” in 2002.

One has visions of determined individuals risking it all to make explosive disclosures before Congress or on “60 Minutes.” The media glorifies those who risk everything to expose corruption and illegal activity. And these lionized individuals deserve every ounce of praise they get. But their happy outcomes are not typical. For every success story, there are a hundred stories of professional martyrdom. Mine is one of them.

Whistleblowers often find that they have become the subject of the story. Any personal vulnerability or

One of this Administration's favorite tactics is to paint any sort of dissent or criticism – whether it comes from whistleblowers, anti-war protesters, or advocates of the politically unpopular – as disloyal at best and unpatriotic at worst

Ashcroft has made clear that forgiveness, while perfectly appropriate in religion, has no place at the Justice Department (except at his morning prayer meetings, of course)

peccadillo they possess can, and will, be used against them. Through this contortion, the whistleblower's charges become a subsidiary issue. The Bush Administration is expert at this subterfuge.

Incendiary descriptions

The conscientious employee is often portrayed as vengeful, unstable, or out for attention. I have not been completely immune from these accusations, but the terms that have been used by what the press cites as "anonymous Justice Department officials" to describe me are far more incendiary: "traitor," "terrorist sympathizer," "turn-coat," and "unpatriotic." Never mind that in debate circles, the lowest form of argumentation is name-calling. For an Administration attempting to quell opposition through a campaign of secrecy and silence, neither the Bush White House nor the Ashcroft Justice Department were short of words.

One of this Administration's favorite tactics is to paint any sort of dissent or criticism – whether it comes from whistleblowers, anti-war protesters, or advocates of the politically unpopular – as disloyal at best and unpatriotic at worst.

With a Crusader's fervor, Ashcroft warned in stark terms that critics who "scare peace-loving people with phantoms of lost liberty only aid terrorists, for they erode our national unity and diminish our resolve." In a ham-handed way, he tried to portray the expression of civil liberties concerns as treasonous. Such ill-considered exhortations have a very real chilling effect on the exercise of basic freedom of speech.

ered exhortations have a very real chilling effect on the exercise of basic freedom of speech.

Although my story is different in its details, it shares many of the same elements with the experiences of other whistleblowers: abuse of government power, lack of due process (or any process at all), secrecy and silence, political overkill, and base vengefulness. The Administration's vindictive response to its critics goes beyond questioning their truthfulness, competence and motives: it seeks to destroy them.

In most cases of whistleblowing, the Executive Branch attacks the person rather than the substance of his or her complaint. It shoots the messenger rather than addressing the message. It silences the critic rather than answering the criticism. It engages in intimidation, character assassination and professional destruction of those who break the code of silence.

And it will not let go. As Jerome Doolittle, novelist and former White House speechwriter, characterized the Justice Department's venomous attacks on me: "There is something primordial about Team Bush's reaction to dissent, something reptilian. They're like the gila monster, its jaws holding their poisonous grip even after its head is severed."

"You are either with us or against us" – Bush's Procrustean mantra during his inexorable march to war in Iraq – applies with equal or greater force to those who cross him, and more broadly, to anyone he perceives

as an “enemy.”

Ashcroft shares Bush’s us-or-them mentality, and their categorical thinking is reflected in the increasingly deep division between “Red America” and “Blue America,” a synecdoche that pollsters and political consultants use as shorthand for the US population that is Republican and Democratic, respectively. Bush and Ashcroft also share a limitless capacity to nurse incandescent grudges. Ashcroft has made clear that forgiveness, while perfectly appropriate in religion, has no place at the Justice Department (except at his morning prayer meetings, of course). “The law is not about forgiveness,” he said. “It is oftentimes about vengeance, oftentimes about revenge.”

Not isolated

One of the most disturbing things about my story is that it’s not an isolated incident. As bizarre, unbelievable and outrageous as it sounds, it is not uncommon. These vicissitudes have happened to everyone from military officers to Muslim guys playing paintball. It has even happened to other Justice Department attorneys.

I’ve decided to tell my story because I vowed that if I could ever speak safely again, I would not remain silent out of some sort of misplaced gratitude that I was no longer being threatened with termination, criminal prosecution, disbarment or ostracization.

My ordeal should have ended at many points along the trajectory. I was muzzled for over a year, so I have

a lot of pent up things to say. Also, I feel a moral imperative to say them because if a person like me who enjoys relative privilege – being white, a US citizen, educated, and comfortably middle-class – can so easily lose her freedom, then maybe people in this country can more easily understand the plight of those in post-9/11 America who are Arab or Muslim, who are immigrants, who are poor, or who don’t speak English.

“Ashcroft Justice”

A lot of commentators saw the John Walker Lindh case as an example of the government going after a minnow with a sledgehammer. The same thing can be said of my case writ small. This modus operandi has been dubbed “Ashcroft justice.” Attorney General Ashcroft did not get the verdict he wanted against Lindh, in some measure, because of my actions.

As CBS commentator Andrew Cohen noted in writing about my role, “It was clear, although the government never explicitly conceded so, that prosecutors were open to a [plea bargain] deal with Lindh because of the brutal way in which he was treated by his military captors in Afghanistan and the spurious way in which federal law enforcement officials had observed Lindh’s constitutional rights. It is no coincidence that the Lindh deal came about on the eve of a scheduled week-long [suppression] hearing that was going to bring into the open the specifics of how Lindh was treated and by whom.”

In a classic case of “the lady doth

If I were a crank making wild allegations about the Lindh case, I would be ignored. But when the Assistant Attorney General starts throwing his weight around to keep me quiet, you have to wonder what I know

BOOK EXCERPT

I'm here to tell you that the emperor has no clothes, and that those who expose the nakedness of this Administration's policies and practices should be applauded, not annihilated

protest to much,” top officials at Justice took time out of their busy schedules to call Cohen after his article ran to try to convince him that he was wrong; specifically, that I had not caused the Lindh case to tank. They minimized me and downplayed my role in Lindh’s surprise plea bargain.

If I really had nothing to do with the unraveling of the Lindh case (in the words of *The New Yorker*’s Jane Mayer, “the prosecution collapsed”), then query why Ashcroft and his functionaries are wasting so much time, energy and taxpayer money getting back at me. If I were a crank making wild allegations about the Lindh case, I would be ignored. But when the Assistant Attorney General starts throwing his weight around to keep me quiet, you have to wonder what I know.

Whether I played a large role or none at all, the government severely damaged my reputation and my psyche. It’s hard to un-ring the bell. One person against an entire agency or government is a David versus Goliath struggle.

In terms of raw power, the government holds all the cards. To sic the infinite resources of the American government on someone is more than a mismatched contest – it is tyranny. It is also a waste of, what we are reminded time and again are, precious and limited government resources.

It has been hard for me to write this memoir because I suffer from the cult of objectivity – the mistaken belief that impartiality will lend legitimacy to my story. But how can I be

neutral when what I have experienced has been so personal and so driven by emotion, surmise, and partisan politics? I therefore confess up front that I have an axe to grind, and nearly \$100,000 in legal bills to show for it.

I’m here to tell you that the emperor has no clothes, and that those who expose the nakedness of this Administration’s policies and practices should be applauded, not annihilated.

Public service does not mean blind obedience to one’s supervisor or subservience to an agency agenda that subverts the law and the public interest. Deciding to blow the whistle can be the single most important decision an individual ever makes. It should not be a question of whether to blow the whistle, but of how loudly to blow it. And in doing so, public servants should not be forced to choose between their conscience and their career.

The past three years have been the most difficult of my life, but they have also been a cataclysmic growth period that has cemented my commitment to civil rights and liberties. I realize that there are many stories like mine, and that I am just a footnote in a seismic shift that is occurring in our country. But I promised myself that if I could ever speak freely again, then I would use my voice to try to prevent this sort of political revenge from happening to anyone else.

My saga began on September 11, 2001, as did the life-altering journeys of so many others. **CT**

SHOW ME THE INTELLIGENCE

BY RAY McGOVERN

Have you noticed? Neither President George W. Bush nor Vice President Dick Cheney have cited any US intelligence assessments to support their fateful decision to send 21,500 more troops to referee the civil war in Iraq. This is a far cry from October 2002, when a formal National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) was rushed through in order to trick Congress into giving its *nihil obstat* for the attack on Iraq.

Why no intelligence justification this time around? Because there is none.

Having successfully cooked intelligence four years ago to get authorization for war, the Bush administration has zero incentive to try a repeat performance. Nor is there any sign that the new Democratic chairmen of the Senate and House intelligence committees will even think to ask the intelligence community to state its views on the likely effect of the planned “surge” in troop strength. This, even though an NIE on Iraq has been “almost ready” for months.

For the Bush administration, it has

been difficult enough whipping its fickle but ultimately malleable generals into line. The civilian intelligence chiefs have proven more resistant. So the White House is playing it safe, avoiding like the plague any estimate that would raise doubts about the wisdom of the decision to surge. And that is precisely what an honest estimate would do. With “sham-dunk” former CIA director George Tenet and his accomplices no longer in place as intelligence enablers, the White House clearly prefers no NIE to one that would inevitably highlight the fecklessness of throwing 21,500 more troops into harm’s way for the dubious purpose of holding off defeat for two more years.

From mushroom cloud to lead balloon

The NIE, which leaned so far forward to support the White House’s warnings of a made-in-Iraq “mushroom cloud,” remains the negative example par excellence of corrupted intelligence. The good news is that Tenet and his lack-

The White House clearly prefers no NIE to one that would inevitably highlight the fecklessness of throwing 21,500 more troops into harm’s way for the dubious purpose of holding off defeat for two more years

An NIE produced in April '06 on global terrorism concluded that the invasion of Iraq led to a marked increase in terrorism, belying administration claims that the invasion and occupation had made us "safer"

eyes were replaced by officers who, by all indications, take their job of speaking truth to power seriously. Deputy Director of National Intelligence for Analysis, Tom Fingar, is a State Department professional not given to professionally selling out. And his boss, John Negroponte, is too smart to end his government career by following the example of his servile predecessors in conjuring up "intelligence" to please the president – not even for a Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Unvarnished NIEs sent to the White House by the Negroponte/Fingar team have not shied away from unwelcome conclusions undercutting administration claims, and have gone over like proverbial lead balloons. An estimate on Iran completed in early 2005, for example, concluded that the Iranians will not be able to produce a nuclear weapon before "early to mid-next decade," exposing Cheney's fanciful claims of more proximate danger. And an NIE produced in April '06 on global terrorism concluded that the invasion of Iraq led to a marked increase in terrorism, belying administration claims that the invasion and occupation had made us "safer."

Worse still from the administration's point of view, patriotic truth-tellers (aka leakers) inside the government apparently decided that administration rhetoric on both of these key issues had deliberately misled the American people, who were entitled to know the truth.

The two unwelcome estimates meant two strikes on Negroponte. Then the White House learned of an

impending strike-three – this one an NIE assessing the future in Iraq and apparently casting doubt on the advisability of US escalation. In a classic Cheneyesque pre-emptive strike, the estimate was put on hold; Negroponte was given a pink slip and assigned back to the State Department. There are rumors that Fingar is clearing out his desk as well.

NIEs can be important

National Intelligence Estimates are the most authoritative genre of analytical product, embodying substantive judgments on key national security issues. They are coordinated throughout the 16-agency intelligence community and then signed by the Director of National Intelligence in his statutory capacity as chief intelligence adviser to the president. In times past, presidents and their senior advisers actually read them and often took their judgments into account in the decision making process.

There have been good estimates, and bad ones. In the latter category, an NIE of Sept. 19, 1962, entitled "The Military Build-Up in Cuba" estimated that the Soviet Union would not introduce strategic offensive missiles into Cuba (even while such missiles were en route). Embarrassing, but an honest mistake.

The NIE issued on Oct. 1, 2002, 10 days before the congressional vote on the war, was dishonest from the get-go. It was prepared by spineless functionaries eager to please their boss (Tenet) and his boss (Bush) by parroting the faith-based analysis of senior analyst Dick Cheney. It is by far the

worst NIE ever produced by the US intelligence community. But, hey, it achieved its primary purpose of scaring Congress into approving a war of aggression.

In the wake of that debacle, few of us intelligence alumni harbored much hope that honesty could be re-introduced into the estimative process any time soon. Former CIA Director Stansfield Turner went so far as to tell a TV host that he thought the CIA should be “dismantled.” Thus, it was a very welcome surprise to learn, thanks to patriotic truth-tellers, of the gutsy judgments of more recent NIEs – and to discover that a remnant of analysts of the old truth-to-power school have been able to ply their trade unencumbered under Fingar and Negroponte.

Some history: Estimates on Vietnam

As one of the intelligence analysts watching Vietnam in the sixties and seventies, I worked on several of the NIEs produced before and during the war. All too many bore this title: “Probable Reactions to Various Courses of Action With Respect to North Vietnam.” Typical of the kinds of question the president and his advisers wanted addressed: Can we seal off the Ho Chi Minh Trail by bombing it? If the US were to introduce X thousand additional troops into South Vietnam, will Hanoi quit? Okay, how about XX thousand?

Our answers regularly earned us brickbats from the White House for not being “good team players.” But in those days we labored under a strong ethos

dictating that we give it to policymakers straight, without fear or favor. We had career protection for doing that. And – truth be told – we often took a perverse delight in it.

Our judgments (the unwelcome ones, anyway) were pooh-poohed as negativism; and policymakers, of course, were in no way obliged to take them into account. The point is that they continued to be sought. Not even Lyndon Johnson or Richard Nixon would be likely to decide on a significant escalation without seeking our best guess as to how US adversaries would likely react to this or that escalatory step

What about now?

As noted above, an intelligence estimate on Iraq has been in process for months – and months – and months. It is not that the analysts are slower these days; it is that the White House has decided that, for political reasons, no estimate at all is better than an unwelcome one. The White House thought process seems to be this:

With Fingar and Negroponte and their benighted ideas about fact-based, rather than faith-based, intelligence analysis, it is far better to duck the issue altogether – at least for as long as the congressional oversight committees continue to slumber. Besides, if Cheney-esque pressure were again to be applied to intelligence analysts, there is a growing risk that this might turn some of them into patriotic truth-tellers. Besides, we already have the needed authorization – and even enough funding to send 21,500 addi-

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tional troops.

It seems quite clear that the additional troop decision was made without any formal input from the intelligence community. There would be no NIE on “Probable Reactions to Various Courses of Action With Respect to Iraq” – no formal paper that could make the president’s decision appear highly questionable. Let the on-again-off-again NIE on prospects for Iraq languish.

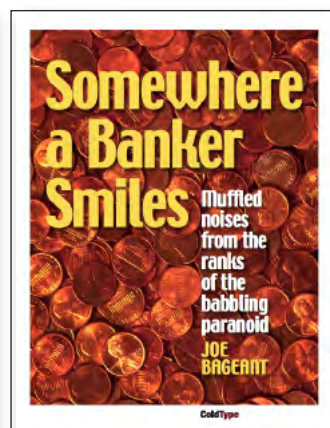
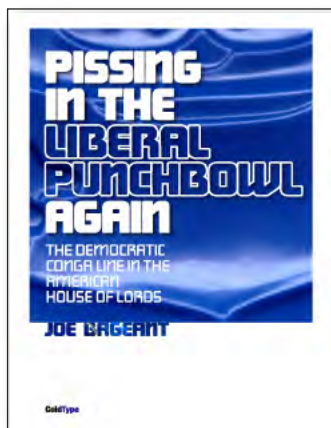
And let former CIA director, now Secretary of Defense Robert Gates pretend, as he did on Jan. 12 before the Senate Armed Services Committee,

that he is “unaware” of the existence of an NIE draft on prospects for Iraq. Sen. John Warner, R-Va., raised the subject with Gates, saying that Negroponte had assured him the NIE would be issued at the end of the month.

Don’t hold your breath.

CT

Ray McGovern chaired NIEs and prepared the President’s Daily Brief during his 27-year career as a CIA analyst. He now works with Tell the Word, the publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in Washington, D.C. This essay originally appeared on the tompaine.com web site



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LOOKING FOR AN EXTREME MAKEOVER

BY BILL BERKOWITZ

It hasn't been the best of times for Israel. There was last summer's widely condemned attack on Lebanon and the recent disclosure by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert that his country has a nuclear arsenal, not to mention the ongoing death and destruction resulting from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Former US President Jimmy Carter's strongly criticised Israel in his new bestselling book *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*, and a recent international consumer survey found that Israel has the worst "brand name" of any country in the world. Finally, The Sunday Times of London reported at the beginning of this year that the Israeli Air Force may be preparing to use low grade, tactical nuclear weapons to strike at Iran's nuclear facilities. So perhaps it is not surprising that Israel – whose international image is of a country in continuous conflict – would engage in a serious long-term effort to reshape global perceptions of itself.

As part of its "re-branding" strategy, according to a report in the Washing-

ton Times, Israel is turning to "the wisdom of Madison Avenue".

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni has "met with public relations executives, branding specialists and diplomats in Tel Aviv to brainstorm about improving the country's image by using the marketing insights first developed to sell peanut butter and Pontiacs," the newspaper reported

"When the word 'Israel' is said outside its borders, we want it to invoke not fighting or soldiers, but a place that is desirable to visit and invest in, a place that preserves democratic ideals while struggling to exist," Livni was quoted as saying by Reuters.

John Stauber, executive director of the Centre for Media and Democracy, whose website PRWatch.org has been tracking developments in the public relations world for several years, told IPS, "These days branding, which has most frequently been associated with creating a feel-good, positive impression for a product, service, or a company, is now being used more and more by coun-

"When the word 'Israel' is said outside its borders, we want it to invoke not fighting or soldiers, but a place that is desirable to visit and invest in, a place that preserves democratic ideals while struggling to exist"

"If Israel's intention is to promote itself as a desirable place to live and invest in, the challenge appears to be a steep one"

"Branding campaigns by nations are a type of propaganda designed to manage and manipulate the perception of in-country citizens or foreigners toward a government," he said. "Countries engaged in controversies, just like companies, will turn to branding methods as a crisis management technique to manage and manipulate public opinion and press coverage.

"Often nations with serious PR or image problems involving social justice issues are engaging in branding efforts. For instance, after 9/11 the United States launched a branding campaign that has spent hundreds of millions of dollars in a failed effort to improve the image of the US in Arab and Muslim countries."

"Given recent developments involving Israel, it is not at all surprising that it would ratchet up its spending on public relations and branding," added Stauber.

Long-term perception

Although the new public relations effort is still in its formative stages, and a budget for it has yet to be developed, a staff person with the London-based global advertising firm Saatchi and Saatchi acknowledged that it is already working with the Israelis free of charge on the re-branding effort.

Unlike public relations campaigns that are more immediately targeted and less durable, branding aims at changing long-term perceptions. The Anholt Nation Brands Index is an analytical ranking of the world's nations as brands developed by author Simon Anholt, an independent British re-

searcher and an adviser to governments on branding, who is also the founding editor of "Place Branding," a quarterly British journal devoted to the relatively new practice of place branding.

The Anholt Nation Brand Index recently polled 25,903 online consumers from 35 countries in North America, Europe, Asia and Latin America and found that Israel finished dead last in the survey, behind Estonia, Indonesia and Turkey.

Among the factors considered in a nation's "brand" are the quality of the country's government, its culture, its people, its business and investment climate, and its desirability as a tourist destination.

"A nation's brand is a deep-seated perception that does not change a great deal," Anholt pointed out. "There is no evidence that re-branding campaigns change people's minds.

"If Israel's intention is to promote itself as a desirable place to live and invest in, the challenge appears to be a steep one," Anholt concluded.

David Saranga, the counsel for media and public affairs at the Israeli Consulate in New York, told PR Week that the government was in consultation with a number of public relations and advertising firms and had not yet decided what the re-branding campaign would focus on. Saranga did point out that two important groups that the government wanted to reach are "liberals" and people aged 16 to 30.

Ambassador Gideon Meir, deputy director general for media and public affairs at Israel's Foreign Ministry, re-

cently spent time in the US meeting with media professionals working in the various Israeli consulates across North America. Meir told Haaretz's chief US correspondent that he would "rather have a Style section item on Israel, then a front page story."

In a paper titled "The Israel Brand – Policy Paper Proposal," Rommey Hassman, a marketing communications strategist and consultant to leading officials, corporations and organisations in Israel's government, non-government and business sectors, pointed out that "Nation-branding is still in its infancy; scholars have yet to conceive a theoretical basis for it."

There have been successes and failures, Hassman, who heads Tel Aviv University's Nation Branding Project, notes: "Spain presented the MIRO-based national logo at the Barcelona Olympics in 1992, to much acclaim [while] in contrast, the United Kingdom's controversial 'COOL Britannia' campaign was abandoned as a failure four years after its 1997 inception."

Jeremy Kahn, former managing editor at the New Republic and a former writer at Fortune magazine, recently told American Public Media's 'Marketplace' that countries are "not a cereal box that can be retooled quickly. To transform a country's image, first you have to transform the country. "

Kahn, who recently wrote a piece on nation branding for Foreign Policy magazine, pointed out that "In the absence of political transformation, nation branding often amounts to nothing more than misdirection.

"The transformation of a country's image can only come after the country is transformed. Throwing millions at public relations firms, hiring marketing consultants, creating snappy slogans or cool logos is basically a monumental waste of time, money and energy," he said.

"Israel also recently spent three years and millions of dollars developing and test marketing an advertising campaign," Kahn noted. "And yes, Israel does indeed 'start with I', as the country's new tag line helpfully points out. But so does Intifada – and it will take more than a new marketing campaign to get potential investors and tourists to forget Israel's ongoing conflict with the Palestinians. In fact, it might require something beyond the abilities of even the most talented marketing consultant: peace." **CT**

Bill Berkowitz is a longtime observer of the conservative movement. His WorkingForChange column "Conservative Watch" documents the strategies, players, institutions, victories and defeats of the US Right.

Meir told Haaretz's chief US correspondent that he would "rather have a Style section item on Israel, then a front page story"

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RAPTORS, ROBOTS & RODS FROM GOD

BY FRIDA BERRIGAN

The same Army that can't provide such basics of modern war is now promising the Future Combat Systems network (FCS), a "family of systems" that will enable soldiers to "perceive, comprehend, shape, and dominate the future battlefield at unprecedented levels"

We are not winning the war on terrorism (and would not be even if we knew what victory looked like) or the war in Iraq. Our track record in Afghanistan, as well as in the allied "war" on drugs, is hardly better. Yet the Pentagon is hard at work, spending your money, planning and preparing for future conflicts of every imaginable sort. From wars in space to sci-fi battlescapes without soldiers, scenarios are being scripted and weaponry prepared, largely out of public view, which ensures not future victories, but limitless spending that Americans can ill-afford now or 20 years from now.

Even though today the Armed Forces can't recruit enough soldiers or adequately equip those already in uniform, the Pentagon is committing itself to massive corporate contracts for new high-tech weapons systems slated to come on-line years, even decades, from now, guaranteed only to enrich their makers.

The typical soldier in Iraq carries

about half his or her body weight in gear and suffers the resulting back pain. Body armor, weapon(s), ammunition, water, first aid kit – it adds up in the 120 degree heat of Basra or Baghdad.

Ask soldiers in Iraq what they need most and answers may include: well-armored Humvees (many soldiers are jerry-rigging their own homemade Humvee armor); more body armor (an unofficial 2004 Army study found that one in four casualties in Iraq was the result of inadequate protective gear), or even silly string (Marcelle Shriver found out that her son was squirting the goo into a room as he and his squad searched buildings to detect trip wires around bombs).

The same Army that can't provide such basics of modern war is now promising the Future Combat Systems network (FCS), a "family of systems" that will enable soldiers to "perceive, comprehend, shape, and dominate the future battlefield at unprecedented levels." The FCS network will consist of a "family" of 18 manned and unmanned ground vehicles, air vehicles, sensors,

and munitions, including:

- * eight new, super-armored, super-strong ground vehicles to replace current tanks, infantry carriers, and self-propelled howitzers

- * four different planes and drones that soldiers can fly by remote control;

- * several “unmanned” ground vehicles.

Put together these are supposed to plunge soldiers into a video-game-like version of warfighting. The FCS will theoretically allow them to act as though they are in the midst of enemy territory – taking out “high value” targets, blowing up “insurgent safe houses,” monitoring the movements of “un-friendlies” – all the while remaining at a safe distance from the bloody action.

To grasp the futuristic ambitions (and staggering future costs) of FCS, consider this: The Government Accounting Office (GAO) notes that “an estimated 34 million lines of software code will need to be generated” for the project, “double that of the Joint Strike Fighter, which had been the largest defense undertaking in terms of software to be developed.”

In charge of this ambitious sci-fi style fantasy version of war are Boeing and SAIC (Science Applications International Corporation). They are the “Lead Systems Integrators” of this extraordinarily complex undertaking, but they are working with as many as 535 more companies across 40 states. They promise future forces the ability to break “free of the tyranny of terrain” and “an

agile, networked force capable of maneuver in the third dimension” in the words last March of retired Major General Robert H. Scales in a Boeing PowerPoint presentation entitled “FCS: Its Origin and Op Concept.”

Defense Secretary Rumsfeld once famously asserted, “You go to war with the Army you have, not the Army you might want or wish to have.” Pentagon planners seem to have taken the opposite tack. They prefer the military they, or their blue-sky dreamers, wish to have for the kinds of wars they dream about fighting. And it won’t be cheap. A March 2005 GAO report found that the total program cost of Future Combat Systems alone “is expected to be at least \$107.9 billion.” In 2005, the Pentagon had already allocated \$2.8 billion in research and development funds to FCS and, in fiscal year 2006, that was expected to increase to \$3.4 billion. (Keep in mind, that all such complex, high-tech, weapons-oriented systems almost invariably go far over initial cost estimates by the time they come on line.)

“The Maserati of the skies”

In 2006, the F-22 Raptor began rolling off the assembly line. The Air Force plans to buy 183 of these high-tech, radar-evading stealth planes, each at a price tag of \$130 million, being manufactured in a joint venture between Lockheed Martin and Boeing. But it turns out that the \$130 million per plane cost is just one-third of the total price, once development costs are factored in. The whole program is slated to cost the Pentagon 65 billion big ones.

Pentagon planners prefer the military they, or their blue-sky dreamers, wish to have for the kinds of wars they dream about fighting

ROAD TO ARMAGEDDON

In 2007, the only reason the military might need such a plane is to outfight its predecessor, the F-16, which Lockheed Martin has sold to numerous countries that benefited from the corporation's vociferous lobbying for new markets and our government's lax enforcement of arms-export controls

In July 2006, the Government Accountability Office asserted. "The F-22 acquisition history is a case study in increased cost and schedule inefficiencies."

Even if it were a bargain, however, it is a classic case of future-planning run amok. The plane was originally conceived to counter Soviet fighter planes, which haven't menaced the US for more than 15 years. The plane itself is technologically awe-inspiring, reportedly having a twice-the-speed-of-sound cruising speed of Mach 2. (The Pentagon jealously guards its maximum speed as top secret.)

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In this classic case of boomeranging weaponry, Lockheed Martin has triumphed three times: First, General Dynamics sold F-16 fighters to the Air Force beginning in 1976; second, Lockheed (which bought General Dynamics) sold the planes to Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela, and other nations from the 1980s to the present moment; and third, Lockheed Martin (having merged with Martin Marietta in 1995 and adjusted its name accordingly) now gets to produce an even higher tech plane for a US Air Force that fears it might be outclassed by foreign military hardware that once was our own. The Bethesda-based company ended 2001 with a stock price of

\$46.67 a share – and began 2007 at a celebratory \$92.07.

The next generation fighter

Of course, the lesson drawn from this is to produce yet more futuristic planes. The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, built by a team led (yet again!) by Lockheed Martin, made its initial flight on December 15, 2006. The total program could surpass \$275 billion, making it the most expensive weapons program in US history. Prime contractor Lockheed Martin is sharing the work and profits with partners Northrop Grumman and BAE Systems (not to speak of scads of subcontractors).

The Air Force already hails the F-35s "transformational sensor capability" and "low-observable characteristics" that will "enable persistent combat air support over the future battlefield. Furthermore, [the] F-35 will help enable the negation of advanced enemy air defenses because it will possess the ability to perform unrestricted operations within heavily defended airspace."

Somewhere in there it is implied that this plane launches missiles that kill people, but it is very deeply embedded. Nowhere does it say that its opponent in the skies could be the F-22 Raptor, once it is sold to all those nations who find their F-16s woefully out of date.

What's next next next next?

Even with such spiraling, mind-boggling investments in advanced weapons systems, the aerospace industry is never satisfied. The quest for new justifications for ever "better" versions of al-

ready advanced weapons systems is the holy grail of the business. These justifications pile up in industry magazines like *Aerospace America*, the organ of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics.

In a typical article in that magazine, the industry makes much of a comment then-Air Force Vice Chief of Staff Gen. T. Michael Moseley made to Congress in March 2004. In charge of the US air campaign over Iraq, he observed that most of the sorties originated from neighboring countries that were allies in Operation Enduring Freedom. But what if, he wondered, you wanted to go to war and there were no local allies willing to offer basing facilities. On the classic Boy Scout theory, be prepared, he promptly warned in written testimony to the House Armed Services Committee, “In the future, we will require deep-strike capabilities to penetrate and engage high-value targets during the first minutes of hostilities anywhere in the battlespace.”

And he was only making a public point of already popular Air Force doctrine. The 176-page Air Force Transformation Flight Plan was issued in all its glittering verbosity in November 2003, bristling with a dismal, hyper-militarized view of the future.

In it, Air Force planners envisioned a world with the United States even more embattled and unpopular than it was at that moment, and where we lacked all powers of persuasion to entice other nations to join future “coalitions of the willing.”

The solution: new bombers that could fulfill those “deep-strike require-

ments” which, sadly, cannot be carried out by tomorrow’s F-22 and F-35 fighter planes. (They “may not have enough range to attack critical ground targets far inside enemy territory, repeatedly, and under all circumstances.”)

Not surprisingly, Lockheed Martin tried to knock two birds out of the sky with one stone, responding to criticism that the F-22 was irrelevant and too expensive, while rushing to meet the Air Force’s perceived need for a new long-range bomber by suggesting yet another plane: the F/B (for fighter-bomber)-22. As they described it, in a vision of a kind of high artistry of death, this wonder of modern air war would even be capable of changing color to match the sky.

A January 2005 article in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* gave Lockheed Martin visionaries a chance to share their chameleon of a “high-speed, high-altitude bomber” which could also change shape, becoming “slimmer and more aerodynamic as its fuel tanks drain on long-distance flights. It would be invisible to radar, carry precision bombs and missiles, and fly fast enough to outrun most fighters.” Sounds cool, right? This might be one instance where the weapons designers and imagineers took a few steps too far into fantasy land. There has not been any progress on the idea since 2005, but don’t be surprised if the chameleon fighter-bomber changes color and shape and soars again in the race for future weapons funding.

Even without the magical fighter-bomber, over the next eight years or so the Air Force imagines fielding systems

Air Force planners envisioned a world with the United States even more embattled and unpopular than it was at that moment, and where we lacked all powers of persuasion to entice other nations to join future “coalitions of the willing”

ROAD TO ARMAGEDDON

The Air Force and the Army are not alone in imagining fabulously wild wars of the future and the multi-billion dollar weapons systems they can build to fight them. The Navy has its own gold-plated crystal ball

like the Common Aero Vehicle— “a rapidly responsive, highly maneuverable, hypersonic glide vehicle that would be rocket-launched into space” according to the Air Force documents. The CAV would be equipped with sensors and bristle with weapons it could launch from space against fixed and moving targets on land, and that could be delivered anywhere on earth within two hours.

As John Pike, a weapons expert and director of GlobalSecurity.org, told the Washington Post in March 2005, CAV programs will allow the US “to crush someone anywhere in world on 30 minutes’ notice with no need for a nearby air base.”

Looking beyond 2015, the Air Force sees systems like the B-X Bomber; space-based Hypervelocity Rod Bundles (nicknamed “rods from God”), a mystical sounding system that promises “to strike ground targets anywhere in the world”; the Guardian Urban Combat Weapon, an “air-launched lurk and loiter reconnaissance, rotary winged, unmanned, combat air vehicle designed for urban warfare”; and the High Powered Microwave Airborne Electronic Attack, an “anti-electronics high powered microwave weapon against ‘soft’ electronic-containing targets” that would be operated “from an airborne platform at military significant ranges.”

The Air Force and the Army are not alone in imagining fabulously wild wars of the future and the multi-billion dollar weapons systems they can build to fight them. The Navy has its own gold-plated crystal ball. Their new

KDD(X) program could end up totaling \$100 billion for some 70 warships including destroyers, cruisers, and a seagoing high-tech killer called LCS (Littoral Combat Ship).

Generously, the Pentagon decided to give the project to two different ship building companies – Northrop-Grumman Ship Systems (Ingalls, Mississippi) and General Dynamics (Bath Iron Works, Maine). According to the Pentagon’s “Program Acquisition Cost by Weapons System,” the DD(X) will include “full-spectrum signature reduction, active and passive self-defense systems and cutting-edge survivability features.” At \$3.3 billion for two ships in 2007, it better.

Building one ship in each location with each contractor raised the cost by \$300 million per ship, according to GlobalSecurity.Org, but to members of Congress representing each district that is a small price to pay for maintaining “flexibility.” In this business, one becomes accustomed to flexibility’s magical spending properties. In its 2006 report, the White House’s Office of Budget and Management commented that the Littoral Combat Ship and other systems mentioned above have a “high potential to meet current and future threats.”

Congress, where so much of the game is bringing the bacon (i.e. ship-building contracts) back to the Baths of the nation, wholeheartedly concurred. That was just about the sum total of the debate about these multi-billion-dollar ship systems, multi-million-dollar boons for a few companies, and the dark specter of the future threats

these ships will theoretically protect us against.

Missile Defense: The great misnomer in the sky

While many of the systems described so far are, at least, futures that, in some heated imagination, exist, the misnamed Ballistic Missile Defense System is moving full steam ahead despite being irrelevant, unworkable, and obscenely expensive in our less-than-futuristic present moment.

The BMD program got another boost recently when incoming Defense Secretary Robert Gates gave it his full support, telling the Senate Armed Services Committee: "I know we've spent a lot of money on developing missile defense, but I have believed since the Reagan administration that if we can develop that kind of capability, it would be a mistake for us not to."

The mistake is wasting one more dime on decades-worth of failure and bombast that have cost an estimated \$200 billion so far without producing a single workable system to shoot down an enemy missile or even the sitting-duck targets that have taken the place of such missiles in half-baked tests of the woeful project.

Missile defense funding is set to soak up another \$9.4 billion in fiscal 2007 – part of the Pentagon's ongoing corporate welfare system – and the Defense Department's Future Years Defense Program report proposes that funding averaging \$10 billion annually be continued for research and development of the system through... (this is not a misprint) 2024. (The nonpartisan Con-

gressional Budget Office projects that annual missile-defense costs will, in fact, increase to \$15 billion by 2016.)

And it is not just in the Pentagon where such blue-sky spending for an overarmed world is underway.

Hidden in the innocuous sounding Department of Energy is the National Nuclear Security Administration, which has big plans laid through 2030. Their Complex 2030 vision, released in April 2006, sees a "responsive nuclear infrastructure" that can continuously dismantle and rebuild nuclear weapons, reducing their numbers and increasing their potency, while ensuring that, at any moment an American leader might want to destroy the planet many times over, nuclear production rates can be rapidly increased.

The Department of Energy estimates that Complex 2030 will require a mere capital investment of \$150 billion, but the Government Accountability Office suggests that, as with so many initial estimates for future weapons systems, that number was far too low. Even if the program cost only a dollar, it is but another typically dangerous and provocative step by the military-industrial complex that threatens, in this case, to encourage yet more global nuclear proliferation.

Complex 2030 would, in fact, plunge us back into a Cold War atmosphere, but with far more nuclear-armed adversaries. It even promises a return to the underground testing of nuclear weapons and could require upping the production of new plutonium pits (the fissile heart of nuclear weapons).

As engineers and physicists at Lock-

"I know we've spent a lot of money on developing missile defense, but I have believed since the Reagan administration that if we can develop that kind of capability, it would be a mistake for us not to"

ROAD TO ARMAGEDDON

Only the money – billions and billions of dollars – is real...

heed Martin and the Air Force dream up new weapons – shaping bombers out of polymer and pixels – politicians and Pentagoners imagine the threats those super-bombers of the future will blast to bits.

Only the money – billions and billions of dollars – is real... But as those billions are sucked away, what happens to our dreams of clear skies, cures for pandemics, solutions to global warming and energy depletion? To make more human dreams our future reality, we have to stop feeding the military's nightmare monsters. **CT**

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This essay first appeared on the web site tomdispatch.com



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JOHNNY GOT HIS GUN

BY WILLIAM BLUM

In the past year Iran has issued several warnings to the United States about the consequences of an American or Israeli attack. One statement, issued in November by a high Iranian military official, declared: “If America attacks Iran, its 200,000 troops and 33 bases in the region will be extremely vulnerable, and both American politicians and military commanders are aware of it.”^[1]

Iran apparently believes that American leaders would be so deeply distressed by the prospect of their young men and women being endangered and possibly killed that they would forswear any reckless attacks on Iran.

As if American leaders have been deeply stabbed by pain about throwing youthful American bodies into the bottomless snakepit called Iraq, or were restrained by fear of retaliation or by moral qualms while feeding 58,000 young lives to the Vietnam beast. As if American leaders, like all world leaders, have ever had such concerns.

Let’s have a short look at some modern American history, which may be in-

structive in this regard. A report of the US Congress in 1994 informed us that:

Approximately 60,000 military personnel were used as human subjects in the 1940s to test two chemical agents, mustard gas and lewisite [blister gas]. Most of these subjects were not informed of the nature of the experiments and never received medical followup after their participation in the research. Additionally, some of these human subjects were threatened with imprisonment at Fort Leavenworth if they discussed these experiments with anyone, including their wives, parents, and family doctors. For decades, the Pentagon denied that the research had taken place, resulting in decades of suffering for many veterans who became ill after the secret testing.^[2]

In the decades between the 1940s and 1990s, we find a remarkable variety of government programs, either formally, or in effect, using soldiers as guinea pigs – marched to nuclear explosion sites, with pilots sent through the mushroom clouds; subjected to chemical and biological weapons ex-

As if American leaders have been deeply stabbed by pain about throwing youthful American bodies into the bottomless snakepit called Iraq, or were restrained by fear of retaliation or by moral qualms while feeding 58,000 young lives to the Vietnam beast

If the Pentagon had been much more forthcoming from the outset about what it knew all along about these various substances and weapons, the soldiers might have had a proper diagnosis early on and received appropriate care sooner

periments; radiation experiments; behavior modification experiments that washed their brains with LSD; widespread exposure to the highly toxic dioxin of Agent Orange in Korea and Vietnam ... the list goes on ... literally millions of experimental subjects, seldom given a choice or adequate information, often with disastrous effects to their physical and/or mental health, rarely with proper medical care or even monitoring.^[3]

In the 1990s, many thousands of American soldiers came home from the Gulf War with unusual, debilitating ailments. Exposure to harmful chemical or biological agents was suspected, but the Pentagon denied that this had occurred. Years went by while the veterans suffered terribly: neurological problems, chronic fatigue, skin problems, scarred lungs, memory loss, muscle and joint pain, severe headaches, personality changes, passing out, and much more.

Eventually, the Pentagon, inch by inch, was forced to move away from its denials and admit that, yes, chemical weapon depots had been bombed; then, yes, there probably were releases of deadly poisons; then, yes, American soldiers were indeed in the vicinity of these poisonous releases, 400 soldiers; then, it might have been 5,000; then, “a very large number”, probably more than 15,000; then, finally, a precise number – 20,867; then, “The Pentagon announced that a long-awaited computer model estimates that nearly 100,000 US soldiers could have been exposed to trace amounts of sarin gas.”^[4]

If the Pentagon had been much

more forthcoming from the outset about what it knew all along about these various substances and weapons, the soldiers might have had a proper diagnosis early on and received appropriate care sooner. The cost in terms of human suffering has been incalculable.

Soldiers have also been forced to take vaccines against anthrax and nerve gas not approved by the FDA as safe and effective; and punished, sometimes treated like criminals, if they refused. (During World War II, soldiers were forced to take a yellow fever vaccine, with the result that some 330,000 of them were infected with the hepatitis B virus.^[5])

And through all the recent wars, countless American soldiers have been put in close proximity to the radioactive dust of exploded depleted uranium-tipped shells and missiles on the battlefield; depleted uranium has been associated with a long list of rare and terrible illnesses and birth defects. It poisons the air, the soil, the water, the lungs, the blood, and the genes. (The widespread dissemination of depleted uranium by American warfare – from Serbia to Afghanistan to Iraq – should be an international scandal and crisis, like AIDS, and would be in a world not so intimidated by the United States.)

The catalogue of Pentagon abuses of American soldiers goes on ... Troops serving in Iraq or their families have reported purchasing with their own funds bullet-proof vests, better armor for their vehicles, medical supplies, and global positioning devices, all for their own safety, which were not provided to them by the army ... Continuous com-

plaints by servicewomen of sexual assault and rape at the hands of their male counterparts are routinely played down or ignored by the military brass ... Numerous injured and disabled vets from all wars have to engage in an ongoing struggle to get the medical care they were promised ... One should read "Army Acts to Curb Abuses of Injured Recruits" (New York Times, May 12, 2006) for accounts of the callous, bordering on sadistic, treatment of soldiers in bases in the United States ... Repeated tours of duty, which fracture family life and increase the chance not only of death or injury but of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).^[6]

National Public Radio's "All Things Considered", on December 4 and other days, ran a series on Army mistreatment of soldiers home from Iraq and suffering serious PTSD.

At Colorado's Ft. Carson these afflicted soldiers are receiving a variety of abuse and punishment much more than the help they need, as officers harass and punish them for being emotionally "weak."

Keep the above in mind the next time you hear a president or a general speaking on Memorial Day about "honor" and "duty" and about how much we "owe to the brave young men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the cause of freedom and democracy."

And read "Johnny Got His Gun" by Dalton Trumbo for the ultimate abuse of soldiers by leaders of nations.

The conscience of our leaders

After he ordered the bombing of

Panama in December 1989, which killed anywhere from 500 to a few thousand totally innocent people, guilty of no harm to any American, the first President George Bush declared that his "heart goes out to the families of those who have died in Panama".^[7]

When asked by a reporter: "Was it really worth it to send people to their death for this? To get Noriega?", Bush replied: "Every human life is precious, and yet I have to answer, yes, it has been worth it."^[8]

Speaking in November 1990 of his imminent invasion of Iraq, Bush, Sr. said: "People say to me: 'How many lives? How many lives can you expend?' Each one is precious."^[9]

While his killing of thousands of Iraqis was proceeding merrily along in 2003, the second President George Bush was moved to say: "We believe in the value and dignity of every human life."^[10]

In December 2006, the White House spokesman for Bush, Jr., commenting about American deaths reaching 3,000 in Iraq, said President Bush "believes that every life is precious and grieves for each one that is lost."^[11]

Both father and son are on record expressing their deep concern for God and prayer both before and during their mass slaughters. "I trust God speaks through me," said Bush the younger in 2004. "Without that, I couldn't do my job."^[12]

After his devastation of Iraq and its people, Bush the elder said: "I think that, like a lot of others who had positions of responsibility in sending someone else's kids to war, we realize that in

When asked by a reporter: "Was it really worth it to send people to their death for this? To get Noriega?", Bush replied: "Every human life is precious, and yet I have to answer, yes, it has been worth it"

Is it not remarkable that in the numerous articles in the American daily press following President Ford's death last month, there was not a single mention of his role in the East Timor massacre?

prayer what mattered is how it might have seemed to God.”^[13]

God, one surmises, might have asked George Bush, father and son, about the kids of Iraq. And the adults. And, in a testy, rather ungodlike manner, might have snapped: “So stop wasting all the precious lives already!”

In the now-famous exchange on TV in 1996 between Madeleine Albright and reporter Lesley Stahl, the latter was speaking of US sanctions against Iraq, and asked the then-US ambassador to the UN, and Secretary of State-to-be: “We have heard that a half million children have died. I mean, that’s more children than died in Hiroshima. And – and you know, is the price worth it?” Replied Albright: “I think this is a very hard choice, but the price – we think the price is worth it.”^[14]

Ten years later, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, continuing the fine tradition of female Secretaries of State and the equally noble heritage of the Bush family, declared that the current horror in Iraq is “worth the investment” in American lives and dollars.^[15]

And don’t forget that we can’t pull out of Iraq now because it would dishonor the troops who haven’t died yet.

The American media as the Berlin Wall

In December 1975, while East Timor, which lies at the eastern end of the Indonesian archipelago, was undergoing a process of decolonization from Portugal, a struggle for power took place. A movement of the left, Fretilin, prevailed and then declared East Timor’s independence from Portugal. Nine days

later, Indonesia invaded East Timor. The invasion was launched the day after US President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had left Indonesia after giving President Suharto permission to use American arms, which, under US law, could not be used for aggression.

But Indonesia was Washington’s most valuable ally in Southeast Asia and, in any event, the United States was not inclined to look kindly on any government of the left.

Indonesia soon achieved complete control over East Timor, with the help of the American arms and other military aid, as well as diplomatic support at the UN. Amnesty International estimated that by 1989, Indonesian troops had killed 200,000 people out of a population of between 600,000 and 700,000, a death rate which is probably one of the highest in the entire history of wars.^[16]

Is it not remarkable that in the numerous articles in the American daily press following President Ford’s death last month, there was not a single mention of his role in the East Timor massacre?

A search of the extensive Lexis-Nexis and other media databases finds mention of this only in a few letters to the editor from readers; not a word even in the reports of any of the news agencies, like the Associated Press, which generally shy away from controversy less than the newspapers they serve; nor a single mention in the mainstream broadcast news programs.

Imagine if following the recent death of Augusto Pinochet the media made

no mention of his overthrow of the Allende government in Chile, or the mass murder and torture which followed. Ironically, the recent articles about Ford also failed to mention his remark a year after Pinochet's coup. President Ford declared that what the United States had done in Chile was "in the best interest of the people in Chile and certainly in our own best interest."^[17]

During the Cold War, the American government and media never missed an opportunity to point out the news events embarrassing to the Soviet Union which became non-events in the communist media.

Man shall never fly

The Cold War is still with us. Because the ideological conflict that was the basis for it has not gone away. Because it can't go away. As long as capitalism exists, as long as it puts profit before people, as it must, as long as it puts profit before the environment, as it must, those on the receiving end of its sharp pointed stick must look for a better way.

Thus it is that when Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez announced a few days ago that he plans to nationalize telephone and electric utility companies to accelerate his "socialist revolution", the spokesperson for Capitalism Central, White House press secretary Tony Snow, was quick to the attack: "Nationalization has a long and inglorious history of failure around the world," Snow declared. "We support the Venezuelan people and think this is an unhappy day for them."^[18]

Snow presumably buys into the be-

lief that capitalism defeated socialism in the Cold War. A victory for a superior idea. The boys of Capital chortle in their martinis about the death of socialism. The word has been banned from polite conversation. And they hope that no one will notice that every socialist experiment of any significance in the past century has either been corrupted, subverted, perverted, or destabilized ... or crushed, overthrown, bombed, or invaded ... or otherwise had life made impossible for it, by the United States.

Not one socialist government or movement – from the Russian Revolution to Cuba, the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the FMLN in Salvador, from Communist China to Grenada, Chile and Vietnam – not one was permitted to rise or fall solely on its own merits; not one was left secure enough to drop its guard against the all-powerful enemy abroad and freely and fully relax control at home.

Even many plain old social democracies – such as in Guatemala, Iran, British Guiana, Serbia and Haiti, which were not in love with capitalism and were looking for another path – even these too were made to bite the dust by Uncle Sam.

It's as if the Wright brothers' first experiments with flying machines all failed because the automobile interests sabotaged each test flight. And then the good and god-fearing folk of America looked upon this, took notice of the consequences, nodded their collective heads wisely, and intoned solemnly: Man shall never fly.

Tony Snow would have us believe

Tony Snow would have us believe that the government is no match for the private sector in efficiently getting large and important things done. But is that really true?

And by the way, Tony, the great majority of the population in the last years of the Soviet Union had a much better quality of life, including a longer life, under their "failed nationalized" economy, than they have had under unbridled capitalism

that the government is no match for the private sector in efficiently getting large and important things done. But is that really true?

Let's clear our minds for a moment, push our upbringing to one side, and remember that the American government has landed men on the moon, created great dams, marvelous national parks, an interstate highway system, the peace corps, built up an incredible military machine (ignoring for the moment what it's used for), student loans, social security, Medicare, insurance for bank deposits, protection of pension funds against corporate misuse, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Institutes of Health, the Smithsonian, the G.I. Bill, and much, much more.

In short, the government has been quite good at doing what it wanted to do, or what labor and other movements have made it do, like establishing worker health and safety standards and requiring food manufacturers to list detailed information about ingredients.

When George W. took office one of his chief goals was to examine whether jobs done by federal employees could be performed more efficiently by private contractors. Bush called it his top management priority. By the end of 2005, 50,000 government jobs had been studied. And federal workers had won the job competitions more than 80 percent of the time.^[19]

We have to remind the American people of what they've instinctively learned but tend to forget when faced with statements like that of Tony Snow

– that they don't want more government, or less government; they don't want big government, or small government; they want government on their side.

And by the way, Tony, the great majority of the population in the last years of the Soviet Union had a much better quality of life, including a longer life, under their "failed nationalized" economy, than they have had under unbridled capitalism.

None of the above, of course, will deter The World's Only Superpower from continuing its jihad to impose capitalist fundamentalism upon the world.

Unwelcome guests at the table of the respectable folk

Sen. Joseph Biden, Democrat from Delaware, the new chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has announced four weeks of hearings focused on every aspect of US policy in Iraq. He really wants to get to the bottom of things, find out how and why things went so wrong, who are the ones responsible, hold them accountable, and what can be done now. The committee will hear the testimony of top political, economic and intelligence experts, foreign diplomats, and former and current senior US officials, like Condoleezza Rice, Brent Scowcroft, Samuel Berger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Henry Kissinger, Madeleine Albright and George Shultz.^[20] All the usual suspects.

But why not call upon some unusual suspects? Why do congressional committees and committees appointed by

the White House typically not call experts who dissent from the official explanations? Why not hear from people who had the wisdom to protest the invasion of Iraq and condemn it in writing before it even began? People who called the war illegal and immoral, said we should never start it, and predicted much of the horrible outcome. Surely they may have some insights and analyses that will not be heard from the mouths of the usual suspects.

Likewise, why didn't the September 11 Committee, or any of the congressional committees dealing with the terrorist attack, call upon any of the numerous 9-11 experts who have done extensive research and who question various aspects of the official story?

Traditionally, of course, such committees have been formed to put a damper on dissident questioning of official stories, to ridicule them as "conspiracy theorists", not to give the dissidents a larger audience. **CT**

NOTES

[1] Fars News Agency, November 21, 2006

[2] Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, "Is Military Research Hazardous to Veterans' Health? Lessons Spanning Half a Century", December 8, 1994, p.5

[3] Ibid., passim

[4] Washington Post, October 2 and 23, 1996 and July 31, 1997 for the estimated numbers of affected soldiers.

[5] "Journal of the American Medical Association", September 1, 1999, p.82

[6] Washington Post, December 20, 2006, p.19

[7] New York Times, December 22, 1989, p.17

[8] New York Times, December 22, 1989, p.16

[9] Los Angeles Times, December 1, 1990, p.1

[10] Washington Post, May 28, 2003

[11] Washington Post, January 1, 2007, p.1

[12] Washington Post, July 20, 2004, p.15, statement attributed to President Bush in the Lancaster (Pa.) New Era newspaper from a private meeting with Amish families on July 9. The White House later said Bush said no such thing. Yes, we know how the Amish lie.

[13] Los Angeles Times, June 7, 1991, p.1

[14] CBS "60 Minutes", May 12, 1996

[15] Associated Press, December 22, 2006

[16] National Security Archive – www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/ – Search <Ford Timor>; William Blum, *Rogue State*, p.188-9

[17] New York Times, September 17, 1974, p.22

[18] Washington Post, January 10, 2007, p.7

[19] Washington Post, March 23, 2006, p.21

[20] Washington Post, January 5, 2007

William Blum is the author of:
Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War 2
Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower; West-Bloc Dissident: A Cold War Memoir; Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire

People who called the war illegal and immoral, said we should never start it, and predicted much of the horrible outcome. Surely they may have some insights and analyses that will not be heard from the mouths of the usual suspects

BUSH ANTI-TERROR SUCCESSSES ARE ALL FICTION

BY DAVID SWANSON

In other words, a regime that appears to be barely holding on to its power is being supported with unabashed US military power – to the tune of approximately 180 million dollars per day

President Bush claimed in his State of the Union speech to have prevented four terrorist plots. Phew! It's a good thing to know that we tossed out our Bill of Rights for some actual REASON – I mean other than turning Iraq into a training ground for terrorism.

Except that we didn't.

1. "We stopped an al Qaeda plot to fly a hijacked airplane into the tallest building on the West Coast."

An October 8, 2005, LA Times story, headlined "Scope of Plots Bush Says Were Foiled Is Questioned," cited "several counter-terrorism officials" as saying that "the plot never progressed past the planning stages.... 'To take that and make it into a disrupted plot is just ludicrous,' said one senior FBI official ... At most it was a plan that was stopped in its initial stages and was not an operational plot that had been disrupted by authorities."

On Feb. 10, 2006, the LA Times quoted a "US official familiar with the

operational aspects of the war on terrorism," who said that "the Library Tower plot was one of many Al Qaeda operations that had not gone much past the conceptual stage.... The official spoke on the condition of anonymity, saying that those familiar with the plot feared political retaliation for providing a different characterization of the plan than that of the president."

Michael Scheuer, an al Qaeda expert in the CIA's counter-terrorism center, told the Voice of America: "This doesn't sound like anything that I would recall as a major threat, or as a major success in stopping it.... My impression [was that the National Security Council] culled through information to look for something that resembled a serious threat in 2002. It doesn't strike me, either as someone who was there or as someone who has followed al Qaeda pretty closely, that this was really a serious sort of effort."

A February 10, 2006 Washington Post story cited "several U.S. intelligence officials" who "said there is deep disagreement within the intelligence

community over the seriousness of the Library Tower scheme and whether it was ever much more than talk.”

A February 10, 2006, New York Daily News story cited one senior counterterrorism official who said: “There was no definitive plot. It never materialized or got past the thought stage.”

Back on June 17, 2004, the New York Daily News quoted John Pistole, the FBI’s counterterrorism director. Asked to comment on a CIA agent’s statement that “I think we’ve probably prevented a few aviation attacks against both the East and West coasts,”

Pistole at first said he was “not sure what [the CIA] was referring to.” The Daily News reported that “Even after consulting CIA officials, Pistole still would not call the alleged threat uncovered in the summer of 2003 an advanced plot.”

2.-“We uncovered an al Qaeda cell developing anthrax to be used in attacks against America.”

An October 31, 2006, Washington Post article describes al Qaeda’s efforts as well short of “developing” and the case to tie them to the anthrax attacks in the United States as leading nowhere. A September 25, 2006, Washington Post article describes the FBI’s investigation of the anthrax attacks in the United States as still open, but just barely active. If that investigation has reached any conclusion, or if Bush has discovered a plot of some other attacks that were prevented, he should produce evidence of such.

3.-“Just last August, British authorities uncovered a plot to blow up passenger planes bound for America over the Atlantic Ocean.”

Well, the British “authorities” did arrest two dozen people at the insistence of the Bush Administration, but numerous reports found consensus among experts that those arrested could not have possibly mixed together on an airplane the liquid explosives they allegedly planned to use. And common sense suggested that if they had managed such a sophisticated plot, it was unlikely anyone else was working on the same thing (the assumption that prevents us all from traveling with toothpaste and deodorant unless sealed in a proper protective plastic bag, and leads to government employees carelessly tossing deadly dangerous toothpaste tubes into trashcans in the middle of unsuspecting crowds).

Craig Murray, former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan, summed this case up well:

“None of the alleged terrorists had made a bomb. None had bought a plane ticket. Many did not even have passports, which given the efficiency of the UK Passport Agency would mean they couldn’t be a plane bomber for quite some time. In the absence of bombs and airline tickets, and in many cases passports, it could be pretty difficult to convince a jury beyond reasonable doubt that individuals intended to go through with suicide bombings, whatever rash stuff they may have

Instead of the emergency requests Messrs. Bush and Cheney tend to prefer, the Democrats want the war funding requests to be included in the annual budget

If we recall the protests in Seattle in 1999 against the WTO, we will remember how effective they were in raising the level of awareness and opposition to the aims of global capitalism

bragged in internet chat rooms.

“What is more, many of those arrested had been under surveillance for over a year - like thousands of other British Muslims. And not just Muslims. Like me. Nothing from that surveillance had indicated the need for early arrests. Then an interrogation in Pakistan revealed the details of this amazing plot to blow up multiple planes - which, rather extraordinarily, had not turned up in a year of surveillance. Of course, the interrogators of the Pakistani dictator have their ways of making people sing like canaries. As I witnessed in Uzbekistan, you can get the most extraordinary information this way. Trouble is it always tends to give the interrogators all they might want, and more, in a desperate effort to stop or avert torture. What it doesn't give is the truth.”

4.-"We broke up a Southeast Asian terror cell grooming operatives for attacks inside the United States."

Was this the one broken up in 1995, before Bush, when we still had much

of our Bill of Rights intact? Is this the “tallest building on the West Coast” story by another name in order to expand the list? I've seen a lot of reports on Bush's speech, but no explanation of what he's talking about here.

Of course, such claims are not new: They follow the pattern of the Padilla radiation bomb claim. The announcement of that supposed success was made at a time when Bush needed a boost in the media, even though the man had been locked up for a month already; and then the charges were later dropped.

Keith Olbermann once ran a segment highlighting the suspicious timing of ten such announcements, each one of which ended up amounting to nothing at all. Olbermann's story left out plenty of more recent examples, but then, so did Bush's speech. Have we forgotten the heroic way in which he saved the Sears Tower already? **CT**

Richard Matthews provided research assistance for this article.

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MONEY VERSUS THE MONSOON

BY STAN COX

You probably haven't noticed, but days aren't as bright as they used to be. Sunlight intensity, averaged across hundreds of locations on all continents, decreased by 1.5 to 3% per decade from the 1950s to 1990s. The dulling of the sky can be traced largely to the burning of fuels, which releases soot, sulfates, nitrates, and other substances that absorb and reflect a portion of the sunlight that normally would reach the Earth's surface.

When reported a few years ago ^[1], these findings were controversial, but subsequent research has helped confirm the reality of "global dimming." However, to paraphrase the old saying about politics, all global climate change is local. Over the past decade, clean-air laws and export of dirty industries have halted dimming and even led to some brightening (and warming) in the US and Europe. Meanwhile, as we shall see, continued dimming over Asia could well mean more erratic monsoon rains and less food for 2 billion people.

If that indeed happens, the chroni-

cally drought-stricken district of Anantapur here at the southern end of the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh may provide a grim preview of South Asia's future. Lying between Hyderabad and Bangalore – the country's two great traffic-choked foreign-investment capitals and major sources of the brown haze that blankets the subcontinent every year from November to April – this impoverished rural region never sees a very good monsoon. The area lies in a "rain shadow" from India's southeastern mountains, and as a result, its average annual rainfall is only about 20 inches, often concentrated in a few downpours between June and September. And even that meager monsoon is increasingly undependable: Of the nine years since 1930 that saw rainfall below 16 inches, six have occurred since 1980 and two since 2002.

A recent study by India's National Climate Center showed that over the past century, 12 of 36 regions in India, including the region that includes Anantapur, have seen decreasing annual rainfall. But despite living in the

Continued dimming over Asia could well mean more erratic monsoon rains and less food for 2 billion people

GLOBAL DIMMING

Some analysts now say the sudden onslaught of hot years over much of the world since 1990 actually represents a longer, more gradual warming trend that was masked back in the 60s, 70s, and 80s by a shady layer of soot and sulfates

driest part of southern India, the 3.6 million people of Anantapur district – 2.7 million of them in small villages – continue to rely on agriculture as the foundation of their economy, indeed their existence. Now, immense, drifting brown clouds produced by the booming, mostly urban, demand for electric appliances, automobiles, and other fossil-fuel-guzzling features of twenty-first-century Indian life could undermine Anantapur's survival in way that centuries of persistent "natural" droughts have not.

Playing with the dimmer switch

The deepest dimming during the past half-century occurred in the Northern Hemisphere, most intensely in the most heavily populated regions ^[2], and especially in the United States, with its voracious energy consumption. Anti-pollution efforts in the industrialized West, along with the 1990s economic crash in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the large-scale relocation of manufacturing to Asia, curbed the release of pollutants in the West, and that appears to have led to overall global brightening in the last decade or so. Some analysts now say the sudden onslaught of hot years over much of the world since 1990 actually represents a longer, more gradual warming trend that was masked back in the 60s, 70s, and 80s by a shady layer of soot and sulfates.

But dimming continues across large parts of the globe, and history shows that the result can be severe drought and plummeting crop production. Recent research has shown that decades

ago, sulfates from industrial Europe and North America weakened atmospheric circulation in the intertropical convergence zone, causing rains to fail in Africa's Sahel region, south of the Sahara desert [3]. The resulting Sahelian drought of the 1970s and 80s ended up killing more than a million people.

Now, food production in South Asia is imperiled by phenomena known as "atmospheric brown clouds." Rapidly industrializing areas of Asia and the surrounding oceans have seen continued darkening, associated with the emergence of extensive, murky clouds with lifetimes measured in weeks. Fed increasingly by combustion of coal, diesel, and gasoline, brown clouds have been returning, darker and larger each winter, over South Asia and the northern Indian Ocean ^[3].

The brown clouds have cut the amount of sunlight reaching the land and ocean surfaces by approximately 8% between 1930 and 2000 ^[4]. While shading and thereby cooling the surface, the brown clouds absorb heat and warm the atmospheric layer in which they hover. That has several nasty consequences: reduced evaporation from the ocean surface (which means less moisture available for rain); warmer-than-normal clouds that contain more fine particles of pollution and can hold more moisture without releasing it as rain; and perhaps most ominously, a potential weakening of the climatic engine that drives the monsoon rains ^[4,5]. That could mean lower crop yields across much of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, and it could tip already drought-afflicted areas like Anantapur

District into ecological and humanitarian crisis.

Living with drought

Traditionally, Anantapur's farmers have dealt with their bad draw in the climatic lottery by growing tough subsistence crops: pearl millet, finger millet, deep-rooted legumes like pigeonpea, and, on better soils, chickpea. Over the past two decades, cash-crop peanut mania swept the district, eventually covering its arable land in a near-monoculture. But drought, soil exhaustion, and a plant virus have driven peanut yields down and reduced the typical seed's oil content from almost 50% down to 36%. Because the crop is grown mainly for cooking oil production, farmers are getting lower prices for smaller crops.

Fully 80% of the district's rural people are small farmers, not fat-cat landlords or landless laborers, but that relatively well-balanced farm economy is getting harder to maintain. Economic pressures, coming on top of increasingly erratic rainfall and depletion of groundwater supplies, have helped push Anantapur toward the top of the list of districts for numbers of farmer suicides, which are reported to number in the thousands. The water table has dropped as much as 15 feet in some places, and more wells are being drilled ever-more deeply to get at ever-less water. It's also reported that 10 to 15% of farmers have fled the crisis to look for work in urban areas.

I recently visited farmlands around the village of Velikonda, one of 54 watersheds in the district where farmers,

assisted by the nonprofit group Acción Fraternal, are using water-harvesting methods, a more diverse array of crops, and natural pest control in an effort to sustain their communities and food supplies over the long haul. There, and in other villages in the district, it's clear that communities accustomed to surviving hard times are not going to give up without a fight.

With the help of engineers, hydrologists, agronomists, and local laborers, and organizing themselves into teams of 15 farm families (of various low castes and non-castes, but none of them well-to-do), people in Velikonda and a host of other villages are planning and building large water-conservation networks. Using mostly hand labor, they have built thick, chest-high earthen berms around the downhill edges of fields to trap precious rainwater that would otherwise run off into gullies during storms. More than 100,000 acres in the district are now protected by such berms.

In the same way, they are hand-digging ponds of 40,000-gallon capacity that can hold rainwater to be hand-carried to new orchards of mango or custard-apple trees. Farmers pay a percentage of the cost of berms, drainage outlets, and ponds on a sliding scale (with the rest coming from Acción Fraternal, which is a part of India's Rural Development Trust. Indian government programs are now also helping fund such projects.)

They also are moving away from a food economy based on selling peanuts and buying nutrient-poor, government-subsidized rice. In an effort led largely

The water table has dropped as much as 15 feet in some places, and more wells are being drilled ever-more deeply to get at ever-less water. It's also reported that 10 to 15% of farmers have fled the crisis to look for work in urban areas

India's captains of industry are achieving prosperity the same way the powerhouse economies of the West were built: with products and technologies that burn every kilogram of fossil fuel that comes within reach

by women, they are re-diversifying their cropping system with nutritious crops they can both consume and sell: millets, sorghum, pigeonpea, broad beans, cluster beans, chilis, coriander, and many more. They have stopped buying costly pesticides, turning instead to natural products like neem seed extract. They are growing non-crop plants like milkweed to trap insects instead of trapping themselves in debt to buy chemicals. They are growing large leguminous plant species on the water-holding berms, to be cut and spread back on the land to add organic matter and nutrients.

Where these self-organized community efforts have taken root, individual despair under the brutal logic of the national and international economy has withered. The work is on a colossal scale and no doubt exhausting, but the atmosphere in the villages is electric. Velikonda and the other places where I saw such cooperative work happening are not the places that continue to be plagued by farmer suicides.

Darkness on the horizon

But even if the people of Velikonda and thousands other villages make every right move within their local, water-limited means, the global economy may not be finished with Anantapur. India's rapid industrialization has added 50% on top of the pollutant emissions that have come with population growth since 1930^[4]. That foul output has accelerated with the opening of the nation's economy over the past decade and a half. India's integration into the world market has meant

cheaper merchandise and services for Western consumers and greater wealth for an upper slice of India's urban minority. But India's captains of industry are achieving prosperity the same way the powerhouse economies of the West were built: with products and technologies that burn every kilogram of fossil fuel that comes within reach.

If the boom continues to darken and thicken the atmospheric brown clouds that, in turn, are threatening to disrupt the monsoon, it could destroy everything that the resolute farm communities of Anantapur have managed to accomplish. Moreover, it could undercut the livelihood and food supply of the rural majority all across the country.

Computer models predict that nationwide monsoon droughts, which historically occur an average of two to three years per decade, could rise to as many as six years per decade under the influence of brown clouds^[4]. If Anantapur is affected as badly as the nation as a whole (and the models appear very uncertain about local variations), agriculture might just become impossible. People there say they already count on drought at least six years in ten; brown clouds conceivably could make that a perfect ten out of ten.

Foreign investment and production for export in India have not come close to the levels they have reached in China, but they have played an indispensable role in creating the country's urban economic explosion (and they have dwarfed by orders of magnitude the foreign funds that have come in to support rural nonprofits like Acción

Fraterna). Such upheavals never come without surprises. And no sudden, human-made climatic change in a random direction has, as one might expect, an equal chance of being either harmful or beneficial. Because life on Earth evolves toward equilibrium with its current environment – and on a long time scale – and because industrial civilization has become so complicated, fragile, and vulnerable, any rapid climatic change, including dimming, is almost guaranteed to prove a disaster with no silver lining.

No one knows, for example, how the complex tug-of-war between global warming and local dimming will turn out. But the results for South Asia are unlikely to be pleasant. The leader of the Atmospheric Brown Clouds Project, Dr. V. Ramanathan of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, has said, “Some years the aerosols [i.e., the pollutants causing dimming] might win and in some years the greenhouse effect may win. So we are concerned that in coming decades the variability between the two will become large and it will be difficult to cope with rapid changes from year to year.”^[6]

The straightforward approach to both warming and dimming is, of course, to make deep cuts in energy consumption planet-wide. The rapidly industrializing nations of the South will have to find their own ways to get the energy they need without ecological devastation. But with the average American using 10 times as much energy as the average person in China, and 24 times as much as the average Indian, it's the clear duty of the United

States to take the lead in slashing consumption.

Instead of that, scientists and policymakers are focusing on technological fixes like carbon sequestration, stratospheric sulfur seeding^[7], and colossal, space-based mirrors^[8]. Growth-dependent economies were built around the fossil-fuel power bonanza and have no way to handle the consequences of the deep energy cuts that are necessary. Global capitalism will not – indeed, cannot – give up the easy exploitation of concentrated energy that need only be mined or pumped. And with its global reach, it will probably entrap even communities like Velikonda that seem determined to wriggle free. Overall, it makes for some pretty dim prospects. **CT**

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You can visit Acción Fraterna's website at <http://www.accionfraterna.org/home.html>

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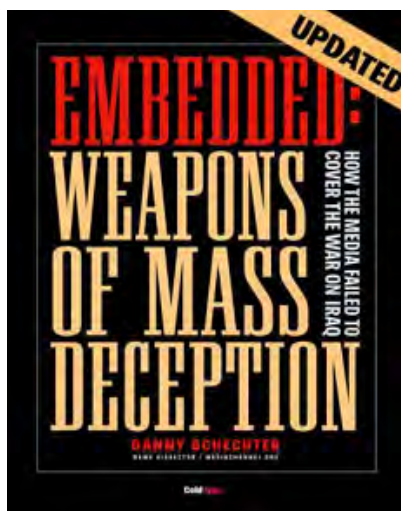
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KILLING JOURNALISTS IS A WAR CRIME

BY AMY GOODMAN

The Committee to Protect Journalists recently released its 2006 report on threats to journalists. Iraq is by far the deadliest place for the fourth year in a row, with 32 journalists killed this year. Sad to say, the violence follows a trend that started with the US invasion of Iraq.

When you step off the elevator at the Reuters news offices in Washington, D.C., you see a large book sitting on a wooden stand. Each entry describes a Reuters journalist killed in the line of duty. Such as Taras Protsyuk. The veteran Ukrainian cameraman was killed on April 8, 2003, the day before the US seized Baghdad. Protsyuk was on the balcony of the Palestine Hotel when a US tank positioned itself on the al-Jumhuriyah bridge and, as people watched in horror, unleashed a round into the side of the building. The hotel was known for housing hundreds of unembedded reporters. Protsyuk was killed instantly. Jose Couso, a cameraman for the Spanish network Telecinco, was

filming from the balcony below. He was also killed.

The difference between the responses by the mainstream media in the United States versus Europe was stunning. While in this country there was hardly a peep of protest, Spanish journalists engaged in a one-day strike. From the elite journalists down to the technicians, they laid down their cables, cameras and pens. They refused to record the words of then-Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar, who joined British Prime Minister Tony Blair and President Bush in supporting the war.

When Aznar came into parliament, they piled their equipment at the front of the room and turned their backs on him. Photographers refused to take his picture and instead held up a photo of their slain colleague.

At a news conference in Madrid with British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, Spanish reporters walked out in protest. Later, hundreds of journalists, camera people and technicians marched on the US embassy in

While in this country there was hardly a peep of protest, Spanish journalists engaged in a one-day strike. They refused to record the words of then-Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar, who joined British Prime Minister Tony Blair and President Bush in supporting the war

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Pentagon spokeswoman Victoria "Torie" Clarke, who has since become a news consultant for CNN and ABC, said at the time that Baghdad "is not a safe place. They should not be there"

Madrid, chanting "Murderer, murderer."

About four hours before the US military opened fire on the Palestine Hotel, a US warplane strafed Al-Jazeera's Baghdad office. Reporter Tareq Ayyoub was on the roof. He died almost instantly.

When interviewed after his death, Ayyoub's wife, Dima, said: "Hate breeds hate. The United States said they were doing this to rout out terrorism. Who is engaged in terrorism now?" This summer, she sued the US government.

The family of Jose Couso has also taken action. They know the names of the three US servicemen who fired on the Palestine Hotel. On Dec. 5, 2006, the Spanish Supreme Court said the men could be tried in Spanish courts, opening the possibility for indictments against the US soldiers. The military response to the journalists' deaths?

Pentagon spokeswoman Victoria "Torie" Clarke, who has since become a news consultant for CNN and ABC, said at the time that Baghdad "is not a safe place. They should not be there."

David Schlesinger, global managing editor of Reuters, said: "It seems in my interactions with the US military – to paraphrase, basically – if you are not embedded, we cannot do anything to protect you. Journalists need to be accorded the rights under the Geneva Convention, of civilians not

to be shot at willy-nilly, not to be harassed in doing their professional jobs."

The U.N. Security Council agrees. On Dec. 23, it passed a unanimous resolution insisting on the protection of journalists in conflict zones.

More than 120 reporters and other media workers have been killed in Iraq since the invasion. In August 2003, Reuters cameraman Mazen Dana was filming outside Abu Ghraib prison when a machine-gun bullet tore through his chest. The Pentagon said the soldiers had "engaged a cameraman."

Not long before his death, Dana won the International Press Freedom Award. "We carry a gift," he said. "We film and we show the world what is going on. We are not part of the conflict." In receiving his award, Dana reflected, "Words and images are a public trust, and for this reason I will continue with my work regardless of the hardships and even if it costs me my life."

But it shouldn't have. The Pentagon should adopt the U.N. standard and send a clear message to its ranks: Shooting the messenger is a war crime that will not be tolerated. **CT**

*Amy Goodman hosts the radio news program "Democracy Now!" Her latest book, co-written with her brother David, is *Static, Government Liars, media Cheerleaders and The People Who Fight back.**

WHITE HOUSE PRESS CORPS LEARNS ITS LESSON

BY DAVID WALSH

The decision by the White House Correspondents' Association to invite impersonator Rich Little to provide entertainment at its annual dinner in April captures something essential about the American media.

Last year's event was dominated by the appearance of comic Stephen Colbert, who skewered George W. Bush and his administration, as well as the Washington press corps. The latter, along with the White House, was not amused. Initially, the media attempted to conceal Colbert's comments from the public. His monologue received no mention from the New York Times in its first article and the Washington Post buried his commentary, leaving out the most pointed jokes. The performance only became widely known through a video that appeared on the Internet, which was downloaded millions of times within the first 48 hours.

At the dinner, Colbert, assuming his persona of a right-wing buffoon, ironically mocked Bush. Referring to the president, seated only a few feet to his

right, he declaimed: "We're not so different, he and I. We get it. We're not brainiacs on the nerd patrol. We're not members of the factinista. We go straight from the gut, right sir?"

And: "I stand by this man. I stand by this man because he stands for things. Not only for things, he stands on things. Things like aircraft carriers and rubble and recently flooded city squares. And that sends a strong message: that no matter what happens to America, she will always rebound with the most powerfully staged photo ops in the world." The comic rejected the claims of those who were suggesting that a personnel shakeup at the White House was merely rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic. "This administration is not sinking. This administration is soaring. If anything, they are rearranging the deck chairs on the Hindenburg!"

Colbert reserved one of his sharpest barbs for the White House press corps itself, whose leading lights were in attendance: "Over the last five years you people were so good – over tax cuts,

His monologue received no mention from the New York Times in its first article and the Washington Post buried his commentary, leaving out the most pointed jokes. The performance only became widely known through a video that appeared on the Internet

Having learned its lesson, the spineless White House Correspondents' Association (WHCA) decided to avoid controversy in 2007 by inviting the 68-year-old Little, whose impersonation of Richard Nixon in the early 1970s represented the height of his contribution to political humor

WMD intelligence, the effect of global warming. We Americans didn't want to know, and you had the courtesy not to try to find out. Those were good times, as far as we knew.

"But, listen, let's review the rules. Here's how it works: the president makes decisions. He's the Decider. The press secretary announces those decisions, and you people of the press type those decisions down. Make, announce, type. Just put them through a spell check and go home. Get to know your family again. Make love to your wife. Write that novel you've got kicking around in your head. You know, the one about the intrepid Washington reporter with the courage to stand up to the administration. You know – fiction!"

Having learned its lesson, the spineless White House Correspondents' Association (WHCA) decided to avoid controversy in 2007 by inviting the 68-year-old Little, whose impersonation of Richard Nixon in the early 1970s represented the height of his contribution to political humor.

Little dropped out of the limelight some time in the 1980s. He lives in Las Vegas and continues to tour his act. His schedule for January and February includes shows at the Suncoast Casino and Hotel in Las Vegas; the Soboba Casino in San Jacinto, California; the North Iowa Community Auditorium in Mason City, Iowa; Youkey Theatre at the Lakeland Center, Lakeland, Florida; the Cumberland County Civic Center Crown Theatre in Fayetteville, North Carolina; and the Central Auditorium in Findlay, Ohio.

On January 17, the Las Vegas Review-Journal ran an article on Little's appearance at the correspondents' dinner. It noted that Little wouldn't "be mentioning Iraq or ratings when he addresses the White House Correspondents' Dinner April 21. Little said organizers of the event made it clear they don't want a repeat of last year's controversial appearance by Stephen Colbert, whose searing satire of President Bush and the White House press corps fell flat and apparently touched too many nerves. 'They got a lot of letters,' Little said Tuesday. 'I won't even mention the word "Iraq.'" Little, who hasn't been to the White House since he was a favorite of the Reagan administration, said he'll stick with his usual schtick – the impersonations of the past six presidents. 'They don't want anyone knocking the president. He's really over the coals right now, and he's worried about his legacy,' added Little, a longtime Las Vegas resident."

Steve Scully, a producer at C-Span and the current WHCA president, denied putting pressure on Little: "I cannot be more clear that we never mentioned Iraq, we never gave him any guidelines. The only thing we told him is that we want to follow the policy of the Gridiron Dinner, which is 'singe, don't burn.'"

After Little denied having even made the remarks to the Las Vegas newspaper, its reporter commented: "Let's go to the replay. Early in the interview, Little said, 'I won't even mention the word Iraq. It's not appropriate. You just want to be entertaining.... I won't do anything close to over the line.' He added,

‘They said, from ...,’ he paused, without finishing the sentence. ‘They thought my approach was more appropriate for their kind of thing. They don’t want Bill Maher or a comedian who’s going to be biting and perhaps knock the president in any way.’“

In an interview with the Washington Post’s Paul Farhi, Little made the same point: “One of the reasons they picked me is because I’m not controversial.... They did get some flak about the guy they had last year. I don’t think they wanted someone political or controversial again.”

Little seems a safe choice. On his personal web site, he includes an extended and heartfelt tribute to the late Ronald Reagan, which includes these gems: “He was unlike any celebrity I have ever known. When talking with him, you became unaware of the fact that you were talking with the President of the United States. The quickest way to become Ronald Reagan’s friend was to tell him a great joke. He would then come right back at you with a joke of his own. You could then tell him another joke, and he’d have another story to tell you. This could go on endlessly, even if there was a war on. ...

“He was nice to everyone and always appeared interested in anything you had to say. I think he was a great President because everyone liked him, even if they were opposed to his politics.... I will miss Ronald Reagan ... to me he was a lovable grandfather.”

Richard Roeper of the Chicago Sun-Times noted in a recent column that Little “was a guest on a radio show I hosted about 10 years ago, and even

then, after he ran through about a dozen voices, I finally had to say, ‘Can you imitate anybody’s who’s alive?’ Mr. Little was not amused.”

Exemplifying the American media’s spirit of self-censorship and all-round philistinism, Scully remarked to the press, “My approach is to try to make it [the annual dinner] a comfortable venue that is enjoyable, funny and interesting.... But you don’t want to offend anyone.” According to Editor & Publisher, he “contends that Colbert’s appearance was a success and played no part in the choice of Little. ‘I think some of the criticism of Colbert was overblown,’ he said. ‘We didn’t hear anything from the White House.’ ... Scully added that getting the hottest, hippest entertainer is not always the best thing for the Washington crowd, whose participants span many different decades. ‘There are some people who think if you don’t know Stephen Colbert, you don’t get his brand of humor,’ Scully said. ‘You want someone who appeals to the [right-wing columnist] Bob Novaks and the bloggers of the world.’“ In another comment, Scully suggested that the correspondents didn’t want to make Bush a “political piñata.”

No one with a brain in his or her head will believe that the WHCA didn’t hear from the White House about Colbert’s performance, directly or indirectly. Bush was obviously livid, as was his wife. One top Bush aide was quoted as saying, “Colbert crossed the line.” Several aides and supporters walked out before the comic had finished.

Ron Hutcheson, a McClatchy News-

“One of the reasons they picked me is because I’m not controversial.... They did get some flak about the guy they had last year. I don’t think they wanted someone political or controversial again”

AFTER COLBERT

These are individuals who fly on Air Force One, who joke around with Bush and his cohorts, whose careers depend on their ability to be intimate with the president

papers reporter and former correspondents' association president, acknowledged that Colbert's impact had played a role in the choice of Little. "It is certainly a safe choice, which might be nice," he said. "My personal feeling is that this [the selection of Little] is about ENOUGH.... We don't need to have a blogfest and a partisan slugfest after the dinner. We don't need that."

What can one say? The media and political establishment is impervious to the sentiments of the population. The war in Iraq is a disaster, the administration's policies have been rejected by the population, Bush is widely despised. Colbert spoke for millions last year, telling the president of the United States what a scoundrel he was.

The media, on the other hand, lives and breathes in Bush's universe. They felt Colbert had been too harsh, unfair, bullying.

In the case of the White House correspondents, they literally breathe the same air. These are individuals who fly on Air Force One, who joke around with Bush and his cohorts, whose careers depend on their ability to be intimate with the president. They may be Republicans or Democrats, it hardly matters, but they are part of Washington's well-heeled, incestuous in-crowd.

In addition to Scully, who worked as a teenager on Jimmy Carter's presidential campaign, the WHCA includes among its officers Ann Compton of ABC News (she serves as the organization's vice president). Her official biography reveals that Compton "is now covering a sixth President for ABC News in a career that has taken her to

the White House, Capitol Hill and through seven presidential campaigns. She is the National correspondent for ABC News Radio, based [in] Washington, DC. On September 11, 2001, Ms. Compton was the only broadcast reporter allowed to remain onboard Air Force One during the dramatic hours when President Bush was unable to return to Washington."

Another WHCA officer, its treasurer, is Jennifer Loven of Associated Press. Her husband, Roger Ballentine, was a senior adviser to the John Kerry campaign in 2004 and is currently president of Green Strategies Inc, an environmental lobbying firm.

Ballentine was a senior member of the Clinton White House staff, serving as chairman of the White House Climate Change Task Force and deputy assistant to the president for Environmental Initiatives. Prior to being named deputy assistant to the president, Ballentine was special assistant to the president for Legislative Affairs, where he focused on energy and environment issues.

WHCA secretary Peter Maer of "CBS News", according to the network's biography, "has covered the White House since 1986.... A frequent flyer on Air Force One, Maer has traveled to nearly 40 countries and every State of the Union with Presidents George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George H.W. Bush, Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter."

WHCA board member Steve Holland of Reuters was cited in a USA Today article in 2001 on Bush's "Western White House" in Crawford, Texas.

“Holland, who started covering the White House when Bush’s father was in charge, is wistful when he recalls cooler summer sojourns in Kennebunkport, Maine. ‘If only he had his father’s preference for vacation spots,’ Holland says. Despite fond memories of Kennebunkport and President Bill Clinton’s trips to chic Jackson Hole, Wyo. ... and Martha’s Vineyard, Mass., Holland says he’s content at the Western White House.”

It comes as no surprise that these people were made unhappy by the performance of Colbert, who committed the fatal error of telling certain elementary, indisputable truths about the

Bush administration, truths which the mass media knows but never repeats. By their ridiculous actions, the members of the White House press corps only confirm the point the comic was making about their toadying. Indeed, by bending over backward so far with their choice of the anodyne, Reagan-loving, all-but-forgotten Little, the White House correspondents have demonstrated their subservience and cowardice more graphically than Colbert could possibly have done. **CT**

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