

Endless War, Endless Conquest, Endless Repression

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The Bush Regime's Imperial Affirmation

While people around the world begin to celebrate George W. Bush's January 20, 2009 departure from the White House, senior administration officials are crafting legislation, rule changes and executive orders that will make permanent the worst excesses of this criminal regime.

And in an election year, you can count on a Democratic-controlled Congress to continue abdicating their role as a brake on the executive branch, ever-fearful that far-right attack dogs and their media accomplices will label them "soft on terror."

In this light, a recent piece in The New York Times outlines the corporatist trajectory that will cement in place the "friendly fascism" of the Bush administration, inaugurated by the Republican party on December 12, 2000 when the U.S. Supreme Court handed a stolen election to the Bush-Cheney cabal.

As Associate Court Justice John Paul Stevens wrote in his bitter dissent to the Bush v. Gore ruling: "Although we may never know with complete certainty the identity of the winner of this year's Presidential election, the identity of the loser is perfectly clear. It is the Nation's confidence in the judge as an impartial guardian of the rule of law."

Ponder those words and then consider all that has followed since that infamous ruling eight long years ago undermined the rule of law and democratic processes in the United States--and the capitulatory cowardice of the putative "opposition" party, the Democrats, who sealed the deal.

Eric Lichtblau reports that as the November 4 general election approaches, "Tucked deep into a recent proposal from the Bush administration is a provision that has received almost no public attention, yet in many ways captures one of President Bush's defining legacies: an affirmation that the United States is still at war with Al Qaeda."

Seven years after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks by the Afghan-Arab database of disposable Western intelligence assets known as al-Qaeda, Bush advisers are demanding that Congress "acknowledge again and explicitly that this nation remains engaged in an armed conflict with Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and associated organizations, who have already proclaimed themselves at war with us and who are dedicated to the slaughter of Americans."

That al-Qaeda attacks Western targets and visits outrages upon innocent civilians does not mean it is not also a blunt-edged weapon selectively deployed by imperialism to stoke ethnic and religious tensions in areas deemed vital to U.S. geostrategic interests. As investigative journalist Robert Dreyfuss has documented,

Sixty years earlier, when the United States began its odyssey in the Middle East, there were other voices who wanted conservative Islam, and early fundamentalist groups associated with the nascent Islamic right, to do battle with the secular left, with Nasser,

with Arab communists and socialists. Now, six decades later, the Bush administration is pursuing a strategy in the Middle East that seems calculated to boost the fortunes of the Islamic right. The United States is counting on Shiite fundamentalists in Iraq to save its failed policy in that country, and a major theoretician of that campaign explicitly calls for the United States to cast its lot in with the ayatollahs and the Muslim Brotherhood. (Devil's Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam, New York: Metropolitan Books, 2005, p. 342)

Long after the Bush administration has sailed off into the proverbial sunset, policies launched across the decades by successive Democratic and Republican governments will continue along the same imperial trajectory: war and covert operations as the preferred instruments for capitalist resource extraction and global domination.

Al-Qaeda: Asset and Adversary

One need only review the role played by al-Qaeda in the Balkans during the 1990s when the United States and their NATO allies, particularly Germany and the United Kingdom, provided entrée to demobilized Afghan-Arab mujahedin fighters as the West dismembered the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, culminating in 1999 with NATO's murderous 78-day bombing campaign of Serbia to "liberate" Kosovo.

Earlier in the decade, thousands of Islamist fighters flooded Bosnia-Herzegovina, directly recruited by former Waffen SS Handzar Division foot soldier and Islamist ideologue, Alia Izetbegovic, the President of Bosnia and darling of liberal interventionists such as Bernard-Henri Lévy. In calling for Western intervention, Lévy shamelessly described Izetbegovic's neofascist statelet as an exemplar of "modern, secular Islam"! Quite naturally, Izetbegovic's Nazi past was covered-up by Western interventionists intent on smashing multiethnic Yugoslavia into smithereens.

Indeed, intelligence analyst and senior lecturer at the University of Amsterdam, Cees Wiebes, documents in *Intelligence and the War in Bosnia 1992-1995*, how Western intelligence agencies, including the CIA, MI6 and BND assisted major arms transshipments into Bosnia despite a UN arms embargo, often in concert with the reactionary Iranian regime.

Some estimates claim that by 1994, as many as 4,000 mujahedin fighters were present in Bosnia. Indeed, none other than Osama bin Laden himself visited Izetbegovic in Sarajevo. As a gesture of appreciation for his support, Izetbegovic gave bin Laden a Bosnian passport. And, a November 1, 2001 account in the European edition of *The Wall Street Journal* claimed that bin Laden continued to visit the Balkan region as late as 1996.

By 1995 as Wiebes documented, American Hercules C-130 transport planes accompanied by jet fighters began landing at the Tuzla Air Base in eastern Bosnia laden with arms, ammunition and communications equipment destined for Izetbegovic's Islamist brigades. Similar arms pipelines were opened between Albania, Bosnia, Croatia and later in the decade Kosovo, where Albanian narcotrafficking networks rule the roost and continue to wreck havoc across the region.

As I documented in *"Welcome to Kosovo! The World's Newest Narco State,"* beginning in 1998 and perhaps earlier, the London-based cleric Omar Bakri Mohammed, the "emir" of the al-Qaeda-linked al-Muhajiroun began a recruitment drive for aspiring mujahedin for the "holy war" in Kosovo at London's notorious Finsbury Park Mosque.

In 2005, in the wake of the July 7, 2005 terrorist attacks in London, it was revealed that Bakri, a

probable MI6 asset and simultaneously an al-Qaeda operative, was the "spiritual" force behind the deadly attacks that claimed 52 lives and wounded hundreds of others. Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed reported that,

The reluctance to take decisive action against the leadership of the extremist network in the UK has a long history. According to John Loftus, a former Justice Department prosecutor, Omar Bakri and Abu Hamza, as well as the suspected mastermind of the London bombings Haroon Aswat, were all recruited by MI6 in the mid-1990s to draft up British Muslims to fight in Kosovo. American and French security sources corroborate the revelation. The MI6 connection raises questions about Bakri's relationship with British authorities today. Exiled to Lebanon and outside British jurisdiction, he is effectively immune to prosecution. ("Sources: August terror plot is a 'fiction' underscoring police failures," The Raw Story, Monday, September 18, 2006)

During NATO's Kosovo aggression, analyst Michel Chossudovsky wrote,

Mercenaries financed by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait had been fighting in Bosnia. And the Bosnian pattern was replicated in Kosovo: Mujahadeen mercenaries from various Islamic countries are reported to be fighting alongside the KLA in Kosovo. German, Turkish and Afghan instructors were reported to be training the KLA in guerrilla and diversion tactics. ... According to a Deutsche Press-Agentur report, financial support from Islamic countries to the KLA had been channelled through the former Albanian chief of the National Information Service (NIS), Bashkim Gazidede. "Gazidede, reportedly a devout Moslem who fled Albania in March of last year [1997], is presently [1998] being investigated for his contacts with Islamic terrorist organizations." ("Kosovo 'freedom fighters' financed by organised crime," World Socialist Web Site, 10 April 1999)

As I documented, the Kosovo Liberation Army's links to both narcotrafficking networks and al-Qaeda was a defining feature of Western intervention in the former Yugoslavia. Indeed, Hashim Thaci's KLA served as the militarized vanguard for the Albanian mafia whose "15 Families" control virtually every facet of the Balkan heroin trade. Thaci is currently Kosovo's Prime Minister. Kosovar traffickers ship heroin originating exclusively from Asia's Golden Crescent. At one end lies Afghanistan where poppy is harvested for transshipment through Iran and Turkey; as morphine base it is then refined into "product" for worldwide consumption. From there it passes into the hands of the Albanian syndicates who control the Balkan Route.

U.S. destabilization programs and covert operations rely on far-right provocateurs and drug lords (often interchangeable players) to facilitate the dirty work. Throughout its Balkan operations the CIA made liberal use of these preexisting narcotics networks to arm the KLA and provide them with targets. Today, similar features are visible for all the world to see as the U.S. warlord state in Afghanistan battles the Taliban and al-Qaeda for control of the lucrative opium growing and processing regions of that destroyed nation.

As a sometime Western intelligence asset, al-Qaeda is not simply a puppet of the United States and NATO as some believe. Such simplifications mask a harder and crueler reality. In the opinion of this writer, the 9/11 cover-up, rather than burying the Bush administration's alleged orchestration of the attacks (the "inside job" thesis), concealed something far more sinister: U.S. imperialism's decades-long collaboration with Islamist extremists to achieve geopolitical advantage over their capitalist rivals.

As with neo-Nazi networks that were reconstituted by the West for war against their domestic leftist adversaries during the Cold War, al-Qaeda and related terror organizations will, at times, share

limited tactical goals with the West, such as the destruction of secular, leftist opponents in the Middle East, or as a force for destabilization operations in target countries such as Iran, as investigative journalist Seymour Hersh has reported in *The New Yorker*.

That al-Qaeda has reconstituted its military-political-mafia structures along the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderlands and continues to attack targets across the region at will, is testament to the resilience of the organization and the appeal of its reactionary ideology. There is a deadly irony here, since its murderous "tradecraft" was quite literally bequeathed to it by Western intelligence services and America's preeminent regional allies, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

The Bush Legacy

As far-right Republican party hordes gather in Minneapolis/St. Paul for the coronation of their presidential candidates, reactionary Senator John McCain (R-AZ) and Alaska's Christian fundamentalist governor, Sarah Palin, the Bush regime's strategy of preemptive war is viciously playing out on the home front. Salon's Glenn Greenwald reports,

Protesters here in Minneapolis have been targeted by a series of highly intimidating, sweeping police raids across the city, involving teams of 25-30 officers in riot gear, with semi-automatic weapons drawn, entering homes of those suspected of planning protests, handcuffing and forcing them to lay on the floor, while law enforcement officers searched the homes, seizing computers, journals, and political pamphlets. Last night, members of the St. Paul police department and the Ramsey County sheriff's department handcuffed, photographed and detained dozens of people meeting at a public venue to plan a demonstration, charging them with no crime other than "fire code violations," and early this morning, the Sheriff's department sent teams of officers into at least four Minneapolis area homes where suspected protesters were staying. ("Massive Police Raids on Suspected Protesters in Minneapolis," Salon, August 30, 2008)

The raids were orchestrated by local law enforcement agencies with major assistance from various federal spy outfits such as the FBI, NSA and the Pentagon's own Northern Command (NORTHCOM). The raids are purely an intimidation tactic designed to squelch peaceful dissent by citizens outraged by Bushist policies throughout these long years of darkness.

Indeed, the Minneapolis Star Tribune reported that police and federal agencies utilized the "services" of informants and provocateurs in their targeting of the anarchist RNC Welcoming Committee.

Aided by informants planted in protest groups, authorities raided at least six buildings across St. Paul and Minneapolis to stop an "anarchist" plan to disrupt this week's Republican National Convention.

From Friday night through Saturday afternoon, officers surrounded houses, broke down doors, handcuffed scores of people and confiscated suspected tools of civil disobedience.

The show of force was led by the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office in collaboration with the FBI, Minneapolis and St. Paul police, the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office and other agencies. (Heron Marquez Estrada, Bill McAuliffe and Abby Simons, "Police Raids Enrage Activists, Alarm Others," Minneapolis Star Tribune, August 31, 2008)

The "preemptive" raids targeted activists, alternative media and lawyers on-scene. All were handcuffed and forced to lie face-down, while SWAT teams and federal agents ransacked numerous

homes in a quixotic hunt for "weapons."

Greenwald avers, "Targeting people with automatic-weapons-carrying SWAT teams and mass raids in their homes, who are suspected of nothing more than planning dissident political protests at a political convention and who have engaged in no illegal activity whatsoever, is about as redolent of the worst tactics of a police state as can be imagined."

After nearly eight years of massive surveillance and infiltration operations by the federal government across a multitude of federal agencies, often acting in cahoots with reenergized local "red squads" rebranded as Fusion Centers and Joint Terrorism Task Forces coordinated through the Office of National Intelligence, the mutant stepchildren of the FBI's COINTELPRO, the CIA's Operation CHAOS and the NSA's Project SHAMROCK have brought the "war on terror" home in a big way.

The Minneapolis City Pages reported back in May, that police and the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force were "soliciting" informants to keep tabs on local protest groups. According to journalist Matt Snyders's account, FBI Special Agent Maureen A. Mazzola, flanked by a cop, attempted to recruit a University of Minnesota sophomore as a paid "confidential informant." While the student declined the feds' "generous offer," the wider issue of recruiting Stasi-like moles to report "suspicious activities" by citizens exercising their constitutionally-guaranteed right to say "NO!" cuts to the heart of the role of dissent in a democracy.

Outraged by the "preemptive policing" on display in Minneapolis, Glenn Greenwald comments on the virtual blackout by the corporate media, all-too-willing to criticize the actions of repressive government's thousands of miles away while silently acquiescing to the police state in full-bloom here at home.

So here we have a massive assault led by Federal Government law enforcement agencies on left-wing dissidents and protesters who have committed no acts of violence or illegality whatsoever, preceded by months-long espionage efforts to track what they do. And as extraordinary as that conduct is, more extraordinary is the fact that they have received virtually no attention from the national media and little outcry from anyone. And it's not difficult to see why. As the recent "overhaul" of the 30-year-old FISA law illustrated--preceded by the endless expansion of surveillance state powers, justified first by the War on Drugs and then the War on Terror--we've essentially decided that we want our Government to spy on us without limits. There is literally no police power that the state can exercise that will cause much protest from the political and media class and, therefore, from the citizenry. ("Federal Government Involved in Raid on Protesters," Salon, August 31, 2008)

As The New York Times reported, Bushist demands on Congress to "affirm" that the U.S. is at "war" with international terrorism, "carries significant legal and public policy implications for Mr. Bush, and potentially his successor, to claim the imprimatur of Congress to use the tools of war, including detention, interrogation and surveillance, against the enemy," which as we see on a daily basis, is a war on our freedom to exist as individuals rather than as "soldiers" in an imperialist charade.

The Bushist proposal will provide the legal framework to assert broad executive power "during a time of war," an interpretation of the commander in chief's presumed wartime powers that Justice Department lawyers secretly used to gin-up the illegal detention and torture of alleged terrorist suspects and the NSA's driftnet surveillance of Americans outside the rule of law.

As readers no doubt recall, the September 14, 2001 congressional resolution known as the "Authorization for Use of Military Force," still in effect, became the pseudo-legal justification for the worst excesses of the Bush regime.

But as former Reagan Justice Department official Bruce Fein told the Times, Congress should not "give the administration the wartime language it seeks."

"I do not believe that we are in a state of war whatsoever," Mr. Fein said. "We have an odious opponent that the criminal justice system is able to identify and indict and convict. They're not a goliath. Don't treat them that way."

The same can be said for the war criminals occupying high-office in the Bush administration and Congress. I disagree with Mr. Fein on one salient point: we are indeed "in a state of war." However, it is a one-sided class war waged by a monstrous system of profit based on the exploitation of our living labor and ecocidal resource extraction by mafia-like associations known as multinational corporations.

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