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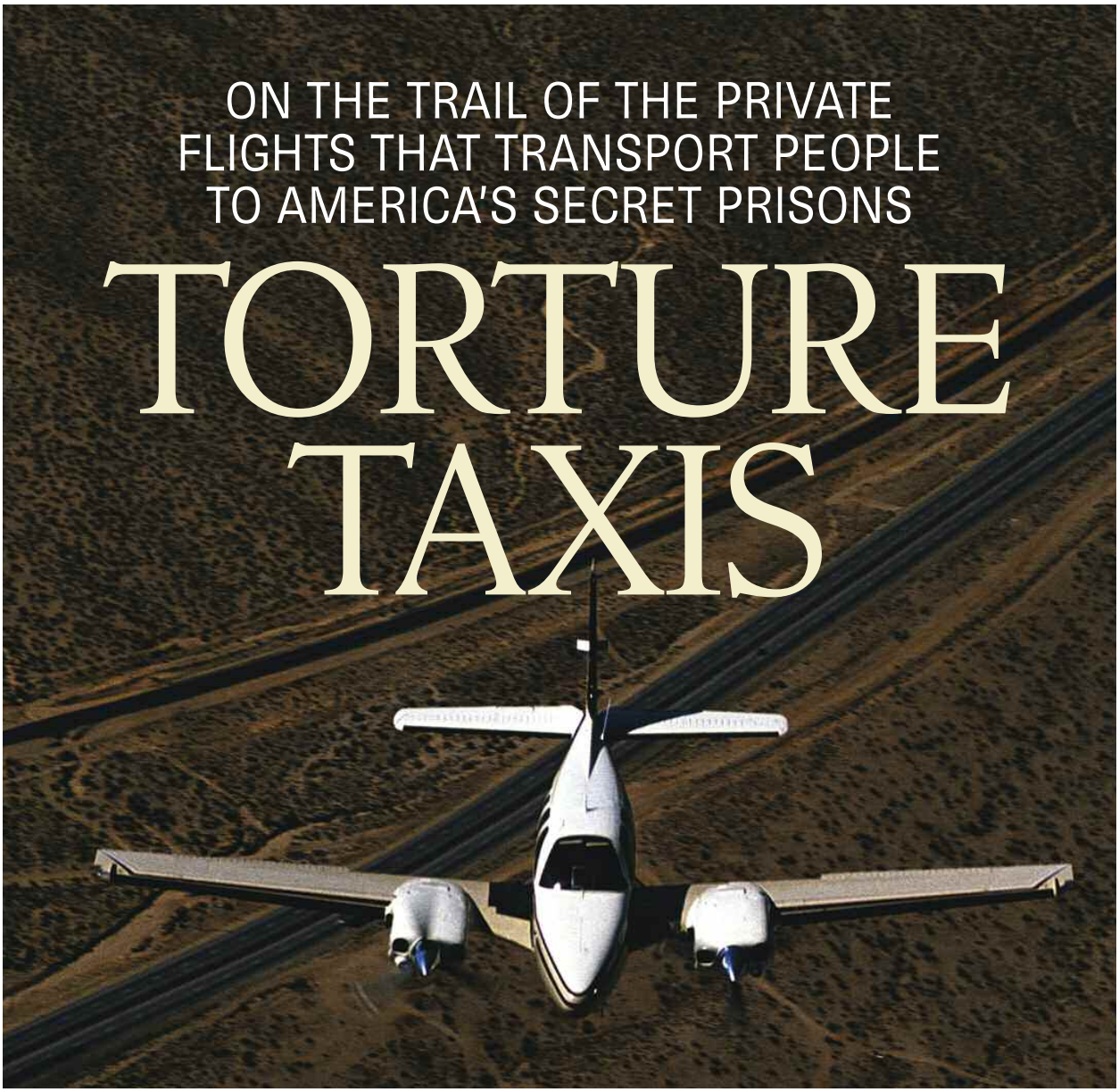

ON THE TRAIL OF THE PRIVATE FLIGHTS THAT TRANSPORT PEOPLE TO AMERICA'S SECRET PRISONS

TORTURE TAXIS

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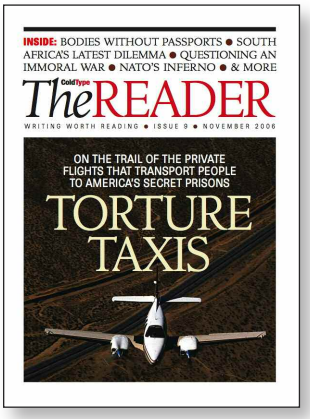

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The authors of the new book "Torture Taxi: On the Trail of the CIA's Rendition Flights" tell **Onnesha Roychoudhuri** *how they pieced together their investigation into a CIA program run not only by shadowy contractors in the darkest corners of Afghanistan, but also by unassuming America family lawyers*

TRACKING THE TORTURE TAXIS

When U.S. civilian airplanes were spotted in late 2002 taking trips to and from Andrews Air Force Base, and making stops in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay, journalists and plane-spotters wondered what was going on. It soon became clear that these planes were part of the largest covert operation since the Cold War era. Called extraordinary rendition, the practice involves CIA officials or contractors kidnapping people and sending them to secret prisons around the world where they are held and often tortured, either at the hands of the host-country's government or by CIA personnel themselves.

On Sept. 6, after a long period of official no-comments, President Bush acknowledged the program's existence. But the extent of its operations has yet to be publicly disclosed.

How extensive is it? Trevor Paglen, an expert in clandestine military installations, and A.C. Thompson, an award-winning journalist for S.F. Weekly, spent months tracking the CIA flights and the businesses behind them. What they found was a startlingly broad network of planes (including the Gulfstream jet belonging to Boston Red Sox co-owner Phillip Morse), shell companies, and secret prisons around the world. Perhaps the most disturbing revelation of their new book "Torture Taxi: On the Trail of the CIA's Rendition Flights" is the collusion of everyday Americans in this massive CIA program. From family lawyers who bolster the shell companies, to an entire town in Smithfield, N.C., that hosts CIA planes and pilots, "Torture Taxi" is the story of the broad reach of extraordinary rendition, and, as Hannah Arendt coined the phrase, the banality of evil.

Trevor and A.C. joined me by phone to explain how they managed to follow a paper trail that led to some of the most critical unknowns about the extraordinary rendition program.

Onnesha Roychoudhuri: *How did the idea for the book come about?*

"At some point, this hobbyist community became aware that there were these civilian planes flying around, acting as if they were working in military black programs"

"People in our communities are doing dirty work for the CIA. This is not just people being snatched up from one faraway country and taken to a country that's even farther away"

Trevor Paglen: I research military secrecy at Berkeley and there is a community there trying to figure out what military programs are. At some point, this hobbyist community became aware that there were these civilian planes flying around, acting as if they were working in military black programs. These people started tracking the planes and repeatedly seeing them in places like Libya and Guantanamo Bay. It became pretty clear that this was a CIA thing and that these were planes that were involved in the extraordinary rendition program.

Roychoudhuri: *When did the pieces start to come together?*

Paglen: Late last year, there was a big uproar about secret prisons in Eastern Europe. Dana Priest at the Washington Post broke the story and Human Rights Watch put out a press release. At that moment the pieces started making sense and we could start explaining what was going on. By that time I had collected a number of files on this just as a curiosity. I brought them over to A.C.'s job, where he has access to some tools to do investigative journalism.

A.C. Thompson: Trevor had this aviation and military expertise and all this information when he came to my office. I've been doing corporate research for years and when we started looking at these possible CIA front companies associated with the planes, it immediately became very apparent that we were looking at phony companies.

Roychoudhuri: *How did you track the extraordinary rendition program?*

Thompson: We wanted to gather up as much information as we could to create this mosaic of evidence to show the broad picture of extraordinary rendition. We went from Smithfield, N.C., to Gardez, Afghanistan, to piece it together. This is something that people have only really had snapshots of thus far. We reverse-engineered the program. We used the paper trails and evidence left behind, from FAA flight logs to the testimony of former prisoners in Afghanistan to piece it all together.

Paglen: We conceived of the book as a travel diary. We showed up at the addresses on this paper trail and followed the leads. The point was to find the story behind the address. Then we would go to the places where those companies actually fly those airplanes and provide the pilots. Then, when we saw that the airplanes frequently landed in Afghanistan, we went there, too.

TORTURE TAXI
On The Trail of the CIA's Rendition Flights
Trevor Paglen & AC Thompson
Melville House
$23

Roychoudhuri: *You relied on data from amateur plane-spotters with data from all over the world. Can you explain how that works?*

Paglen: There are many plane-spotting websites with data re-

garding the movements of these aircrafts along with pictures. The data can be very scattered and difficult to do much with. But some of these plane-spotters have developed advanced techniques to get information on aircraft movement. That became very helpful in piecing some of this together. If you are a plane-spotter and you are interested in the history of a particular aircraft, you know there are many documents publicly available: registration papers and airworthiness certificates from the FAA. You can also get flight data from the FAA. And in the cases that data has been blocked, people have figured out ways to get around those blocks. When the plane-spotter community and journalists came together, it became one of the few ways to see the outlines of this program.

Roychoudhuri: *The fact that the CIA is using civilian planes actually makes it easier to track them.*

Paglen: Civilian law around aviation is much looser than laws governing military. Civilian planes can basically fly wherever they want in the world. The U.S. military needs special permission to fly over somebody else's airspace. Using the civilian companies is a way to create mobility and avoid drawing attention.

Thompson: The CIA wants to exist in the civilian world. It wants to create these entities so that it can move without a lot of scrutiny. But in the civilian world, you have to interact with other parts of the government all the time. If you create a shell corporation that is going to supposedly own an airplane that will be used to transport people to dungeons around the world, you have to file incorporation papers with the state the company is based in. When you go and get these corporate papers, you can analyze things like the signatures on the documents.

Roychoudhuri: *What did you find when you examined some of these documents?*

Thompson: We found Colleen Bornt who was an exec at a company called Premier Executive Transport Services. Premier was the company that owned the plane that took Khaled el-Masri to the Salt Pit. When you go look at the paper documents that Colleen signed, you find that every one of her signatures looks completely different. That's because each one was made by a different person. When we started looking for more traces of Colleen there was no home address, no phone number, nor any other proof that she's existed at all.

That's the same with all these companies. They don't have real headquarters, staff or anything besides these paper documents they filed to incorporate and a handful of lawyers who helped set these companies up and serve as the registered agents for them. These are the people who receive summons and subpoenas for the companies.

Roychoudhuri: *What are these lawyers?*

Thompson: These lawyers are the only humans you can find who actually exist in these companies. We went to look to talk to people at Keeler and Tate, another shell company implicated in el-Masri's abduction. Keeler and Tate were sued by el-Masri with the help of

"There's nothing random about the CIA using this rural area in North Carolina. If you wanted to shut up a secret operation, this is where you would do it. It's a God, guns and guts area"

"It's like the U.S. is treating this whole country [of Afghanistan] as if it were a giant black site"

the ACLU. We went to the only address for Keeler and Tate – a law office in Reno, Nevada. We told the secretary "One of the lawyers here is a registered agent and you have been named in a lawsuit alleging a connection to the CIA and extraordinary rendition, what do you think of that?" She didn't seem at all surprised, but she threw us out pretty quickly.

Roychoudhuri: *Who are these lawyers?*

Thompson: The kind of people we're talking about are Dean Plakias in Dedham, Mass., outside of Boston. He is not a high-profile guy. He's a family lawyer with a small practice and how he ended up in this world is still a mystery. This is an American story, a neighborhood story. When we started looking at all the front companies the CIA had erected, we realized our neighbors were helping the CIA set up these structures. These are family lawyers in suburban Massachusetts and Reno, Nevada. People in our communities are doing dirty work for the CIA. This is not just people being snatched up from one faraway country and taken to a country that's even farther away.

Roychoudhuri: *When you have a false entity like Colleen Bornt signing for purchases of planes, is that breaking business laws?*

Thompson: As far as I can tell, it's 100% illegal under the business and professions codes in any state. I don't think that it would be legal anywhere. I also don't think that it's legal in any state for a lawyer to set up a phony business for people who they know don't exist. It's also likely at odds with the ethics provisions of most state bar organizations for lawyers. Strictly speaking, I don't think any of these things are legal.

Roychoudhuri: *Where was the most interesting place you traveled?*

Thompson: We went to Nevada, Massachusetts and New York to track down the front companies. We went to Beale Air Force base in Northern California to track U2 spy planes. We went to Smithfield, N.C, which is home to the airfields that many of these airplanes fly out of. Then we went to Kabul and Gardez, Afghanistan.

But the two most interesting places were the rural town of Smithfield and Kinston down the road, where there's another airstrip that a company called Aero Contractors uses. Aero is the company that flies many of these missions for the CIA. We went there and talked to a pilot who had worked for Aero about exactly what they did and how the program worked. There's nothing random about the CIA using this rural area in North Carolina. If you wanted to shut up a secret operation, this is where you would do it. It's a God, guns and guts area.

Roychoudhuri: *When you asked questions, what kind of answers did you get?*

Thompson: What you start to figure out by spending time in Smithfield is that a lot of people know about the company and have at least an inkling of what goes on at the airport. Most don't want to talk about it and don't take a critical view of it. Folks we met there framed the debate within this religious discourse. The activists that we talked to were god-fearing devout Christians

who felt like this was not what they signed up for as religious people, that it violates the religious tenets they adhere to. Interestingly, folks on the other side of the debate seem to be coming from a similar place, but just coming to a different conclusion. The subject of whether or not torture was permitted by the Bible was discussed in church there – and many congregants believed it was.

Paglen: It's this small town with this open secret that nobody wants to talk about. It shows what's going on culturally. When a country starts doing things like torturing and disappearing people, it's not just a policy question, it's also a cultural question.

Roychoudhuri: *When you started to put the pieces of the rendition program together, what did you see?*

Paglen: Take Khaled el-Masri (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khalid_El-Masri) for example. His case was a blueprint for this program because it's the most complete account. He showed up in Germany after having disappeared for five months and told this incredible story. His interrogators told him not to tell anybody because they wouldn't believe him anyway. But when you excavate his story, there is a trail of evidence to corroborate it.

He says he was kidnapped in Macedonia on a certain day. It turns out that a plane-spotter took a picture of a known CIA airplane in Majorca [Spain] the day before el-Masri was kidnapped. German journalists went to the airport of Skopje [Macedonia] with this picture and verified the plane was there on that date. The plane had also filed a flight plan from Macedonia to Kabul. El-Masri said he was taken to Kabul. In Kabul, he said he was taken on a 10-minute drive to a prison. He drew a map of what he thought the prison floor plan was. We got on Google Earth, looked at Kabul and drew a ring around how far you could go in about 10 minutes. Then we compared the buildings in that ring to the map that el-Masri had drawn. We found a building that looks exactly like it. So we drove out there. There is indeed a giant facility with Americans there. He could not have made this up.

Roychoudhuri: *You actually went to one of the places el-Masri believes he was held – the Salt Pit in Afghanistan.*

Paglen: There have been at least three or four black sites in and around Kabul, Afghanistan. The one we definitely knew the location of was the Salt Pit. We found a driver who would take us out there. When you drive out to the Salt Pit, you have these wide plains; it's very isolated. We were driving up and there was a traffic jam which was a goat herder with a bunch of goats on the road. As we're waiting, he turns around and he's wearing a hat that says KBR – Kellogg Brown and Root (a subsidiary of Halliburton). As we drove farther, we saw a huge complex with a big wall around it. There are signs in English saying this is an Afghan military facility, no entrance. There's then a checkpoint. We were stopped. We told the guards we were turning around and going back to Kabul. We asked what goes on there and the guard said he didn't know exactly. Then we asked if there were Americans there. And he

"We realized that this wasn't about a handful of CIA secret prisons. The U.S. military has erected some 20 detention centers throughout Afghanistan – which all operate in near total secrecy"

"If Congress does authorize the president's version of the bill, they're not only retroactively authorizing torture, they're creating a legal framework for the future. That would create a system where disappearing and torturing people would become a part of the law"

said, "Oh yes, there's lots of Americans here." And we saw some Americans sitting on a Humvee.

Roychoudhuri: *Did you get a sense of the scope of the rendition program through your travels in Afghanistan?*

Thompson: When Trevor and I went to Afghanistan we realized that this wasn't about a handful of CIA secret prisons. The U.S. military has erected some 20 detention centers throughout Afghanistan – which all operate in near total secrecy. These are facilities that the U.N., the Afghan government, journalists, and human rights groups can't get into. Extraordinary rendition is one facet of a much broader story of secrecy and imprisonment that spans the globe.

In Kabul and Gardez, we interviewed many people – in human rights organizations, NGOs, local journalists, and former detainees. We realized that the kinds of distinctions that we were making between CIA and military black sites, CIA and military torture made absolutely no sense to people. It's more like the U.S. is treating this whole country as if it were a giant black site.

Paglen: This rendition and torture is one flavor of a larger thing going on: the U.S. taking people all over the place, imprisoning and torturing them without charge.

Thompson: From interviewing a lot of detainees and Dr. Rafiullah Bidar, regional director of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (http://www.aihrc.org.af/), it was clear that the Americans had grabbed hundreds and hundreds of people. They're being held without charges, in some 20 different facilities.

Roychoudhuri: *Who are these people?*

Paglen: When A.C. interviewed people who had been held at the military air base Bagram, prisoners told him that there were Iraqis, Yemenis, an international cast of characters at this DOD prison. So what the hell are they doing there? These are not high-profile renditions like el-Masri or Khaled Sheikh Mohammed. So who are these guys? How did they get there? Is this part of the rendition program, or has the practice of transferring prisoners to these different places around the world become a standard practice?

Roychoudhuri: *In the book, you make clear that the rendition program has been around for years. What has changed?*

Paglen: The program was established over multiple administrations, Democrat and Republican. For example, Aero Contractors was set up under the Carter administration. The counterterrorist unit in the CIA was set up under the Reagan administration, but the rendition program was set up under Clinton. It's an accumulation of the capacity of this infrastructure. After 9/11, the CIA went about setting up this entire infrastructure. Materially, they started getting airplanes and secret prisons together. They also started putting together a corporate structure, meaning shell companies. All of this was already in place, but not solidified. All the controls seemed to be taken off of it. They're not planning each operation so meticulously, they're not getting presidential authorization for each operation.

We're hearing about it now because

it grew so big, clearly expanding beyond what the intention of the program was at first. There is no question that some of these guys they're picking up did nothing and are the wrong people. One of the differences between the pre- and post-9/11 is that the CIA becomes squarely in charge of the program. Before, the CIA was working with the FBI.

Thompson: The pre-9/11 program was geared more towards adjudicating people domestically who were suspected of crimes against American citizens. That was obviously not quite as controversial as running this huge program that's snatching people and taking them to secret dungeons around the world.

Roychoudhuri: *Clearly, other countries have to be at least partially aware of the program in order for the U.S. program to operate. Did you get a sense of the level of collaboration?*

Paglen: We know that immediately after 9/11 the CIA set up a program to collaborate with 80 foreign countries to varying degrees. The CIA also started funding other intelligence services in order to use them as proxies. We also know that some of these collaborations were kept off the record; supposedly there is no paper trail.

Roychoudhuri: *Has that off-the-record quality caused glitches in the program?*

Paglen: What happened in October of 2001 is that one of these airplanes landed in Pakistan. The Pakistani intelligence service (ISI) picked up a guy named Jamil Qasim Saeed Mohammed (http://obsidianwings.blogs.com/obsidian_wings/2004/10/jamil_qasim_sae.html). The plane landed on the tarmac; they had this guy in chains. That guy was handed over to the Americans and put into this Gulfstream. They were going to fly him out of there, but the air traffic controllers require a landing fee and they refused to pay. The ISI then went to the airport officials and told them to waive the landing fee, so the plane took off. But it created a stir, and drew attention to the aircraft. A Pakistani journalist heard about this and published it, including the tail number of the plane in the newspaper. American journalists then got their hands on this tail number, and this is one of the very early keys that began to unlock parts of this story.

Roychoudhuri: *As journalists have begun tracking plane numbers, the CIA has attempted to reshuffle. They change the number on the plane, or they change the phone line of the shell companies. How much do you think public scrutiny can achieve?*

Thompson: A ton. If people want the CIA to be reined in and if they feel we shouldn't go around the world summarily detaining and torturing people, they can truly pressure their government to make that happen. They did it in the '70s through Frank Church, the Idaho senator, and the Church Committee. They severely curbed the transgressions and the misdeeds of the CIA. The thing is, by and large Americans don't care about this. Europeans, who play a much smaller role in this, are absolutely outraged about it; their governments are outraged about it. The day Americans decide that they don't

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"It's common knowledge that most of the guys at Guantanamo are nobodies. Many were turned in by bounty hunters"

think torture is something we should do, than maybe we'll see some pressure to change these things.

Roychoudhuri: *You quote 9/11 Commission member Jamie Gorelick in the book: "In criminal justice, you either prosecute suspects or let them go. But if you've treated them in ways that won't allow you to prosecute them, you're in this no man's land. What do you do with those people?" Based on the fact that it's so difficult to bring these people back out of this extralegal system, do you have any sense of where the rendition program is going?*

Paglen: This is the crucial question that we are facing right now. Bush transferred a handful of guys to Guantanamo (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/ 5321606.stm) and acknowledged they were kept in these secret prisons. Congress has to come up with a framework to prosecute these guys. It's common knowledge that most of the guys at Guantanamo are nobodies. Many were turned in by bounty hunters. But the guys that Bush transferred to Guantanamo Bay are guys that everybody agrees are bad guys. The sticking point is that they have tortured them for years and the evidence against them is totally tainted by rendition and torture. These are guys that people definitely want to see put on trial. By moving them to Guantanamo Bay, Bush is basically challenging Congress and saying, "If you want to put Khaled Sheikh Mohammed on trial, you're going to have to retroactively authorize torture, rendition, and the black site program."

If Congress does authorize the president's version of the bill, they're not only retroactively authorizing torture, they're creating a legal framework for the future. That would create a system where disappearing and torturing people would become a part of the law. **CT**

Onnesha Roychoudhuri is a Brooklyn-based freelance writer. A former assistant editor of AlterNet.org, she has written for AlterNet, MotherJones.com, Women's e-News, and PopMatters.

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David Swanson *has a few words of advice for members of the U.S. government that allowed George W. Bush to 'interpret' the Geneva Conventions and half of the Bill of Rights. Pointing out that legalizing torture and murder did not protect Pinochet or Hitler, he presents top ten 10 reasons why Bush should be impeached*

MOMMY, WHAT'S WATERBOARDING?

Remember the great harm done to the moral core of our nation when, according to the excited news reports following Kenneth Starr's great work in life, children were asking their parents what oral sex was? Neither do I. But children can now ask their parents what torture is, how waterboarding works, and when exactly torture is a good thing. "Mommy, we're going to play enemy combatant. Can I have some pliers to pull out Geoffrey's fingernails?"

Can I just say, to the Representatives and Senators who just voted to overturn (or allow George Bush to "interpret") the Geneva Conventions and half the Bill of Rights, and I say this as mildly as I know how, WAKE THE HELL UP, YOU COMPLICIT FASCIST MORONS; BUSH HAS CAMPS PLANNED FOR SOME OF YOU, AND DANTE HAS A CIRCLE RESERVED FOR THE REST. Oh, and one more thing: oral sex feels GOOD. Torture HURTS LIKE HELL. Got it? The world needs more sex, less sadism. What exactly are you unclear on?

Remember when Bush, like O.J. Simpson on the trail of the real killer, was energetically searching the White House (not to mention consulting a private lawyer) to determine who had leaked Valerie Plame's identity as a CIA agent to the media? Neither do I. But if it had happened, wouldn't it have made sense for Bush to simply subject Cheney, Rove, Libby, Armitage and a few others to a little torture until they spilled the beans?

Of course not. The slightest threat of discomfort, and these characters would have each confessed to the leak, the Kennedy assassination, and firing the secret missile into the Pentagon from the ghost jet. Just look at what fear of a vague threat of future prosecution has brought them to. Bush and gang, terrified of prosecution for violating the War Powers Act of 1996, have rammed through Congress, just before an election, a piece of legislation that removes Habeas Corpus and retroactively legal-

"The slightest threat of discomfort, and these characters would have each confessed to the leak, the Kennedy assassination, and firing the secret missile into the Pentagon from the ghost jet"

"The Bush gang attacks wherever it's most scared. The Pelosi gang falls for the bluff every time"

izes war crimes, a piece of legislation that will quite likely be, in part or whole, ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

Whether the Supreme Court lets this illegal law stand or not, international courts need not. Legalizing torture and murder did not protect Pinochet or Hitler. And legalizing impeachable offenses does not protect a President from impeachment. On the contrary, it adds yet another impeachable offense to the list. And don't think for a minute that this President isn't scared of impeachment as well. There's no other explanation for the Republican National Committee announcing, in conflict with every bit of evidence, that impeachment was a good issue for Republicans in the recent election. The Bush gang attacks wherever it's most scared. The Pelosi gang falls for the bluff every time.

Because the list of impeachable offenses grows on a daily basis now, it may be helpful to list the top ten grounds for removing these thugs from office. The reasons can be found just after the main text of the U.S. Constitution. They're labeled "The First Amendment," "The Second Amendment,"....

Of course, I'm kidding. Bush and Cheney have destroyed much more than 10 amendments. Here are my top ten reasons to impeach:

1. Launching an aggressive war, using fraud to sell the war to Congress and the public, and misusing government funds to move troops to Iraq and begin bombing raids prior even to Congress's dubious authorization to use force.

2. Targeting civilians, journalists, hospitals, and ambulances, and using illegal weapons, including white phosphorous, depleted uranium, and a new type of napalm.

3. Arbitrarily detaining Americans, legal residents, and non-Americans, without due process, without charge, and without access to counsel.

4. Authorizing the torture of thousands of captives, resulting in some cases in death. Having prisoners hidden from the International Committee of the Red Cross and shipped to other nations and secret U.S. bases to be tortured.

5. Illegal warrantless spying, and lying to the public about it for years.

6. Failing to protect New Orleans from Hurricane Katrina, to provide troops in Iraq with body armor, to attempt to prevent the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, or to work to decrease global warming.

7. Using signing statements to refuse to obey hundreds of laws passed by Congress.

8. Stealing the 2000 and 2004 elections.

9. Systematically using propaganda and disinformation, selectively and misleadingly leaking classified information, and keeping secret information meant to be public.

10. Urging Congress to pass bills that will retroactively and unconstitutionally legalize a number of the crimes listed above. **CT**

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Here's another list for the Bush Administration to contemplate: **Michael Schwartz** *outlines nine paradoxes that help to explain why the current war on Iraq is such a disaster. The heavy-handed counter-insurgency methods used by military leaders, he says, are hardly the best way to win a nation's hearts and minds*

NINE PARADOXES OF A LOST WAR

Recently, the New York Times broke a story suggesting that the U.S. Army and Marines were about to turn the conceptual tide of war in Iraq. The two services, reported correspondent Michael R. Gordon, "were finishing work on a new counterinsurgency doctrine" that would, according to retired Lt. Gen. Jack Keane, "change [the military's] entire culture as it transitions to irregular warfare."

Such strategic eureka moments have been fairly common since the Bush administration invaded Iraq in March 2003, and this one – news coverage of it died away in less than a week – will probably drop into the dustbin of history along with other times when the tactical or strategic tide of war was supposed to change. These would include the November 2004 assault on the city of Fallujah, various elections, the "standing up" of the Iraqi army, and the trench that, it was briefly reported, the Iraqis were planning to dig around their vast capital, Baghdad.

But this plan had one ingenious section, derived from an article by four military experts published in the quasi-official Military Review and entitled "The Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency." The nine paradoxes the experts lay out are eye-catching, to say the least, and so make vivid reading; but they are more than so many titillating puzzles of counterinsurgency warfare. Each of them contains an implied criticism of American strategy in Iraq. Seen in this light, they become an instructive lesson from insiders in why the American presence in that country has been such a disaster, and why this (or any other) new counterinsurgency strategy has little chance of ameliorating it.

PARADOX 1: The more you protect your force, the less secure you are

The military experts offer this explanation: "[The] counterinsurgent gains ultimate success by protecting the populace, not himself." It may seem like a bland comment, but don't be fooled.

"The nine paradoxes the experts lay out are eye-catching, to say the least, and so make vivid reading; but they are more than so many titillating puzzles of counter-insurgency warfare. Each of them contains an implied criticism of American strategy in Iraq"

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It conceals a devastating criticism of the cardinal principle of the American military in Iraq: that above all else they must minimize the risk to American troops by setting rules of engagement that essentially boil down to "shoot first, make excuses later." Applications of this principle are found in the by-now familiar policies of annihilating any car that passes the restraint line at checkpoints (because it might be a car bomber); shooting at pedestrians who get in the path of any American convoy (because they might be trying to stop the vehicles to activate an ambush); and calling in artillery or air power against any house that might be an insurgent hiding place (because the insurgents might otherwise escape and/or snipe at an American patrol).

This "shoot first" policy has guaranteed that large numbers of civilians (including a remarkable number of children) have been killed, maimed, or left homeless. For most of us, killing this many innocent people would be reason enough to abandon a policy, but from a military point of view it is not in itself sufficient. These tactics only become anathema when you can no longer ignore the way they have made it ever more difficult for the occupying army to "maintain contact" with the local population in order "to obtain the intelligence to drive operations and to reinforce the connections with the people who establish legitimacy."

PARADOX 2: The more force you use, the less effective you are

Times' reporter Gordon summarizes the logic here nicely: "Substantial force increases the risk of collateral damage and mistakes, and increases the opportunity for insurgent propaganda." Considering the levels of devastation achieved in the Sunni city of Fallujah (where 70% of structures were estimated to be damaged and close to 50% destroyed in the U.S. assault of November 2004) and in other Sunni cities (where whole neighborhoods have been devastated), or even in Shiite Najaf (where entire neighborhoods and major parts of its old city were destroyed in 2004), the word "substantial" has to be considered a euphemism. And the use of the word "propaganda" betrays the bias of the military authors, since many people would consider such levels of devastation a legitimate reason for joining groups that aim to expel the occupiers.

Here again, the striking logic of the American military is at work. These levels of destruction are not, in themselves, considered a problem – at least not until someone realizes that they are facilitating recruitment by the opposition.

PARADOX 3: The more successful counterinsurgency is, the less force that can be used and the more risk that must be accepted

Though not presented this way, this paradox is actually a direct criticism of the American military strategy in the months after the fall of the Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003. In those early days, active resistance to the occupation was modest indeed, an average of only six violent engagements each day (compared to 90 three years later.) But American military policy in the country was still based on overwhelming force.

American commanders sought to deter a larger insurgency by ferociously repressing any signs of resistance. This strategy included house-to-house searches witnessed by embedded reporter Nir Rosen and described in his vivid book, "In the Belly of the Green Bird."

These missions, repeated hundreds of times each day across Iraq, included home invasions of suspected insurgents, brutal treatment of their families and often their property, and the indefinite detention of men found in just about any house searched, even when U.S. troops knew that their intelligence was unreliable. Relatively peaceful demonstrations were forcibly suppressed, most agonizingly when, in late April 2003, American troops killed 13 demonstrators in Fallujah who were demanding that the U.S. military vacate a school commandeered as a local headquarters. This incident became a cause célèbre around which Fallujahns organized themselves into a central role in the insurgency that soon was born.

The new counterinsurgency strategy acknowledges that the very idea of overwhelming demonstrations of force producing respectful obedience has backfired, producing instead an explosion of rebellion. And now that a significant majority of Iraqis is determined to expel the Americans, promises of more humane treatment next time will not get the genie of the insurgency back in the bottle.

PARADOX 4: Sometimes doing nothing is the best reaction

This paradox is, in fact, a criticism of another cardinal principle of the occupation: the application of overwhelming force in order to teach insurgents (and prospective insurgents) that opposition of any sort will not be tolerated and, in any case, is hopeless. A typical illustration of this principle in practice was a January 2006 U.S. military report that went in part: "An unmanned U.S. drone detected three men digging a hole in a road in the area. Insurgents regularly bury bombs along roads in the area to target U.S. or Iraqi convoys. The three men were tracked to a building, which U.S. forces then hit with precision-guided munitions." As it turned out, the attack killed 12 members of a family living in that house, severely damaged six neighboring houses, and consolidated local opposition to the American presence.

This example (multiplied many times over) makes it clear why, in so many instances over these last years, doing nothing might have been better: fewer enemies in the "hood." But the developers of the new military strategy have a more cold-blooded view of the issue, preferring to characterize the principle in this way: "If a careful analysis of the effects of a response reveals that more negatives than positives might result, soldiers should consider an alternative." That is, while this incident might well be an example of a time when "doing nothing is the best reaction," the multiple civilian deaths that resulted could, under at least some circumstances, be outweighed by the "positives." Take, for a counter example, the killing of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the head of al-Qaeda-in-Mes -opotamia, in an air strike that also caused multiple civilian deaths.

"These missions, repeated hundreds of times each day across Iraq, included home invasions of suspected insurgents, brutal treatment of their families and often their property, and the indefinite detention of men found in just about any house searched, even when U.S. troops knew that their intelligence was unreliable"

"Iraq's new government was to be an American ally, hostile to that axis-of-evil regional power Iran, and it was to embrace the "opening" of the Iraqi economy to American multinationals"

PARADOX 5: The best weapons for counterinsurgency do not shoot

The Times' Gordon offers the following translation of this paradox: "Often dollars and ballots have more impact than bombs and bullets." Given the $18 billion U.S. reconstruction budget for Iraq and the three well-attended elections since January 2005, it might seem that, in this one area, Bush administration efforts actually anticipated the new counterinsurgency doctrine.

But in their original article the military strategists were actually far more precise in describing what they meant by this – and that precision makes it clear how far from effective American "reconstruction" was. Money and elections, they claim, are not enough: "Lasting victory will come from a vibrant economy, political participation and restored hope."

As it happened, the American officials responsible for Iraq policy were only willing to deliver that vibrant economy, along with political participation and restored hope, under quite precise and narrow conditions that suited the larger fantasies of the Bush administration. Iraq's new government was to be an American ally, hostile to that axis-of-evil regional power Iran, and it was to embrace the "opening" of the Iraqi economy to American multinationals. Given Iraqi realities and this hopeless list of priorities (or inside-the-Beltway day-dreams), it is not surprising that the country's economy has sunk ever deeper into depression, that elected officials have neither the power nor the inclination to deliver on their campaign promises, and that the principle hopes of the majority of Iraqis are focused on the departure of American troops because of, as one pollster concluded, "the American failure to do basically anything for Iraqis."

PARADOX 6: The host nation doing something tolerably is sometimes better than our doing it well

Here is a paradoxical principle that the occupation has sought to apply fully. The presidential slogan, "as the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down," has been an expression of Bush administration determination to transfer the front-line struggle against the insurgents – the patrols, the convoys, the home invasions, any house-to-house fighting – to Iraqi units, even if their job performance proved even less than "tolerable" compared to the rigorous execution of American troops.

It is this effort that has also proved the administration's most consistent and glaring failure. In a country where 80% of the people want the Americans to leave, it is very difficult to find soldiers willing to fight against the insurgents who are seeking to expel them. This was evident when the first group of American-trained soldiers and police deserted the field of battle during the fights for Fallujah, Najaf, Mosul, and Tal Afar back in 2004. This led eventually to the current American strategy of using Shia soldiers against Sunni insurgents, and utilizing Kurds against both Shia and Sunni rebels. (Sunnis, by and large, have refused to fight with the Americans.) This policy, in turn, has contributed substantially to the still-es-

calating sectarian violence within Iraq.

Even today, after the infusion of enormous amounts of money and years of effort, a substantial proportion of newly recruited soldiers desert or mutiny when faced with the prospect of fighting against anti-American insurgents. According to Solomon Moore and Louise Roug of the Los Angeles Times, in Anbar province, the scene of the heaviest fighting, "half the Iraqi soldiers are on leave at any given time, and many don't return to duty. In May, desertion rates in some Iraqi units reached 40%." In September, fully three-quarters of the 4,000 Iraqi troops ordered to Baghdad to help in the American operation to reclaim the capital and suppress internecine violence there, refused deployment. American officials told the LA Times that such refusals were based on an unwillingness to fight outside their home regions and a reluctance to "be thrust into uncomfortable sectarian confrontations."

As the failed attempts to "stand up" Iraqi forces suggest, the goal of getting Iraqis to fight "tolerably" well depends upon giving them a reason to fight that they actually support. As long as Iraqis are asked to fight on the side of occupation troops whose presence they despise, we cannot expect the quality of their performance to be "tolerable" from the Bush Administration point of view.

PARADOX 7: if a tactic works this week, it will not work next week; if it works in this province, it will not work in the next

The clearest expression of this principle lies in the history of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), the anti-occupation weapon of choice among Iraqi resistance fighters. Throughout the war, the occupation military has conducted hundreds of armed patrols each week designed to capture suspected insurgents through house-to-house searches. The insurgency, in turn, has focused on deterring and derailing these patrols, using sniper attacks, rocket propelled grenades, and IEDs. At first, sniper attacks were the favored weapon of the insurgents, but the typical American response – artillery and air attacks – proved effective enough to set them looking for other ways to respond. IEDs then gained in popularity, since they could be detonated from a relatively safe distance. When the Americans developed devices to detect the electronic detonators, the insurgents developed a variety of non-electronic trigger devices. When the Americans upgraded their armor to resist the typical IED, the insurgents developed "shaped" charges that could pierce American armor.

And so it goes in all aspects of the war. Each move by one side triggers a response by the other. The military experts developing the new strategy can point to this dilemma, but they cannot solve it. The underlying problem for the American military is that the resistance has already reached the sort of critical mass that ensures an endless back-and-forth tactical battle.

One solution not under consideration might work very well: abandoning the military patrols themselves. But such a tactic would also require abandoning counterinsurgency and ultimately leaving Iraq.

"And so it goes in all aspects of the war. Each move by one side triggers a response by the other. The military experts developing the new strategy can point to this dilemma, but they cannot solve it"

"A tactical victory occurs when the enemy is killed or retreats, leaving the battlefield to the victor. In guerrilla war, therefore, the guerrillas never win since they always melt away and leave their adversary in charge"

PARADOX 8: Tactical success guarantees nothing

This point is summarized by Gordon of the Times this way: "[M]ilitary actions by themselves cannot achieve success." But this is the smallest part of the paradox. It is true enough that the insurgency in Iraq hopes to win "politically," by waiting for the American people to force our government to withdraw, or for the cost of the war to outweigh its potential benefits, or for world pressure to make the war diplomatically unviable.

But there is a much more encompassing element to this dictum: that guerrilla fighters do not expect to win any military battles with the occupation. In the military strategists' article, they quote an interchange between American Colonel Harry Summers and his North Vietnamese counterpart after the U.S. had withdrawn from Vietnam. When Summers said, "You know you never defeated us on the battlefield," his adversary replied, "That may be so, but it is also irrelevant."

A tactical victory occurs when the enemy is killed or retreats, leaving the battlefield to the victor. In guerrilla war, therefore, the guerrillas never win since they always melt away and leave their adversary in charge.

But in Iraq, as in other successful guerrilla wars, the occupation army cannot remain indefinitely at the scene of its tactical victories – in each community, town, or city that it conquers. It must move on to quell the rebellion elsewhere. And when it does, if the guerrillas have successfully melted away, they will reoccupy the community, town, or city, thus winning a strategic victory and ruling the local area until their next tactical defeat.

If they keep this up long enough and do it in enough places, they will eventually make the war too costly to pursue – and thus conceivably win the war without winning a battle.

PARADOX 9: Most of the important decisions are not made by generals

Because guerrilla war is decentralized, with local bands deciding where to place IEDs, when to use snipers, and which patrols or bases to attack, the struggle in different communities, provinces, or regions takes very different forms. Many insurgents in Fallujah chose to stand and fight, while those in Tal Afar, near the Syrian border, decided to evacuate the city with its civilian population when the American military approached in strength. In Shia areas, members of Muktada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army chose to join the local police and turn it to their purposes; but Sunni insurgents have tried, instead, to disarm the local police and then disband the force. In every city and town, the strategy of the resistance has been different.

The latest American military strategists are arguing that what they call the "mosaic nature of an insurgency" implies the necessity of giving autonomy to local American commanders to "adapt as quickly as the insurgents." But such decentralization cannot work if the local population supports the insurgent goal of expelling the occupiers. Given autonomy under such circumstances, lower level U.S. military offi-

cers may decide that annihilating a home suspected of sheltering an insurgent is indeed counterproductive; such decisions, however, humane, would now come far too late to convince a local population that it should abandon its support of a campaign seen as essential to national independence.

There may have been a time, back when the invasion began, that the U.S. could have adopted a strategy that would have made it welcome – for a time, anyway – in Iraq. Such a strategy, as the military theorists flatly state, would have had to deliver a "vibrant economy, political participation, and restored hope." Instead, the occupation delivered economic stagnation or degradation, a powerless government, and the promise of endless violence. Given this reality, no new military strategy – however humane, canny, or well designed – could reverse the occupation's terminal unpopularity. Only a U.S. departure might do that.

Paradoxically, the policies these military strategists are now trying to reform have ensured that, however much most Iraqis may want such a departure, it would be, at best, bittersweet. The legacy of sectarian violence and the near-irreversible destruction wrought by the American presence make it unlikely that they would have the time or inclination to take much satisfaction in the end of the American occupation. **CT**

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"No new military strategy – however humane, canny, or well designed – could reverse the occupation's terminal unpopularity. Only a U.S. departure might do that"

There are many reasons to oppose the Iraq war, says **Danny Schechter,** *the News Dissector, but he cautions that we should oppose the war for the right reasons and absorb its lessons less we repeat them in Iran or in other, even more devastating wars that are certain to follow if we don't*

QUESTIONING AN IMMORAL WAR

"What was once hailed as a heroic mission is now being dismissed as a fiasco, error and "mistake," and to some former war boosters, even a "noble" mistake"

Ok, class. No talking. Pencils up. All eyes on the exam. Here's the first multiple-choice question:

The Iraq War is bad because:

a. It is illegal, immoral, and criminal
b. It has ended up killing and maiming millions of Iraqis we promised to free
c. It has devastated a country and ignited world opinion against the United States and caused thousands of US casualties
d. It has debased our media and turned much of it into a propaganda organ
e. It was badly managed and poorly executed

If you survey world opinion, there would be a consensus on selecting A-D as a response. If you polled most Democratic politicians and mainstream journalists, you would find overwhelming support only for E – "the we screwed it up" thesis as the correct answer.

What was once hailed as a heroic mission is now being dismissed as a fiasco, error and "mistake," and to some former war boosters, even a "noble mistake."

In fact, that's the view that seems to be framing what debate there has been on the war. It is still – AAU – All About Us. In this view, all that matters is our policy objectives but rarely our economic or geo-political agenda. Iraq as a nation, as a culture and a people barely exists.

For the most part the American debate leaves out the Iraqis except as victims or killers. The leaders that they said to have elected don't seem to count with Washington giving them orders and pulling their strings.

Prime Minister Maliki had to have a press conference to announce he works for the Iraqi People, not the Bush Administration. He knows that if he is to survive politically and personally, he

has to distance himself from his wannabe benefactors. How many of us know that the Iraqi Government we trained is running death squads? How many Iraqis do we ever see, or more importantly HEAR on the air?

The Democratic Party line mirrors this America First philosophy.. Never ready to challenge the deeper assumptions and interests guiding the war, most of the Democrats instead harp on the stupidity and failures of the war's instigators and managers who are considered incompetent. According to the NY Times, The Democrats are "running to the right," self-consciously becoming conservative and moderate candidates who posture at being tougher on national security that the Repugs. (Oddly the International Herald Tribune ran almost identical stories ten days earlier.")

So in the same way that Fox News pushed all other news outlets to the right, the GOP has imposed its worldview on the whole political spectrum. As a result, many Dems are not challenging this distorted ideology, only the personalities identified with it.

Bush's message points, Cheney's contentiousness and Rumsfeld's ravings make them a perfect foil those who say what they want to do is right – but the way they are going about it is wrong.

Isn't it obvious that the responsibility for the war goes deeper and further. What about the rest of the military which went along with the "plan," just "following orders," knowing it was a joke? (Many of the Generals speaking out now held their fire and muzzled their doubts for years.)

And what about the press that did more selling than telling about the war? The TV networks didn't have to wait for Tom Ricks to publish his expose Fiasco to have him on the air and challenge lousy tactics and pervasive corruption. They all drank the Kool Aid. They were all complicit.

Where were – where are – the reports about all the war crimes that have catalogued by scores of credible experts and observers. The use of proscribed weapons, the brutality of which Abu Ghraib is not the worst example, the failed "Shock and Awe," the neglect and indifference of the needs of ordinary people "living" without water, electricity and sometimes food. Where is the concern for them?

We are talking here not just about casualties or "collateral damage" but about the destruction of a society that is rarely described or understood by journalists who keep American body counts and politicians who avoid the big picture. Journalists overseas are able to assess the situation with greater clarity than their "objective" American counterparts:

Journalist Patrick Cockburn who has watched the war up close concludes in a book for Verso: "The U.S. failure in Iraq has been even more damaging than Vietnam because the opponent was punier and the imperial ambitions even greater."

Pepe Escobar of Asia Times describes what he calls "the logic of extermination."

"This logic of extermination of a society and culture was inbuilt in the process since March 2003. In fact, the systematic annihilation of 2-3% of the entire Iraqi population, according to a

"Bush's message points, Cheney's contentiousness and Rumsfeld's ravings make them a perfect foil those who say what they want to do is right – but the way they are going about it is wrong"

"I don't want to rant but I am also troubled when I watch nominally independent films about Iraq that sell the war in the guise of offering "verite" reporting by soldiers"

study by The Lancet, not to mention the million people displaced since March 2003, follow the more than 500,000 children who died during the 1990s as victims of United Nations sanctions. Iraq has been systematically destroyed for more than 15 years, non-stop."

And what about the contribution of the Clintonistas who imposed sanctions that killed off an estimated one million Iraqi children while posturing about how bad Saddam is and was. I still remember Madeleine Albright telling 60 Minutes that that death count was "acceptable" because the goal was so noble. No wonder they have been so timid in criticizing the war. It represents their policy by other means!

Our lack of knowledge and blatant denial can perhaps be explained by the lack of context and background offered in the media and the failures of our educational system to prepare young people for a changing world. . 63% of our students couldn't find Iraq on a map after three years of "coverage." This is a reflection of the dumbing-down process which substitutes entertainment for information. No wonder Americans seem to have so little empathy and a sense of connectedness to the rest of the world. Many believe in the title of that anthem – "We Are The World," a song that was ironically making the opposite point. They support charities but not deeper change.

Playing to this culture of ignorance and indifference is the Pentagon's Information/media war. They have just announced a new unit to better promote its message across 24-hour news channels, particularly on the internet. The Pentagon said the move would boost its ability to counter 'inaccurate' news stories and exploit new media. BBC reports that Pentagon press secretary Eric Ruff said the unit would reportedly monitor media such as weblogs – perhaps my own as well– and would also employ 'surrogates', or top politicians or lobbyists who could be interviewed on TV and radio shows.

Media propaganda like this, and the role the networks play without anyone in the Pentagon telling them what to do, seems to be ignored by the hyper-partisan "left" as well where concerns about the larger world are minimal, and the focus is ONLY on Bush and the White House as if that is where all power resides. What about globalization, human rights and corporate wrongs as well as economic justice issues like pervasive debt at home? Those issues seem to have disappeared even on so-called progressive blogs and "alternative" media outlets that love insider gossip and revel in a sense of exaggerated self-importance. Their view is often narrow, nationalistic and naïve and often apes GOP tactics from the other side.

I don't want to rant but I am also troubled when I watch nominally independent films about Iraq that sell the war in the guise of offering "verite" reporting by soldiers. "The War Tapes" is one such film – funded in part by progressives – which I later heard praised by President Bush's media advisor. No Wonder. It is de-facto pro-war!. The War Tapes also use "hot bang-bang footage" from Fallujah to show how scary the US military mission is with-

out offering any context or clearly showing the consequences of their 'we destroyed the village in order to save it' approach.

Even Iraq for Sale by my friend Robert Greenwald tends to praise the mercenaries of "Blackwater Security" because they were double-crossed by the military without fully showing the crimes they committed in Fallujah.

If the war had been more successful – say like Israel's 6 Day War instead of its recent Lebanon disaster – would we all be rallying behind the Bush policies instead of condemning them? Sure Saddam is a creep but he was our creep for many years and his demonization was not a basis for the war.

Let's stop pandering on national security to out-Republican the hard right. That approach failed in 2004 and it will fail again? The whole issue is convoluted anyway. Even as President Bush insists that "America loses" if The Dems win because that will somehow strengthen the terrorists, Al Qaeda strategists say openly that they prefer the Republicans in power and the US military stuck in Iraq to keep their Jihad alive. Odd as it seems, they like Bush, and believe that his Global War on Terror (GWOT) strengthens their war of terror. And like him, they just want us to "bring it on."

It's time to abandon this superficial approach with its patriotically correct slogans and failed practices – bombing that doesn't work, torture that offends the world – and return to core small d democratic principles. Instead the Repugs are going the other way with more bluster about "progress" and with "moderates" like former Vietnam War Bombadier John McCain proposing a troop increase and more escalations, a clear sign that the US is losing.

Let us articulate what we stand for – not just what are we against. May we oppose the war for the right reasons and absorb its lessons less we repeat them in Iran or other wars that are certain to come if we don't. How's that for an "inconvenient truth?" **CT**

News Dissector Danny Schechter wrote two books, "Embedded: Weapons of Mass Deception" and "When News Lies," and directed the film WMD about the Iraq war media coverage. See wmdthefilm.com

"If the war had been more successful – say like Israel's 6 Day War instead of its recent Lebanon disaster – would we all be rallying behind the Bush policies instead of condemning them?"

Stories about the illegal trade in body parts – often obtained by traffickers for measly sums paid to the donor or for nothing at all – may seem suited for the big screen, television or science fiction novels, they are occurring in the real world with disturbing frequency, writes **Bill Berkowitz**

BODIES WITHOUT PASSPORTS

"U.S. or Japanese medical agents working for large hospitals abroad... abducted bodies, harvested the parts they wanted, especially eyes, kidneys, hearts, and livers, and then dumped the remains on the sides of country roads or in hospital dumpsters"

Nancy Scheper-Hughes opens her provocative essay entitled "Biopiracy and the Global Quest for Human Organs," with a scene taken from Stephen Frears' film "Dirty Pretty Things." Okwe, an illegal Nigerian immigrant doctor, framed in his homeland and forced into exile in London, discovers that the hotel where he works is one stop along the grisly trail of illegal body parts trafficking.

In a late-January episode of the CBS television program "Numb3rs" – a detective series built around the conceit that crimes can often be solved through the application of sophisticated mathematical formulas – four Indian girls from Chennai were duped and brought to the United States by body-parts traders. The young immigrants were forced to sell their body parts in order to repay those who brought them to the country.

While stories about the illegal trade in body parts – often obtained by traffickers for measly sums paid to the donor or for nothing at all – may seem better suited for the big screen, episodic television or science fiction novels, they are occurring in the real world with disturbing frequency.

Scheper-Hughes, a professor of medical anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, knows this all too well. She is the co-founder and director of Organs Watch, a project that originated in widespread rumors of body snatching and organ theft in the urban shantytowns of Brazil in the mid-1980s.

In her essay published in the March/April 2006 edition of the Nacla Report on the Americas, Scheper-Hughes says that "U.S. or Japanese medical agents working for large hospitals abroad... abducted bodies," harvested the parts they wanted, especially eyes, kidneys, hearts, and livers, and then unceremoniously dumped the remains "on the sides of country roads or in hospital dumpsters."

Although medical professionals denied this was happening, in 1997

Scheper-Hughes began following the trail of rumors about the grim trade. Over the years, she has traveled to 12 countries and visited more than 50 scenes of illicit organs and tissues procurement.

Legislation has been passed in several countries to crack down on the trade in body parts, but Scheper-Hughes told me in a telephoned interview that "things are still quite unstable."

"China is preparing a new law making transplant tourism illegal. There will be no payment for organs and no foreign transplant patients," she said.

"It's too early to say whether it will stick or give rise to a shadow transplant economy. A new law was passed in Israel, making it illegal for Israeli transplant patients to be reimbursed by their national health insurance carriers for illegal transplants."

"Despite all this legislative activity, transplant tourism grows stealthily on the margins, as patients are 'voting with their legs' to solve their problems. Eventually, I see paid kidney donors becoming routine and eventually legal so that the trade will occur nationally rather than transnationally. That would be a sad outcome, but perhaps it is inevitable now that the cat is out of the bag," she concluded.

One of her more shocking realizations was that the underground body parts industry had gone from being something that "evoked shock and revulsion bordering on nausea" to becoming a "fait accompli – an accepted medical fact defended on pragmatic grounds."

As a member of the panel on Ethics, Access and Safety in Tissue and Organ Transplant at a 2003 World Heath Organization meeting, Scheper-Hughes witnessed an official from a private eye bank "defend the 'necessary' commercialization of tissue banks in the developing world."

Without government support for "subsidized tissue banking," the argument went, poor countries had to resort to international trading/selling of body parts that were not being used locally and that could be transported through informal agreements to the developed world, where they are in great demand for orthopedic and other high-tech surgeries.

And, in what on the face of it appears to be a win-win situation, "In exchange, the poor donor-institutions could receive a steady supply of scarce corneas."

Organs Watch discovered a "large, unregulated, multi-million-dollar business in human tissues, taken without consent or procured from the naive family members of brain-dead donors who believe their 'gifts' would be used altruistically to save lives and reduce human suffering." Instead, these "gifts" were turned into commodities that were bought and sold, processed and transported, picking up additional value as they moved toward the market. Organs Watch found that bone and skin grafts were sold and processed by private biotech firms in the U.S. and turned into expensive commercial products for dentists, orthopedics and plastic surgery.

In South Africa, official documentation revealed that "human heart valves [had been] taken without consent from

"Organs Watch found that bone and skin grafts were sold and processed by private biotech firms in the U.S. and turned into expensive commercial products for dentists, orthopedics and plastic surgery"

"The transfer of hundreds of Achilles tendons that were removed without consent from the bodies of the victims of township violence and shipped by the director of the tissues bank to a corrupt U.S. businessman who paid 200 dollars for each tendon"

the bodies of poor blacks in the local police mortuary and shipped for 'handling costs' to medical centers in Germany and Austria," the group says.

In 2002, Scheper-Hughes apprised the South African Ministry of Health of a scheme originating at a national tissue bank that involved "the transfer of hundreds of Achilles tendons that were removed without consent from the bodies of the victims of township violence and shipped by the director of the tissues bank to a corrupt U.S. businessman who paid 200 dollars for each tendon."

Shipped to the U.S. via South Korea, they were ultimately repackaged and sold locally and abroad to private medical and biotech firms for 1,200 dollars each.

As is most often the case, everyone, except the poor people from whom these tendons came, benefited handsomely from the deal.

The rise in "illegal transplant tourism" – a term coined by Scheper-Hughes – was "developed to meet an insatiable demand for organ transplants that rises exponentially against a flat supply of organs donated through traditional and regulated means," she writes in the essay.

While donations have remained flat – increasing only 33 percent over the past decade or so – the number of patients on national waiting lists has increased by 236 percent.

With the increased need, poor people are recruited or entrapped into donating their body parts to satisfy the demand from rich patients who can afford to travel abroad and, Scheper-Hughes says, to break national laws and international medical regulations to get the organs and medical procedures they need.

Scheper-Hughes told me that she continues to be very active with Organs Watch, and is currently working with the World Health Organization on several "black spots" in illegal transplant tourism – China, Pakistan – as well as with the ministry of health and the federal police in South Africa and Brazil with respect to arrests and trials of "transplant surgeon outlaws." **CT**

Bill Berkowitz is a longtime observer of the conservative movement, documenting the strategies, players, institutions, victories and defeats of the American Right.

How much longer can we go on avoiding our tacit complicity in mass murder by virtue of thinking that we have some kind of clearance from 'on-high', from a God that can talk of mercy and compassion in the same breath as it condones the use of terror as a means of spreading 'civilisation', Western-style? asks **William Bowles**

THE SHAME OF NATO'S INFERNO

Civilised *(adjective): cultured, educated, refined, enlightened, polite, elegant, sophisticated, urbane*

Civilise *(verb): to enlighten, educate, cultivate, improve, advance, develop, refine*

Poor old Dante Alighieri, were he around today, I am sure he would find it difficult to find the words to describe the evils visited by so-called civilised nations on the defenceless of the planet, assuming that is, he was fully informed of what is going on.

I know I shouldn't be surprised but nevertheless I am. Surprised firstly that I live in a barbaric culture that has been able to masquerade as civilised and secondly, that it has been able to persuade the world that it possesses civilised credentials in the first place. And thirdly, that it has been able to carry off this illusion for well on five hundred years.

Most of us associate the idea of being civilised with learning and with respect for culture, though the root of the word is that of the city dweller.

"Missiles struck storage tanks at the petrochemical plant [in Panchevo, northeast of Belgrade], sending over 900 tons of highly carcinogenic vinyl chloride monomer (VCM) surging into the air. By sunrise, clouds of VCM poured through the town, registering as high as 10,600 times the permissible limit for human safety, and billowing clouds from the plant were so thick that residents were unable to see the sun. VCM is dangerous enough on its own, but when it burns, it releases phosgene gas as a by byproduct, a substance so toxic that it was used as a poison gas in the First World War. Raging fires discharged chlorine gas, another substance that was employed as a poison gas during World War I, along with a host of other harmful chemicals, such as naptha, ethylene dichloride and hydrochloric acid. More than 2,000 tons of highly toxic PVC dichloroethane washed onto the ground, necessitating

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"Just as devastating is the almost total silence of the Western media which has consistently and deliberately withheld information from the public about the awful effects of these nightmare weapons on literally millions of people"

a long-term ban on eating root vegetables grown in the town. A poison rain spattered the region, and hundreds of tons of oil and chemicals soaked into the soil and poured into the Danube River. After a missile narrowly missed hitting a tank of liquid ammonia, workers panicked at the fearsome consequences an explosion on the tank would have, and dumped the liquid ammonia into the Danube."[1]

As if the use of high explosives during 'ordinary' bombing of men, women and children which 'merely' tear one limb from limb were not bad enough, what I call ecocidal warfare, is not as immediately visible in its devastating effects not only on people but over the generations, on entire ecologies, the long term effects of which we have only the vaguest understanding except that it can only be disastrous for our descendents.

The range of ecological weapons used by so-called civilised nations is devastating enough but because the targets themselves quite often contain toxic and carcinogenic substances, ecological weapons' effects are multiplied through the chemicals released into the environment.

It is inconceivable that the war planners are not aware of the consequences of targeting modern industrial plants, the contents of which when released render the environment effectively uninhabitable, perhaps for generations. When accidents happen at equivalent plants in Western countries, all hell breaks loose, contingency plans swing into operation, entire communities are evacuated; exclusion zones are established, clean-up crews move in utilising the latest techniques to minimise the environmental damage.

Not so for the unfortunate inhabitants of Yugoslavia, Iraq and the Lebanon, where the targeting of electric and chemical manufacturing and storage locations are part and parcel of a deliberate policy of terror, for not only does it impact on the people who live and work in the location but it also endangers the entire population through the destruction of water treatment and distribution systems, the loss of electrical power for hospitals, indeed the entire fabric of modern society grinds to a halt as a result.

Just as devastating is the almost total silence of the Western media which has consistently and deliberately withheld information from the public about the awful effects of these nightmare weapons on literally millions of people. 'Fire and forget' takes on an entirely new meaning.

The use of these weapons on industrial targets constitutes a war crime of such absolutely devastating dimensions that it's conceivable that our domestic populations, were they truly aware of the scale and impact of these WMD would react with horror and revulsion that such destruction was being committed not only in their name but by societies which claim to be civilised. No wonder the mainstream media (MSM) have hidden the reality from us.

"The half-life of depleted uranium is 4.5 billion years, essentially ensuring the permanent contamination of affected areas. To grasp just what this means in terms of time, consider that the age of the Solar System is only slightly longer … DU weapons have

the added side benefit of being an effective means of disposing of nuclear waste. By the time of the NATO war [on Yugoslavia], the U.S. had stockpiled over a billion pounds of waste from the production of nuclear weapons, and the Pentagon provided the material cost-free to weapons manufacturers … [A] single particle of DU lodged in the lung [is] equivalent to an hourly chest x-ray for life."[2]

The Western media, using false NATO claims that DU did not result in increased radiation, claims based on the use of geiger counters which in fact do not measure the alpha radiation given off by DU, has been able to shrug off the accusations that DU is dangerous to life.

Much play has been made of the use of cluster bombs but an even more deadly variation is the graphite bomb used against electrical transformer stations, designed to knock out a nation's electricity supply.

"[These are] small containers filled with small coils, wrapped with silicon threads. The silicon threads were covered with aluminum, to be [electrically] conductive … When this cluster bomb explodes over a transformer plant, a kind of web is made and that web falls over the plant. It's a kind of solid water. The effect is the same as if you would throw huge amounts of water over these distribution plants. They would cause short circuits, etc., and all these plants go out of operation. But much more of this material was spread into a fog of tiny particles of silicon. As you know, glass is made of silicon. Glass wool is also made of silicon. Glass wool was forbidden twenty years ago. It's very carcinogenic. I'm talking about people living in the areas where those bombs have been dropped. A thick fog had been hanging over there for hours. People have been inhaling these particles of silicon."[3]

Aren't humans ingenious when it comes to devising methods of killing us off. That millions of highly skilled people are engaged in inventing these horrific means of murder should have us in open revolt against our governments for committing such unmitigated acts of evil against our fellow humans and all in the pursuit of private profit.

Such is the degree of alienation brought about not only because scientists and engineers in far-off offices are totally disconnected from the effects of their ingenuity but because we all inhabit a culture that has been mis-educated for generations into accepting the idea that we occupy some higher niche in the 'evolutionary tree', so poisonous is our conception of 'civilisation'.

How much longer can we go on avoiding our tacit complicity in mass murder by virtue of thinking that we have some kind of clearance from 'on-high', from a God that can talk of mercy and compassion in the same breath as it condones the use of terror as a means of spreading 'civilisation', Western-style?

Ultimately, the real reasons, hidden from public view, are economic. Yugoslavia, the last bastion of social ownership in Eastern Europe, had to have its domestic economy reduced to rubble, thus under the guise of destroying 'military' targets, every factory and warehouse of any significance, all infrastructure, electrical, water, sewage

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"And make no mistake, NATO plans made it clear that the Yugoslav economy was to be sold off to Western capital"

treatment, communications and transport was bombed, often over and over again, regardless of the consequences. And make no mistake, NATO plans made it clear that the Yugoslav economy was to be sold off to Western capital.

"The Western-sponsored Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe called for widespread privatisation and Western investment .... The New Serbia Forum, funded by the British Foreign Office ... brought Serbian professionals and academics to Hungary on a regular basis for discussions with British and Central European "experts." .... The Forum advocated the "reintegration" of Yugoslavia in the European family," a euphemistic phrase that meant the dismantlement of the socialist-oriented economy and implementation of a privatization campaign for the benefit of Western corporations."[4]

In reality, 'civilisation' is actually a code-word for capitalism, Western-style, that justifies the use of mass extermination and terror on any country which resists its demands. **CT**

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1. George Monbiot, "Consigning Their Future to Death," The Guardian (London), April 22, 1999.
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"Use of Depleted Uranium (DU) Weapons by NATO Forces in Yugoslavia," Coghill Research Laboratories (UK), April 1999.
3. Interview with Dushan Vasiljevich by delegation, Belgrade, August 7, 1999.
4. "Britain Trains New Elite for Post-Milosevic Era," The Independent (London), May 3, 2000.

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A nuclear North Korea with a "crazy" leader serves as a rationale for policies the White House is pursuing anyway, like anti-missile systems, military bases all over the map, ever-higher military spending, and all the other nice things a respectable empire bent on world domination needs, writes **William Blum**

THE JINGO BELLS ARE RINGING

Who really poses the greatest danger to world peace: Iraq, North Korea or the United States?" asked Time magazine in an online poll in early 2003, shortly before the US invasion of Iraq. The final results were: North Korea 6.7%, Iraq 6.3%, the United States 86.9%; 706,842 total votes cast.[1]

Imagine that following North Korea's recent underground nuclear test neither the United States nor any other government cried out that the sky was falling. No threat to world peace and security was declared by the White House or any other house. It was thus not the lead story on every radio and TV broadcast and newspaper page one. The UN Security Council did not unanimously condemn it. Nor did NATO. "What should we do about him?" was not America Online's plaintive all-day headline alongside a photo of North Korean leader Kim Jong-il.

Who would have known about the explosion, even if it wasn't baby-sized? Who would have cared? But because all this fear mongering did in fact take place, www.vote.com was able to pose the question – "North Korea's Nuclear Threat: Is It Time For An International Economic Blockade To Make Them Stop?" – and hence compile a 93% "yes" vote. It doesn't actually take too much to win hearts and mindless. Media pundit Ben Bagdikian once wrote: "While it is impossible for the media to tell the population what to think, they do tell the public what to think about."

So sometime in the future, the world might, or might not, have nine states possessing nuclear weapons instead of eight. So what? Do you know of all the scary warnings the United States issued about a nuclear-armed Soviet Union? A nuclear-armed China? And the non-warnings about a nuclear-armed Israel? There were no scary warnings or threats against ally Pakistan for the nuclear-development aid it gave to North Korea a few years ago, and Washington has been busy this

"While it is impossible for the media to tell the population what to think, they do tell the public what to think about."

"And just for the record, contrary to what we've been told a million times, there's no objective evidence that North Korea invaded South Korea on that famous day of June 25, 1950"

year enhancing the nuclear arsenal of India, events which the world has paid little attention to, because the United States did not mount a campaign to tell the world to worry. There's still only one country that's used nuclear weapons on other people, but we're not given any warnings about them.

In 2005, Secretary of War Rumsfeld, commenting about large Chinese military expenditures, said: "Since no nation threatens China, one wonders: Why this growing investment?"[2] The following year, when asked if he believed the Venezuelans' contention that their large weapons buildup was strictly for defense, Rumsfeld replied: "I don't know of anyone threatening Venezuela – anyone in this hemisphere."[3] Presumably, the honorable secretary, if asked, would say that no one threatens North Korea either. Or Iran. Or Syria. Or Cuba. He may even believe this. However, beginning with the Soviet Union, as one country after another joined the nuclear club, Washington's ability to threaten them or coerce them declined, which is of course North Korea's overriding reason for trying to become a nuclear power; or Iran's if it goes that route.

Undoubtedly there are some in the Bush administration who are not unhappy about the North Korean test. A nuclear North Korea with a "crazy" leader serves as a rationale for policies the White House is pursuing anyway, like anti-missile systems, military bases all over the map, ever-higher military spending, and all the other nice things a respectable empire bent on world domination needs. And of course, important elections are imminent and getting real tough with looney commies always sells well.

Did I miss something or is there an international law prohibiting only North Korea from testing nuclear weapons? And just what is the danger? North Korea, even if it had nuclear weapons and delivery systems, and there's no evidence that it does, is of course no threat to attack anyone with them. Like Iraq under Saddam Hussein, North Korea is not suicidal.

And just for the record, contrary to what we've been told a million times, there's no objective evidence that North Korea invaded South Korea on that famous day of June 25, 1950. The accusations came only from the South Korean and US governments, neither being a witness to the event, neither with the least amount of credible impartiality. No, the United Nations observers did not observe the invasion. Even more important, it doesn't really matter much which side was the first to fire a shot or cross the border on that day because whatever happened was just the latest incident in an already-ongoing war of several years.[4]

Operation Because We Can

Captain Ahab had his Moby Dick. Inspector Javert had his Jean Valjean. The United States has its Fidel Castro. Washington also has its Daniel Ortega. For 27 years, the most powerful nation in the world has found it impossible to share the Western Hemisphere with one of its poorest and weakest neighbors, Nicaragua, if the country's leader was not in love with capitalism.

From the moment the Sandinista revolutionaries overthrew the US-sup-

ported Somoza dictatorship in 1979, Washington was concerned about the rising up of that long-dreaded beast – "another Cuba". This was war. On the battlefield and in the voting booths. For almost 10 years, the American proxy army, the Contras, carried out a particularly brutal insurgency against the Sandinista government and its supporters. In 1984, Washington tried its best to sabotage the elections, but failed to keep Sandinista leader Ortega from becoming president. And the war continued. In 1990, Washington's electoral tactic was to hammer home the simple and clear message to the people of Nicaragua: If you re-elect Ortega all the horrors of the civil war and America's economic hostility will continue. Just two months before the election, in December 1989, the United States invaded Panama for no apparent reason acceptable to international law, morality, or common sense (The United States naturally called it "Operation Just Cause"); one likely reason it was carried out was to send a clear message to the people of Nicaragua that this is what they could expect, that the US/Contra war would continue and even escalate, if they re-elected the Sandinistas.

It worked; one cannot overestimate the power of fear, of murder, rape, and your house being burned down. Ortega lost, and Nicaragua returned to the rule of the free market, striving to roll back the progressive social and economic programs that had been undertaken by the Sandinistas. Within a few years widespread malnutrition, wholly inadequate access to health care and education, and other social ills, had once again become a widespread daily fact of life for the people of Nicaragua.

Each presidential election since then has pitted perennial candidate Ortega against Washington's interference in the process in shamelessly blatant ways. Pressure has been regularly exerted on certain political parties to withdraw their candidates so as to avoid splitting the conservative vote against the Sandinistas. US ambassadors and visiting State Department officials publicly and explicitly campaign for anti-Sandinista candidates, threatening all kinds of economic and diplomatic punishment if Ortega wins *[He did – Editor]*, including difficulties with exports, visas, and vital family remittances by Nicaraguans living in the United States.

In the 2001 election, shortly after the September 11 attacks, American officials tried their best to tie Ortega to terrorism, placing a full-page ad in the leading newspaper which declared, among other things, that: "Ortega has a relationship of more than thirty years with states and individuals who shelter and condone international terrorism."[5] That same year a senior analyst in Nicaragua for the international pollsters Gallup was moved to declare: "Never in my whole life have I seen a sitting ambassador get publicly involved in a sovereign country's electoral process, nor have I ever heard of it."[6]

Additionally, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) – which would like the world to believe that it's a private non-governmental organization, when it's actually a creation and an agency of the US government – regularly furnishes large amounts of

"One cannot overestimate the power of fear, of murder, rape, and your house being burned down"

"One of the fears of the ambassador likely has to do with Ortega talking of renegotiating CAFTA, the trade agreement between the US and Central America, so dear to the hearts of corporate globalizationists"

money and other aid to organizations in Nicaragua which are opposed to the Sandinistas. The International Republican Institute (IRI), a long-time wing of NED, whose chairman is Arizona Senator John McCain, has also been active in Nicaragua creating the Movement for Nicaragua, which has helped organize marches against the Sandinistas. An IRI official in Nicaragua, speaking to a visiting American delegation in June of this year, equated the relationship between Nicaragua and the United States to that of a son to a father. "Children should not argue with their parents." she said.

With the 2006 presidential election in mind, one senior US official wrote in a Nicaraguan newspaper last year that should Ortega be elected, "Nicaragua would sink like a stone". In March, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, the US Ambassador to the UN under Reagan and a prime supporter of the Contras, came to visit. She met with members of all the major Sandinista opposition parties and declared her belief that democracy in Nicaragua "is in danger" but that she had no doubt that the "Sandinista dictatorship" would not return to power. The following month, the American ambassador in Managua, Paul Trivelli, who openly speaks of his disapproval of Ortega and the Sandinista party, sent a letter to the presidential candidates of conservative parties offering financial and technical help to unite them for the general election of November 5. The ambassador stated that he was responding to requests by Nicaraguan "democratic parties" for US support in their mission to keep Daniel Ortega from a presidential victory. The visiting American delegation reported: "In a somewhat opaque statement Trivelli said that if Ortega were to win, the concept of governments recognizing governments wouldn't exist anymore and it was a 19th century concept anyway. The relationship would depend on what his government put in place." One of the fears of the ambassador likely has to do with Ortega talking of renegotiating CAFTA, the trade agreement between the US and Central America, so dear to the hearts of corporate globalizationists.

Then, in June, US Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick said it was necessary for the Organization of American States (OAS) to send a mission of Electoral Observation to Nicaragua "as soon as possible" so as to "prevent the old leaders of corruption and communism from attempting to remain in power" (though the Sandinistas have not occupied the presidency, only lower offices, since 1990).

The explicit or implicit message of American pronouncements concerning Nicaragua is often the warning that if the Sandinistas come back to power, the horrible war, so fresh in the memory of Nicaraguans, will return. The London Independent reported in September that "One of the Ortega billboards in Nicaragua was spray-painted 'We don't want another war'. What it was saying was that if you vote for Ortega you are voting for a possible war with the US."[7]

Per capita income in Nicaragua is $900 a year; some 70% of the people live in poverty. It is worth noting that Nicaragua and Haiti are the two na-

tions in the Western Hemisphere that the United States has intervened in the most, from the 19th century to the 21st, including long periods of occupation. And they are today the two poorest in the hemisphere, wretchedly so.

Don't look back

The cartoon awfulness of the Bush crime syndicate's foreign policy is enough to make Americans nostalgic for almost anything that came before. And as Bill Clinton parades around the country and the world associating himself with "good" causes, it's enough to evoke yearnings in many people on the left who should know better. So here's a little reminder of what Clinton's foreign policy was composed of. Hold on to it in case Lady Macbeth runs in 2008 and tries to capitalize on lover boy's record.

Yugoslavia: The United States played the principal role during the 1990s in the destruction of this nation, republic by republic, the low point of which was 78 consecutive days of terrible bombing of the population in 1999. No, it was not an act of "humanitarianism". It was pure imperialism, corporate globalization, getting rid of "the last communist government in Europe", keeping NATO alive by giving it a function after the end of the Cold War. There was no moral issue behind US policy. The ousted Yugoslav leader, Slobodan Milosevic, is routinely labeled "authoritarian" (Compared to whom? To the Busheviks?), but that had nothing to do with it. The great exodus of the people of Kosovo resulted from the bombing, not Serbian "ethnic cleansing"; and while saving Kosovars the Clinton administration was servicing Turkish ethnic cleansing of Kurds. NATO admitted (sic) to repeatedly and deliberately targeting civilians; amongst other war crimes.[8]

Somalia: The 1993 intervention was presented as a mission to help feed the starving masses. But the US soon started taking sides in the clan-based civil war and tried to rearrange the country's political map by eliminating the dominant warlord, Mohamed Aidid, and his power base. On many occasions, US helicopters strafed groups of Aidid's supporters or fired missiles at them; missiles were fired into a hospital because of the belief that Aidid's forces had taken refuge there; also a private home, where members of Aidid's political movement were holding a meeting; finally, an attempt by American forces to kidnap two leaders of Aidid's clan resulted in a horrendous bloody battle. This last action alone cost the lives of more than a thousand Somalis, with many more wounded.

It's questionable that getting food to hungry people was as important as the fact that four American oil giants held exploratory rights to large areas of Somali land and were hoping that US troops would put an end to the prevailing chaos which threatened their highly expensive investments.[9]

Ecuador: In 2000, downtrodden Indian peasants rose up once again against the hardships of US/IMF globalization policies, such as privatization. The Indians were joined by labor unions and some junior military officers and their coalition forced the president to resign. Washington was alarmed.

"The cartoon awfulness of the Bush crime syndicate's foreign policy is enough to make Americans nostalgic for almost anything that came before"

"Liberian president Charles Taylor was an indispensable ally and supporter of the RUF and Jackson was an old friend of his"

American officials in Quito and Washington unleashed a blitz of threats against Ecuadorian government and military officials. And that was the end of the Ecuadorian revolution.[10]

Sudan: The US deliberately bombed and destroyed a pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum in 1998 in the stated belief that it was a plant for making chemical weapons for terrorists. In actuality, the plant produced about 90 percent of the drugs used to treat the most deadly illnesses in that desperately poor country; it was reportedly one of the biggest and best of its kind in Africa. And had no connection to chemical weapons.[11]

Sierra Leone: In 1998, Clinton sent Jesse Jackson as his special envoy to Liberia and Sierra Leone, the latter being in the midst of one of the great horrors of the 20th century – an army of mostly young boys, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), going around raping and chopping off people's arms and legs. African and world opinion was enraged against the RUF, which was committed to protecting the diamond mines they controlled. Liberian president Charles Taylor was an indispensable ally and supporter of the RUF and Jackson was an old friend of his. Jesse was not sent to the region to try to curtail the RUF's atrocities, nor to hound Taylor about his widespread human rights violations, but instead, in June 1999, Jackson and other American officials drafted entire sections of an accord that made RUF leader, Foday Sankoh, the vice president of Sierra Leone, and gave him official control over the diamond mines, the country's major source of wealth.[12]

Iraq: Eight more years of the economic sanctions which Clinton's National Security Advisor, Sandy Berger, called "the most pervasive sanctions every imposed on a nation in the history of mankind",[13] absolutely devastating every aspect of the lives of the Iraqi people, particularly their health; truly a weapon of mass destruction.

Cuba: Eight more years of economic sanctions, political hostility, and giving haven to anti-Castro terrorists in Florida. In 1999, Cuba filed a suit against the United States for $181.1 billion in compensation for economic losses and loss of life during the first forty years of this aggression. The suit holds Washington responsible for the death of 3,478 Cubans and the wounding and disabling of 2,099 others.

Only the imperialist powers have the ability to enforce sanctions and are therefore always exempt from them.

As to Clinton's domestic policies, keep in mind those two beauties: The "Effective death penalty Act" and the "Welfare Reform Act". And let's not forget the massacre at Waco, Texas.

Three billion years from amoebas to Homeland Security

"The Department of Homeland Security would like to remind passengers that you may not take any liquids onto the plane. This includes ice cream, as the ice cream will melt and turn into a liquid."

This was actually heard by one of my readers at the Atlanta Airport recently; he laughed out loud. He informs me that he didn't know what was more bizarre, that such an announcement was made or that he was the only person that he could see who reacted to its

absurdity.[14] This is the way it is with societies of people.

As with the proverbial frog who submits to being boiled to death in a pot of water if the water is heated very gradually, people submit to one heightened absurdity and indignation after another if they're subjected to them at a gradual enough rate. That's one of the most common threads one finds in the personal stories of Germans living in the Third Reich. This airport story is actually an example of an absurdity within an absurdity. Since the "bomb made from liquids and gels" story was foisted upon the public, several chemists and other experts have pointed out the technical near-impossibility of manufacturing such a bomb in a moving airplane, if for no other reason than the necessity of spending at least an hour or two in the airplane bathroom. **CT**

NOTES

[1] Time European edition online: http://www.time.com/time/europe/gdml/peace2003.html
[2] Washington Post, June 4, 2005
[3] Associated Press, October 3, 2006
[4] William Blum, Killing Hop: US Military & CIA Interventions Since World War II (2004), chapter 5
[5] Nicaragua Network (Washington, DC), October 29, 2001 – www.nicanet.org/pubs/hotline1029_2001.html and New York Times, November 4, 2001, p.3
[6] Miami Herald, October 29, 2001
[7] The remainder of the section on Nicaragua is derived primarily from The Independent (London), September 6, 2006, and "2006 Nicaraguan Elections and the US Government Role. Report of the Nicaragua Network delegation to investigate US intervention in the Nicaraguan elections of November 2006" – www.nicanet.org/pdf/Delegation%20Report.pdf
See also: "List of interventions by the United States government in Nicaragua's democratic process." – www.nicanet.org/list_of_interventionist_statments.php
[8] Michael Parenti, "To Kill a Nation: The Attack on Yugoslavia" (2000)
Diana Johnstone, "Fool's Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO and Western Delusions" (2002)
William Blum, "Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower" (2005), see "Yugoslavia" in index.
[9] Rogue State, pp. 204-5
[10] Ibid., pp. 212-3
[11] William Blum, "Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire", chapter 7
[12] Ryan Lizza, "Where angels fear to tread", New Republic, July 24, 2000
[13] White House press briefing, November 14, 1997, US Newswire transcript
[14] Story related to me by Jack Muir

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

"As with the proverbial frog who submits to being boiled to death in a pot of water if the water is heated very gradually, people submit to one heightened absurdity and indignation after another if they're subjected to them at a gradual enough rate"

Almost overnight, says **Rian Malan,** *South Africans have come to the dismaying realisation that many things in their country are rotten, including local government on the verge of collapse, a murderous succession dispute in the ruling ANC, corruption and a spiralling crime rate*

SOUTH AFRICA'S CIVIL DECAY

"Nine months ago South Africa seemed to be muddling through in a happy-go-lucky fashion. The economy was growing, albeit slowly. Trains ran, if not exactly on time. If you called the police, they eventually came"

When the winter rains closed in on Cape Town I thought, bugger this, I'm selling up and moving somewhere sunny. To this end, I asked the char, Mrs Primrose Gwayana, to come in and help spruce up the house. We were scrubbing and painting and what have you when Primrose's broom bumped the dining table, and crack – a leg snapped off, its innards hollowed out by wood-borers. I thought, uh-oh, here's an omen. Something awful is going to happen. And it has.

Nine months ago South Africa seemed to be muddling through in a happy-go-lucky fashion. The economy was growing, albeit slowly. Trains ran, if not exactly on time. If you called the police, they eventually came. We thought our table was fairly solid, and that we would sit at it indefinitely, quaffing that old Rainbow Nation ambrosia. Now, almost overnight, we have come to the dismaying realisation that much around us is rotten. Nearly half our provinces and municipalities are said to be on the verge of collapse. A murderous succession dispute has broken out in the ruling African National Congress. Our Auditor-General reportedly has sleepless nights on account of the billions that cannot be properly accounted for. Whites have been moaning about such things for years, but you know you're in serious trouble when President Thabo Mbeki admits the 'naked truth' that his government has been infiltrated by chancers seeking to 'plunder the people's resources'.

I knew in my bones that it would come to this, but somewhere along the line I got tired of stinking up my surroundings with predictions of doom, so I shut up and went with the flow. Ergo, I cannot say I told you so. But I have a pretty good idea why things went wrong, and it all began with 'transformation', a euphemism for ridding the Civil Service of whites, especially white males. Under apartheid, those chaps ran everything. Clearly this had to change, but white males carried the institutional memory in their brains, and

the blacks who replaced them tended to flounder. This led to what we call 'capacity problems', a euphemism for blacks who couldn't or wouldn't carry out the jobs for which they were paid. Capacity problems in turn led to crises in electricity supply, refuse removal, road maintenance, healthcare, law enforcement and so on. Again, white malcontents have complained about such things for years, but you know you're in trouble when an eminent black journalist like Justice Malala dismisses the Mbeki administration as an 'outrage', characterised by 'a shocking lack of leadership' on the part of a Cabinet riddled with 'incompetent, inept and arrogant' buffoons.

In short, we're in crisis. Everyone acknowledges it, but somehow we never see firm corrective action. Previously we were told it was awkward for a black liberation movement to purge black appointees, even if they were useless. This year a new excuse emerged.

Back in April, around the time of the ominous table-leg incident, the actress Janet Suzman and I dined with a bossy American woman who bit my head off when I opined that our recently deposed deputy president, Jacob Zuma, would one day step into Nelson Mandela's shoes. For a foreign feminist, it was unthinkable that a man with four years of schooling and rape and corruption charges pending should become president of anything. My explanations to the contrary were dismissed as racist rubbish, but let me air them anyway.

Zuma is a Zulu, and when he became a target for criminal investigation, many fellow tribesmen suspected he was being stitched up by President Mbeki, who was reputedly keen to eliminate him as a potential successor. Conspiracists noted that Mbeki was a Xhosa, and that various members of what we call the 'Xhosa nostra' had become billionaires as a result of their political connections, whereas Zuma's allegedly improper payments were limited to a trifling £100,000. They found it even more fishy that the sad and desperate young woman who invited herself to spend a night in Zuma's home, only to accuse him of rape in the aftermath, was acquainted with the minister of intelligence Ronnie Kasrils, a KGB-trained master of the dark arts of espionage, presumably including honey traps.

Zulus are a warlike bunch, as we know, and the Zuma affair got their blood up. Thousands turned out to cheer their homeboy at his rape trial, and to denounce his accuser as a harlot bribed to bear false witness. Zuma's acquittal sparked riotous celebrations, and when his corruption trial started last month the crowds were even larger. '100%

Zulu Boy' T-shirts were still evident, but now there were red flags too, because radicals had started rallying to the Zuma cause. First to join were the young lions of the ANC Youth League. They were followed by the Young Communists, then by large sectors of the trade union movement and the Communist party proper. All that remained was for Winnie Mandela to take sides, and lo: when the judge dismissed Zuma's corruption charges in late September, she materialised among the jubilant masses, praising the

"Zulus are a warlike bunch, as we know, and the Zuma affair got their blood up. Thousands turned out to cheer their homeboy at his rape trial, and to denounce his accuser as a harlot bribed to bear false witness"

"Uniformed warders swarmed out of the gates, and the gathering turned into a revolutionary song-and-dance extravaganza in honour of Tony Yengeni, a popular ex-MP about to start serving four years for fraud"

Lord for answering her prayers.

These developments confounded naive left-liberals, who had repeatedly assured us that Zuma was politically dead. Feminists recalled the dalliance with Ms Lewinsky that almost destroyed Bill Clinton. Aids activists were scandalised by Zuma's failure to use a condom during the rape-case escapade, even though the woman involved was HIV-infected. Moralists contended that even though criminal charges had proved unsustainable, there were enough facts on the table to show that Zuma was sorely lacking in probity. For such people, it was unhinging to see Zuma become the leading contender for South Africa's presidency, greeted at every turn by adoring supporters who informed reporters that the Ten Commandments were an alien invention that didn't apply to African males. Their campaign song was even more unnerving: 'Bring me my machine gun.' A Serbian journalist living here took one look at this and wrote a piece headlined, 'Time to Panic'.

Hmm. My friend Steve, a capitalist who golfs with the black elite, says this is nonsense. 'Zuma is charming,' he says. 'If he actually gets the job, things will settle down and it'll be business as usual.' Maybe so, but the next general election is three years away, and meanwhile government is incapable of acting against the borers in our woodwork.

Let's look at law enforcement, one smallish aspect of the growing problem. After years of slow decline, crime surged earlier this year, with insurance companies reporting a 20 per cent rise in claims. Some blamed a strike by security guards, who took to looting shops they had previously guarded and throwing scabs off trains. Others pointed the finger at feral refugees from Zimbabwe. 'Capacity problems' in the police were certainly a factor, too. In the middle of all this, a convoy of expensive cars carrying senior ANC dignitaries rolled up at a prison outside Cape Town. Uniformed warders swarmed out of the gates, and the gathering turned into a revolutionary song-and-dance extravaganza in honour of Tony Yengeni, a popular ex-MP about to start serving four years for fraud.

Is this not bizarre? A politician accepts a discounted Mercedes from an arms contractor, lies about it, gets nailed – and several of the ruling party's most prominent leaders hail him as a hero, a staggering insult to their own criminal justice apparatus. In her eagerness to charm the rabble, National Assembly Speaker Baleka Mbete went so far as to claim that Yengeni had never committed fraud, even though he pleaded guilty to same. The main opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), termed her behaviour 'disgraceful', but there was no retribution.

Why? Because a crackdown by Mbeki might cause figures like Mbete to defect to Zuma, who is not particularly punctilious about whom he accepts as allies. Don Mkhwanazi, for instance, got into hot water after hiring a 'well-known crook' to assist him in his duties as boss of the Central Energy Fund. Mkhwanazi claimed racists were defaming him, but fell silent when it emerged that his bent chum (who earned £300,000 a year) was chan-

nelling money into a bank account that paid Mkhwanazi's mortgage in a posh Jo'burg suburb. Mkhwanazi resigned in disgrace. Today he is a trustee of Zuma's unofficial election campaign.

My pal Steve says one shouldn't take such things too seriously, noting that respectable people have also cast their lot with Zuma. Maybe so, but Zuma's core supporters are scary. The other day they put on a spectacular display at a conclave of Cosatu, South Africa's mighty Congress of Trade Unions. Whenever an incumbent cabinet member appeared, delegates rose to their feet, waving red flags and chanting, 'Tell us, what has Zuma done?' One minister was jeered off the podium. The deputy state president was 'humiliated and degraded' by hecklers, who went on to sing, 'It is better for us to take over this country, we will go with the Communists.' President Mbeki wisely kept his distance, but they had a song for him too: 'We will kill this big ugly dog for Zuma.'

Alas, poor Thabo. I'm no great fan of our remote and autocratic president, but the charges emanating from the red brigade – 'betraying the poor' and 'tolerating inequality' – are asinine. A former communist, Mbeki saw the light in the late 1980s and cajoled his comrades into a historic compromise with capitalism. His saturnine manipulation of business and labour led to a massively increased tax harvest, which in turn financed the creation of a welfare state, with 11 million poor now receiving subsistence grants of one sort or another. This is amazing. A welfare state in Africa!

Unfortunately, such goodies are the fruits of gradualism, and I can't see us staying the course. Jacob Zuma wants the big job, so he promised to resurrect the ANC's revolutionary tradition, whereupon the movement's most dedicated activists immediately rallied to his standard. As I see it, the only way for Mbeki loyalists to block Zuma is by promising even more loot to the masses, and once they do that, Zuma will surely move even further leftward. Nobody (save DA leader Tony Leon, who is white and therefore irrelevant) is going to stand up and say, 'Sorry, folks, this isn't the answer, we have to work harder, exercise self-discipline and bring white technocrats back into government so as to make things work again.'

And besides, if by some miracle Mr Leon started swaying the electorate, would our rulers put up with it? The ANC dominates almost everything else, but it has never won an election here in Cape Town. This enrages the city's black power faction, which has prevailed upon the ANC to oust DA Mayor Helen Zille and impose a multiparty government. The stated reason for this initiative, launched two weeks ago, is that Zille's coalition is weak and unstable. Maybe so, but we all know it's really a power grab, inspired at least in part by fears that Africa's last white- and Creole-controlled city will continue to prosper while all else hurtles into a black hole of dysfunctionality. What can we do? Some in the ruling party have a peculiar view of democracy. They see it as a system designed to put themselves in power. If voters fail to understand this, their mistakes must be corrected by fiat.

"His saturnine manipulation of business and labour led to a massively increased tax harvest, which in turn financed the creation of a welfare state, with 11 million poor now receiving subsistence grants of one sort or another. This is amazing. A welfare state in Africa"

No, there won't be civil war. Whites are finished. According to a recent study, one in six of us has left since the ANC took over, and those who remain know their place. For apartheid-era law and order minister Adriaan Vlok, this turned out to be on his knees, washing the feet of those he sinned against during the struggle. Truly! He carried a briefcase and a basin into various government buildings and performed acts of abject contrition in public. No doubt Mr Vlok's bones were warning him to repent before the end came.

Ah well. Let's look on the bright side. Osama bin Laden has no beef with us, we are not sinking into a Mesopotamian quagmire and the weather is wonderful in summer. Anyone want a house here? **CT**

South African author Rian Malan is the author of the best-selling book, My Traitor's Heart. His e-book, In The Jungle, is available free at http://www.coldtype.net/archives.html

"A free press, run commercially, has to set a firewall between the journalistic writing and the advertising that pays the bills . . ." Well, that's what London's Independent newspaper says, but the reality is different, says **David Cromwell,** *as he tries to discover why the firewalls don't seem to be working*

THE FICTITIOUS FIREWALL

In its latest annual report on media performance, US-based watchdog Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) noted that: "Most people are aware that news media rely on corporate advertising dollars – though the fact is rarely discussed, and when it is, editors and producers will generally insist that there's no connection between the companies that buy ads and the content of the news." ('Fear and Favor – FAIR's Sixth Annual Report,' Extra!, March/April 2006; www.fair.org/index.php? page= 2848)

Thus, here in Britain, Guy Keleny of The Independent claims: "A free press, run commercially, has to set a firewall between the journalistic writing and the advertising that pays the bills. [...] The journalists do not allow their reporting to be muffled by the interests of advertisers, and the advertisers are free to say what they like in the space they have bought (subject to the law and industry codes) without regard to the newspaper's editorial opinions." (Guy Keleny, 'Errors & Omissions,' The Independent, October 7, 2006)

We wrote to Keleny on October 9, suggesting that the picture he painted of a firewall between reporting and advertising did not pertain to reality: "For example, are you aware that last year BP and Morgan Stanley both issued directives demanding that their ads be pulled from any edition of a publication that included potentially 'objectionable' content? BP went so far as to demand advance notice of any stories that mention the company, a competitor of the company or the oil and energy industry in general. [FAIR, op.cit.]"

We pointed out that such agreements are not exceptional. We also quoted FAIR: "While these demands may seem like an egregious intervention into the editorial process, the truth is, as one anonymous editor told [trade journal] Advertising Age (May 16, 2005), there's 'a fairly lengthy list of companies that have instructions like this.'"

We noted that in his 'Errors & Omissions' column Keleny had omitted to mention that the British quality press,

"A free press, run commercially, has to set a firewall between the journalistic writing and the advertising that pays the bills"

"Ever worked on a magazine launch? The first and only real questions are: who will advertise in [the] product? Will it be read by people whom advertisers want to reach?

including the Independent, is dependent upon advertising for around 75 per cent of its revenue. It would be irrational to claim that this has no impact on shaping the content of his newspaper. As Keleny's former editor Andrew Marr has written of his profession: "The biggest question is whether advertising limits and reshapes the news agenda. It does, of course. It's hard to make the sums add up when you are kicking the people who write the cheques." (Marr, 'My Trade,' Macmillan, 2004, p.112)

This structural compromise is well-understood throughout the mainstream. In April 2004, Nick Taylor, editor of the Guardian's Spark magazine, told us candidly: "Ever worked on a magazine launch? The first and only real questions are: who will advertise in [the] product? Will it be read by people whom advertisers want to reach?

"Readers/viewers/listeners are the most important thing to any publisher or broadcaster. But, from an economic point of view, [this is] primarily because high numbers of readers means high ad revenue. And media survive only through ads. I and all writers/editors/broadcasters would love it to be different but there is no option – the basic cost of producing the Guardian every day is (of course) more than the cover price."

We ended our email to Keleny by saying that we "hope that you are willing and able to respond to the above points, please. These are vital issues, are they not?"

The following day, Keleny responded as follows: "I didn't know that about BP and Morgan Stanley. But threats by advertisers to boycott publications that print things they don't like are nothing new. Every local weekly newspaper gets them from time to time. The question is whether or not the editor gives in to them. I imagine some do and some don't." (Email from Guy Keleny to David Cromwell, October 10, 2006)

This is the sound of a firewall sputtering! Recall Keleny's bold as brass comment in his article: "The journalists do not allow their reporting to be muffled by the interests of advertisers."

Spin cycle – the rotating greenwash

FAIR's annual report pointed out that as well as subverting potentially damaging news reports, powerful advertisers also like to ensure that they are associated with positive spin. Thus, the October 31, 2005 issue of Time magazine featured a section titled "The Future of Energy". This focused on attempts to find alternatives to oil and to make oil production more efficient. FAIR summarised the piece: "Throughout the feature were full-page ads for BP, with taglines like 'investing in our energy future,' explaining how the company is pursuing alternatives to oil. BP is also mentioned by a source in Time's feature article as one of the more innovative energy companies. That, presumably, was free." (FAIR, op. cit.)

Many Media Lens readers will be aware that BP advertising regularly appears in the Independent, with full-page ads in the print edition as well as BP 'Target neutral' ads on frequent rotation in the online edition (as they are on the Guardian's website). Such rotating ads are essentially tools of green-

washing spin, presenting a false image of a huge oil corporation working tirelessly to turn away from fossil fuels towards a greener future based on clean and renewable energy.

It is no surprise that BP is spending big money to reach audiences provided by The Independent and The Guardian – relatively influential and affluent readers with (often) left-liberal-green leanings. By launching a pre-emptive strike on people who might be sceptical of fossil fuel giants, BP aims to get them "on side".

The implicit message is: "We're like you – we're concerned about the environment and about climate change. We're doing something about it by going green – by going 'beyond petroleum'. We're all part of the same movement".

Would senior Independent editorial staff, we wondered, be willing to debate such important matters?

Knowing that the paper's editor, Simon Kelner, famously never replies to readers, we instead emailed his deputy, Ian Birrell: "Good to see The Independent's front-page story today (Michael McCarthy, 'The century of drought,' The Independent', October 4, 2006) – although the online article is surrounded by BP ads, ironically.

"Why does your newspaper group continue to take advertising revenue from BP, a corporation that:

"(a) causes untold damage to climate stability; and

"(b) attempts to cover its tracks by using full-page ads in The Independent boosting its supposed green credentials?

"As the Oxford-based group Corporate Watch points out: 'BP's strategy of appropriating the language of environmentalists and positioning itself as a socially responsible company on the issue of climate change by buying up a solar company (for a fraction of the amount it spends on oil acquisitions) is a clear example of a company attempting to take intellectual leadership of an issue where it finds itself criticised, and has been well documented elsewhere." (Corporate Watch, 'What's Wrong with Corporate Social Responsibility?,' p.5, 2006; http://www.corporatewatch. org/?lid=2670)

"As a longstanding reader of the Independent, I hope you will feel able to respond to this email please." (Email to Ian Birrell from David Cromwell, October 4, 2006)

Despite a gentle nudge by follow-up email, Birrell has maintained a stoic silence. Emails to Imogen Haddon, managing editor of The Independent and Independent on Sunday, as well as Charlie Burgess, her recent predecessor who is now a media consultant, similarly went unanswered.

Meanwhile, lucrative corporate ads continue to spin in the news media, totally segregated – so we are told – from the steely gaze and independent investigations of the corporate-employed news reporter. **CT**

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"Such rotating ads are essentially tools of greenwashing spin, presenting a false image of a huge oil corporation working tirelessly to turn away from fossil fuels towards a greener future based on clean and renewable energy"

North Korea is simply the latest failure highlighting a foreign policy hobbled by ideological flights of fancy and a remarkable inability to recognize the limits of U.S. power to remake distasteful realities, says Tony Karon, who lists ten flaws in the Bush Adminstration's handling of foreign affairs

WHY BUSH 'LOST' KOREA

"Let's just say the world looks at Bolton and sees an infantile provocateur who has about as much to offer international diplomacy as does Bill O'Reilly

Get me my megaphone… The furor over North Korea's bomb test, if that's what it was, has highlighted the extent to which the Bush Administration has squandered Washington's traditional global leadership role. Sure, the international community is united in condemning Pyongyang's nuclear test – the world never applauds the emergence of a new nuclear-weapons power. But much of the international community actually holds the Bush Administration partly responsible for this development because of its refusal to engage seriously with the regime in Pyongyang, which gave it neither sufficient incentive to refrain from testing nor disincentive for doing so. The Bush policy had simply created yet another vacuum, to be filled by its enemies. And when Condoleezza Rice, asks the world to believe that the reason the U.S. can't talk directly to Pyongyang because it lacks the strength, alone, to force North Korea to keep its promises, the world simply rolls its eyes and wonders when the U.S. is going to get serious.

But another indication of just how seriously the Administration regards the diplomacy of convincing others to follow the U.S. lead is the identity of its UN ambassador – John Bolton. Bolton, whose answer when asked a couple of years ago what lesson Iran and North Korea should take from the U.S. invasion of Iraq, answered "Take a number." But there are too many instances of Bolton's demagogic bluster to document. Let's just say the world looks at Bolton and sees an infantile provocateur who has about as much to offer international diplomacy as does Bill O'Reilly.

But it's not Bolton's John Wayne schtick that makes the Security Council push back against the U.S. in order to ensure that the sanctions that are adopted will be largely symbolic, and will facilitate rather than hinder a resumption of negotiations with Pyongyang. It's simply that the U.S. is unable to lead because it offers no plausible endgame. Resuming talks

aimed at a denuclearization deal is the only sane endgame, so the others on the Security Council will ensure that its condemnation and punishment of North Korea works towards that goal.

North Korea is simply the latest failure highlighting a foreign policy hobbled by ideological flights of fancy and a remarkable inability to recognize the limits of U.S. power to remake distasteful realities. When the paintball revolutionary who penned Bush's "Axis of Evil" speech popped up with a prescription for the Korea crisis that included forcing South Korea to starve North Korea, encouraging Japan to build nuclear weapons, and inviting Taiwan to NATO meetings in order to "punish" China, what became abundantly clear was that the Administration has suffered all along from an absence of adult supervision.

Colin Powell was always treated like the hired help by the berserk brats he was supposed to be minding. And it was on North Korea that this first became apparent. Powell had been on the job scarcely three weeks when he told reporters that the new administration would be pursuing the engagement strategy of the Clinton team, and was publicly rebuked by Bush, who also made clear his disdain for South Korea's 'Sunshine' policy of engaging the North. The Cheney crowd was having none of it, and appeared to have persuaded Bush that by sheer force of its "moral clarity," the U.S. could smite those deemed "evil" from its path. Regime-change, not engagement that propped up Kim Jong-il was what they wanted, and this clearly appealed to a president who made no secret of his loathing of Kim. Of course, "regime-change" was a non-starter in the real world, not only because the U.S. couldn't make it happen without at least a million Koreans being killed, but also because it was flatly rejected by South Korea – whose protection was ostensibly the purpose of the U.S. presence on the peninsula. (For four decades, South Korea had been a military dictatorship ready to do Washington's bidding; when it finally became a democracy in the early 90s it began adopting positions increasingly at odds with those of the U.S.)

Nobody had any interest in "regime-change," but the "moral clarity" imperative allowed the hawks to reject any real engagement with North Korea. The result was a hybrid policy that went nowhere, eventually forcing the U.S. to accept the six-party process but never doing what it was going to take – as China and South Korea repeatedly implored – to make it work: direct U.S.-North Korea talks, and security guarantees offered to Pyongyang from the only power it truly feared. That's why there's so much pressure on the U.S. after North Korea's announcement to retract its policy of no direct talks. That'll happen eventually, of course (either on this administration's watch or the next). And Powell may permit himself a wry smile.

There are general lessons in all of this, of course. Here, a random ten flaws it exposes in the Administration's handling of foreign affairs:

1. Megaphone diplomacy

To be fair to Bush, this began with Madeleine Albright marching around

"Colin Powell was always treated like the hired help by the berserk brats he was supposed to be minding. And it was on North Korea that this first became apparent"

"The reason the Bush Administration has hit a wall time and again at the UN Security Council (Iraq, Iran, and now North Korea) precisely because it only hears that part of what others are saying that affirms the U.S. position"

the world on behalf of Bill Clinton and "the indispensable nation" and simply reading everyone else the riot act. Then again, Bush did promise a "humble foreign policy" on his way to the presidency in 2000, and produced anything but. So now, it's Condi Rice traveling around the world touting"transformational diplomacy," spreading "creative chaos" in order to change the world, lecturing all and sundry as she went on the error of their ways. Naturally, this approach does little to sway neutrals, or even allies. The essence of diplomacy is conversation: The Bush Administration's failure to grasp this is evident in one of Bush's arguments against talking directly to North Korea – "They know our position."

2 Selective hearing

Obviously, the megaphone approach doesn't lend itself to listening to others. And the basis of diplomacy is listening to others and taking account of their concerns as you push your own agenda – you win the game by articulating your positions in a way that accommodates and addresses the concerns and interests of those you're facing across the table. That, for example, is exactly what China is doing when it tells the U.S. that Pyongyang has crossed a line and must be punished, but at the same time emphasizes that the punishment must be "appropriate and prudent" and must advance the goal of a negotiated settlement. The reason the Bush Administration has hit a wall time and again at the UN Security Council (Iraq, Iran, and now North Korea) precisely because it only hears that part of what others are saying that affirms the U.S. position. It hears that nobody wants Iran to develop nuclear weapons, or that everyone condemns North Korea's test, and appears to then deduce that this means others support the U.S. position. But then, when it comes down to action, it discovers that the U.S. position lacks the support to prevail. (I've been hearing State Department officials predicting for over a year now that Iran is weeks away from facing sanctions backed by Russia and China… When that doesn't happen, they say they're going slowly to "keep Russia and China on board" – as if they're actually driving a process that has Russia and China "on board.") If they'd listen properly to what others are saying they'd hear a critique of their own simplistic policies, which others are not prepared to endorse. More often, others are addressing U.S. concerns while articulating what they see as a more prudent and pragmatic way of addressing them.

3. Don't bring it unless you can win it

Kofi Annan has warned the Administration repeatedly that bringing matters to the Security Council without a consensus among the Permanent Five members is a recipe for disaster. Yet the U.S. keeps on doing it, with the result that its authority has been continuously denuded. It started over Iraq: It would once have been unthinkable for the likes of Mexico and Chile to resist a U.S. geopolitical initiative that didn't adversely affect their own interests – to say no to the U.S. simply because they thought it was wrong. Yet so bizarre was the U.S. request for authorization for war in February of 2003

that they did, in fact, say no. And not only were they not punished for it, they were actually vindicated. (What better testimony to Condi Rice's giddy detachment from reality than her suggestion that the U.S. would "forgive Russia, ignore Germany, punish France", all for having been proved right about Iraq.) The more serious point here, of course, was that Iraq was the beginning of a new era in which others didn't have to take what the U.S. said at the UN that seriously. Other countries could say no to the U.S. and suffer no consequences.

4. Don't write checks you can't cash

Or else what? That's how North Korea has responded to every red line drawn by the U.S. so far, and Iran is starting to do the same. The U.S. "won't tolerate" North Korea testing a nuclear weapon. And then it does. And so the U.S. has to move its red line of intolerability to the insistence that North Korea refrain from sharing its nuclear weapons with others. The U.S. sets Iran deadlines for compliance with the demand to end uranium enrichment, and Iran simply ignores those and answers in its own time. If the U.S. is unable to really to act to reverse those transgressions of red lines, it's better not to have drawn them in the first place. It's a simple case of recognizing what the U.S. is able to do by the use of force, and not issuing empty threats which only further undermine its credibility.

5. In whose interest?

Perhaps blinded by its own sense of moral authority or raw power, the Bush Administration has often failed to ask the most basic question of international cooperation: Are there mutual interests that can create agreement for united action among disparate parties. I once heard the idea attributed to John Foster Dulles (not sure that he actually said it) that "America doesn't have friends; America only has interests." The same is true for everyone else, too. So, take an issue like getting Chinese support for sanctions or related forms of pressure against Iran: The Bush Administration has operated on the assumption that if the U.S. asks hard and often enough, China will be somehow shamed or cajoled into going along with the crowd. I've seen countless instances of Administration officials telling journalists exactly that. And it's ludicrous. Among China's vital national interests, now, is access to expanded supplies of oil and natural gas, and to that end it has committed some $70 billion to investment in extracting Iran's energy resources. Comprehensive sanctions, therefore, let alone regime-change (which the Chinese would correctly suspect may be the real U.S. motive) runs absolutely counter to China's vital national interests. Frankly, even a nuclear-armed Iran is less threatening to Beijing's interests than sanctions or regime change. So, on what basis is the Bush Administration demanding Chinese support? What's in it for Beijing? I've never heard a coherent interests-based argument about why China should support U.S. policy on Iran — or even a sense that the U.S. has offered concessions to Chinese interests on some other front, say Taiwan, in order to win their support on Iran.

"If the U.S. is unable to really to act to reverse those transgressions of red lines, it's better not to have drawn them in the first place"

"The idea that the defining issue of our time is the terrorism of al-Qaeda and the like is laughable to most of the world"

It's hardly surprising, therefore, that Beijing doesn't support U.S. policy on Iran. And it's all very well for the U.S. to demand a hard line on North Korea, but the affect of its implementation on South Korea or China make clear why it is not in their interest. (The prime Chinese interest in North Korea is stability, and perhaps also avoiding a situation where the U.S. expands its presence on China's doorstep.)

A corollary to the point about interests is the question of priority: The priorities of the Bush administration are not those of the entire global community, and to the extent that Washington has failed to recognize this, U.S. leadership has declined. The idea that the defining issue of our time is the terrorism of al-Qaeda and the like is laughable to most of the world – from a strategic point of view, John Kerry was right: Terrorism is a nuisance issue, a matter of law and order. The fact that it's been all the Bush administration wants to talk about in global forums for years is why, for example in APEC, China is now the dominant player. (Bush comes to APEC to talk about terrorism, which for most of the Asian countries is a peripheral concern, at best – Beijing comes all to talk business, in the way that Bill Clinton used to do.)

6. 'Moral clarity' and talking to the enemy

The Bush Administration won't talk to Iran, North Korea, Syria, Hamas, Hezbollah, the Muslim Brotherhood…. To talk to them, say the hawks, would legitimize them. That's just plain dumb. None of these political entities is dependent on U.S. recognition for their political status. The legitimacy of Hamas and Hizballah, for example, is established at the ballot box and on the ground through popular actions. Denying them contact with the U.S. hardly weakens the regimes in Tehran, Pyongyang or Damascus, it simply weakens the U.S. ability to anticipate, manage and resolve dangerous conflicts. What I find particularly ironic about this position is that it's adopted in the name of a Reaganesque "Moral Clarity." Sure, Reagan had the "moral clarity" to denounce the Soviet Union as "Evil," but he still pursued the most extensive engagement with its leaders of any U.S. President. The reason James Baker is out publicly telling everyone why it pays to talk to "the enemy" is simply this: Bush Junior, having finally started to panic over the mess he's made of Iraq, has called in the grownups to clean up – and cleaning up will involve some very generous talking to Iran and Syria, among others…

7. The fact that interests sometimes coincide doesn't mean they always coincide

The corollary to the point above is that while two countries can have a common interests on a single issue, they may have sharp differences on another issue. And if the second issue is more important to the country concerned than it is to the U.S., then the mutual interest on the first point won't be enough to secure an active alliance. Condi Rice's recent 'Look Busy' tour of the Middle East is a perfect example: Having recognized that the moderate

pro-U.S. Arab regimes were antagonized by Hizballah's summer provocation of Israel and that they saw it as a sign of hostile Iranian meddling on their turf, the Administration went out to rally support for a U.S.-Israel-Arab moderate united front against Iran and Hamas — knowing, also, that Islamist groups are threatening to the Arab moderates. But for those regimes, the Israel-Palestinian conflict is a far more immediate crisis and concern, because it generates the hostility towards the U.S. and regimes that do its bidding that Hizballah and other radicals can exploit. So, those regimes want the U.S. as a matter of extreme urgency to move to restart the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and create a fair solution based on the 1967 borders. And that is something the U.S. refuses to do, with the result that the Arab moderates showed no interest in jumping on the anti-Iran, anti-Hamas bandwagon, and Rice's trip became another flop.

8. Between diplomacy and surrender…

When President Bush talks about diplomacy, he doesn't mean the sort of give-and-take discussion typically associated with the word. He usually means a kind of foreplay to the main event, a process that must "exhaust itself" in order to persuade others to join a posse for more punitive action. So, it means talking to friends and potential allies about measures that can be adopted to force the other side to submit to the demands and ultimatums of the U.S. and its allies. Diplomacy on Iran for Bush means the Europeans giving Iran a take it or leave it ultimatum, and then talking to the Europeans about what sanctions to put in place. And, of course, North Korea "knows our position." So it's not just megaphone diplomacy, what's being said into the megaphone is "come out with your hands up." Unless the adversary has or believes he will be defeated by U.S. military power, it doesn't work.

9. The diminishing returns of force

Madeleine Albright once asked what the point of America having such a great army was if it wasn't willing to use it. The answer, of course, is that it may well be more useful unused than used. Having deployed American force in Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. has created not one but two situations in which it has failed to prevail by force. And the lesson is not lost on America's adversaries. Moreover, the fact that those two conflicts remain unresolved and a heavy strain on American military and financial resources further emboldens enemies. The Iranians, for example, now know that even if the U.S. bombed it, it is unable to seriously entertain the possibility of a land war — and Iran can exact a heavy price even for air attacks because of the exposed U.S. flank in Iraq.

10. You only run this town if people think you run this town

Speaks for itself, really, that line from "Miller's Crossing." In the early days of the Bush Administration, "multipolarity" — the notion of a world made up of various power centers combining variously to secure their interests in a variety of different formations and cre-

"The Iranians, for example, now know that even if the U.S. bombed it, it is unable to seriously entertain the possibility of a land war"

"Foreigners listening to Bush define what's going on in Iraq as a war between democracy and "Islamofascism" can't possibly take him seriously"

ating a fabric of stability was the wishful thinking of French foreign policy thinktanks. After all, there was only one "Hyperpower," as Villepin put it.

Yet six years into the Bush Administration, multipolarity has become a reality. Iraq has left U.S. power stained and no longer intimidating to regional foes; U.S. failure to impose its will in the disastrous war of choice there has brought a precipitous decline in its diplomatic influence.

Foreigners listening to Bush define what's going on in Iraq as a war between democracy and "Islamofascism" can't possibly take him seriously. North Korea's nuclear test, and the way the UN will respond, are both symptoms of the decline in the perception of U.S. power, and of Washington's ability to provide global leadership that others will benefit from following. Everybody knows, now, that the "hyperpower" is on the skids.

It's still by far the most powerful entity on the planet, but its power is not nearly absolute as Villepin and others once feared. The Administration still acts as if it runs the planet, but everything from the antics of Hugo Chavez to the defiance of North Korea and Iran, and the quiet but firm push-back from China, Russia and the Europeans on a number of diplomatic fronts suggest that, unfortunately for Bush, the secret is out. **CT**

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I WANT TO HURT SOMEBODY

It was pure war-nography. The front page of the New York Times today splashed a four-column-wide close-up of a blood-covered bullet in the blood-soaked hands of an army medic who'd retrieved it from the brain of Lance Cpl. Colin Smith.

There was a 40 column-inch profile of the medic. There were photos of the platoon, guns over shoulders, praying for the fallen buddy. The Times is careful not to ruin the heroic mood, so there is no photograph of pieces of corporal Smith's shattered head. Instead, there's an old, smiling photo of the wounded soldier.

The reporter, undoubtedly wearing the Kevlar armor of the troop in which he's "embedded," quotes at length the thoughts of the military medic: "I would like to say that I am a good man. But seeing this now, what happened to Smith, I want to hurt people. You know what I mean?"

The reporter does not bother – or dare – to record a single word from any Iraqi in the town of Karma where Smith's platoon was, "performing a hard hit on a house."

I don't know what a "hard hit" is. But I don't think I'd want one "performed" on my home. Maybe Iraqis feel the way I do.

We won't know. The only Iraqi noted by the reporter was, "a woman [who] walked calmly between the sniper and the marines."

The Times reporter informs us that Lance Cpl. Smith, "said a prayer today," before he charged into the village. We're told that Smith had, "the cutest little blond girlfriend" and "his dad was his hero." Did the calm woman also say her prayers today? Is her dad her hero, too? We don't know. No one asks.

The reporter and his photographer did visit a home in the neighborhood – but only after the "hit" force kicked in the door. I suppose that's an improvement over the typical level of reporting we get. In dispatches home by the few US journalists who brave beyond the Green Zone, Iraqis are little more than dark shapes glimpsed through the slots of a speeding Humvee.

Last month there was a big hoo-ha over the statistical accuracy of a Johns Hopkins University study estimating that 655,000 Iraqis have died as a result of this war.

I doubt the Iraqi who fired that bullet into Lance Cpl. Smith read the Hopkins study. Iraqis don't need a professor of statistics to tell them what happens in a "hard hit" on a house. Of civilians killed by the US forces the Hopkins team found 46% are younger than fifteen years old.

I grieve for Lance Cpl. Smith and I can't know for certain what moved the sniper to pick up a gun and shoot him. However, I've no doubt that, like the Marines who said prayers before they invaded the homes of the terrified residents of Karma, the sniper also said a prayer before he loaded the 7.62mm shell into his carbine.

And if we asked, I'm sure the sniper would tell us, "I am a good man, but seeing what happened, I want to hurt people." **CT**

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