

## After All We Did For Them in Fallujah!

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*I was a bit surprised as well as appalled at the reported reaction of U.S. military personnel who had participated in the November 2004 destruction of Fallujah under Operation Phantom Fury, to the January 2014 taking control of the city by Sunni insurgents. The New York Times reporter covering this story says that “watching insurgents running roughshod through the streets they once fought to secure, often in brutal close quarters combat, has shaken their faith in what their mission achieved.”<sup>1</sup> Marine Corps sergeant Adam Banotai is quoted as saying that “It made me sick to my stomach to have that thrown in our face, everything we fought for so blatantly taken away.” Former State Department official Kael Weston, who worked with the Marines fighting in Iraq, and talked with them about this development, says that “This has been a gut punch to the morale of the Marine Corps and painful for a lot of families who are saying ‘I thought my son died for a reason’.”*

There is a vagueness in these references to a supposed “mission” and “reasons.” We should not forget that the U.S. leader in this Iraq enterprise, U.S. President George W. Bush, had originally claimed that the sole reason for invading Iraq was its possession of weapons of mass destruction and the threat that this posed to international peace and security. Once that was admitted to have been a fraud the mission and its purported reasons would seem to have disappeared and immediate withdrawal should have been called for. However, this was quickly adjusted to the mission of bringing democracy to Iraq, presumably to help the Iraqi people improve their lives as well as reduce the external threat of dictatorship. But any sensible person should recognize that a U.S. leadership that stands firmly with Saudi Arabia, and had earlier supported Saddam Hussein when he was attacking Iran, couldn’t be expending resources for any democratic objective. There must be material or other semi-hidden objectives that can’t be made explicit, except in unpublicized documents like the neo-con Project for the New American Century’s Rebuilding America’s Defenses or claims by disaffected insiders like former Bush Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill that a plan for regime change in Iraq was firmed up well before 9/11.<sup>2</sup>

Sensible and aware people could also not swallow the notion that you could be helping the Iraqi people by destroying one of their major cities and making it into a free fire zone. It is true that by the time the U.S. military unleashed its full fury on Fallujah in early November, 2004, a majority of its 350,000 civilians had fled, but thousands remained and thousands were killed. According to Dr. Hafidd al-Dulzanni, head of the Commission for the Compensation of Fallujah Citizens, the U.S. assault destroyed some 7,000 houses, 840 stores, workshops and clinics, 65 mosques and religious sanctuaries, 59 schools, 13 government buildings, two electricity stations, three water purification plants, along with several railroad stations and sewage purification plants, among other things. Hospitals were an explicit target and weapons like white phosphorus and uranium-larded projectiles (see below) were used, all adding up to massive violations of the laws of war.

This was clearly not a campaign for the benefit of the people of Iraq, large numbers of whom were under deliberate attack or were considered expendable collateral damage in the U.S. war project. In the larger Iraq war picture we should note that perhaps a million were killed and 4 million turned into refugees, and we may recall the 500,000 Iraqi children killed via the “sanctions of mass destruction” in the 1990s. Iraqi civilian welfare was not an objective of U.S. policy toward Iraq at any time over the past several decades, and the U.S. impact on that welfare has been highly negative and criminal. In fact, with an unbiased system of international justice, there would be a need for many courtrooms and prison cells to accommodate the trials and incarceration of U.S. and U.K. officials and military personnel.

The media’s role in this aggression and mass murder operation has been extremely important. While reporting on the shaken faith of the Marines who fought in Fallujah in 2004, the media don’t explore what that “mission” was and put it into meaningful context. You may be certain that they won’t hark back to those alleged but non-existent weapons of mass destruction that the initially claimed mission was supposedly designed to eliminate, nor will they discuss the hypocrisy and dishonesty of the claim of an alleged new mission of bringing democracy to Iraq. And you may be even more certain that they won’t discuss how all this conflicts with the express norms of the UN Charter and international law. They’ll save that for Putin in Ukraine!

Equally illuminating is the media’s neglect, now and earlier, of the U.S.-UK’s own use of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The U.S. military admittedly used white phosphorus in Operation Phantom Fury, but there is evidence that they also employed weaponized uranium that may plausibly explain dramatic increases in rates of cancer, birth defects and infant mortality, and what Chris Busby, the author and co-author of two studies on the Fallujah health crisis called “the highest rate of genetic damage in any population ever studied.” This came to public notice when reports out of Fallujah after 2004 described a major and rapid increase in the incidence of cancer and congenital birth defects. A population based epidemiological study published in July 2010 by Malak Hamden and Chris Busby, “Cancer, Infant Mortality and Birth Sex-Ratio in Fallujah, Irqq, 2005-2009,” found a huge rise in infant mortality, and types of cancer “similar to that in the Hiroshima survivors” (breast cancer, lymphoma, brain tumors, leukemia). The leukemia increase was 38-fold in Fallujah versus 17-fold in Hiroshima survivors. This report was mentioned by BBC and written up by Patrick Cockburn in “Toxic Legacy of US Assault on Fallujah ‘Worse Than Hiroshima’,” in *The Independent* (July 24, 2010).

But the *New York Times* has never mentioned this study, nor has any other major mainstream media source in the United States.

Busby found, to his surprise, that environmental samples of soil, water and human hair in Fallujah contained slightly enriched uranium, which is more powerful and damaging than depleted uranium. This enriched uranium is man-made and is very possibly a constituent of new undisclosed uranium weapons now secretly employed by the Pentagon. If valid, the United States has carried out a nuclear attack on Fallujah, and presumably elsewhere as well. Scary and clearly worthy of examination in a free press, but while it is discussed in an interview with Busby on RT<sup>3</sup>, the Busby studies and the uranium connection have not been mentioned by U.S. politicians or found fit to discuss in America’s newspaper of record.

In contrast, allegations of the Syrian government’s use of chemical weapons. upset the sensitive and highly moral (and supremely hypocritical) U.S. leadership and caused it to

draw a “red line” beyond which Syria might be openly bombed. Here was news fit to print, with Nexis showing 686 articles mentioning Syria and sarin and/or chemical weapons in the *New York Times* between August 19, 2013 and August 27, 2015. A ratio of 686 for the politically helpful to 0 for dramatic facts that don’t fit shows a remarkable propaganda system at work.

The response to the 2004 Fallujah massacre and its capture by insurgents in 2014 quickly brings to mind the Vietnam war experience with its confused “mission” and even more blatant anti-people war. Perhaps the most famous quote coming out of that war was the U.S. officer commenting on the destruction of Ben Tre: “We had to destroy the town in order to save it.” Save it for whom? It was periodically claimed that we were protecting the Vietnamese people’s “right to choose” and their self-determination, but this was long subordinated to high level war-makers’ and war intellectuals’ preoccupation with stopping the march of communism and alleged communist aggression. The leaders, intellectuals and pundits were fuzzy on whether the aggression was sponsored by the Soviet Union, China or was just reflecting expansionist Communist ideology, but, of course, North Vietnam was the acknowledged front line aggressor. That the United States was the aggressor was suggested only by the wild persons in the wings who couldn’t be taken seriously or admitted to in mainstream debates.

That the United States was truly the aggressor was supported by the fact that Ho Chi Minh and the communists didn’t control all of Vietnam before the U.S. war only because U.S. force and derived diplomacy wouldn’t allow it. After the communists had forced out the French, the settlement at Geneva in 1954 provided for a unifying election in 1956 between the southern and northern parts of the country. The United States refused to allow this, clearly because the prominent Vietnamese communist Ho Chi Minh would have won. This was acknowledged by U.S. President Eisenhower in his autobiography where he admitted that Ho would have captured 80 percent of the votes in a free election. Thereafter the United States underwrote a war of pacification in the south and then attacked the North and invaded Vietnam directly in 1965. But it and its mercenary army progeny in the southern part of Vietnam could not subdue the populace or defeat the National Liberation Front in the south or the North Vietnamese forces when they entered the fray in 1965. The U.S.-supported faction in the south had no political base, which is why they couldn’t have won the 1956 election and why they couldn’t fight effectively thereafter. Their puppet role helped further alienate the populace.

The U.S. methods of fighting further disaffected the people and consolidated the political strength of the communists. It was a merciless war against a people. And while killing literally millions of Vietnamese, mostly civilians, it was a failure. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan show that the U.S. military has not learned a lesson and continues to create enemies faster than it kills them. Sadly, this does not result in their leaders being brought to justice, so that the lesson is not learned and their successors are able to kill on a large scale once again, perhaps creating an Iraq syndrome to be overcome in the future as this country has overcome its Vietnam syndrome (with the help of using a mercenary army).

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## Notes

1. Richard A. Oppel, Jr., "Falluja's Fall Stuns Marines Who fought There," *New York Times*, January 10, 2014.
2. Julian Borger, "Bush decided to remove Saddam 'on day one'," *Guardian*, January 11, 2004.
3. "US uranium to blame for deformed babies in Fallujah?," October 25, 2011

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