

Assessing the Bush Legacy: The Measure of the Man and His Administration

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Region: [USA](#)

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George W. Bush. US president: January 20, 2001 – January 19, 2009. Born of privilege. Unimpressive by every measure. A history of underachievement. Chosen by big money. Arranged through electoral fraud. Installed by the Supreme Court. Empowered by a dubious “terrorist” act, and ending with a record unmatched by the worst of his predecessors. Assessing the Bush legacy – from its illegitimate birth; through its lawless, belligerent years; to the world potentially on the brink at its end. Exploring it fully as a change of command approaches, and an unenviable task awaits the new incumbent.

As Texas Governor

Looking to Election 2000, big monied interests knew what they wanted and got it in George W. Bush. In his 2000 book, “The Dirty Truth,” Rick Abraham (a former Texas environmental law enforcement officer) documented his record as Texas governor from 1995 – 2000 when “he championed the agenda of the state’s biggest and worst corporate polluters,” according to commentator, author, and former Texas Department of Agriculture Commissioner Jim Hightower. In return for huge political contributions and jump-starting his presidential bid, he:

- lobbied for a national radioactive waste dump in Texas;
- told the public it was mostly for x-rays and other hospital waste;
- solicited nuclear power waste from other states;
- corrupted the state’s environmental standards to accommodate polluters;
- failed to provide protection from industrial pollution, air toxins, and hazardous wastes;
- did it all secretly;
- stripped municipalities of local control over land use and environmental protections;
- let state parks languish in decay and disrepair, and this was only his environmental record.

He was staunchly pro-business, anti-civil liberties, unresponsive to public needs, and presided over more state executions than any other governor in the nation since the Supreme Court reinstated capital punishment in 1976. His own aides at the time called him a man who enjoys killing, and not one to trust with the presidency as it turned out.

Elections 2000 and 2004 - Tainted by Fraud

On December 12, 2000 the Supreme Court hijacked an electoral process that was deeply flawed and rigged to elect George Bush. It coronated him president after three days earlier halting the Florida vote recount on the spurious grounds that it violated the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause. It was the first time ever in US history that the High Court reversed a popular vote (5 - 4) to install its own preferred candidate.

For its part, the media cheered the process and wholeheartedly approved. They, too, got their man in Washington. They rallied around him ever since, ignored his high crimes and misdemeanors, the economy in disarray, and continue to support him in spite of his lowest-ever approval rating for any president. He surpassed Harry Truman at the depth of the Korean War and Richard Nixon during Watergate, and will be judged by history as our worst and most disgraceful president ever.

Election 2000 made it possible. Investigative journalists like Greg Palast documented how mostly poor African-Americans and Latinos were removed from voter roles for having falsely been "identified" as ex-felons and thus unable to vote in states like Florida. Various other obstructions were also used. Ballot boxes in African-American districts were missing and uncounted. State troopers were positioned near polling sites in black precincts to intimidate and delay voters by searching their cars and setting up roadblocks. Some precincts demanded two photo IDs. Florida law requires only one.

African-American students at schools like Florida A&M signed up in force as first-time voters but were obstructed at polling stations. They were turned away because they couldn't show a registration card or drivers license. However, Florida lets eligible residents sign an affidavit (not provided) and swear they hadn't voted.

In African-American and other Democrat districts, voters were turned away and directed to vote elsewhere. They were never mailed registration cards, and they were told they showed up too late and polls were closed. Many requesting absentee ballots never got them, and evidence emerged of forged ones for George Bush. Similar practices showed up in other states like Ohio, New Hampshire, Missouri and Tennessee that narrowly went for Bush over Gore. And all the above was besides the hanging, dimpled, and pregnant chads or otherwise disqualified Florida votes that never were counted but should have been.

Election 2004 was even worse than 2000 because technology smoothed the way with electronic ease. In 2002, the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) passed as a way to facilitate fraud. It ushered in the age of privatized voting on touchtone electronic voting machines - owned, programmed, operated and controlled by giant corporations with close Republican ties. Today, over 80% of all votes are cast and counted this way. Most states require no verifiable paper receipts, so it's easy to manipulate outcomes, and not just for president.

They helped reelect Bush at a time his approval rating hovered around 40%. Most voters believed the country was headed in the wrong direction, and most polls had Kerry a heavy favorite. In addition, a record 16.8 million new voters registered, mostly Democrats. Nonetheless, Bush got 11.6 million more votes than in 2000, won with a comfortable three million vote margin, and Florida and Ohio made the difference. Either one going for Kerry would have changed the outcome, and again electoral fraud was rife and well-documented. Some of it included:

- millions of absentee ballots never mailed to Democrats or arrived too late;
- malfunctioning voting machines in Democrat districts wiped out huge numbers of crucial votes;
- according to Greg Palast, over three million votes cast but never counted because of rejected “provisional ballots” (for registered voters unlisted on rolls); “spoiled ballots” (ones malfunctioning machines didn’t count); uncounted absentee ballots for minor reasons; and black and Latino voters stripped from the rolls for the same reasons as in 2000;
- major deviations in 30 states between exit polls and final results; way beyond margins of error and indicative of fraud; in all but four states, discrepancies favored Bush;
- Ohio was ground zero, much like Florida in 2000 that also went for Bush in 2004; 357,000 Ohio voters, overwhelmingly Democrat, were prevented from voting or their votes weren’t counted; Bush carried the state by 118,599; clear proof he lost; Kerry won, and was elected president;
- Democrat precincts got too few voting machines; voters were obstructed by long lines, malfunctioning machines, numerous instances of being told they were at the wrong precinct, and most disturbing:
- one in every four Ohio registrants showing up to vote discovered they weren’t listed on the rolls because Republican Secretary of State and co-chair of Bush’s reelection committee, Kenneth Blackwell, ordered them purged.

These and other fraudulent practices greased the way for George Bush’s illegitimate reelection and the continued fallout from it.

Transformed by September 11, 2001

The widely followed Cook report assessed Bush’s first five months in office as follows: After “start(ing) off strong....his future seems far less certain. Not only are (his) overall job approval ratings slumping, but his disapproval ratings are climbing....the last three months (especially) have been less than auspicious for this new President....they have a lot of repair work to do and had better get started.”

Bush entered office with an approval rating around 50%. It first rose slightly, then dipped below 50% in late August. It all changed on September 11. Bush’s rating skyrocketed to a temporary high above 90% and stayed above 80% through year end. That event transformed a mediocre president overnight to a combination of Lincoln, FDR and Churchill, according to some observers and hyperactive media pundits. It was beyond laughable then, and hugely more so now.

After he peaked, it was downhill to 60% at yearend 2002, around 50% in late 2003, then around 40% or lower to more recent months when he’s ranged from the low to higher 20s. Until American Research Group’s September lowest ever for a US president at 19%, Research 2000 scored him lowest at 22% in late July. CBS in early August had him at 25%, and even Fox/Opinion Dynamics gave him a 27% rating at month end July. Others had him slightly higher with every incentive to keep him from submerging and failing thereafter to surface.

The Cook Report's Charlie Cook may have thought that on June 21 when he wrote in the National Journal: Ronald "Reagan drew a whole generation into the Republican Party....some observers wonder whether George W. Bush may have driven another (one) away," and McCain won't likely bring them back. But it wasn't that way in late 2001 through the March 2003 Iraq war start with the public still traumatized by 9/11 and the hype about Saddam's WMDs.

Deconstructing the Bush Legacy - The Bush Doctrine

Below is a review of the Bush administration's record, including related events before he took office.

On September 11, 1990, GHW Bush addressed a joint session of Congress following Saddam's August 2 Kuwait invasion. It became known as his "Toward a New World Order" speech. He said: "This invasion shall not stand, because it threatens the New World Order." Then in his January 29, 1991 State of the Union address, he spoke of "a defining hour....Halfway around the world (where) we are engaged in a great struggle in the skies and on the seas and sands....facing down a threat to decency and humanity (and for) a victory over tyranny and savage aggression." He called for a "new initiative in government....to prepare for the next American century (and) seize this opportunity to fulfill the long-held promise for a 'new world order....' "

After the Cold War ended in 1991, GHW Bush's Defense Secretary Dick Cheney and undersecretary Paul Wolfowitz designed what they called the Defense Planning Guidance or Wolfowitz doctrine. It was an early plan for what later emerged in the late 1990s and in the Bush Doctrine. The New York Times "leaked" it in March 1992 and caused an uproar. It was an imperial design for unchallengeable dominance using preemptive military action to suppress potential threats - no holds barred anywhere.

In 1997, the plan was revived by the Project for a New American Century (PNAC) in a (2000) document called "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategies, Forces and Resources for a New Century." It reasserted an imperial design for global dominance and stated: "America should seek to preserve and extend its position of global leadership by maintaining the preeminence of US military forces." It further called for "American hegemony" and "full-spectrum dominance," and said achieving it would be long-term "absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event - like a new Pearl Harbor.

A host of PNC members joined the Bush administration, key among them Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz - fully committed to what emerged as a "Global War on Terrorism" starting off in Afghanistan, Iraq, and against any perceived homeland threats. Their vision:

- unchallengeable dominance;
- ignoring the rule of law;
- waging wars of aggression called liberating ones;
- making torture official state policy;
- suppressing civil liberties for our own good;

- targeting Muslims, Latino immigrants and others of choice for political advantage; rounding them up; denying them due process; incarcerating and/or deporting them, and much worse as discussed below;
- building Department of Homeland Security (DHS) mass detention camps for “enemies of the state” or threats to “national security;”
- deploying paramilitary enforcers (like Blackwater Worldwide, formerly Blackwater USA) on US streets;
- silencing dissent;
- turning elections into farces; pre-determining outcomes for favored candidates; letting kabuki theater, horse race journalism, and trivia substitute for real news and information; turning democracy into fantasy;
- fostering social decay at home; and
- institutionalizing spying and police state repression for enforcement.

Key Administration and Earlier Policy Documents

The US Space Command produced a 1998 document called Vision for 2020. In May 2000 ahead of Bush taking office, it was released as a (neo-con influenced) imperial grand strategy called the Department of Defense (DOD) Joint Vision 2020 with a sweeping aim - to achieve “full spectrum dominance” over all land, surface and sub-surface sea, air, space, electromagnetic spectrum and information systems with enough overwhelming power to fight and win global wars against any potential challengers with all weapons in our arsenal, including nuclear and others of mass destruction.

The December 2001 Nuclear Policy Review reasserted the same prerogative to unilaterally declare and wage future wars preemptively with first strike nuclear weapons, and by inference, all others as well.

Plans were well in place long before September 11, but that event provided the pretext. It gave the Bush administration “reason” to attack Afghanistan on October 7 (long planned in advance), invade with ground troops on October 19, and look ahead to the grand scheme against Iraq.

On September 11, 2001, Bush addressed the nation and declared a “war on terrorism,” asked for world support to win it, and began what became “our government’s emergency (preventive war strategy) response plans.” He planned to ignore the law and wage a global war throughout an “arc of instability” from the South American Andean region (mainly Colombia) to North Africa through the Middle East to the Philippines, Indonesia and elsewhere in Eurasia.

On January 29, 2002 in his first State of the Union address, he declared war on a “terrorist underworld (in) at least a dozen countries....in remote jungles and deserts (and) in centers of large cities.” He asked “all nations (to) heed our call and eliminate the terrorist parasites who threaten their countries and our own (and) If they do not act, America will.” He singled out North Korea, Iran and Iraq as an “axis of evil....seeking out weapons of mass destruction (and) posing a grave and growing danger.” Things headed downhill from there.

On September 20, 2002, Bush issued what became known as the Bush Doctrine or self-declared right to wage global (imperial) wars against “terrorist” states or ones that harbor or aid them. The 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS) made it policy and in stronger terms in 2006 – the unilateral right to wage preventive, preemptive and later “proactive” wars against perceived threats or potential challengers and to control the world’s energy and other resources in key regions like the Middle East, Eurasia, Latin America, Africa and now the Arctic. The 2006 version mentions Iran 16 times and states: “We may face no greater challenge from a single country than Iran.” Current developments suggest that position is unchanged, at least in belligerent rhetoric.

The Air Force’s “Strategic Master Plan FY 06 and Beyond calls space “the ultimate high ground of US military operations.” It aims to link the Pentagon with NASA, militarize its operations, “own outer space,” and weaponize it with the most advanced, destructive current and future technology, including unmanned space vehicles for planetary surveillance.

The October 2006 National Space Policy embraced this agenda without so stating it. It called on NASA to “execute a sustained and affordable human and robotic program of space exploration and develop, acquire, and use civil space systems to advance fundamental scientific knowledge of our Earth system, solar system, and universe.” The nuclear input is from language “to ensure space capabilities....to further US national security, homeland security, and foreign policy objectives (with) a robust foreign space intelligence collection and analysis capability” to assure it and have the heavens militarized for enforcement.

Seizing full advantage from the 9/11 event and follow-up anthrax attacks, the Bush administration subverted the rule of law, abandoned restrictive treaties, militarized more than the rest of the world combined, and rescinded the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) so as to illegally develop new biowarfare weapons. It further renounced the 1989 (GHW Bush-signed) Biological Weapons Anti-Terrorism Act of 1989 that prohibits “the Development, Production, and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons....”

According to international (and biowarfare) law expert Francis Boyle, it’s to fight and win a future biowar. It also makes “a catastrophic biowarfare or bioterrorist incident a statistical certainty” and makes everyone unwitting subjects of a recklessly endangering experiment. To go along with a potential nuclear holocaust and turning democracy into fantasy.

Homeland Police State Enforcement

Implementation follows planning. At home, it’s been high-octane repression in the forms reviewed below and covered earlier in this writer’s December 2007 Police State America article. Here it’s reviewed more briefly. The topic is hugely important and explains the current state under George Bush with little or no likely change coming under Barack Obama.

Post-9/11, “national security” and the “war on terrorism” became buzzwords to rally the public for what lay ahead. On the evening of September 11, Bush asked for public and world support and began the “government’s emergency (preventive war strategy) response plans,” but not as people envisioned. Policies were explained above. Ignore the law. Wage aggressive wars. Destroy homeland civil liberties, and more in defense of privilege over beneficial social change.

In so doing, he turned momentary world support and sympathy into mass public condemnation and rather quickly. He also risked the unimaginable. Replacing democracy with tyranny and ending planetary life with first-strike nuclear weapons - far more destructive than used against Japan in 1945.

Throughout history, going back to George Washington, presidents issued Executive Orders (EOs) even though nowhere does the Constitution let them make new law through one-man decrees. Compared to Bush, however, past presidents were almost discrete. He, in contrast, signed a blizzard of them as well as the equally unconstitutional practice of changing legislation with "signing statements."

Until 2001, all presidents combined challenged new laws with less than 600 of them. Through almost mid-2008, Bush issued at least 157 in changing over 1150 provisions of law and about which the Congressional Research Service said 78% of them raised constitutional objections. He abused his authority to rewrite laws as he wished, continues doing so to the present, and Congress and the courts let him get away with it.

Bush also usurped unconstitutional "Unitary Executive" authority or what Chalmers Johnson calls "a ball-faced assertion of presidential supremacy....dressed up in legalistic mumbo jumbo" to act as he wishes on all matters, foreign or domestic, law or no law - a practice that "flies in the face of the Constitution itself."

Justice Louis Brandeis' dissent in *Myers v. United States* (1926) cited the separation of powers and said it exists "to preclude (this type) exercise of arbitrary power, (divide) government powers among three departments, to save the people from autocracy." A clear and present danger under George Bush with no Brandeis on the High Court to object. Nor in Congress with enough power to matter. Not the House Speaker, party leaders in both Houses, or key committee chairpersons.

Post-9/11 on September 17, Bush signed a secret presidential finding (similar to EOs) empowering the CIA to "Capture, Kill or Interrogate Al-Queda Leaders." It authorized establishing a secret global network of facilities to detain, interrogate and otherwise mistreat whomever is called a "terrorist threat" and began his administration's official sanctioning of torture. More on that below.

On November 13, he issued Military Order Number 1. It disturbed one analyst enough to call it a "coup d'etat" and "watershed moment in (the) country" and hinted at what would follow: violating the rule of law, suspending civil liberties, and usurping absolute authority to act against anyone - later called "unlawful enemy combatants" or "terrorist" threats, including US citizens stripped of their constitutional protections. At the president's discretion, they're gone. And it was only the beginning. From then followed:

- the use of National and Homeland Security Presidential Directives (NSPDs and HSPDs); they're much like EOs and presidential findings with the "full force and effect of law;" they relate to national security and remain classified unless made public; Bush issued dozens of NSPDs and over 20 HSPDs;

- the October 25, 2001 NSPD-9 signed into law official administration policies adopted on September 4, 2001 - seven days before 9/11 with every expectation they'd be implemented; it's titled "Defeating the Terrorist Threat to the United States" and referred to Al Qaeda and so-called terrorist networks of Muslim fundamentalist extremists;

— later NSPDs related to combatting WMDs, the Iraq war, biodefense (aka biowarfare), using space for “full spectrum dominance,” and much more;

— the combined NSPD-51/HSPD-20 deserves special mention; it was similar to Ronald Reagan’s Executive Order 12656 that empowered the executive in cases of “any occurrence, including natural disaster, military attack, technological emergency, or other emergency, that seriously degrades or seriously threatens the national security of the United States;”

— it established “Continuity of Government (COG)” procedures under a “Catastrophic Emergency” that may be anything from a real or contrived “terrorist” act to whatever the president calls a justifiable “emergency;” it established unprecedented powers free from constitutional constraints - to claim a “national emergency,” declare martial law, and govern as a virtual dictator with limitless police state powers; some COG powers were invoked on September 11, 2001; they’ve remained in force since, and on August 28, 2008, George Bush continued “the powers and authorities adopted to deal with that emergency;”

— the USA Patriot Act (over 300 pages long) - written well in advance of 9/11; passed and signed into law 45 days later on October 26; it capitalized on a window of hysteria; granted unchecked powers to the executive; and subverted sacred constitutional liberties of free expression, religion, right to peacefully assemble, and to petition the government for redress of grievances; due process; and freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures - in all the ways now allowed through a process of institutionalized spying and monitoring of all our behavior and practices at the government’s discretion; the Act also (for the first time) created the crime of “domestic terrorism” to apply the definition to US citizens as well as aliens;

— the November 25, 2002 Homeland Security Act (HSA); also written well in advance of 9/11 as a companion anti-terrorism bill and included the repressive Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) - to terrorize legal and undocumented immigrants, mainly Latinos and Muslims; DHS centralizes unprecedented military and law enforcements powers in the executive branch for greater global dominance; like the Patriot Act, it sweeps away constitutional protections and justifies it in the name of “national security;” it coordinates it with the October 2002-created US Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) in violation of the 1807 Insurrection Act and 1878 Posse Comitatus protections against US military forces deployed inside the country except as expressly authorized by the Constitution or in cases of internal insurrection;

— the late September 2006 Pentagon Global Strike Command called the Joint Functional Component Command for Global Strike and Integration; it followed from the 2002 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) that planned policy five to ten years ahead and remains classified except for excerpted parts; they relate to offensive strike systems and a revitalized defense infrastructure to meet emerging threats; the tone is belligerent and declares preventive wars on any nation, groups or force anywhere (including internal ones) and allows NORTHCOM, DHS, and other domestic security agencies unrestricted countermeasure powers - indicative of a police state;

— within days of 9/11, torture became official US policy and was authorized by a blizzard of presidential directives, memoranda, and other official documents from the highest levels of government; domestic and international laws and norms were rendered invalid, and a new

repressive order replaced them; the rule of law no longer applies, and constitutional protections no longer exist at the president's discretion;

— Congress was fully obliging; in the Detainee Treatment Act of 2005, it officially sanctioned torture after intervening against the Supreme Court's *Rasul v. Bush* (June 2004) ruling granting Guantanamo detainees habeas rights; it also ruled they had none.

-in the Military Commissions Act (MCA - aka the torture authorization and habeas revocation act), it subverted the High Court a second time in *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld* when it held as follows: Guantanamo Bay military commissions lack "the power to proceed because (their) structures and procedures violate both the Uniform Code of Military Justice and the four Geneva Conventions (of) 1949;" Congress responded with sweeping MCA powers, reaffirmed torture as official US policy, and let the president designate anyone anywhere in the world (including US citizens) "unlawful enemy combatants" and empowered him to arrest, detain, and torture them indefinitely in military prisons as well as deny them due process in civil courts;

— Sections 1076 and 333 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2007; they ended the 1807 Insurrection Act and 1878 Posse Comitatus protections against US military forces used for law enforcement inside the country, except as explained above;

— Congress passed the Real ID Act of 2005 that, if implemented, threatens personal privacy; originally, it was to become effective in May 2008 to require states to meet federal ID standards; so far, however, it's in question as at least two dozen states passed laws prohibiting its use; it requires every US citizen and legal resident to have a national identity card that in most cases is a driver's license; it's to contain personal information required to open a bank account, board an airplane, be able to vote, or conduct virtually any essential business; in the future it may also contain a radio frequency identification (RFID) computer chip to track all our movements, activities and transactions at all times - a police state dream; the legislation so far remains stalled;

— institutionalized spying now policy under George Bush with Congress complicit in its implementation; since late 2001, the National Security Agency (NSA) did it illegally; the 2007 Protect America Act amended the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) to allow virtually unrestricted mass data-mining and intercept of all types of domestic and foreign communications of anyone - foreign nationals and US citizens; it authorizes unrestricted warrantless spying for any claimed "national security" reason;

— Congress further violated Fourth Amendment protections against illegal searches and seizures by passing the 2008 FISA Amendments Act; it gutted FISA by weakening standards of proof and warrants required for surveillance and granted telecom companies retroactive immunity for warrantless spying post-9/11 - now institutionalized unchecked, unrestrained and easily abused;

— through late November 2008, Bush issued around 280 Executive Orders in addition to his signing statements, presidential findings, and official executive memoranda; the July 17, 2007 EO was particularly egregious: "Blocking Property of Certain Persons Who Threaten Stabilization Efforts in Iraq;" under it, Bush usurped authority to criminalize the anti-war movement, make First Amendment protests illegal, and assert power to seize the assets of persons violating this decree; he effectively criminalized dissent and moved the nation closer to tyranny;

— the Bush administration may be the most secretive one ever in a democracy; he placed limits on presidential records, the Freedom of Information Act, and a free and open society by usurping power to classify information for “national security” and create a new array of categories called “sensitive;”

— in November 2006, the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (AETA) amended the 1992 Animal Enterprise Protection Act; it criminalized First Amendment activities advocating for animal rights – like peaceful protests, leafleting, undercover investigations, whistleblowing and boycotts; it makes these forms of animal protection advocacy a crime;

— the House overwhelmingly passed the Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007; it’s now in the Senate where if passed and signed into law will effectively criminalize “thought” and further erode constitutional protections;

— Sections 1615 and 1622 of the 2008 Defense Authorization Act; they authorize DOD to militarize state and local law enforcement authorities during a national emergency described as “an accident of national significance or a catastrophic incident;” they effectively established a martial law apparatus at state and local levels to work alongside federal agencies – without congressional approval.

For the past eight years, these and other administration policies explain the current state in America – a swift descent from a deeply flawed democracy to the tipping edge of tyranny. This is what awaits Barack Obama and the challenge he faces. Given his past record and disturbing campaign rhetoric, he’s unlikely to deliver meaningful change in spite of the public pleading for and expecting it.

Permanent Wars for Global Dominance

Afghanistan, Iraq, Occupied Palestine, Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Pakistan, Somalia, North Korea, Venezuela, Bolivia, Haiti, Cuba as well as China, Russia and the Caucasus; a likely 1000 + US bases worldwide in around 150 countries; current defense spending exceeding \$1 trillion annually with all domestic and foreign related items included – plus unknown multi-billions kept secret off-the-books; and a state of permanent war abroad for global dominance and at home for total control as discussed above. Parts of the Bush legacy today in America.

Afghanistan came first – a nation John Pilger calls more abused, long-suffering, and less helped than any other in living memory. Today, its agony continues. The country is occupied. Some estimates cite over three million deaths since 2001. War continues to rage. Little of it makes headlines, but Afghans are victimized by America’s “war on terrorism.”

So are Iraqis from nearly three decades of war. First against Iran in the 1980s. Then against America from August 2, 1990 to the present – the savage Gulf War causing about 200,000 deaths; 12.5 years of genocidal sanctions; an unimaginable toll of at least 1.5 million deaths; two-thirds of them children; and unmeasurable amounts of illnesses and human misery through March 2003. Then George Bush’s Iraq War. At least another million deaths. Some estimates as high as two million. Around four million internally and externally displaced. Mass unemployment and poverty. A near-total absence of essential services – fresh drinking water, sanitation, electricity, medical care, education, security and for many enough food.

Emergency needs are unmet. It’s an overall humanitarian disaster of epic proportions

unreported in the mainstream. The “cradle of civilization” was erased for plunder. A nation was transformed into a “free trade” paradise. The message for others is it’s coming – “shock and awe,” invasion, occupation, lost sovereignty, mass deaths, illness and disease, incarcerations, torture, and utter deprivation. A testimony to “democracy,” liberation, and “free market” majesty. A ghoulish dystopia; a living hell heading everywhere unless stopped.

It afflicted Haiti for over 500 years. Most recently beginning on February 29, 2004, in the middle of the night, from a Bush-ordered coup d’etat, when US Marines abducted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and forcibly flew him to the Central African Republic. Today he’s exiled in South Africa. He vows to return, and Haitians want him back in any capacity.

Haiti is now occupied. UN Blue Helmet paramilitaries control it. So do other repressive internal security forces. The people are deeply impoverished. They’re the poorest in the Hemisphere. Unemployment is rampant. A tiny 5% of elites control everything – the economy, media, universities, professions, and what passes for Haiti’s polity. Washington holds an iron grip. Six powerful families and US corporate interests profit. Another “free market” paradise. Human deprivation is unimaginable and now much worse with Haitians unable to afford high food prices. Most are undernourished. Many are starving and forced to eat “mud cookies” from edible clay. They lack nutrition, contain dangerous bacteria, and are just stomach-filler.

They protest for relief. Washington-directed UN “Peacekeepers” respond violently. They patrol streets and neighborhoods, crush dissent, shoot to kill, arrest the innocent, incarcerate them under horrific conditions, and hold them indefinitely with little hope for judicial relief. Today’s Haiti. More of Bush’s legacy.

Venezuela might have been the same if Washington’s April 2002 coup succeeded. Since taking office in February 1999, President Hugo Chavez was targeted for removal, and maybe assassination, especially after George Bush’s election. Luckily he survived; continues to lead his nation; was elected and reelected impressively; prevailed in every presidential, parliamentary, municipal and referendum election since December 1998 until hitting a momentary speed bump last December.

He nonetheless remains strongly popular. Venezuela is a democracy. Chavez delivers vital social services. He redistributes national wealth to his people. He’s rewarded with their support, and that makes him target one in the Hemisphere for removal – so far without success but not because Bush didn’t try. To be continued under the new incumbent.

Iran is also targeted and has been since the Islamic Revolution. After George Bush’s election, pressure built and today remains intense. The Israeli Lobby wants regime change. So do Bush neocons and the Democrat leadership, at least most of them. A large US naval presence is in the region. Reinforcements may be sent. A potential blockade is threatened. It’s unclear if it’s planned or just bluff. Pending H. Con. Res. 362 with around 250 co-sponsors calls for it. It remains undebated and referred to the House Foreign Affairs Committee. A companion S. Res. 580 was also introduced. It’s also undebated and referred to the Foreign Relations Committee for consideration.

Things will likely remain on hold until Barak Obama assumes office in January. Nonetheless, the situation is tense and worrisome as both parties are hostile to the Iranian government and very responsive to Israeli Lobby pressure. In or out of office, Bush neocons have power

and exert considerable influence. Another testimony to his legacy that gives reason for Iranians to worry. All humanity as well.

Then there's the Caucasus crisis over Georgia's willful aggression against its breakaway South Ossetian province. It erupted on August 7, subsided a few days later, but ignited a new Cold War with Georgia a US proxy and Russia falsely accused of aggression.

Another key headline-making act of America v. Russia, more Bush legacy fallout, and what the new president will face in 2009. As well as Russia's justifiable anger at being surrounded by US bases. Most in place since George Bush's election. And now "advanced tracking missile defense radar" for the Czech Republic by 2012 and offensive "interceptor (and Patriot) missiles" for Poland - neither of which Russia will tolerate nor should it. It suggests a potential 1962 Cuba scenario when the world came within an eyelash of nuclear war. It also echos Barbara Tuchman's "Guns of August" on how WW I began and its early weeks. Either possibility shows the perils of Bush's legacy on which the fate of the world may now hinge.

The Special Relationship between America and Israel

It began in March 1948 when Harry Truman met secretly with Chaim Weizmann (Zionist leader and first Israeli president) and pledged support for a new Jewish state. On May 14, 1948, the British Mandate ended at midnight. At the same time, National Council members in Tel Aviv signed the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel. Minutes later, Washington followed through on a 1922 congressional resolution in support of a Jewish homeland and became the first country to extend recognition. Harry Truman signed the following statement:

"This Government has been informed that a Jewish state has been proclaimed in Palestine, and recognition has been requested by the provisional government thereof.

The United States recognizes the provisional government as the de facto authority of the new State of Israel."

It established an enduring alliance under successive administrations that became more special than ever under George Bush. At its core, realgeopolitik in a strategic part of the world. The mutual advantage for both sides, and how the influential Israeli Lobby cemented it. James Petras explained it in his important 2006 book: "The Power of Israel in the United States."

At its heart is the high proportion of wealthy and influential Jewish families in the country - despite the small percentage of Jews in the population overall. Allied with others, they created a "tyranny of Israel over the US" that threatens world peace and security and the future of democracies in both countries and elsewhere.

At least since 1967, the Lobby secured Washington's unconditional support for Israel's wars of aggression. Also the 1991 Gulf War, the 2003 Iraq War, and a scheme to isolate and possibly blockade and/or attack Iran to solidify regional dominance for both countries and a lock on that nation's vast oil and gas resources.

Most important is what Washington provides in aid. Shirl McArthur explained the direct part in his July 2006 Washington Report on Middle East Affairs article titled "A Conservative Estimate of Total Direct US Aid to Israel: \$108 billion. He used data from a January 5, 2006 Congressional Research Service Report to Congress from 1949 through a 2006 FY estimate.

It totaled \$98.72 billion. McArthur then added further DOD “special projects” amounts of \$9.24 billion for a grand \$108 billion total. Far and away, Israel is the largest recipient of US aid in all forms.

It includes:

- around \$3 billion annually in direct aid;
- billions more in low or no interest loans;
- millions annually for immigrant resettlement on expropriated Palestinian lands;
- multi-billions in waved loan obligations; at least \$45 billion since 1974;
- special multi-billion loan guarantees for aggressive wars and to militarize and occupy Palestine;
- billions more in military aid; financial help to develop Israel’s defense industry; state-of-the-art technology; and the latest US weapons;
- US guarantees for Israel’s access to oil; and
- open-checkbook amounts for joint initiatives in or outside the region - all with imperial aims plus special requests honored, including secret ones.

The US-Israeli relationship has always been special. More than ever under George Bush the way Ariel Sharon once boasted. With good reason he said: “We have the US president under our control.” It advantages both sides but gravely harms most others. Another chilling side of the Bush legacy to be continued under Barack Obama, who’ll be even more committed according to James Petras. He calls him “America’s First Jewish President” in a compelling new article easily accessible online.

The Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) North American Union (NAU)

It’s another Bush administration grand scheme to merge three nations into one - controlled by Washington and the corporate interests behind it. It’s a coup d’etat against the sovereignty of three nations enforced by militarizing the continent for exploitation. If implemented, it will create a borderless North America without barriers to trade and capital - mostly for US corporate giants. It will ensure America gets free and unlimited access to Canadian and Mexican resources, mainly oil and gas, and in the case of Canada fresh water as well.

It will also militarize North America under US dominance in the name of national and continental security, control it with police state powers, and empower corporate interests to pillage it. It’s a secretly crafted scheme to:

- make the region “safe” for business;
- ruthlessly exploit workers; and
- steal their future.

Its worst features are withheld from legislators. It’s public language is deceptively benign.

Its real design is well hidden. Growing opposition is significant but way short of stopping it. If in place, it will take Police State America to a new level. More potential fallout from George Bush's legacy.

Bush's War on Working Americans

Taking from the poor and middle class. Giving to the rich. That explains a lot about Bush's plutocratic scheme, his "ownership society." To transfer trillions of public and private dollars from millions of working Americans to giant corporations and the wealthiest segment of society.

Corporations alone are hugely concentrated and virtual monopolies. Of the world's largest economies, at least 51 are corporations. Most are US-based or controlled and function as what Noam Chomsky calls "private tyrannies." More than ever under George Bush. They're run by well-connected, powerful figures comprising the top 1% of the nation's affluent.

According to economist Michael Hudson, they (and others in the top 1%) own around 70% of the country's wealth in the form of stocks, bonds, land, business assets, natural resources, and other investments. They're interlocked for even more dominance and well served by an administration delivering most everything they want.

In contrast, 90% of American families have little or no net worth with all their debt burdens taken into account. And millions now face the potential loss of their homes because of unaffordable mortgages and the nation's grave economic conditions afflicting them. More as well. Since the mid-1970s, wages haven't kept up with inflation, and benefits have declined and are disappearing.

Jobs are offshored for greater profits. High-paying manufacturing and other good ones are lost, replaced by lower-paying, less skilled, many part-time ones, and a huge reserve army of unemployed and underemployed to contain wage pressures. Union membership has plummeted from a post-war 1950s 34.7% high to around 12% now and only 7.4% in the private sector.

Credit recent developments to George Bush. Post-9/11, he declared war on working Americans. He took on public sector unions straightaway; denied 170,000 DHS employees civil service protection and the right to bargain collectively; and targeted all federal workers for lower pay, fewer benefits, loss of unionized rights, and in many cases their jobs.

He one-sidedly supports business. Stripped workers of their bargaining rights. Denied pay raises for 1.8 million federal workers on the pretext of a "national emergency" and millions more overtime pay. He appointed anti-union officials. Tried to weaken and end Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and other social services; and exploited undocumented immigrants as a wedge against organized labor but failed to secure "immigration reform" to fully implement it.

Since 1999, and especially under George Bush, consumer debt grew twice as fast as income. Millions live in poverty, many millions more just above it. At least 47 million Americans have no health insurance. Millions more have too little of it, and in some portions of every year at least 80 million Americans are uninsured – and it's getting worse at a time of economic crisis and skyrocketing unemployment.

The nation's 140 million working population has been gravely harmed. Opportunity in

America is disappearing. Today's wealth gap is unprecedented. According to the Center for Economic Policy Research (CEPR), one in three jobs (around 47 million) pay low wages (defined as two-thirds the median wage or \$11.11 per hour or less) with few or no benefits, including pensions or retirement accounts. One in four workers (around 35 million) earn poverty wages. Millions of others as well because official statistics mask the problem of big city workers earning too little to support their families. They comprise a permanent underclass that's growing – and a dying middle class that's eroding.

These conditions have accelerated under George Bush. He shamed the nation by:

- targeting the poor, middle America and people most vulnerable;
- stripping away opportunity;
- shifting wealth to the rich;
- making speculation even more of a growth industry;
- designating everything for privatization;
- aiming to end public education and hand it to profiteers for plunder; and
- creating the grimmest and most unparalleled economic conditions since New Deal reforms improved things in the 1930s.

More of his shameless legacy to be handed to the incoming administration with faint hope it'll improve things.

Additional Bush Administration “Distinctions” – Early Corruption Scandals to Today's Economy in Disarray

Besides the above, the Bush legacy has two other “distinctions.” Its first two years were tainted by huge corruption scandals, and its final two by far greater criminal fraud and the greatest ever financial/economic calamity – a truly unprecedented event. First the scandals with many familiar names.

Most prominent was Houston-based Enron. It began in 1985 shipping natural gas through pipelines; then transformed itself over the next 16 years into one of the country's most dominant energy traders – aided and abetted by its close relationship with Texas Governor George Bush. In return for privileged favors, he got huge financial contributions and a jump-start for his presidential ambitions.

Enron prospered and had \$111 billion in 2000 revenues. Fortune magazine named it “America's Most Innovative Company” for six consecutive years. But by the end of 2001, a corruption scandal sunk it and forced it into bankruptcy protection from its creditors.

It turned out that the company engaged in illegal, off-the-books transactions and partnerships to maximize sales and profits and conceal growing debt problems. By the time evidence emerged, it was too late for investors and employees. Top company officials were charged and convicted of securities, wire and mail fraud. Money laundering and conspiracy as well.

Its accounting firm Arthur Anderson was convicted of obstructing justice for destroying evidentiary files and preventing the court from seeing financial records, transactions, emails, memos and other fraud-related documents. On May 31, 2005, the pro-business Supreme Court reversed the conviction on the spurious grounds that jury instructions were inappropriate. Merrill Lynch was just as fortunate. On January 22, 2007, the High Court dismissed a huge lawsuit for restitution from colluding with Enron to defraud investors. It immunized other bankers as well from any liability in the company's malfeasance. Enron wasn't as lucky and no longer exists.

For every uncovered corporate scandal, countless others exist and remain hidden. Here are a few Forbes.com lists during 2001, 2002 and an earlier 2000 one:

- Adelphia Communications (2002) involving billions of illegal off-the-books loans to top executives; also overstating financial results by inflating capital expenses and concealing debt;
- AOL Time Warner (2002) for inflating sales by booking barter deals on advertising; AOL may have overstated revenue by \$49 million, and the company took a dubious \$54 billion writedown for "good will" to end 2002 with the largest loss ever in corporate history - \$98.7 billion;
- Bristol-Myers Squibb (2002) for inflating its 2001 revenue by \$1.5 billion by so-called "channel-stuffing" - the practice of forcing wholesalers to accept more products than they can sell to clean out company inventory and claim added sales;
- CMS Energy (2002) for illegally executing "round-trip" trades to artificially boost energy trading volume;
- Duke Energy (2002) for the same offense;
- Dynegy (2002) for the same one;
- El Paso (2002) - the same one also;
- Global Crossing (2002) for engaging in network capacity "swaps" with other carriers - to inflate revenue and for destroying evidentiary documents to hide them;
- Halliburton (2002) for inflating sales by booking barter transactions as revenue;
- Kmart (2002) - regarding anonymous letters from company employees alleging the company's accounting practices intended to deceive investors about its financial health;
- Merck (2002) - for recording \$12.4 billion in consumer-to-pharmacy co-payments the company never collected;
- Mirant (2002) - for fraudulent accounting practices that boosted revenues and understated expenses;
- Peregrine Systems (2002) - for overstating \$100 million in sales by improperly recognizing revenues from third-party resellers;
- Quest Communications International (2002) - for illegally engaging in "round-trip" trades

to boost trading volumes and revenues;

— Tyco (2002) - for its CEO's indictment for tax evasion, improper use of company funds, and illegal merger accounting practices;

— Xerox (2000) - for falsifying financial results for five years to boost income by \$1.5 billion, and last but not all

Worldcom (2002) - the second most notable scandal after Enron for overstating cash flow by \$3.8 billion; booking operating expenses as capital ones; for SEC charges of \$9 billion in fraudulent accounting practices; and for founder and CEO Bernard Ebbers illegally taking \$400 million in off-the-books loans.

By late 2002, the Afghan and Iraq wars created an illusion of prosperity. Alan Greenspan engineered it with 1% interest rates and huge liquidity infusions. Ben Bernanke continued it. The administration supported it. The result was predictable. A bubble economy and credit/debt crisis was allowed to build and mushroom. It was structured on a foundation of speculative greed and fraud and is imploding because of excess. It's spreading contagion globally; creating unparalleled risks; and threatening millions around the world with financial ruin. It reveals predatory capitalism's dark side and shows nothing this pernicious is sustainable.

Here's a brief look at George Bush's eight year (economic) balance sheet:

— an unprecedented \$8 trillion housing bubble now imploding;

— millions of foreclosed homeowners and millions more at risk;

— the likely deepest economic calamity since the 1930s and potentially one even worse;

— skyrocketing job losses;

— rising bankruptcies;

— failing banks;

— consumers maxed out on credit and strapped by debt;

— the American dream an illusion; from eroded household wealth, declining wages and benefits, and soaring expenses;

— trillions of dollar losses; likely many trillions more ahead;

— a potential devastating deflation and eventual potential serious inflation from excess money creation;

— multi-trillions in toxic debt; from asset backed securities (ABS); not by mistake; by design; as F. William Engdahl explains in his new book: "Power of Money;" to profit hugely and create a banking panic; for greater concentrated "financial and economic power in a few private hands;" globally under JP Morgan Chase, Citigroup (if it survives), Goldman Sachs, and Bank of America; masters of the universe;

— an unrepayable national debt; in the tens of trillions;

- speculative finance turned more than ever into a growth industry;
- toxic waste derivative schemes in place of legitimate investments;
- massive unchecked fraud;
- “banksters” rewarded instead of punished;
- the economy reeling from mountains of debt, frozen credit, mortgage delinquencies, growing defaults, rising unemployment, and the possibility of something much more serious ahead.

It’s spreading everywhere, touching businesses and households. The result of speculative finance, corruption, and irresponsible governance, now threatening the nation with economic decline or possible ruin.

Today’s problems are multi-fold and causing at least three simultaneously imploding bubbles; ones responsible governance and corporate oversight could have avoided:

- a property, mainly housing one;
- a mortgage finance one; and
- an alphabet soup of toxic CDOs, SIVs, SPVs, CMOs, CMBSs, and a whole menu of levered-up, high-risk securitized assets amounting to financial alchemy; defrauding millions, including sophisticated investors and sovereign ones.

No one’s sure how this can be resolved or how long it may take. It’s a deplorable administration’s final chapter. An odious one as its end approaches. From stolen elections to corporate scandals. Ruinous militarization, permanent wars, and imperial madness. Reckless spending and unrepayable debt. An environment of reckless finance, massive fraud, and unprecedented wealth transfers to the rich. A war on working Americans. Repressive police state laws. An absence of checks and balances. Democracy reduced to fantasy. The nation in decline, and a lawless state with no regard for the greater good.

Congress is largely supportive. So are federal courts, now stacked with repressive right wing justices. Nearly two-thirds are from or affiliated with the extremist Federalist Society. Its advocacy is chilling:

- rolling back civil liberties;
- ending New Deal social policies;
- opposing reproductive choice, government regulations, labor rights, and environmental protections;
- allowing the nation’s prison population explode to the world’s largest; mostly affecting nonviolent offenders; largely poor blacks and Latinos, and overall subverting justice to defend privilege.

A full Bush legacy accounting requires volumes. The above is just a sampling. For good measure, however, more examples are below from the many during his tenure. They range from neglect to outrage to scandal to high crimes and misdemeanors:

- sending young men and women to fight illegal wars; then provided the sick and wounded with third world health care on return; some even charged for it; others get little or nothing;
- irradiating vast areas of Iraq and Afghanistan with depleted uranium contamination and other deadly toxins; they cause every imaginable health problem to those exposed and their families;
- issuing an executive order (EO) revoking Gerald Ford's ban on assassinations and thus making the practice (along with torture) official state policy;
- willfully leaving New Orleans vulnerable to what FEMA in early 2001 called the most likely potential US disaster - a major hurricane and flood in the city; ethnically cleansing poor blacks post-Katrina to let corporate predators seize their land and property for profitable development;
- rejecting the Kyoto Protocol ratified by 182 countries as of May 2008;
- showing contempt for environmental issues and giving corporate allies license to pollute;
- increasing defense spending to over \$1 trillion dollars annually with all budgeted categories included plus multi-billions more in secret off-the-books allocations;
- at the least, having full knowledge and allowing the 9/11 attack to happen; then rigging the 9/11 Commission to whitewash the investigation and leave the most important questions unanswered;
- promoting the 2005 Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act; now hurting homeowners in trouble and facing foreclosure; others as well from lost jobs and illness;
- trying to privatize Social Security for Wall Street; to end the most important federal program keeping millions of seniors out of poverty;
- ending Medicare through huge annual premium increases; gradually eliminating Medicaid as well for the indigent;
- hiring journalists to be paid propagandists;
- supporting ending Net Neutrality and allowing service providers to censor content;
- vetoing stem cell research legislation twice;
- supporting the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 to give loggers license to clear cut;
- spending billions on "missile defense" that, in fact, is for offense; provocatively installing it close to Russian and Chinese borders;
- wanting a constitutional amendment declaring marriage to be only between a man and a woman;
- adding a signing statement to the 2006 Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act asserting executive authority to open US mail;

- supporting the 2005 Energy Policy Act and 2007 Energy Independence and Security Act that mandate biofuel production and use; a scam to create food shortages; let prices rise and enrich agribusiness; they're also a genetic Trojan horse for Ag biotech giants like Monsanto to colonize our fuel and food system, raise prices, control output, and make it all GMO - known to harm human health;
- favoring the abolition of the separation of church and state;
- supporting nuclear proliferation for commercial and military purposes;
- signing the 2006 Secure Fence Act to build a multi-billion dollar barrier on our southern border with Mexico to deter unwanted Latino immigrants;
- in 2003, exempting 20 million acres of wetlands and streams from Clean Water Act (CWA) protections;
- letting the dollar depreciate 40% from 2002 - 2008 and now manipulating it higher to facilitate reckless money creation and borrowing; and
- allowing market manipulation to let oil and gasoline prices skyrocket to benefit Big Oil allies.

There's more as in the administration's final days George Bush is rushing through new "midnight regulations" that will be very hard to change. They include:

- allowing uranium mining near the Grand Canyon;
- permitting loaded firearms in national parks;
- prohibiting injured consumers from suing negligent manufacturers in state courts; requiring pro-business federal ones to handle them;
- further gutting the Endangered Species Act by no longer requiring government scientists to assess how imperiled species will be impacted by mining, logging, drilling, highway building, and other development; climate change and other environmental considerations will also no longer apply;
- opening two million new acres of mountain state lands to shale oil development;
- opening additional acres of undeveloped lands to mining;
- letting Big Coal dump waste from mountaintop mining into neighboring streams and valleys; letting the industry build plants next to some sites formerly restricted for environmental safety;
- trashing the Clean Water Act by letting Agribusiness dump, or let seep, animal waste into US waterways; another new regulation will exempt factory farms from reporting air pollution from animal waste;
- exempting big chemical companies from monitoring their lead emissions; also classifying three billion pounds of hazardous waste as "recycling" and letting another 200 million pounds be reclassified as "fuel;"

- restricting the government’s ability to protect workers from exposure to toxic chemicals and other substances; also weakening the Family and Medical Leave Act to make it harder for workers to have time off for serious illness; another favor to truckers to permit longer driver hours on the road – up to 11 hours a day with only 34 downtime hours between hauls;
- a vaguely written rule to make it harder for pharmacies and health care providers to participate in abortions; also to provide information on contraception, family planning and artificial insemination;
- limiting vision and dental care for over 50 million low income Medicaid recipients to make hard-pressed states and poor people cover more of the cost;
- relaxing air pollution standards near national parks;
- enlisting state and local police to illegally spy for the federal government; and perhaps more still in the administration’s final days – to add an exclamation point to an ugly legacy.

Once these rules are published in the Federal Register, the new administration will be hard-pressed to expunge or change them. Doing so takes time, in some cases years, at a time the economic crisis, foreign wars, and other priorities take precedence.

The Center for Public Integrity published its “Broken Government By the Numbers” under George Bush. Some include:

- 45 million (more likely 50) with no health care and tens of millions more with too little;
- 60% of EPA scientists report political interference with their work;
- of 1273 whistleblower complaints from 2002 – 2008, all but 17 were dismissed – a mere 1.3%;
- 190,000 missing US-supplied weapons in Iraq;
- \$212.3 million in Halliburton overcharges for oil construction work in Iraq plus countless millions more for its other services and products; much the same is true for other companies with close administration ties;
- record fiscal deficits, expected to reach or exceed \$1 trillion for FY 2009 and successive years thereafter;
- a record \$9.91 billion for government secrecy in 2007;
- 800 government laptops with sensitive information lost by FBI, DEA, and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives;
- 30 million pounds of tainted beef recalled in 2007 and concern for how much more is never found or reported;
- DOD weapons acquisition budget exceeded by over \$300 billion plus trillions of unaccounted for defense allocations;
- less than 3% of US electricity needs provided by alternative energy;

- the horrific toll in Iraq and Afghanistan - to US forces and local populations;
- \$100 billion or more in annual federal tax revenues lost by letting corporations and the rich use off-shore tax havens;
- \$60 billion in annual Medicare fraud;
- lax FDA, FAA, OSHA and other government agency enforcement endangering public health and safety;
- 20,000 annual US deaths from power plant and diesel vehicle pollution;
- 60,000 newborns a year at risk for neurological problems because of mercury emissions from coal-fired plants;
- 935 “demonstrably false statements” in the run-up to the Iraq war;
- 760,800 disability claims backlogged and awaiting hearings by the Social Security Administration as of October 2008, and
- 806,000 veterans’ disability claims in 2006 (mostly from the Iraq and Afghan wars); the backlog reached 400,000 in February 2007.

These and other policies, measures, rules (or lack of them), actions, and shoddy under-performance favor the rich and harm most others. In addition, militarizing the nation is heading it for insolvency, tyranny and ruin - from overreach to lawlessness to massive corruption and fraud.

The Bush legacy. Tainted from start to finish. Herbert Hoover, Augustus Caesar and Caligula combined, and now on Barack Obama’s plate to handle. It’s doubtful he can or will try. Beware of promised change. It usually guarantees little, and none on what matters most. A lot rides on that being wrong at the most perilous time in our history when the task awaiting the new president may be more than any new head of state can handle.

Given Obama’s rogue team, what James Petras calls “ambitious power-driven operatives (who represent) the biggest threat to world peace and to US democratic values in recent history,” expect his policy initiatives to advance the worst of them under George Bush, and soon enough we’ll know we were “Fooled Again.”

A Final Comment and Tribute to Iraqi Journalist Muntazer al-Zaidi’s Heroism

We heard the story and saw the clip. It’s all over the world about a man who’s now a hero to millions. Al Jazeera explained that: “In Iraqi culture, throwing shoes at someone is a sign of contempt and (al-Zaidi’s action) is likely to serve as a lasting reminder of the widespread opposition to the US-led invasion (and occupation) of Iraq - the conflict which has come to define Bush’s presidency.”

At the same time he shouted: “This is the farewell kiss you dog....this is from the widows, the orphans and those who were killed in Iraq.” According to Musa Barhoumeh, editor of Jordan’s independent Al-Gahd newspaper: “Throwing the shoes at Bush was the best goodbye kiss ever....it expresses how Iraqis and other Arabs hate” this man.

Al-Zaidi is now imprisoned. He faces prosecution by the Iraqi "government" under three articles of the country's criminal code and may be sentenced to up to 15 years - for insulting a foreign head of state, the Iraqi prime minister, and possibly the more serious charge of assault.

He's been badly beaten, struck on the head with a rifle butt, has a broken arm and ribs, facial and other cuts, and reportedly has been tortured. A signature campaign is circulating to free him. It's easily accessed online. Sign it in solidarity with him, for the many others he represents, ending the Iraq occupation, liberation and human rights for its people, and as a powerful parting gesture against George Bush, his ugly administration, and its tainted and criminal legacy.

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