

Burning the Cradle of Civilization

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

“I have evidence that the Americans were on a par with Nazi Germany with its actions in the Persian Gulf. I have documents in my possession, which support my assertions. . . . This is on the basis that on-going acts of aggression in Iraq and systematically applied war crimes provide a moral equivalent between the US and Nazi Germany.”—Royal Air Force, Dr. Malcolm Kendall-Smith (sentenced to eight months in jail for refusal to go to Iraq.) [[Source](#)]

Depending on the scope of use, mythmaking in imperialism can be a powerful instrument to rewrite history and influence issues of war and peace. Take for example the U.S. (and other imperialist states including Israel) mythmaking on the extent of Nazi violence. Immediately after the demise of the Third Reich, the ideologically motivated elevation of Nazism to a “universal” symbol of atrocities has acquired an ever-inflating mythological dimension.

But as colonialist Western countries kept building up the myth of Nazism as a cosmic embodiment of evil and violence, they downgraded to irrelevance their own embodiment of violence as highlighted by a multi-century history of mass extermination of colonized peoples and ongoing imperialist wars against Arab and Muslim states.

Pointedly, as it is an immutable historical fact that Nazi Germany and Japan committed massive atrocities before and during WWII, it is also an immutable historical fact that Germany’s adversaries: Britain, USSR, and the United States committed equal, if not more heinous atrocities, before, during, and after that same war.

During the war for instance, the nuclear holocaust of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the incineration of Dresden, Berlin, and Tokyo made part of premeditated atrocity patterns that went beyond military imperatives required for prevailing. After the war ended, Dwight D. Eisenhower committed atrocities similar to that of Nazism when thousands of German prisoners of war perished when he gave his tacit consent to starve them to death by reducing daily caloric intake to a dangerous level or by allowing them to perish by other means. [1]

Yet, for over 60 years since the end of WWII, U.S. imperialism and its entertainment branch (Hollywood) kept feeding and flooding the public with fictional stories about unmatched German perfidy and innate violence, all while equally vile atrocities against countless non-white nations and peoples went unmentioned and rarely penetrated popular conscious.

To illustrate this, consider the following: how many times have we seen films depicting a convoy of German military trucks carrying prisoners of war? The following is a typical scene: the convoy stops and prisoners are ordered to get down and walk away; suddenly a stern German soldier appears on the back of a truck standing behind a machine gun and begins to mow them down. Now, compare that depiction to the American massacre of Vietnamese

villagers at My Lai; how many of us have seen this or other episodes of American violence in Vietnam depicted in films, foreign or American?

In the current analysis of the American bombardment of Iraq in 1991, I am not going to debate, refute, or uphold that Nazi violence has inherent qualities that makes it less abhorrent than the one employed by the United States in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and elsewhere. What I intend to demonstrate, instead, is that American violence in Iraq has qualities that belies and contradicts American claims of civilized conduct and the possession of superior moral standards over other civilizations, and irrevocably puts the American brand of violence in a category by itself.

Once this demonstration is in place, the resulting picture would be uncompromising: by all standards of impartial comparison and considering the time we live in, the American model of supremacist violence supersedes by its magnitude, cruelty, fascism, cynicism, motives, myths, rationales, execution, details, and ideology, any other form of violence throughout history.

Moreover, just because the United States did not build crematories to burn its victims in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere, it does not mean that it did not burn them by using alternative methods such as massive bombardments of defenseless cities and the burning of their inhabitants with white phosphorous, Napalm, and carpet-bombing with bunker-buster bombs.

For example, when the American Hitler of turn burned the Cradle of Civilization in 1991, he did it by dropping over 80,000 tons or 250,000 heavy weight bombs. If that did not constitute a holocaust (from the Greek: holokaustos: burned whole) what else would? Describing that bombardment, the [Antiwar Committee](#), writes:

The war on Iraq was portrayed in the U.S. as a war without casualties. Yet, on the first day of air strikes against Iraq (Jan. 17, 1991), the U.S. dropped explosives *equivalent to the explosive power of the Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Throughout the duration of the bombing, explosives equivalent to seven nuclear bombs were dropped*, in addition to internationally banned biological and chemical weapons. (1)

Also, the 1991 war on Iraq marked the first time the U.S. used ammunition tipped with Depleted Uranium (DU). These bullets and anti-tank shells pierce armor with the side effect of disintegrating into thousands of tiny radioactive particles on impact. Although the Iraq Health Ministry noted an increase in cancer cases of over 60% since 1991, *a World Health Organization study was derailed on November 29 due to a lobbying campaign by Washington.* [[Source](#)] [Italics added]

As a mechanism leading to intervention, mythmaking has a peculiar duration: it precedes and then accompanies the intervention up to a specified time. Once the physical phase of the intervention is completed, the myth, as a progenitor for the rationale to intervene, begins to vanish as it never existed thus leaving the space free for the creation of new myths that, in turn, would create a set of additional rationales to justify the next planned moves.

There were countless myths in the history of the U.S. colonialist imperialism, each of which left thousands or hundreds of thousands of people dead. Sampling: Indian (Original Peoples) savages, black inferiority to implement slavery; Spanish treachery, civilizing the Filipinos,

Japan attacked the U.S. for no reason, the atomic attack against Japan to save American life, the communist domino theory in South East Asia, Palestinian “terrorism,” Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction, “democratizing” the Arabs, and so on. In its aggression against Iraq in 1991, the United States of George H. W. Bush added one more item to its long list of myths: “smart” bombing.

American military planners invented that phrase to insinuate that the American bombing of Iraq was discriminate to minimize civilian deaths. The insinuation is preposterous: minimizing civilian deaths does not alter the fact that mass murder in any magnitude is still criminal. To argue this, would an Iraqi individual who lost his or her family as a “collateral damage” accept that loss because determined criminals sitting in Washington, D.C., decided it was an acceptable damage?

Nonetheless, what is “smart” bombing, and does that mean traditional bombing is “stupid”?

Briefly, the imperialist idiom, “smart” bombing, revolves around an applied concept in military technology: 1) computer-guided missiles that recognize previously downloaded profiles of targeted buildings, as in Tomahawk missiles, and 2) laser-guided bombs as dropped from jetfighters.

But was the bombing of Iraq, “smart”? No. In fact, out of the 250,000 bombs dropped on Iraq, only 244 were “smart” and if you add to that the 88 tele-guided Tomahawked missiles, the total would be 332. This means *less than one percent* of all bombs were “smart.” As you can see, the bombing was not “smart” at all, and the incremental, massive destruction of Iraq in 42 days of bombing proved it.

To downplay the news of Iraqi deaths, U.S. war planners, in an infantile public relations stunt, discarded the term “smart bombing” and adopted “surgical strike,” as if a name change indicting precision would transform the essence of a bombardment whereby the United States dropped bombs that exceeded all bombs dropped in WWII. This is how an imperialist CNN dealt with the notion of “smart bombing”:

But “smart weapons” — the military calls them precision-guided munitions (PGMs) — weren’t widely used in 1991. Only 244 laser-guided bombs and 88 cruise missiles hit Iraq, out of a total of some 250,000 bombs dropped during the war. But while the venerable B-52 dropped tons of old-fashioned explosives on troop concentrations in northern and southern Iraq, the strikes on Baghdad were relatively few and tightly targeted. *The rise of smart weapons led to a new military theory — “surgical strikes.”*

Two raids of 300 B-17 bombers could not achieve with 3,000 bombs what two F-117s can do with only four,” Gen. Buster C. Glosson, the planner of the Gulf War air strikes, wrote in 1992. “Of the 85,000 tons of bombs used in the Gulf War, only 8,000 tons (less than 10 percent) were PGMs, yet they accounted for 75 percent of the damage.” More precisely targeted weapons, the argument goes, *harm fewer civilians*. [Italics added] [Source](#)

Notice how CNN praised the B-52s that wreaked havoc on Iraq with the flattering adjective “venerable,” thus alluding to their exterminating use against hapless Vietnamese. Also, notice how the writers of news tried to alter the perception on the scale of damage inflicted on the Iraqi capital by inserting the phrase, “the strikes on Baghdad were relatively few and tightly targeted,” implying that “surgical” bombing was working.

As I explained, the theatrical posturing to change the name of means of killing from “smart” to “surgical” is as futile as is imperialism itself: death is still the same. In addition, purporting that targeted weapons “harm few civilians,” reveals in the most startling way that the American ideology of extermination has deep roots in the American military psyche, in that, death (in any proportion) of the attacked population, has no relevance in the calculation of the American political and military establishments.

Having thus far established the American determination to 1) attack Iraq, 2) go beyond the mere “liberation” of Kuwait to destroy it as a nation, and 3) having delineated the mythmaking that surrounded the bombing, it is now mandatory to ask some questions.

Was the destruction of Iraq’s water and sewage systems a strategic American aim to create a cataclysmic health crisis among the surviving population? Did the U.S. anticipate the outcome of its deliberate bombardment? And if so, did U.S. planners intend to use the economic sanctions as a means to amplify the effects of that mayhem? The answer to all these questions is a loud, resonating yes.

Because of the critical importance of my assertion, I am introducing Thomas J. Nagy (Associate Professor of Expert Systems, George Washington University) to support it. Citing U.S. official documents, Nagy wrote an indispensable article, [The Secret Behind the Sanctions: How the US Intentionally Destroyed Iraq’s Water Supply](#). In it, he reported on a file declassified by the Department of Defense, [IRAQ Water Treatment Vulnerabilities](#). Nagy writes:

Over the last two years, I’ve discovered documents of the Defense Intelligence Agency proving beyond a doubt that, contrary to the Geneva Convention, the U.S. government intentionally used sanctions against Iraq to degrade the country’s water supply after the Gulf War. *The United States knew the cost that civilian Iraqis, mostly children, would pay, and it went ahead anyway.* [Italics added]

The primary document, “Iraq Water Treatment Vulnerabilities,” is dated January 22, 1991. It spells out how sanctions will prevent Iraq from supplying clean water to its citizens.

Iraq depends on importing specialized equipment and some chemicals to purify its water supply, most of which is heavily mineralized and frequently brackish to saline,” the document states. *“With no domestic sources of both water treatment replacement parts and some essential chemicals, Iraq will continue attempts to circumvent United Nations Sanctions to import these vital commodities. Failing to secure supplies will result in a shortage of pure drinking water for much of the population. This could lead to increased incidences, if not epidemics, of disease.”* [Italics added]

The document notes that the importation of chlorine “has been embargoed” by sanctions. “Recent reports indicate the chlorine supply is critically low.”

Food and medicine will also be affected, the document states. “Food processing, electronic, and, particularly, pharmaceutical plants require extremely pure water that is free from biological contaminants,” it says.

The document addresses *possible Iraqi countermeasures to obtain drinkable water despite sanctions.* [Italics added]

Iraq conceivably could truck water from the mountain reservoirs to urban areas. But the

capability to gain significant quantities is extremely limited,” the document states. “The amount of pipe on hand and the lack of pumping stations would limit laying pipelines to these reservoirs. Moreover, without chlorine purification, the water still would contain biological pollutants. *Some affluent Iraqis could obtain their own minimally adequate supply of good quality water from Northern Iraqi sources. If boiled, the water could be safely consumed. Poorer Iraqis and industries requiring large quantities of pure water would not be able to meet their needs.*” [Italics added]

As an alternative, “Iraq could try convincing the United Nations or individual countries to exempt water treatment supplies from sanctions for humanitarian reasons,” the document says. “It probably also is attempting to purchase supplies by using some sympathetic countries as fronts. If such attempts fail, Iraqi alternatives are not adequate for their national requirements.” [Italics added]

Recently, I have come across other DIA documents that confirm the Pentagon’s monitoring of the degradation of Iraq’s water supply. These documents have not been publicized until now.

The first one in this batch is called “Disease Information,” and is also dated January 22, 1991. At the top, it says, “[Subject: Effects of Bombing on Disease Occurrence in Baghdad.](#)” The analysis is blunt: “Increased incidence of diseases will be attributable to degradation of normal preventive medicine, waste disposal, water purification/distribution, electricity, and decreased ability to control disease outbreaks. Any urban area in Iraq that has received infrastructure damage will have similar problems.”

The second DIA document, “[Disease Outbreaks in Iraq.](#)” is dated February 21, 1990, but the year is clearly a typo and should be 1991. It states: “*Conditions are favorable for communicable disease outbreaks, particularly in major urban areas affected by coalition bombing.*” It adds: “*Infectious disease prevalence in major Iraqi urban areas targeted by coalition bombing (Baghdad, Basrah) undoubtedly has increased since the beginning of Desert Storm. . . . Current public health problems are attributable to the reduction of normal preventive medicine, waste disposal, water purification and distribution, electricity, and the decreased ability to control disease outbreaks.*” [Italics added]

This document lists the “most likely diseases during next sixty-ninety days (descending order): diarrheal diseases (particularly children); acute respiratory illnesses (colds and influenza); typhoid; hepatitis A (particularly children); measles, diphtheria, and pertussis (particularly children); meningitis, including meningococcal (particularly children); cholera (possible, but less likely).”

The third document in this series, “[Medical Problems in Iraq.](#)” is dated March 15, 1991. It says: “Communicable diseases in Baghdad are more widespread than usually observed during this time of the year and are linked to the poor sanitary conditions (contaminated water supplies and improper sewage disposal) resulting from the war. According to a United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)/World Health Organization report, the quantity of potable water is less than 5 percent of the original supply, there are no operational water and sewage treatment plants, and the reported incidence of diarrhea is four times above normal levels. Additionally, respiratory infections are on the rise. Children particularly have been affected by these diseases.”

Perhaps to put a gloss on things, the document states, “There are indications that the

situation is improving and that the population is coping with the degraded conditions.” But it adds: “Conditions in Baghdad remain favorable for communicable disease outbreaks.”

The fourth document, “[Status of Disease at Refugee Camps](#),” is dated May 1991. The summary says, “Cholera and measles have emerged at refugee camps. Further infectious diseases will spread due to inadequate water treatment and poor sanitation.”

The reason for this outbreak is clearly stated again. “The main causes of infectious diseases, particularly diarrhea, dysentery, and upper respiratory problems, are poor sanitation and unclean water. These diseases primarily afflict the old and young children.”

The fifth document, “Health Conditions in Iraq, June 1991,” is still heavily censored. All I can make out is that the DIA sent a source “to assess health conditions and determine the most critical medical needs of Iraq. Source observed that Iraqi medical system was in considerable disarray, medical facilities had been extensively looted, and almost all medicines were in critically short supply.”

The protein deficiency disease kwashiorkor was observed in Iraq “for the first time,” the document adds. “Gastroenteritis was killing children. . . . In the south, 80 percent of the deaths were children (with the exception of Al Amarah, where 60 percent of deaths were children).”

The final document is “Iraq: Assessment of Current Health Threats and Capabilities,” and it is dated November 15, 1991. *This one has a distinct damage-control feel to it.* Here is how it begins: “Restoration of Iraq’s public health services and shortages of major medical materiel remain dominant international concerns. Both issues apparently are being exploited by Saddam Hussein in an effort to keep public opinion firmly against the U.S. and its Coalition allies and to direct blame away from the Iraqi government.” [Italics added]

Having explored how the United States premeditatedly destroyed Iraq’s vital infrastructures (civilian, industrial, agricultural, and military) and killed hundred of thousands of its people, the question remains: Was the United States following any blueprint?

Next: Part 45: How the U.S. engineered the Iraqi holocaust

Notes

[1] James Bacque, *Other losses: The shocking truth behind the mass death of disarmed German soldiers under General Eisenhower’s command*, Prima Publishing, 1991

Recommended reading

Paul Walker, [The Myth of Surgical Bombing in the Gulf War](#)

Anthony Arnove, Editor, *Iraq under siege*, South End Press, 2000

Cynthia Peters, Editor, *Collateral Damage*, South End Press, 1992

Stephen Rosskamm Shalom, *Imperial Alibis*, South End Press, 1993

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