

Collateral Damage is Murder

By [Michael Boldin](#)

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

Collateral damage is nothing more than a euphemism for state-sponsored mass murder. It is the term given to people killed in military actions who were “not intentionally targeted.” In reality, this is pure propaganda. It has always been morally just to protect innocent people against aggressors. But, on the other hand, it has never been moral, nor has it ever been necessary, to bomb cities filled with innocent people.

We rarely see the faces or know the identities of those reduced to the status of collateral damage. It is a gray area where the victim becomes less than a person. Interestingly enough, during the Vietnam War, both Henry Kissinger and Robert McNamara used the term “integers” to describe those civilian deaths that they preferred not to have publicized as human beings. Such is the amazing power of doublespeak.

Civilians killed incidental to what the dominant power refers to as “progress” are called collateral damage, while those killed intentionally are victims of “terrorism.” But all too often, unfortunately, it’s quite difficult to tell the difference between the two. Governments regularly do one and call it the other, but the end result is still the same; dead civilians. So, no matter name you give it (War on Terrorism, Spreading Democracy, Regime Change, Defending our Freedoms), when war is taken to a civilian population, isn’t it nothing more than terrorism and murder, even if you later call the victims collateral damage?

Come to think of it, there is probably no term that is more repugnant and immoral than the one that discards the importance of other people’s lives are mere collateral damage; especially when their deaths become incidental to the conquest of some military or political objective. As collateral damage, these people suffer the same outcome as fat discarded by a butcher.

It is important to note, however, that those who use the term “collateral damage” strategically always seem to apply it to foreigners; such as Iraqis and Afghanis. Even when a two-ton, laser-guided bomb is dropped on a small village, it’s claimed that the mass deaths were “inadvertent” and “tragic,” and that they could have been prevented if the “terrorists” would just stop fighting back, or as some of us call it, resisting. So, rather than treating these people as human beings victimized by evil actions, they are simply written off as collateral damage, i.e., rubble.

No moral person would ever dream of referring to a policeman killed while trying to save people from the World Trade Center as collateral damage, even though that policeman was also an “inadvertent” victim, and not the direct target of the attack. We can all acknowledge the fact that the policeman was a real person, and not just an unfortunate statistic. That person was the victim of a heinous act of violence which caused his death. Likewise, the innocent victims of our government’s actions in the “war on terror” are more

than a statistic. They are also victims of heinous acts of violence.

Apologists for American soldiers killing people in Iraq would like us to believe that their killings are justifiable because they're done in "self-defense." The awful truth is that most killing in the course of this or any war is simply murder disguised as self defense. Otherwise, we'd have to accept as morally valid, a thought process similar to this:

Those Iraqis were trying to kill ME so I just had to kill THEM. Like my leaders said, they were supposed to welcome me as a liberator, and let me secure their country for them. I'm here to help these poor people, and all they do is shoot at me!

Let's try to simplify this self-defense argument. U.S. soldiers participate in the invasion of Iraq, which is a country thousands of miles away from home that has never attacked America. The soldiers have their weapons loaded, with fingers on the trigger. Meanwhile, there are Iraqi citizens who object to their country being invaded by a foreign army. They proceed to load their own weapons, and point them at invading U.S. soldiers. American soldiers then shoot and kill the "foreigners" in their home country. According to American politicians and military leaders, such killings are not murder; they're self-defense. These "insurgents" should have just given up and surrendered peacefully.

With this type of thinking, I suppose that if a person were to stand on your driveway and aim a loaded weapon at you, they would be justified in killing you if you were to point a gun at them. They, and not you, under this code of collateral damage, would be the ones using self-defense! Oh, you might say that the robber was trespassing, right? U.S. troops are doing the same, are they not? We've heard it called regime change, spreading democracy, fighting terrorism and more. But, what else can it be called other than trespassing? It is nothing more than an invasion, which is trespassing at the barrel of a gun.

When a State drops bombs on another country and brings about the inevitable deaths of innocents, it cannot be exempted from liability just because it didn't want to kill them. It can never be innocent itself, whatever the justification. It can never be anything but fully responsible for each and every death it causes. Reducing men, women and children to statistics will never eliminate the overall culpability of the aggressor State.

The obvious assumption that the murderers make is that *our goals* and *our lives* have more importance than that of any foreigners, and therefore, in order to achieve these goals, we have the *right* to murder them without repercussion. Because there is never a penalty for the "winners," it must be a right...right? But what kind of right could this be? Is it an inherent right, a legal right, a moral right? In fact, it's none of these; it is simply a right of superior power. This is the same kind of right that has been exercised by tyrants throughout history; giving them justification to murder millions to achieve a "greater good."

So, these unfortunate people, the collateral damage of war, have been forced to become martyrs for the unchecked power that caused their deaths. They have been discarded for the sake of the higher cause; not based on their own beliefs, but ours. It should be quite self-evident by this point in history, that anyone who claims to believe in freedom and equality could never use the phrase "collateral damage" without being an utter hypocrite. Such hubris must not continue forever. The murder of innocent people is murder, period.

Yes, it is true that innocents die when war is waged. Yes, innocent people will always die when their cities are bombed and their homes are invaded. This is all the reason that should be needed to vehemently oppose every aggressive war that our government engages in!

In the end it doesn't matter what you call it. A half-million Iraqi children who died as a result of "sanctions" don't care what you call it. They, and their brethren who are dying today, don't care about the doublespeak used by so-called scholars, party loyalists, military apologists, or any other supporters of our brutal wars - they're dead.

Written by Michael Boldin [[send him email](#)], who is an outspoken critic of the American political system, and a senior editor and contributing writer for www.populistamerica.com

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