

COMMEMORATION. Sixth Year of US Invasion: Iraq: Deaths Rise, Pretense We Care Fades

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Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [IRAQ REPORT](#)

Thus far, [4,261](#) members of the U.S. military have been killed in Iraq and [67,237](#) wounded, not counting many diagnosed after leaving Iraq, including estimated hundreds of thousands with [traumatic brain injury](#), hundreds of thousands with [post-traumatic stress disorder](#), unknown numbers poisoned by [hexavalent chromium](#) or [depleted uranium](#), also not counting the many victims of [murder](#) by veterans unable to stop doing their jobs, not counting the [one in three](#) women in the military sexually assaulted by men in the military, and not counting [6,570](#) suicides, and twice that many attempts, per year by veterans, and rising. Suffering and death for U.S. troops resulting from the war on Iraq is rising, not diminishing. Veterans are becoming ill, homeless, murderous, and suicidal.

Meanwhile, [for Iraqis](#), years of homelessness, imprisonment, lack of electricity, lack of medicine, injuries, trauma, lost family members, and poisoned environments are taking their toll. Of 1.2 million killed, 2,000 have been doctors. There are 4.7 million refugees, including 20,000 doctors. Almost a third of Iraq's children suffer from malnutrition, and virtually all Iraqis lack adequate medical services, electricity, and — in many areas — drinking water. Cancer and miscarriages have increased dramatically. While violence is down, the same may not be true of deaths and suffering.

While the U.S. media obsesses over teeny fractions of the trillions of dollars the U.S. government is giving to bankers, 130,000 troops and 160,000 contractors continue to occupy Iraq in the name of the United States, and very few Iraqis are convinced they will ever leave, while even fewer want them to stay. The [protest](#) on Saturday at the Pentagon was smaller than on past anniversaries of the invasion of Iraq, apparently limited to those who do not leave it to their televisions to decide what is important to them. Very few [voices](#) in the U.S. media address the topic with any seriousness at all. A [fake New York Times](#) declared the war over in November as soon as a different brand was put on the "commander in chief," but the corporate media, congress, and most of the public has accepted that story with a straight face.

Speaking of New York Times stunts, a year ago this week a former member of the German parliament named [Jurgen Todenhofer](#) placed [three full-page ads](#) in the New York Times setting out ten theses for reforming the West's understanding of the Muslim world. Todenhofer has now published a book that includes those theses in the conclusion. I recommend reading the whole book, which carries the disturbing title "Why Do You Kill: The Untold Story of the Iraqi Resistance."

The book recounts a trip that Todenhofer made last year to Ramadi, Iraq, where he met with

resistance fighters. The term Iraqi resistance fighter is not even familiar to Americans. We generally hear about “insurgents”. Just as “weapons of mass destruction” was a term meant to blur an important distinction between nuclear and other kinds of weapons, “insurgent” is meant to conflate those legally fighting against an occupying army with those targeting civilians. The people Todenhofer speaks with place the highest value on protecting civilians, but make it their job to kill American soldiers in Iraq. Todenhofer does not defend what they do or claim to have verified everything they say. But what they say is new, interesting, and almost certainly contains some elements of the truth, just as the statements of the Pentagon and its embedded pundits may contain some elements of the truth. Todenhofer does not spare us the horrible stories of how the people he meets came to join the resistance, the murder and abuse of their loved ones by Americans, the desperation, fear, anger, and hatred. He fails to discuss the presence of nonviolent resistance in Iraq and fails to adequately appeal for it. But he paints a picture for us of how members of the armed resistance think about what they are doing. One Iraqi tells him:

“One of my nephews, Zaid, was given the job of setting off the bomb. As the convoy approached, an old man sat down on a stone just opposite the spot where the bomb had been hidden. Zaid stared at him in dismay and waved to him from a distance to try to make him move. In just a few seconds he would have to trigger the detonation. Zaid started to shake and tears were trickling down his face. When the convoy was level with the bomb, he knew he had to set the bomb off at once. But he did not activate the bomb. White as a sheet, he slowly opened his fist, careful not to touch the activator. He let the convoy pass, unharmed. He went to his comrades and handed them the activator without saying a word. They all embraced him because he has spared the old man.”

Another resistance fighter gives Todenhofer a typical view of the forces at play in Iraq:

“The resistance is not fighting to establish an Islamic theocratic state — unlike both Al Qaeda, which is financed by Saudi ‘charitable organizations,’ and the radical Shi-ite militias, which are mostly funded by Iran. The resistance wants to install a secular constitution ... For Mohammed, terrorists are people who kill civilians for political reasons. He therefore considers Al Qaeda, the death squads run by certain politicians, and the U.S. government all to be terrorists.”

Another Iraqi describes a different sort of relationship to U.S. troops:

“His tribe helped a number of American soldiers desert and smuggled them across the border into Jordan. The GIs paid an average of 600 dollars just to get out of Iraq. And they had to hand over their uniforms and weapons. But they were happy to do so. In exchange they were given an Iraqi dishdasha. Abu Bassim says he himself helped five American soldiers flee.”

The same Iraqi young man described as refraining from pressing a detonator above hammers home the bloody consequences of Americans permitting the impression to be made that Bush actually defeated Kerry in 2004:

“I ask Zaid if it did not terrify him to have the power to decide whether young American soldiers will live or die. Zaid clenches his teeth. The American soldiers did not think twice before targeting and shooting his brothers, he

retorts. He knows that many people in America are against this war, but they re-elected Bush despite his lies and despite the death of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and of many American soldiers ... I ask if he ever thinks of the parents of the young American soldiers he has killed. Those parents and even those sons might have been against this war, just as he is. Zaid looks at me long and hard, and answers with another question: 'Have these people ever thought about my family, even for a moment?'"

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David Swanson is the author of the upcoming book "Daybreak: Undoing the Imperial Presidency and Forming a More Perfect Union" by Seven Stories Press and of the introduction to "The 35 Articles of Impeachment and the Case for Prosecuting George W. Bush" published by Feral House and available at Amazon.com. Swanson is Co-Founder of AfterDowningStreet.org, creator of ProsecuteBushCheney.org and Washington Director of Democrats.com, a board member of Progressive Democrats of America, the Backbone Campaign, and Voters for Peace, a convenor of the legislative working group of United for Peace and Justice, and chair of the accountability and prosecution working group of United for Peace and Justice.

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