

Death Mask: The Deliberate Disintegration of Iraq

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

The recent revelations about the [virulent spread of death squads](#) ravaging Iraq have only confirmed for many people the lethal incompetence of the Bush Regime, whose brutal bungling appears to have unleashed [the demon of sectarian strife](#) in the conquered land. The general reaction, even among some war supporters, has been bitter derision: "Jeez, these bozos couldn't boil an egg without causing collateral damage."

But what if the truth is even more sinister? What if [this murderous chaos](#) is not the fruit of rank incompetence but instead the desired product of carefully crafted, efficiently managed White House policy?

Investigative journalist Max Fuller marshals a convincing case for this dread conclusion [in a remarkable work of synthesis](#) drawn from information buried in reams of mainstream news stories and public Pentagon documents. Piling fact on damning fact, he shows that the vast majority of atrocities now attributed to "rogue" Shiite and Sunni militias are in fact the work of government-controlled commandos and "special forces," trained by Americans, "advised" by Americans and run largely by former CIA assets, Global Research reports.

We first [reported here in June 2003](#) that the U.S. was already hiring Saddam's security muscle for "special ops" against the nascent insurgency and re-opening his torture haven, Abu Ghraib. Meanwhile, powerful Shiite militias - including Talibanic religious extremists armed and trained by Iran - were loosed upon the land. As direct "Coalition" rule gave way to various "interim" and "elected" Iraqi governments, these violent gangs were formally incorporated into the Iraqi Interior Ministry, where the supposedly inimical Sunni and Shiite units often share officers and divvy up territories.

Bush helpfully supplied these savage gangs - who are killing dozens of people each week, Knight-Ridder reports - with American advisers who made their "counter-insurgency" bones forming right-wing death squads in Colombia and El Salvador. Indeed, Bush insiders have openly bragged of "riding with the bad boys" and [exercising the "Salvador option,"](#) lauding the Reagan-backed counter-insurgency program that slaughtered tens of thousands of civilians, Newsweek reports. Bush has also provided a "state-of-the-art command, control and communications center" to coordinate the operation of his Iraqi "commandos," as the Pentagon's own news site, DefendAmerica, reports. The Iraqi people can go without electricity, fuel and medicine, but by God, Bush's "bad boys" will roll in clover as they carry out their murders and mutilations.

For months, stories from the Shiite south and Sunni center have reported the same phenomenon: people being summarily seized by large groups of armed men wearing police commando uniforms, packing high-priced Glocks, using sophisticated radios and driving

Toyota Land Cruisers with police markings. The captives are taken off and never seen again – unless they turn up with a load of other corpses days or weeks later, bearing marks of the gruesome tortures they suffered before the ritual shot in the head. Needless to say, these mass murders under police aegis are rarely investigated by the police.

Earlier this year, one enterprising Knight-Ridder reporter, Yasser Salihee, actually found several eyewitnesses willing to testify to [the involvement of the U.S.-backed commandos](#) in 12 such murders. The offer was shrugged off by the Interior Ministry's spokesman – an American “adviser” and veteran bones-maker from the Colombian ops. In the end, it didn't matter; Salihee was shot dead by a U.S. sniper at a checkpoint a few days afterwards.

The Bushists may have been forced to ditch their idiotic fantasies of “cakewalking” into a compliant satrapy, but they have by no means abandoned their chief goals in the war: milking Iraq dry and planting a [permanent military “footprint”](#) on the nation's neck. If direct control through a plausible puppet is no longer possible, then [fomenting bloody chaos and sectarian strife](#) is the best way to weaken the state. The Bushists are happy to make common cause with thugs and zealots in order to prevent the establishment of a strong national government that might balk at the ongoing “privatizations” that have continued apace behind the smokescreen of violence, and the planned [opening of Iraq's oil reserves](#) to select foreign investors – a potential transfer of some \$200 billion of Iraqi people's wealth into the hands of a few Bush cronies, the Independent reports.

The violence is already dividing the country into [more rigid sectarian enclaves](#), the New York Times reports, as Shiites flee Sunni commandos and Sunnis flee Shiite militias in the grim tag-team of their joint endeavor. It's all grist for the Bushist mill: an atomized, terrorized, internally riven society is much easier to manipulate. And of course, [a steady stream of bloodshed](#) provides a justification for maintaining a substantial American military presence, even as politic plans for partial “withdrawal” are bandied about.

There's nothing new in this; Bush is simply following a well-thumbed playbook. For example, in 1953 the CIA bankrolled Islamic fundamentalists and secular goon squads to destabilize the democratic government of Iran – which selfishly wanted to control its own oil – and pave the way for the puppet Shah, as [the agency's own histories recount](#). In 1971, CIA officials admitted carrying out [more than 21,000 “extra-judicial killings”](#) in its [“Phoenix” counter-insurgency operation](#) in Vietnam. (The true number of victims is certainly much higher.) In 1979, the CIA began sponsoring the most violent Islamic extremist groups in Afghanistan – supplying money, arms, even jihad primers for schoolchildren – to destabilize the secular, Soviet-allied government and provoke the Kremlin into a costly intervention, [as Robert Dreyfus details](#) in his new book, *Devil's Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam*. Later, Saudi magnate Osama bin Laden – whose family firm helped kick-start George W. Bush's business career – joined the operation, and his men were sent to America for “anti-Soviet” terrorist training, as [Greg Palast reports](#). And of course, these examples only scratch the scorched-earth surface of America's double-dealings in this deathly shadow world.

This bi-partisan policy has been remarkably consistent for more than half a century: to augment the wealth and power of the elite, American leaders have supported – or [created](#) – vicious [gangs of killers and cranks](#) to foment unrest, eliminate opponents and [terrorize whole nations](#) into submission. The resulting carnage in the target countries – and inevitable blowback against ordinary Americans – means nothing to these Great Gamesters; it's merely the price of doing business. Bush's “incompetence” is just a mask for stone-cold

calculation.

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