

## NATO Hunting Season in Full Swing

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Like dominoes they are falling: Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya. Even al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was taken out in a surprise ambush by US special forces at his secret hideout inside of nuclear-armed Pakistan.

Since its first act of aggression on the territory of a sovereign state (on February 28, 1994, NATO aircraft shot down four jets in the Bosnian War) each successive NATO operation is revealing an increasingly disturbing trend: the leaders of the condemned countries are meeting violent, even barbaric ends. Has the rule of law taken a back seat in NATO's global juggernaut?

Compare the 'natural' death of Slobodan Milocevic, former President of Serbia and Yugoslavia, with that of the grisly murder of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi. Shortly after the end of the Yugoslavian War, which saw a massive NATO aerial bombardment that lasted from March 24, 1999 to June 10, 1999, Milocevic was sent to The Hague to stand trial for charges of war crimes. Milocevic surprised his accusers by deciding to represent himself in the five-year trial. The case, however, abruptly ended without a verdict when the former four-term leader died of an apparent heart attack.

Although NATO's participation in the Yugoslav War was flawed from the start (it did not have the full support of the UN Security Council), at least Milocevic was treated to a semblance of civilized legal procedure and decorum. Incidentally, Yugoslavia filed a complaint at the International Court of Justice against ten NATO member countries (Belgium, Germany, France, United Kingdom, Italy, Canada, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United States). The Court did not decide upon the case, however, because it ruled that Yugoslavia was not a member of the UN during the war.

NATO's next violation of international law occurred in Iraq, where the United States led a wild goose chase in the hunt for weapons of mass destruction, which failed to materialize. The Bush administration was then obliged to change its mission statement in Iraq to "democracy building" - an interesting concept from a man who entered the White House due to his selection by a right-leaning Supreme Court, as opposed to his election by We the People. Meanwhile, Iraq President Saddam Hussein was found hiding in a hole in Tikrit, whereupon he was treated to the humiliation of a medical examination in full view of the media cameras. It was a nice gesture, but Hussein was ultimately hanged on Dec. 30, 2006 by the Iraqi interim government. Many observers questioned why the Baathist leader was not granted a 'fair trial' at the ICC as opposed to a show trial arranged by his political opponents.

That brings us to Libya, where the world was just treated to ghastly images of Muammar

Gaddafi being torn apart by a wild mob moments after his capture. Not only does this barbaric execution – the autopsy revealed Gaddafi died from a gunshot wound to the head – speak volumes about what the future holds for this North African nation (which was doing fairly well for itself with free healthcare and education before the civil war began) it shows exactly how callous NATO has become in its coordination of these jolly little wars.

Although NATO was the primary firepower behind the Libyan opposition's victory, it did nothing to protect Muammar Gaddafi and ensure that he received a fair trial at the ICC. This was in its power. NATO could have made specific demands on Libya's opposition that it wanted Gaddafi taken alive. But, possibly not wanting a replay of another highly publicized international trial (ala Slobodan Milocevic), NATO even attacked Gaddafi's caravan as it was attempting to flee from Sirte. The United Nation resolution never mentioned NATO taking sides in the civil war. It only mentioned that the western military bloc was empowered to "protect civilians."

Commenting on Gaddafi's demise, former Cuban leader Fidel Castro, 85, denounced NATO for its role in the overthrow of Libyan leader, saying the "brutal military alliance has become the most perfidious instrument of repression the history of humanity has known."

Castro also expressed indignation at the killing of Gaddafi and the subsequent treatment of his body, which he said was "kidnapped and exhibited like a trophy of war, a conduct that violates the most elemental principles of Muslim norms and other religious beliefs."

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin called images of Gaddafi being beaten by the mob "disgusting."

The killing of Gaddafi was not the first time that a wanted individual received what could best be described as barbaric treatment at the hands of his enemies.

As horrible as al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was, what did the US forces who killed him at his 'secret' hideout in Pakistan have to gain by not taking him out alive? By all accounts, bin Laden was unarmed and offered no resistance during the much-hyped gunfight. After his summary execution, his body was dumped into the sea, yet flying him back to Afghanistan alive would have been a much shorter trip. And imagine all the secrets bin Laden took to his grave!

Yes. Osama bin Laden was suspected of committing terrible crimes, but what did his enemies gain by killing him and then disposing of his body in a way that would only further enrage his followers? The answer is simple: nothing.

When will NATO and its member states begin to behave better than their avowed enemies?

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