

THE AFTERMATH OF 9/11, TEN YEARS LATER

Tragedy Leads to Destructive US Foreign and Domestic Policies

September 9,
2011

On the tenth anniversary of September 11, Americans are remembering the roughly 3000 people who died that day in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. For some, the date also brings anger at the US government for manipulating the nation's collective grief and fear. Rather than taking the world's sympathy and seeking to bring violent criminals to court, the US became embroiled in ongoing and ever-expanding illegal, immoral, expensive wars and passed laws to threaten the freedoms it claims to be protecting.

SIX COUNTRIES AND COUNTING: AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ, YEMEN, PAKISTAN, SOMALIA AND LIBYA

****AFGHANISTAN**** The first post-9/11 war, launched without a specific UN mandate or reasonable self-defense claim, was the US bombing, invasion, and occupation of Afghanistan starting October 7, 2001. While UN Security Council Resolution 1373 (9/29/01) invoked the militarily enforceable Chapter VII, it called for all member states to reject "terrorism" and for a progress report to be issued 90 days later.

Security Council Resolution 1378, passed November 14—over a month after the US war began, called upon the Afghan people to build a new government and condemned the then-faltering Taliban regime for having harbored Osama Bin Laden. The Taliban fell from power December 22, 2001.

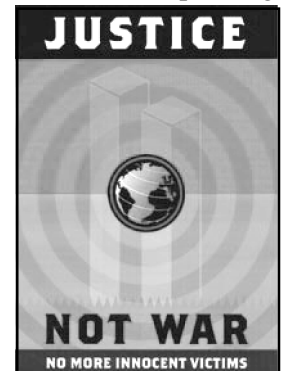
Afghanistan has been racked by violence for over 30 years beginning with the US and Soviet Union fighting for control from 1979 to 1989. Bin Laden was a product of the US efforts funding the "Mujahideen" to fight the USSR.

Although a new Afghan government was installed by the US, the Taliban and others have initiated guerilla attacks against international forces and the new regime. In 2006, NATO troops technically took over much of the military control from the US. In 2009 and 2010, President Obama sent a "surge" of troops, increasing the number from roughly 34,000 at the end of the Bush era to over 100,000. In June, 2011, a much-ballyhooed announcement that 30,000 troops will come home by the end of 2012 was considered progress, ignoring that there will still be both nearly double the number of troops from 2008 and 100,000 or so "contractors" in the country.

It is unknown exactly how many Afghan civilians have died as a result of the invasion, but the BBC reports (7/14) there were "1,462 civilian deaths in January to June [2011], a 15% increase" from 2010. Meanwhile, US troop deaths went up from 50-150 per year in 2002-2008 to 300-500 in 2009-2011. As of September 7, 1760 US troops and almost 1000 others had died in Afghanistan (icasualties.org).

****IRAQ**** To justify the US-led March 2003 invasion of Iraq, the Bush administration asserted that because Iraq supported terrorists, Iraq is part of the "War on Terror." However, the 9/11 commission report among others found that Saddam Hussein provided no material support for Al Qaeda prior to 9/11 (Reuters, 9/8/06). President Bush himself conceded that there was no connection between Iraq and 9/11. Not a single one of the hijackers was alleged to have been Iraqi. Iraq had no reconstituted weapons of mass destruction program.

US soldiers and Iraqi civilians and combatants continue to die as a result of these manipulations. 4474 Americans



had died in Iraq as of September 9, 2011; that means combined, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have cost more than twice the 2973 Americans lives lost on September 11. And that's not counting more than 94,000 American men and women who've been wounded and disabled since then (Department of Defense statistics, 8/23).

After the initial invasion and resulting factional fighting, Iraq Body Count estimates between 102,416 and 111,937 Iraqi civilians have died, based on verifiable news reports (www.iraqbodycount.org). That's more than 30 times the number killed on 9/11. While many were killed directly by bombs and gunfire, others died as a result of damage that US bombings caused to civilian infrastructure, including damage to hospitals and water filtration plants.

The infrastructure in Iraq, devastated by the US' 1991 war and 13 years of economic sanctions, has not improved despite billions pumped in by American taxpayers. A 2011 bipartisan report found "the US government has wasted more than \$30 billion on private contractors and grants in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past decade" (The *Guardian*, 8/30).

The Status of Forces Agreement signed by George Bush in 2008 calls for all US troops to be out by December 31, 2011. President Obama seems to be tempting Iraqi militia leader Moqtada Al Sadr to make good a threat to start fighting again if the troops don't leave. Alternatively, over 25 members of Congress have signed onto HR 2757, which would prohibit the use of any funds to support US military personnel, contractors, permanent bases or control of Iraq's oil after the end of the year.

****PAKISTAN**** Under GW Bush, American unarmed aircraft (drones) dropped bombs on Pakistan's northwestern region (near Afghanistan) 45 times in 5 years. President Obama has overseen 219 drone strikes as of August 22, in just 3 years (longwarjournal.org). At minimum, 128 civilians have been killed, though the US continues to deny this (*Guardian*, 7/17). There was a brief reprieve in the drone strikes after a CIA contractor killed two Pakistanis in January, and again after a US Navy Seal

(more, over)

team assassinated Osama Bin Laden on May 1, but they have since resumed. Pakistan is a tenuous ally of the US, receiving billions in aid, and has nuclear weapons capabilities. Despite Pakistani government and civilian protests, the drone strikes continue.

****YEMEN, SOMALIA**** The US has conducted multiple air attacks on the countries of Yemen and Somalia, using drones, cruise missiles, and air-launched missiles. In late June, the US conducted airstrikes in Somalia, killing at least one (*NY Times*, 7/1). In 2009, an American helicopter raid on Somalia ended with troops picking up the dead Somalis and flying off with them (*NY Times* 9/15/09). In Yemen, at least 30 were killed after US airstrikes on August 31 and September 1 (*Associated Press*, 9/1). While the US claims to be targeting “Al Qaeda” or “Al Shabbab” “terrorists,” innocent civilians are also being reported injured and killed in these countries.

****LIBYA**** Despite the “limited mandate” in UN Security Council Resolution 1973 allowing member nations to “protect civilians,” America’s 6-month war on that country (under the fig leaf of a NATO operation) killed dozens of civilians, including members of the “rebel” militias they were allegedly aiding (*Reuters*, 4/7, for example). The US and its allies intervened to depose Muammar Gadhafi, not to end his strongman regime, but to dismantle nationalization of the country’s resources — including oil.

ISRAEL/PALESTINE Though many people repeat that 9/11 happened because others “hate our freedoms,” it is acknowledged in most of the world that the attacks that day were in response to US foreign policy. Aside from the presence of troops in Saudi Arabia (since withdrawn) and the sanctions killing Iraqi civilians (since lifted), Al Qaeda cited the ongoing oppression of Palestinians as one reason for attacking America.

In late 2005, Israeli troops physically disengaged from the Gaza Strip, one of the two major land areas occupied since the 1967 war. But Gaza remains under the de facto control of Israel with regards to the movement of humans, funds and goods. In 2010, Israeli commandos raided a ship on a humanitarian aid mission to Gaza, killing nine—including one American with dual Turkish citizenship (*ABC*, 6/3/10). In June/July 2011, a second flotilla headed from Greece with no aid, only the desire to meet with Palestinians, was sabotaged, undermined, and prevented from heading to Gaza.

The Geneva conventions prohibit targeting civilian infrastructure and the collective punishment of a people. As Israel continues to build settlements in the West Bank, the Palestinians are pushing to be recognized as an independent state in the UN. Unless the Israeli/Palestinian issue is resolved, the Middle East will likely never see peace.

THE WAR AT HOME Back in the USA, September 11 led to a climate of fear making it easy for laws to pass stripping citizens’ rights. The passage of the USA PATRIOT act in October, 2001 greatly expanded the power of law enforcement. The National Security Agency began conducting warrantless wiretaps on international calls. Every major city’s police force joined forces with the FBI in “Joint Terrorism Task Forces” (JTTFs). Though originally created through 1996 Clinton-era anti-terrorism laws, JTTFs became ubiquitous after 9/11; Portland

essentially removed its officers in 2006, but rejoined with vague restrictions in April 2011.

The “War on Terror” has made life more difficult for many Arabs, Muslims and immigrants in the US. In addition to increasingly blurred lines between law enforcement and immigration administration, cultural forces are leading to discrimination and unjustifiable detentions and deportations. Suspects brought to the US military base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, have been held for nearly ten years, and most have not been charged with any crime. A wave of anti-immigration sentiment, increasingly aimed at undocumented Latin-Americans, has illogically connected the tragedy of 9/11 to the efforts of thousands of people to find work and support their families in countries whose economies are suffering from US economic policies like NAFTA.

CONCLUSION As we remember September 11, let us commit to seeking the truth and refuse to allow propaganda, euphemisms and sanitized media accounts to blind us to the suffering of war. Let’s remember that the life of every Iraqi, Afghan, Pakistani, Somali, Yemeni and Libyan killed was every bit as precious, and complex and dear, and their grief and terror in the face of war is every bit as great as the terror of those killed on September 11.

Let’s bring our War Dollars home. A Brown University study estimates just the wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq will cost at least \$3.2 trillion, mostly of borrowed money, meaning at least another \$1 trillion in interest. While people are being thrown out of foreclosed homes, losing jobs, having pensions taken away, and facing rocketing health care costs, it is time to bring the money back home and spend it here. The US Conference of Mayors passed a resolution calling for just that in June, 2011, and there are efforts in Portland to get a local resolution passed modeling the national call.

Let’s pledge resistance to violence in the name of “national security” and commit to international law, human rights, and civil liberties. Let’s convert the US military economy to a peace economy, with money for health care, housing, and an educated citizenry that will never again allow its own government to conduct illegal and immoral wars.

(This flyer was modeled on PJW’s “9/11 Five Years Later” flyer from Sept. 2006 but includes a lot of updated information including the doubling of both American and Iraqi lives lost since then.)

This flyer was prepared September 2011 by the
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