

September 16,
2006

THE AFTERMATH OF 9/11, FIVE YEARS LATER

US Foreign and Domestic Actions Turn Tragedy into Self-Destructive Policies

On the fifth anniversary of September 11, people remembered the shocking images of planes slamming into the World Trade Center and the roughly 3000 people who died that day in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. For many, however, the date brings anger at the US government for manipulating the nation's collective grief and fear and using it to embroil the US in two illegal, immoral wars and threaten the freedoms it claims to be protecting.



AFGHANISTAN: THE FORGOTTEN WAR

The first war, launched without a specific UN mandate or reasonable self-defense claim, was the US bombing, invasion, and occupation of Afghanistan starting on 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, which passed on 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, one of the poorest nations in the world, has been racked by violence for nearly 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 government was installed by the US, the Taliban and other groups have initiated guerilla attacks against international forces and the new regime. Until recently, the capital Kabul was the only stable area of the country. But on September 8, Taliban fighters exploded a suicide bomb that killed 18 Afghans and two US soldiers (*Guardian*, 9/9).

In late July, NATO troops took over much of the military control from the US, with soldiers from many nations now dying at alarming rates. None of this is to diminish the thousands of Afghans who perished under US bombs or as a result of the guerilla warfare. It was estimated in 2004 that about 3500 Afghans were killed in the invasion (Prof. Marc Herald, University of New Hampshire, 6/04) and, for example, NATO claims to have killed 420 in a nine-day battle in early September (*Associated Press*, 9/10).

IRAQ: NO CONNECTION TO 9/11

Both in the lead up to and following the US-led March, 2003 invasion of Iraq, the Bush administration asserted that because Iraq supported terrorists, Iraq is a part of the so-called “War on Terror.” However, both the 9/11 commission report and a recently-released US Senate Intelligence report found that Saddam Hussein provided no material support for Al Qaeda prior to 9/11 (*Reuters*, 9/8). President Bush himself has conceded several times that there was no connection between Iraq and 9/11. On this front, a slim majority of the American public seems to be in touch with the reality: 53% of those polled said Iraq is not part of the “War on Terror” (*AP/CNN* 9/6). The remainder continue to believe that Iraq was involved in 9/11, despite the fact that not a single one of the hijackers was Iraqi.

Other reasons given for attacking Iraq have also proven untrue. There was no reconstituted weapons program as asserted by members of the administration. The *Associated Press* reports “after a 16-month, \$900-million-plus investigation, the U.S. weapons hunters known as the Iraq Survey Group declared that Iraq had dismantled its chemical, biological and nuclear arms programs in 1991 under U.N. oversight.” Nonetheless, 50% of Americans polled in July continued to believe that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (*AP/Harris* 8/6).

US soldiers and Iraqi civilians and combatants continue to die as a result of these manipulations. The body count of U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq is fast approaching the 2973 killed on September 11. As of September 14th, 2677 US soldiers were listed dead in Iraq. Adding the 338 who have died in Afghanistan, the toll is 3015, meaning that both wars have killed more Americans than 9/11. And that's not counting the roughly 20,000 American men and women who've been wounded and disabled (www.icasualties.org).



Turning our attention to the countless Iraqis who've died, Iraq Body Count estimates the Iraqi civilian dead at between 43,000 and 48,000, based on verifiable news reports (www.iraqbodycount.org). A study coordinated by faculty at Johns Hopkins University and published in the British medical journal *The Lancet*, estimated that 100,000 Iraqi civilians had already died by October, 2004. 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 U.S. 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. September 20, 2006 marks

the day Iraq must allocate the last \$2 billion of \$21 billion in reconstruction funds. An August US government report found that "only 38% of oil and gas projects had been completed and that nearly a third of planned electricity projects had not even started." Inflation has brought the price of even simple items up 150% to 300% since 2003 (Reuters 8/19). Iraq, which sits on one of the largest reserves of oil in the world, experienced a fuel shortage for four months in summer 2006 and is looking to import oil from other countries, including its former enemy Iran.

Beyond the US conflict with Iraqi guerillas, Iraq is now bathed in sectarian violence among armed factions of its Sunni and Shia Muslim populations. Some of this violence may have been fostered by a US policy to train Shia and Kurdish "death squads" to target Sunni guerillas (*Newsweek*, 1/14/05). The Pentagon reported in early September that the number of Iraqi casualties was up by over 1000 per month, totalling over 3000—or more than the number of Americans killed on 9/11—every month (*LA Times* 9/1). Whether this violence is labelled a civil war or not, the daily level of carnage is sadly far worse than under the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein.

ISRAEL/PALESTINE/LEBANON: RESOLVE THIS CRISIS TO CALM THE MIDDLE EAST

Though many cling to the idea that 9/11 happened because other people in the world "hate our freedoms," it is acknowledged in most of the rest 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 its jihad (which means "struggle," not "holy war") against 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 remained under the de facto control of Israel with regards to the movement of humans, funds and goods. In late June, in retaliation for the abduction of an Israeli soldier, Israel bombed Gaza, knocking out power to over 60% of its residents, and setting in motion a humanitarian crisis which continues now in September.

Two weeks later, an incident involving the abduction of two Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah members on the Lebanon border led to a massive bombing and invasion of Lebanon by Israeli troops. The 34-day battle caused an estimated \$3.6 billion in physical damage to Lebanon, including every bridge over the Litani river and other civilian infrastructure, and left over 1100 dead, the vast majority civilians. In contrast, 159 Israelis were killed, 2/3 of them soldiers, with an estimated \$1.1 billion in damage (BBC, 8/31). A huge oil spill off the coast of Lebanon has still not been cleaned up.

The Geneva conventions prohibit the targeting of civilian infrastructure as well as the collective punishment of a people for the acts of a few. The US promotes democracy in the Middle East and yet it has withheld funds from the Palestinians since the election of Hamas to power, and seems to disregard that Hezbollah has elected representatives in Lebanon's parliament and, like Hamas, does work bringing needed services to the people.

Worse, the US sped up orders for precision-guided bombs to Israel soon after the conflict began. In contrast, they hesitated when pressed to increase the number of cluster munitions requested (*NY Times*, July 21 and August 11).

Now Israel plans to build more settlements in the West Bank, further eroding the possibility that the conflict in the Middle East will come to a peaceful resolution anytime soon.

THE WAR AT HOME

Back in the USA, September 11 led to a climate of fear making it easy for laws to pass stripping rights from our citizenry. The passage of the USA PATRIOT act in October, 2001 greatly expanded the power of law enforcement. Meanwhile, the Bush Administration took additional steps which appear to have been outside existing laws. The National Security Agency (NSA) began conducting warrantless wiretaps on international calls, despite the fact that they might have asked the super-secret Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act court for warrants. On August 17, federal judge Anna Diggs Taylor ruled that the wiretaps are unconstitutional. She ordered the program to halt immediately, stating, "There are no hereditary kings in America and no powers not created by the Constitution" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 8/18). A related program involving amassing a database of every call made by Americans was revealed in May.



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 in some cases unjustifiable detentions and deportations. Suspects brought to the US military base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, have been held for nearly five 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.

IRAN, NORTH KOREA AND OTHER HOTSPOTS

In his 2002 State of the Union speech, President Bush labelled Iraq, Iran and North Korea the "Axis of Evil," even though at that time the three countries likely had little to no contact with one another. With Iraq and Afghanistan under occupation, the US has new launching pads from which to initiate a war on Iran if it decides to do so. The current crisis revolves around Iran's desire to generate nuclear power, something it is entitled to do under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The US is claiming that Iran plans to use enriched uranium to create atomic weapons, a claim which greatly resembles its empty accusations prior to the Iraq war. On September 13, UN weapons inspectors denounced a US House report on Iran's nuclear capabilities, calling parts of the document "outrageous and dishonest" (*Washington Post*, 9/14).

Across Asia, the North Koreans, who had abandoned their nuclear ambitions under an agreement forged by the Clinton administration in 1994 and were moving towards reconciliation with the South, have been testing ballistic missiles and indicating that they are ready to test a nuclear weapon. Clearly, the efforts to demonize these nations has not deterred their ambitions.

The US has also indicated it may act against Syria, Venezuela, and any other country they deem failing to support the "war on terror." It is no coincidence that these countries also have large supplies of oil.

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 and Afghan killed was every bit as precious, and complex and dear, and their grief and terror in the face of this war is every bit as great as the terror of those killed on September 11.

Let's pledge our resistance to the use of violence to enhance "national security" and our commitment to international law, human rights, and civil liberties. Let's convert the US military economy to a peaceful economy, with money for health care and affordable housing, and for the kind of quality education that is necessary to building an informed and vigilant citizenry that will never again allow itself to be hijacked by its own government and made complicit in illegal and immoral wars.



This flyer was prepared September 2006 by the
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Contact us about emergency and regular meetings !
Regular meetings usually 2nd Tuesdays, 7 PM; next one is October 10.

Contact these organizations for more information (these are sources of the panelists and/or cosponsors of the 9/16/06 forum):

First Unitarian Church
1011 SW 12th
Portland, OR 97205
(503) 228-6389
www.firstunitarianportland.org

September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows
P.O. Box 1818
Peter Stuyvesant Station
New York, NY 10009
peacefultomorrows.org

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
2249 E Burnside, Portland 97214
(503) 230-9427
www.afsc.org

Quaker peace-making & human rights organization.

American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon
P.O. Box 40585
Portland, Oregon 97240-0585
(503) 227-3186
www.aclu-or.org

Center for Intercultural Organizing
2808 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., #13
Portland, Oregon 97212
(503) 287-4117
www.interculturalorganizing.org

Americans United for Palestinian Human Rights
PO Box 12054
Portland, OR 97212
503-287-1885
info@auphr.org <http://www.auphr.org>

American Iranian Friendship Council
info@aifcpdx.org
<http://www.aifcpdx.org>

Northwest Veterans for Peace
P. O. Box 7
Banks, OR 97106
Phone 503-324-1804

Portland Peaceful Response Coalition (PPRC)
PO Box 431, Portland 97207
(503) 344-5078
www.pprc-news.org

Meetings First Tuesdays, 7 PM, locations vary
Rally Fridays, 5 PM, Pioneer Courthouse Square

Multnomah Monthly Meeting of Friends (Quakers)
4312 SE Stark, Portland 97214
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Web: house.gov/blumenauer/contact.html
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Web: house.gov/defazio/ContactMe.shtml
Eugene: 541-465-6732, fax: 541-465-6458

Darlene Hooley, 5th District
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web : house.gov/hooley/zipauth2.htm
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