BUILDING A CULTURE OF PEACE & JUSTICE TO REPLACE THE CULTURE OF WAR and EMPIRE, Dick Bennett, Editor.


“America has some great ideas, but one of the things it is really short on is memory. . . . We dropped 10 years of war on people halfway around the world that disrupted their society completely and have yet to take a good look at exactly what we did. . . . The Iraq war is not over, and that's why we need to have a record, so the next time someone in Washington comes up with the bright idea that they want to install a government that they like better than another one halfway around the world we will have something that isn't bullshit to talk about.” — David Harris in *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* (May 2014, p. 44).

MARCH 19, 2013: 10th ANNIVERSARY OF US INVASION OF IRAQ 2003

For a full list of US military deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan, go to: casualties.usatoday.com. But where are the Iraq and Afghan lists?? This is a morally zero nationalism and ethnocentrism devoid of compassion except for our own.

GLOBAL IS LOCAL, LOCAL GLOBAL

“Conflicts in our age have become both local and global, blurring the distinction between the two. We can no longer speak of local and national conflicts without considering their international implications, nor can we ignore the impact of global trends and relations on local issues.” — Ibrahim Kalin, “Islam and Peace,” in *Crescent and Dove*, ed. by Qamar-ul Huda (USIP, 2010, p. 30).

"To initiate a war of aggression, therefore, is not only an international crime, it is the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole." — Robert H. Jackson, Chief U.S. Prosecutor, Nuremberg Military Tribunal

My blog: War Department/Peace Department

http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/
My Newsletters:
http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/
Index:
http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/
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Dear Dick,

“Not another war. Have we learned nothing?,” stated WAND Executive Director, Susan Shaer. “Let’s not use history to do the blame game. But history does inform us that military actions inflame war. They don’t solve crises. They don’t make us safer.”

Please take action now to tell the President: No military intervention. Call the White House.
comment line at 202-456-1111.

Reasons:

• More arms and equipment will only pour oil on the fire.

• Bombing will require attacking cities, causing citizens deaths.

• A diplomatic solution may not be possible, but it is worth trying.

• This is not just about Iraq; it is a regional fight involving Syria and Lebanon, with influences from other stakeholders in the region.

• This is a matter for the United Nations and a global response.

• WAND will continue to keep you updated on what you can do. Not another war.

Read WAND blog post by Senior Public Policy Director Kathy Crandall Robinson here.

Peace,

The WAND Team

---

Don't Bomb Iraq 6-13-14

Sign the petition:

"Mr. President: Don't bomb Iraq. Americans elected you in 2008 in no small part because of your principled opposition to the U.S. unilateral invasion and occupation of Iraq. Don't double down on George W. Bush's disastrous invasion and make his failed war your legacy fore.

Automatically add your name:

Dear Dick,

Insurgents in Iraq have taken Mosul, the country's second largest city, and they are making their way to Baghdad. Events are unfolding so rapidly in Iraq that this email may be out of date before you read it.

One thing won't change. It was George W. Bush who lost the war in Iraq. But President Obama could turn this needless and bloodbath.
decides to bomb Iraq.

President Obama is now faced with a decision: Does he double down on Bush’s catastrophic decision 12 years ago to invade Iraq, one of the most foolish and costly decisions by a president in recent decades in terms of American blood and treasure? Or does he do what he promised as a candidate for president in 2008, and finally end the American occupation of Iraq?

Tell President Obama: Don’t bomb Iraq. It’s time to end American intervention in Iraq.

For the last 12 years, Iraq has been Bush and Cheney’s war. But if the president takes ownership of George W. Bush’s disastrous decision to invade Iraq by launching a new round of bombing strikes, Iraq will become Barack Obama’s war.

CREDO opposed the war before it began back in 2002. In advance of the invasion, our members raised over $150,000 to fight back against the Bush administration and war mongers in Congress. And today we’re still fighting to revoke the blank check for war — the Authorization for Use of Military Force — that gives the president the ability to effectively wage war in Iraq without Congressional approval.

It was as clear back in 2002 before the unilateral invasion of Iraq as it is now -- that Americans can’t stop Iraq from sliding into civil war and religious sectarianism without occupying the country indefinitely. Americans elected Barack Obama in 2008 in no small part because of his principled opposition to the war — the Authorization for Use of Military Force — that gives the president the ability to effectively wage war in Iraq.

Tell President Obama: Don’t bomb Iraq. It’s time to end American intervention in Iraq.

With your help, we stopped the president from starting a war with Syria with our opposition to his plan unilaterally bomb the country. Millions of petition signatures and tens of thousands of calls to Congress — that we were able to defeat the hawks in Congress and the White House and stop the rush to war.

It was a catastrophic mistake and tremendous moral failure to invade Iraq in the first place. If there is one thing we’ve proved in our disastrous 12 years of invasion and occupation it is that U.S. military intervention cannot create the space for the political solution that is necessary for a safe and secure future for Iraq.

While what is happening in Iraq is tragic, there is no plausible scenario in which further U.S. military intervention magically creates a stable democracy in which protections for human rights, religious freedom, self-governance and equal rights for women and girls.

Please join us in saying, once again, no to war in Iraq.

Becky Bond, Political Director
CREDO Action from Working Assets

Automatically add your name:

Learn more about this campaign

Share on Facebook
Post to your wall

Tweet this
Dear Dick,

Tell President Obama and Congress: No New U.S. War in Iraq!

Sign our petition

Senators Lindsey Graham and John McCain have called for direct U.S. military action in Iraq following the failure of the Iraqi Army to defend Mosul against Sunni insurgents. These calls, amplified in the media, are putting pressure on the Obama Administration for direct U.S. military intervention in Iraq, including airstrikes.

Act now! Sign our petition at MoveOn telling President Obama and Congress NO to a new U.S. war in Iraq.


Senate Armed Services Chair Carl Levin has correctly called for caution. Levin said: "It's unclear how air strikes on our part can succeed unless the Iraqi army is willing to fight, and that's uncertain given the fact that several Iraqi army divisions have melted away." As the New York Times has written, "The United States simply cannot be sucked into another round of war in Iraq."

The U.S. war in Iraq ended in 2011 with the withdrawal of our troops, and the last thing we need is a new U.S. war in Iraq. President Obama has been right to say that the Iraqi government must be responsible for security in Iraq.

To avoid another rush to war, Members of Congress must insist that an explicit Congressional authorization of force precede any direct U.S. military action in Iraq, including airstrikes. This is how we stopped the U.S. bombing of Syria: by getting Members of Congress to insist that there be an explicit Congressional authorization before any U.S. bombing.

Sign and share our petition now. When you sign our petition, it will be automatically delivered to President Obama and Congress.


Thanks for all you do to help prevent more war,

Robert Naiman and Megan Iorio
Just Foreign Policy
Tell Washington to repeal authorization for the Iraq war

Apr 12, 2014

Progressive Secretary PS.ActionReply@gmail.com via uark.edu

Dear Dick,

Here is a new Progressive Secretary letter. You will be able to edit your name, address, etc. in the next step.

This letter supports a campaign by Win Without War asking Congress to repeal the Iraq war authorization.

In the past, Congress didn’t have to repeal war authorizations because Presidents were trusted to come back to Congress for further authority, but unless the original authorization is rescinded, future Presidents could again establish actions in Iraq.

Our letter will be sent to Congress, and to the President.

No President, however trustworthy, should have a blank check to wage war without input from Congress.

Even though the Iraq war has ended, the Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) for Iraq is still active. This means that any President, current or future, can send troops there at will, without Congressional approval.

S. 1919 and H.R. 3852 would repeal the AUMF for Iraq. Please see that these bills are enacted, and our system of checks and balances is restored in this crucial area.

Click here to send this letter or to learn more (you can edit the subject or the letter itself in the next step, if you wish).

Sincerely,
BACKGROUNDS TO THE UPRISING OF JUNE 2014

IRAQ RUINED

The Anti-Empire Report #85

By William Blum, September 1st, 2010

Things which don’t go away. Things the American government and media don’t let go of. And neither do I.

Iraq

“They’re leaving as heroes. I want them to walk home with pride in their hearts,” declared Col. John Norris, the head of a US Army brigade in Iraq. ¹

It’s enough to bring tears to the eyes of an American, enough to make him choke up.

Enough to make him forget.
But no American should be allowed to forget that the nation of Iraq, the society of Iraq, have been destroyed, ruined, a failed state. The Americans, beginning 1991, bombed for 12 years, with one excuse or another; then invaded, then occupied, overthrew the government, killed wantonly, tortured … the people of that unhappy land have lost everything — their homes, their schools, their electricity, their clean water, their environment, their neighborhoods, their mosques, their archaeology, their jobs, their careers, their professionals, their state-run enterprises, their physical health, their mental health, their health care, their welfare state, their women’s rights, their religious tolerance, their safety, their security, their children, their parents, their past, their present, their future, their lives … More than half the population either dead, wounded, traumatized, in prison, internally displaced, or in foreign exile … The air, soil, water, blood and genes drenched with depleted uranium … the most awful birth defects … unexploded cluster bombs lie in wait for children to pick them up … an army of young Islamic men went to Iraq to fight the American invaders; they left the country more militant, hardened by war, to spread across the Middle East, Europe and Central Asia … a river of blood runs alongside the Euphrates and Tigris … through a country that may never be put back together again.

“It is a common refrain among war-weary Iraqis that things were better before the U.S.-led invasion in 2003,” reported the Washington Post on May 5, 2007.

No matter … drum roll, please … Stand tall American GI hero! And don’t even think of ever apologizing. Iraq is forced by the United States to continue paying reparations for its own invasion of Kuwait in 1990. How much will the American heroes pay the people of Iraq?

“Unhappy the land that has no heroes …
No. Unhappy the land that needs heroes.”
– Bertolt Brecht, Life of Galileo

“What we need to discover in the social realm is the moral equivalent of war; something heroic that will speak to men as universally as war does, and yet will be as compatible with their spiritual selves as war has proved to be incompatible.”
– William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience

Perhaps the groundwork for that heroism already exists … February 15, 2003, a month before the US invasion of Iraq, probably the largest protest in human history, between six and ten million protesters took to the streets of some 800 cities in nearly sixty countries across the globe.

Iraq. Love it or leave it.
Not a single reconstruction project was completed in Iraq: report
By John Vibes, December 29, 2013.

After many years and roughly a trillion dollars spent on reconstruction in Iraq, not one major project has been completed

IRAQ (INTELLIHUB) — A new report has revealed what many people have been saying for years, that the reconstruction program in Iraq is a total scam. There is no telling exactly how much money has been wasted, but it is likely to be many trillions of dollars. According to investigations by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), which he presents in his 220sten report, the U.S. has put $60 billion in reconstruction projects.

http://intellihub.com/2013/12/29/not-a-single-reconstruction-project-was-completed-in-iraq-report/

New >From The American Empire Project
We Meant Well
How I Helped Lose the Battle for the Hearts and Minds of the Iraqi People
by Peter Van Buren

From a State Department insider, the first account of our blundering efforts to rebuild Iraq—a shocking and rollicking true-life tale of Americans abroad
Charged with rebuilding Iraq, would you spend taxpayer money on a sports mural in Baghdad's most dangerous neighborhood to promote reconciliation through art? How about an isolated milk factory that cannot get its milk to market? Or a pastry class training women to open cafes on bombed-out streets without water or electricity?
According to Peter Van Buren, we bought all these projects and more in the most expensive hearts-and-minds campaign since the Marshall Plan. We Meant Well is his eyewitness account of the civilian side of the surge, that surreal and bollixed attempt to defeat terrorism and win over Iraqis by reconstructing the world we had just destroyed. Leading a State Department Provincial Reconstruction Team on its quixotic mission, Van Buren details, with laser-like irony, his yearlong encounter with pointless projects, bureaucratic fumbling, overwhelmed soldiers, and oblivious administrators secluded in the world's largest embassy. .

American Empire Project americanempireproject@e.macmillan.com via uark.edu to jbennet
Freedom Isn’t Free at the State Department
The Only Employee at State Who May Be Fired Because of WikiLeaks By Peter Van Buren

On the same day that more than 250,000 unredacted State Department cables hemorrhaged out onto the Internet, I was interrogated for the first time in my 23-year State Department career by State’s Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) and told I was under investigation for allegedly disclosing classified information. The evidence of my crime? A posting on my blog from the previous month that included a link to a WikiLeaks document already available elsewhere on the Web.

As we sat in a small, gray, windowless room, resplendent with a two-way mirror, multiple ceiling-mounted cameras, and iron rungs on the table to which handcuffs could be attached, the two DS agents stated that the inclusion of that link amounted to disclosing classified material. In other words, a link to a document posted by who-knows-who on a public website available at this moment to anyone in the world was the legal equivalent of me stealing a Top Secret report, hiding it under my coat, and passing it to a Chinese spy in a dark alley.

The agents demanded to know who might be helping me with my blog (“Name names!”), if I had donated any money from my upcoming book on my wacky year-long State Department assignment to a forward military base in Iraq, and if so to which charities, the details of my contract with my publisher, how much money (if any) I had been paid, and — by the way — whether I had otherwise “transferred” classified information.

Had I, they asked, looked at the WikiLeaks site at home on my own time on my own computer? Every blog post, every Facebook post, and every Tweet by every State Department employee, they told me, must be pre-cleared by the Department prior to “publication.” Then they called me back for a second 90-minute interview, stating that my refusal to answer questions would lead to my being fired, never mind the Fifth (or the First) Amendments.

"The US Role in Iraq's Upsurge of Violence"

By Stephen Zunes, National Catholic Reporter, posted January 25, 2014. [Via HAW].

Traces the current conflicts largely to US policies during the occupation. Zunes is a notable scholar, and this essay sounds highly relevant to my newsletter, but I could not copy it. —Dick]

Michael Reagan: Iraq: Counting the Bodies
Iraq: Counting the Bodies
by Michael Reagan
On Saturday a car bomb in Baghdad exploded in a crowded commercial street. Kamal Mahmoud, a school teacher, witnessed the blast. He told the New York Times, “I felt the heat of the blast on my face and the bodies of two women thrown in the middle of the street covered in blood, one of them without legs.” It's not clear if the women survived. Fourteen people were killed.

Political violence has increased this year, one of the bloodiest since the partial U.S. withdrawal in 2011. According to media reports, 6,000 people died from violence in 2013, over 1,000 in September alone. These numbers come largely from deaths recorded in the press, notoriously inaccurate for a comprehensive picture of mortality in Iraq, or any combat zone.

A new study released today and published in the Public Library of Science – Medicine journal tries to create a more accurate picture of what death in Iraq has looked like since 2003. An international team of researchers from the University of Washington, Simon Fraser University, John Hopkins
University, and Mustansiriya University (Baghdad) sampled 2000 households, asking for information on deaths of family and household members.

It finds that **approximately one half million Iraqis died from war related causes between 2003 and 2011**. A majority, more than sixty percent of the deaths, were directly caused by violence – gunshots, explosions like Saturday’s car bomb, or areal bombings. The rest are attributable to social collapse, the loss of infrastructure and health care from the invasion, occupation, and political and sectarian violence that followed.

What’s significant about the study is that it is the first household statistical sampling to emerge following the US withdrawal of combat troops, and therefore attempts to provide something of a comprehensive picture of violence in Iraq during the period of U.S. occupation.

**Although perhaps low, the numbers from this study are devastating. It would make Iraq one of the worst humanitarian disasters – crimes if we think about responsibility – of the 21st century, second only to Congolese war in terms of numbers of dead.**

**Counting Bodies**

Pervious numbers of Iraqi dead vary wildly. Unlike U.S. and coalition occupation forces, for which we have exact numbers, Iraq lives and deaths are not given careful attention. Demonstrating the U.S. military’s attention to civilian casualties, U.S. General Tommy Franks, in reference to Afghanistan, famously told the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 2002 that “we don’t do body counts.” Those concerned with human loss of life have to find information elsewhere, and that has meant two board and contrasting approaches – using media reports on casualties, or a statistical sampling method like the one used in this study.

Basing civilian body counts on media reports is notoriously unreliable. A number of studies have found that as violence in a country increases, the coverage of violence tends to decrease. This is because as a country becomes more violent, it becomes more dangerous for journalists to attempt to access sites of conflict. Through 2010, Iraq remained the most dangerous place on earth for journalists. This means that in some instances body counts through careful media analysis can be as much 80% below actual death tolls.

Iraq Body Count, the most visible group that uses this method, puts their figure between 114,000 and 126,000 war dead. Even though they have been hostile to previous studies using the household sampling method, they write on their website that their information is intended to be “an irrefutable baseline figure,” and provide a “conservative cautious minimum” for numbers of dead.

The *PLS-Medicine* study uses household survey sampling methods to look at “excess deaths” from 2003 to 2011 that can be attributed to the war. Lead authors Amy Hagopian and Abraham Flaxman write that “approximately a half-million deaths in Iraq could be directly attributable to the war.” But this figure is rounding up from their own numbers. Based on their survey sample, the “hard” number they offer is 405,000 excess deaths. But they seek to adjust for a large outmigration of Iraqi emigrants during the war, an estimated two million people. Based on this loss of sampling population, they adjust their figures upward by 55,000 to 460,000 war dead.
Compared to other studies, these numbers seem low. Two previous studies, one by researchers at Johns Hopkins University published in the Lancet in 2006, and another published in 2007 by a private British research firm, Opinion Research Business, put the death toll at 655,000 and over one million, respectively.

Although the authors of the *PLoS-Medicine* study attempted to correct for out migration, the effect of population loss and mobility may have impacted the study. The samplings produced in 2006 and 2007, at the height of the conflict, probably reflect a closer account of what really happened during the war. But these studies produced missed the remaining 4-5 years of war. The *PLoS-Medicine* study attempts to cover this period, and it seems unlikely that numbers of war dead, for the entire period of war, would be substantially lower than those numbers produced half way through the occupation.

**The Human Impact of Numbers**

Whatever the actual numbers, half a million to a million, the human cost of these numbers are hard to contemplate.

To try to understand those numbers, I think back to the stories of individuals, published periodically through the height of the war. Stories of those killed, kidnapped, tortured or displaced that jumped through the dense mist of American news coverage to remind us what war is about.

Like the story of Abeer Hamza, who stands out because of the particular brutality of her case.

In the spring of 2006 fourteen year old Abeer Hamza and her family were killed by five US service members on guard at a nearby checkpoint. The Army soldiers had been eyeing Abeer, and told her mother that the girl was “very good.” In broad daylight, the soldiers broke into the Hamza house, killed Abeer parents, 34 year old mother, Fakhriyah Taha Muhusin, father Qasim Hamza Raheem, and Abeer’s six year sister Hadeel. After killing Abeer’s family, the soldiers gang-raped Abeer, and then killed her. They lit her body on fire which quickly spread to the rest of the house. The fire was the reason they were caught and tried for their crime.

Like Abeer, Namir Noor-Eldeen stands out for the uniqueness of his death.

Noor-Eldeen was an Iraqi correspondent for Rueters. On July 12th, 2007 a US military helicopter supporting U.S. forces in a fire fight in a North Bahgdad neighborhood mistook Namir’s camera for a weapon. With glee, the copter and their support team wanted to “light ‘em all up” and opened fire, killing altogether 11 people. Eight were killed in the first round of shooting, including Namir, and three more when a van arrived to help the wounded. In the copter’s video feed, obtained and released by Wikileaks, the soldiers are jubilant at their accuracy, “right through the windshield,” laughing as the panicked survivors “drove over a body.” This in contrast to the desperation on the voices of the soldiers on the ground, including Ethan McCord, who can be heard as they discover and attempt to save a four year old girl and seven year old boy wounded in the shooting. In contrast to Abeer and Namir, hardly anyone knows of Safa Nawar Mohammed.

Safa was riding in the back of a pickup truck in Mahmudiayah in the spring of 2006 when her truck approached a
platoon of U.S. soldiers. Spooked by an earlier incident, the soldiers fired shots at the vehicle, striking Safa through the head. Although not quite dead when soldiers found her, no medical assistance was called because of the severity of her wound, and Safa died a few minutes later.

Safa is one of innumerable and largely unrecognized victims of the the U.S. invasion. Like those killed in the Hadytha massacre, or countless checkpoints shootings, or in the first and second battles for Fallujah.

These are the stories of the numbers of the dead found the PLoS study. These stories are multiplied by a hundred, by a thousand, by a hundred-thousand, and two hundred thousand, and we begin to approach the meaning of the study.

**The Right to Heal**

There have been efforts to reach out to Iraqi victims and their families on the part of U.S service members. Following the release of the Wikileaks “Collateral Murder” video, two veterans, Josh Stieber and Ethan McCord, wrote “An Open Letter of Reconciliation and Responsibility to the Iraqi People,” in which they apologized for the crimes they participated in, and sought dialogue with Iraqis.

In March of this year, on the tenth anniversary of the U.S. invasion, the Organization of Women’s Freedom in Iraq (OWFI), Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), and the Federation of Workers Councils and Unions in Iraq (FWCUI) launched the Right to Heal Initiative. From their website:

Iraqis and veterans are coming together to hold the U.S. government accountable for the lasting effects of war and the rights of veterans and civilians to heal. The Iraq war is not over for Iraqi civilians and U.S. veterans who continue to struggle with various forms of trauma and injury; the effects of environmental poisoning due to certain U.S. munitions and burn pits of hazardous materials; and with a generation of orphans and displaced. As Iraqi civil society tries to rebuild from the Iraq war as well as a decade of U.S. bombing and sanctions, they face political repression by a corrupt U.S.-established government that is selling off the country’s natural resources to foreign interests.

Along with the Center for Constitutional Rights, these groups have filed a request for a hearing with the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights.

These efforts by veteran and human rights groups need to be supported. Even with withdrawal of U.S. combat troops, Iraqis continue to live and die because of the impacts of the invasion of their country of which the car bombing last Saturday is just one incident. The PLoS-Medicine study published today helps us understand some of those impacts.

---

Michael Reagan is an organizer with the Seattle Solidarity Network and student at the University of Washington.
IRAQI REFUGEES: SOME 5 MILLION BY NOW HAVE FLED FROM THE INVASION, OCCUPATION, RESISTANCE, AND CIVIL WAR

UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees UNHCR

GOOGLE SEARCH, UNHCR AND IRAQ, APRIL 11, 2014

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3. UNHCR - Continuing fighting in central Iraq leaves 140,000 ...
   www.unhcr.org/52e274...
   United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
   Jan 24, 2014 - GENEVA, January 24 (UNHCR) – The UN refugee agency on Friday reported that more than 65,000 people had over the past week fled the ...

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Today’s Top Stories  APRIL 11, 2014
Chadians Continue to Flee CAR, Often Destitute: IOM
USAID Donates Plastic Sheets as Rains Hit South Sudan
IOM Supports Cross Border Campaign to Eliminate Malaria in Southern Africa
US Resettles 75,000 Bhutanese Refugees from Nepal
Radio Drama Calls on Typhoon-affected Communities in the Philippines to ‘Rise Together’

Video
Standing in solidarity with the Iraqi people
IOM has had an uninterrupted presence in Iraq since 2003, and during this critical post-war period, will continue to stand in solidarity with the Iraqi people. This video highlights the work of IOM in Iraq and how critical the need is.

Latest Situation Reports
CAR - Results from IOM’s third return intervention survey have been published.
South Sudan - 33,312 patients received consultations at IOM clinics in Unity and Upper Nile States since the beginning of the year
Iraq - Transportation Assistance 2013-2014
Sudan - Since the beginning of the conflict, 444 individuals in total have fled CAR and returned to Sudan
Syria - In cooperation with SwissLeg, IOM is providing life-changing support to individuals with disabilities thanks to prosthetic limb fitting | Map
DOCUMENTING WHAT HAPPENED TO PEOPLE IN COUNTRIES INVADED BY THE US AS ANOTHER WAY TO PREVENT FUTURE INVASIONS

“America has some great ideas, but one of the things it is really short on is memory. Once something is no longer new, we abandon it and pay no attention. We dropped 10 years of war on people halfway around the world that disrupted their society completely and have yet to take a good look at exactly what we did. We fool ourselves when we start thinking that we can turn a war on and off like a faucet. . . . The Iraq war is not over, and that’s why we need to have a record, so the next time someone in Washington comes up with the bright idea that they want to install a government that they like better than another one halfway around the world we will have something that isn’t bullshit to talk about.” David Harris in The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs (May 2014, p. 44). Through video and digital recordings, Citizens Reach Out (CRO), [Iraq] “What Happened” Project,” documents and archives firsthand stories of what happened to war refugees. These accounts are preserved in the University of California at Berkeley’s Merritt System.
Preserving the stories of Iraqi refugees to the US is the purpose of the “What Happened?” project of Citizens Reach Out. This Project concentrates on professional Iraqis threatened by Shia militias. --Dick

B. The “What Happened?” Project

It has been more than a decade since the US invaded Iraq, and almost three years since it finally withdrew its troops. But since the early days of the invasion Iraqis, especially those who had academic and intellectual backgrounds or were professionals working for government agencies have been targeted and assassinated by the militant forces that came after the U.S. invasion. Such militant forces were AL Mahdi Army and the Badr Brigade, both shia militias that were trained to target and assassinate Iraqi intellectuals and minorities all around the country. This resulted in large numbers of Iraqis fleeing their country and seeking refuge in neighboring countries.

As of 2010, the estimated number of Iraqi refugees has mounted to 4 million refugees, most
of whom lived in Syria and Jordan after escaping Iraq. With limited ways of earning a sustainable living, Iraqi refugees endured tough living conditions. In some cases both parents were often working in menial jobs not related to their original professions in order to provide for their families.

Starting in 2004, the UNHCR in collaboration with International Organization of Migration (IOM), began helping Iraqis to resettle in the US and Europe in hopes of finding a better future where they could use their experience and educational backgrounds to restart a new life far away from war zones. Since then, almost thirty-thousand Iraqis have been resettled in the US. They have settled mostly in El Cajon, CA, Sacramento, CA, San Jose, CA, Tucson, Arizona, and Dallas, TX, to name a few places.

Citizens Reach Out launched the “What Happened?” Project to document the stories of these refugees and preserve their journey from home to the country that invaded their homeland.

Their stories are compelling, powerful and often heartbreaking. CRO records the raw tales of mothers, fathers and sons who saw the horrid images of war and lived under skies that were lit by jet fighter airplanes and woke up to the sounds of explosions. Some of them lost a parent, a sibling, a cousin, and they all lost their homes.

The “What Happened?” Project is a small window to the big world of the Iraqi refugee crises, so won’t you take a moment and look through this window to learn about the tragedy that was created by this war?

UN Says 703 Killed in Iraq in February Attacks
Salaheddin reports: "The figures issued by the U.N.'s mission to Iraq is close to January's death toll of 733, showing that a surge of violence that began 10 months ago with a government crackdown on a Sunni protest camp is not receding."
In Iraq, Legacy of US Occupation Continues

Mounting deaths of Iraqis offer somber reminder of what US intervention has brought

- Andrea Germanos, staff writer

Iraq, a country "wrecked" by U.S. invasion and occupation, continues to experience yet another month with hundreds of civilian casualties.

Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey talks with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in 2012. (Photo: DOD/D. Myles Cullen. According to a statement issued Saturday by the United Nations mission to Iraq, 703 Iraqis were killed in February, and 564 of those were civilians. There were also 1,381 Iraqis injured last month. Those figures follow a month in which 733 Iraqis were killed, including 618 civilians. The figures for both months leave off deaths in Anbar province, because the UN stated it could not validate those numbers. 2013 also marked a somber record for Iraq—the highest number of civilian casualties since 2008.

The U.S. has recently poured Hellfire missiles and surveillance drones into the country, purportedly to help Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki fight al Qaeda. "The political, social and religious leaders of Iraq have an urgent responsibility to come together in the face of the terrorist threat that the country is facing," Nickolay Mladenov, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, stated Monday.

Yet Raed Jarrar, an Arab-American blogger and political analyst, explained to Common Dreams that "what is causing violence and casualties in Iraq today has little to do with terrorism. It’s caused by corruption, sectarian politics, and other legacies of the U.S. occupation in Iraq."

"What started last year as a legitimate nonviolent movement was crushed by Iraqi government tanks in late December," Jarrar continued. "It has since turned into an armed uprising against the Iraqi government. The U.S. continues to interfere in Iraq by sending weapons and providing political support to its allies in the country."

Other critics of military intervention have also charged that the ongoing violence gripping Iraq has "everything to do with the aftermath of the U.S. invasion and occupation."

READ MORE
Nearly 800 Killed in Iraq's Bloodiest Month This Year: UN

Isabel Coles, Reuters, Reader Supported news, June 2, 2014
Coles reports: “Nearly 800 people were killed in violence across Iraq in May, the United Nations said on Sunday, making it the deadliest month so far this year.”


The Post makes twelve claims regarding the condition of Iraq at this time, which it blames on Obama’s “readiness to dismiss this mess.”

1. The country is “sliding into civil war.”
2. Shiite Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki’s rule has become “increasingly authoritarian and sectarian.”
3. His government and “U.S.-trained Army” are “losing control over much of the country.”
4. His “military campaign against sunni tribes” failed, resulting in the “takeover of Fallujah by al-Qaida and waves of bombings against Shiites in Baghdad.” [These first four assertions seem to be borne out by the uprising. –D]
5. In desperation, like Assad of Syria, he has “resorted to using Syrian-backed Shiite militias.” [Using? When, where? How many?]
6. Kurdistan “has become a de facto independent state.”
7. His government coalition was “brokered by Iran.” [To what extent? Iran is a demonizing word. ]
8. He has accelerated “the sectarian crumbling of the American-built democratic system.” [Iraq had become a democratic country? The WP writer was desperate for arguments by this point. ]
9. His imminent failure will “reverse the gains won by the hundreds of thousands of Americans who served there…” [This appeal to sentiment for our troops to defend a wildly wrong war repeats one of the worst falsehoods of the Vietnam War. What is the gain in the deaths of perhaps a million Iraqi civilians (and desperate soldiers)?]
10. “Al-Qaida and its affiliates are close to consolidating control of a wide swath of territory across western Iraq and northern Syria.” [Really, when the rebels are Sunnis in a religious civil war?]
11. These “extremists…aspire to launch attacks against the U.S. homeland,” and
the “new Iraqi government” probably cannot “eliminate this threat.” [This is an egregious, laughable example of fear-mongering.]

12. “At least some of this trouble could have been avoided had the Obama administration managed Iraq better.” [This claim appears in the text following #6, but its application to all is implied. The Obama administration inherited Iraq from the Bush administration, whose invasion of Iraq was so deeply and thoroughly ill-conceived and mismanaged that Obama could hardly be expected to remedy it—except by withdrawing, which he lacked the stature to do.]

I wanted to dissect this editorial to identify clearly the Post’s position regarding Iraq, toward examining its validity, since the WP is widely known as a mouthpiece for the warfare state.

At the beginning of the editorial, the writer concedes that “Iraq’s best days in the past decade have been its elections,” including the latest, when “about 12 million people went to the polls to vote in the first parliamentary elections held without the presence of U.S. troops.” Yet this achievement seems nullified by the twelve “failures.” That is, the election was an illusion.

The criticism of the Obama, “At least some of this trouble,” is deceptive in its extreme vagueness, since “some” could mean 1% or 49%. And shouldn’t the Post include the Bush Administration? “Some” of this trouble could have been avoided had the illegal, unnecessary, lying invasion never occurred in the first place.

Surely the claim that al-Qaida et al. “aspire” to attack the US is the most absurd sort of fear-mongering. Yes some probably feel such aspirations, but does that translate into credible threat? Any evidence? Such hyperbolical over-reaching invites us to examine all of the Post’s claims carefully.

RELATED: WOMEN SOLDIERS

RELATED BACKGROUNDS: WOMEN SOLDIERS

Winner of the 2010 Ken Book Award

The Lonely Soldier--the inspiration for the documentary Invisible War--vividly tells the stories of five women who fought in Iraq between 2003 and 2006--and of the challenges they faced while fighting a war painfully alone.

More American women have fought and died in Iraq since World War Two, yet as soldiers they are still painfully alone. In Iraq, only one in ten troops is a woman, and she often serves in a unit with few other women or none at all. This isolation, along with the military's deep-seated hostility toward women, causes many female soldiers find as hard to cope with as war itself: degradation, sexual persecution by their comrades, and loneliness, instead of the camaraderie that every soldier depends on for comfort and survival. As one female soldier said, "I ended up waging my own war against an enemy dressed in the same uniform as mine."

In The Lonely Soldier, Benedict tells the stories of five women who...
fought in Iraq between 2003 and 2006. She follows them from their childhoods to their enlistments, then takes them to war and home again, all the while setting the war’s events in context.

We meet Jen, white and from a working-class town in the heartland, who still shakes from her wartime traumas; Abbie, a rebel against a household of liberal Democrats by enlisting in the National Guard; Mickiela, a Mexican American who grew up entangled in L.A. gangs; Terris, an African American whose childhood was torn by violence; and Eli PaintedCrow, who joined the military to follow Native American tradition and to escape a life of Faulknerian hardship. Between these stories Benedict weaves those of the forty other Iraq War veterans she interviewed, illuminating the complex issues of war and misogyny, class, race, homophobia, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Each of these stories is unique, yet collectively they add up to a heartbreaking picture of the sacrifices women soldiers are making for this country.

Benedict ends by showing how these women learned to face the truth of war and by offering suggestions for how the military can improve conditions for female soldiers—including distributing women more evenly throughout units and rejecting male recruits with records of violence against women. Humanizing, urgent, and powerful, Lonely Soldier is a clarion call for change.

In the Media:

Helen Benedict will be featured in a new documentary on the sexual assault of women in the military, The Invisible War

Click here to watch an interview with Benedict featuring The Lonely Soldier TV’s College Series.

Read a post by Helen Benedict on the Huffington Post

Listen to Helen Benedict on The Jeff Farias Show

Watch Helen Benedict on NBC Nightly News

Listen to Helen Benedict on WBGO in New Jersey

Listen to Helen Benedict’s appearances on The Diane Rehm Show

Read a piece that acknowledges The Lonely Soldier as the inspiration for a Sundance film entrant, “The Invisible War”.
Click here to read an interview with Helen Benedict in Guernica Mag

Reviews

"Benedict’s book, filled with compelling and heartbreaking stories, is a groundbreaking testament to the bravery, resilience, and almost insurmountable obstacles faced by women stationed in Iraq."
—Deirdre Sinnott, ForeWord

"Whether the soldiers’ language is plainspoken or poetic, Helen Benedict’s book gives them a place to tell their stories. . . . The Lonely Soldier has strong merit as an account of women’s military experience in this long and reckless war."
—Amy Herdy, Ms.

"Benedict’s brilliant and compassionate reporting is neither left nor right—it’s human. . . . You know these women—they are your mother, sister, cousin, daughter. Their stories of injustice in the U.S. military will tear your guts out."
—Dale Maharidge, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning And Their Children after Them

"The Lonely Soldier will shock you and enrage you and bring you to tears. It’s must reading for everyone who cares about women, justice, fairness, the military, and the United States."
—Katha Pollitt, award-winning columnist, The Nation

"A stunning chronicle of abuses suffered by women enlisted in the U.S. Army serving in Iraq."
—Los Angeles Times

"It is hard to determine what is most disturbing about this book—the devious and immoral tactics used by leaders and recruiters to get women to join, the poverty and personal violence women were escaping that led them to vulnerability to manipulation, the raping and harassing of women soldiers by their superiors and comrades once they got to Iraq, or the untreated homelessness, illnesses, and madness that have haunted [these] women since they came home. . . . A crucial accounting of the shameful war on women who gave their bodies, lives, and souls for their country."
—Eve Ensler, playwright, performer, activist, and author of The Vagina Monologues

Shade It Black: Death and After in Iraq

In this absorbing memoir, Iraq veteran Goodell recounts her service, the brutal, sexist culture of the Marine Corps, and her struggle to adapt to the world upon her return from Iraq. After enlisting, Goodell volunteered to serve with the Marines’ declared Mortuary Attachment in Iraq’s Al Anbar province, in 2004. The Mortuary Attachment platoon...
"what had to be done but that no one wanted to know about": they "processed" the bodies of U.S. and other soldiers killed in combat, so that they could be identified and returned to their families. She describes in gruesome detail what it affects the soldiers who care for their comrades in this way. She rubbed up against a Marine Corp culture of indignities (calling an unfit Marine a "fat nasty" or worse), outright misogyny ("Don't even...tell me that's a woman. Get...out of my formation!"), and sexist marching cadences. Coming home, unable to gain weight or sleep or relax and unprepared for post-service life among a population that had no idea of who she was or what she had gone through, Goodell began to come apart. Her memoir is a courageous settling of accounts, and a very good read. (May)

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Bennis: Iraq War Continues
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Powell’s New Book: No Debate by Bush Admin.
New Film on Cheney, War Criminal
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Iraq and Iran Alliance

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Breen, the Suffering of Individual Iraqis

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Bennis, *Challenging Empire*

Tomas Young, Last Letter to Bush, Cheney, March 18, 2013

Young Documentary, “Body of War”

Young, Google Search May 4, 2013

Forthofer, US Leaders Guilty of War Crimes
Contact Arkansas Congressional Delegation

Arkansas is represented in Congress by two senators and four representatives. Here is how to reach them. None of the senators or representatives publishes his e-mail address, but each can be contacted by filling in forms offered through his website.

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END IRAQ WARS NEWSLETTER: THEY HAVE NOT ENDED #16

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