

America's Special Envoy: What the Establishment Media Won't Tell You About Richard Holbrooke

By [Max Kantar](#)

Global Research, December 15, 2010

15 December 2010

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In the American press, the death of U.S. Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke has been universally hailed as an immense tragedy for the people of the United States and the world at large. TIME magazine described the longtime Democratic Party advisor and foreign diplomat as “tactically brilliant and capable of the finest strategic judgment” while also “possessing high principles and real, deep compassion.”¹ *New York Times* columnist, Nicholas Kristof—well known for his ultra-dovish politics and passion for humanitarianism—praised Holbrooke as “a man of heart” who served as an “inspiration” to us all.² The *Washington Post* joined in the chorus of admiration, warmly painting Holbrooke as a “towering, one-of-a-kind presence” who “move[d] with equal confidence through Upper East Side cocktail parties, the halls of the White House and the slums of Pakistan.”³

One by one, each newspaper and major television network lionized Holbrooke as a man of peace, great intelligence, compassion, and foresight. Humorous anecdotes and interpersonal stories were shared, serving to humanize him as a family man and great personality. Media outlets and intellectuals doted on Holbrooke’s supposed achievements surrounding the establishment of the 1995 Dayton Accords—praise that is dubious at best.⁴

What they left out is that Richard Holbrooke was as Special Envoy, in a many regards, a war criminal; an exporter of misery and suffering to millions of people.

Over the course of nearly five decades, Holbrooke supported and took part in—often playing quite substantial roles—some of the most horrifying crimes of the latter half of the twentieth century. For six years in the 1960s he worked to advance the brutal U.S. pacification of South Vietnam. In addition to serving as an aide to multiple U.S. ambassadors in the Saigon embassy, Holbrooke worked as a USAID operative in the Mekong Delta. USAID programs provided training for South Vietnamese police, intelligence agents, and death squads to help these U.S.-directed forces ruthlessly terrorize and slaughter hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese peasants in an effort to stop the population from supporting Ho Chi Min and the National Liberation Front (also known as the “Viet Cong”).

USAID also played a significant role in facilitating CIA involvement in “Operation Phoenix”—the infamous program of mass torture and political murder which claimed several tens of thousands of victims. In all, the U.S. and its surrogate forces in Vietnam ended up killing upwards of three to four million human beings throughout the war, including many children. Holbrooke also helped implement this campaign by serving as a high level advisor to then-President Lyndon Johnson. .

In the late 1970s, Holbrooke served as President Jimmy Carter’s Assistant Secretary of State

for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. The unprovoked Indonesian invasion and occupation of East Timor, beginning in 1975, was largely a U.S. project designed to maintain traditional U.S. political and economic interests in the region. The U.S. provided Indonesia with upwards of 90 percent of their military hardware and, until 1999, successfully blocked all international efforts in the United Nations to bring about an Indonesian withdrawal from East Timor.

Holbrooke served as the top Carter administration official responsible for U.S. policy in Indonesia and East Timor. On the military end, Holbrooke authorized crucial arms shipments to Indonesia which allowed the invading forces to attack largely undefended, civilian targets. As part of the political campaign to conceal these genocidal atrocities, Holbrooke testified before Congress in 1979, lying to the American people about the mass starvation the U.S.-backed Indonesian forces were imposing on the East Timorese general public. According to sources from the UN, Amnesty International, and the Catholic Church, some 200,000 East Timorese were killed, with hundreds of thousands more tortured and rendered homeless in what amounted to, proportionally, one of the most comprehensive genocides since the Nazi Holocaust.⁵

Holbrooke also served as a major Carter administration apologist for the hideous crimes of the U.S. favorite in The Philippines, Dictator Ferdinand Marcos. His hatred for popular movements, grassroots struggles, and democracy was not limited, however, to Vietnam, East Timor, and The Philippines. Holbrooke successfully convinced Carter to authorize South Korean troops under effective U.S. control to crush a pro-democracy uprising in Kwangju, South Korea, resulting in the killing of hundreds of young activists.⁶

As an advisor to President Bill Clinton, Holbrooke supported and often spoke out in defense of the U.S.-sponsored ethnic cleansing and brutalization program of Turkish Kurds. Tens of thousands of Kurds were killed, thousands of villages were razed, countless women raped, and millions rendered homeless, largely as a result of U.S. diplomatic and military support. Unsurprisingly, Holbrooke also took a hard line against the Palestinian struggle for freedom from Israel's foreign military occupation, voicing support for America's policy of financing Israeli crimes while also urging the UN Security Council to abstain from criticizing Israel.

In more recent years, Holbrooke is known for being a prominent and powerful Democratic Party supporter of the March 2003 invasion of Iraq—an invasion and occupation which has thus far resulted in the killing of over 1,000,000 people and the torture, mutilation, brutalization, and devastation of many more millions of Iraqis.⁷

At the time of his death, Holbrooke was serving as the Obama administration's Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan. In this capacity, he led the push for Obama's military surge in Afghanistan which has been closely accompanied by a drastic increase in death and destruction. House raids by U.S. Special Forces, aerial bombings, and increased fighting with insurgents has made life for the Pashtun population a living nightmare, according to leading independent journalists in Afghanistan, such as Anand Gopal. In addition to crimes and humiliations committed by NATO troops, Gopal writes, the daily atrocities committed by U.S.-backed Afghan forces and paramilitary death squads continue to increase support for the Taliban-led insurgency while fostering hatred for the United States.⁸ In Pakistan, Holbrooke has overseen an unprecedented increase in remote-controlled drone bombings in the tribal regions. Thousands of Pakistanis have been killed by these strikes and it is widely believed that civilians are bearing the brunt of the bloodshed.⁹

Falsifying history is one of the most important functions of the establishment media. Whenever a statesman or lap-dog intellectual dies,¹⁰ it is important that the documentary record is suppressed in favor of telling comforting narratives that perpetuate the harmful myths of the dominant political culture.

Max Kantar is a Michigan-based independent writer and human rights activist. He can be reached at maxkantar@gmail.com

Notes

1 Massimo Calabresi, "Richard Holbrooke: Archetype of American Diplomacy," *TIME*, December 14, 2010, <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2036851,00.html> (December 14, 2010).

2 Nicholas Kristof, "Richard Holbrooke, RIP," *New York Times*, December 14, 2010, Opinion Pages, <http://kristof.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/12/13/richard-holbrooke-rip/> (accessed December 14, 2010).

3 Ranjiv Chandrasekaran, "Richard Holbrooke Dies: Veteran U.S. diplomat brokered Dayton peace accords," *Washington Post*, December 13, 2010.

4 Edward Herman, "Inhumanitarian Intervention," *Z Magazine*, May 2007, <http://www.zcommunications.org/inhumanitarian-intervention-by-edward-herman> (accessed December 14, 2010).

5 On Holbrooke's role in the East Timor genocide, see, for example, Sunil Sharma, "200,000 Skeletons in Richard Holbrooke's closet," *Dissident Voice*, March 22, 1999, http://dissidentvoice.org/Articles/Sharma_Holbrooke-Timor.htm (accessed December 14, 2010); Joshua Frank, "Obama's Necon: The Curious Case of Richard Holbrooke," *Counterpunch*, January 27, 2009, <http://www.counterpunch.org/frank01272009.html> (accessed December 14, 2010). For more on blocking international efforts to stop the genocide, see Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *A Dangerous Place* (Boston: Little Brown, 1978), 247-53.

6 Tim Shorrock, "Kwangju Declassified: Holbrooke's Legacy," May 31, 2010, <http://timshorrock.com/?p=435> (accessed December 14, 2010).

7 For sources on the death toll in Iraq, see, for example, Patrick McElwee, "A Million Iraqi Dead?," *Extra!* January/February 2008, <http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=3321> (accessed December 14, 2010).

8 Anand Gopal, "The Battle for Afghanistan: Militancy and Conflict in Kandahar," *New America Foundation*, November 2010, http://newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/kandahar_0.pdf (accessed December 14, 2010).

9 For sources and analysis on U.S. drones and civilian casualties, see Max Kantar, "International Law: The First Casualty of the Drone War," *Global Policy Forum*, May 30, 2009, <http://www.globalpolicy.org/home/163-general/48551-international-law-the-first-casualty-of-the-drone-war.html> (accessed December 14, 2010). For a more recent report, see "US criticized in Pakistan Drone Report," *BBC News*, December 9, 2010,

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-11963632> (accessed December 14, 2010).

10 Another prime example is the media coverage of the death of longtime racist, William F. Buckley. For an excellent analysis, see Steven Rendall, "William F. Buckley: Rest in Praise," *Extra!*, May/June 2008, <http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=3406> (accessed December 15, 2010).

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Max Kantar](#), Global Research, 2010

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Max Kantar](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca