

America's Record of Murder and Mayhem Since 1945: Some of the Worst Hits

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The United States has [killed, maimed, displaced, and otherwise harmed an astonishing number of people](#) (according to Ward Churchill) in its 241-year record of murder and mayhem – including more than [20 million killed in 37 nations](#) since 1945.

Direct Assault

A distinction exists between those Uncle Sam has directly assaulted and those he has more indirectly attacked. Examples of direct assault are numerous and horrible to contemplate.

The history of direct U.S.-military mass killing since 1945 includes:

- * The [firebombing of Tokyo](#): roughly 100,000 Japanese civilians incinerated when U.S. bombers created the greatest firestorm in history.
- * Hiroshima (146, 000 killed with a single bomb – what U.S. president Harry Truman called “the greatest thing in history”) and (80,000) Nagasaki: savagely unnecessary and arch-criminal [atom-bombings](#) carried out even though the U.S. high command knew that Japan was defeated and ready to accept U.S. surrender terms).
- * Four million killed in [Korea](#) to prevent national unification under Left and Soviet-allied power there between 1950 and 1953.
- * The “crucifixion of Southeast Asia” (Noam Chomsky’s term at the time): the U.S. and its allies killed at least 3 million Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians between 1962 and 1975. (Operation Phoenix, a CIA and military operation, alone killed 40,000 Vietnamese – more than two-thirds the total U.S. body count in the so-called Vietnam War)
- * [Iran Air Flight 655](#): on July 3, 1988, the *USS Vincennes* crossed into Iranian waters and shot down an Iranian civilian plane, blowing 290 people out of the sky. (The *Vincennes*’ commander was granted an award for “exceptionally meritorious conduct.”)
- *The “Highway of Death”: U.S. fighter jets engaged in a frenzied slaughter of tens of thousands of surrendered Iraqi troops in 1991. (The Lebanese-American journalist Joyce Chediak [testified](#) that “U.S. forces continued to drop bombs on the convoys until all humans were killed. So many jets swarmed over the inland road that it created an aerial traffic jam, and combat air controllers feared midair collisions.... The victims were not offering resistance...it was simply a one-sided massacre of tens of thousands of people who had no ability to fight back or defend.”)

*Fallujah: the U.S. Marines [waged chemical warfare and used radioactive ordnance](#) in the process of leveling a great Iraqi city in April and November of 2004.

*Bola Boluk: an Afghan village where [U.S. bombers blew 113 civilians](#) (including dozens of children) to bits in May of 2009.



* [The U.S. drone war program](#) (2001 to present), aptly described by Noam Chomsky as “the most extreme terrorist campaign of modern times”: The Bureau of Investigative Journalism reports a minimum number of U.S. 3,734 [drone strikes](#) with nearly 10,000 killed, including 1,427 civilians in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen “since the Bureau began collecting data.” (Chomsky’s description referred to Obama’s drone record; Trump has dramatically increased drone strikes).

* Bayda Province, Trump’s first blood: US Navy special forces carried out a raid – planned under the Obama administration and handed off to the incoming Trump team – that killed 25 civilians, including 10 children in the mountainous Yakla region of Yemen’s Bayda province. One of the children [killed was an eight-year-old girl](#), Nawar al-Awlaki, daughter of the Islamist preacher Anwar al-Awlaki, who was killed on the order of Barack Obama in a September 2011 US drone strike in Yemen. Nawar’s older brother, 16-year-old son Abdulrahman, was killed in a second drone strike soon afterwards. The continued U.S. slaughter of al-Awlaki’s children was consistent with Trump’s campaign claims that he would kill the relatives of terrorist suspects – a war crime. The other thing with the terrorists is you have to take out their families, when you get these terrorists, [you have to take out their families](#),” Trump pronounced on Fox News in December 2015.

Proxy Killing

Dreadful as such moments of direct imperial butchery may be, the United States may well have killed, maimed, and displaced more people indirectly, through proxies and clients.

In 1954, a CIA-orchestrated coup removed the democratically elected Guatemalan and Left government of Jacobo Arbenz. Over the next four decades, U.S.-backed right-wing Guatemalan regimes killed tens of thousands of peasants, workers, students, and activists.

In 1960, the CIA killed the Congo’s first independent head of state, the Left anti-colonialist leader Patrice Lumumba. The United States subsequently backed the brutal Congolese dictator Joseph Mobutu, who killed hundreds of thousands. (The U.S. has since been significantly responsible for as many 3 million deaths in that resource-rich country ever since. It sponsors and protects the Rwandan dictator Paul Kagame, whose body count in his own country and Congo runs into the tens of thousands.)

In 1965 and 1966, the United States worked with Britain and Australia to help orchestrate the overthrow of the democratically elected Left government of Indonesia and the subsequent massacre of somewhere between 500,000 and 1 million Indonesian peasants, workers, intellectuals, and activists. Coup General Suharto received rich military and economic assistance from the U.S. over three decades of subsequent authoritarian rule.

In December of 1975, Suharto got a green light from his sponsors in Washington to invade East Timor. The Indonesian military received advanced weaponry from the United States and the U.S. client Israel as it brutally annexed the poor island nation and killed at least 180,000 of its inhabitants.

In 1973, a CIA-engineered coup overthrew the democratically elected socialist government of Chilean president Salvador Allende and replaced him with the fascist butcher and close U.S. ally General Augusto Pinochet. Pinochet's regime killed 30,000 workers, students, peasants, intellectuals and activists while introducing U.S.- (University of Chicago-) imported economic policies during the 1970s and 1980s.

A U.S.-sponsored and U.S.-equipped fascist regime in Argentina and allied death squads killed as many 30,000 workers, students, intellectuals, and activists in that country between 1974 and 1983.



In the late 1970s and 1980s, Washington, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan created the extremist Islamo-Wahhabist forces that became al Qaeda and the Taliban as part of the U.S. Cold War with the Soviet Union and to destabilize a pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan. These Sunni jihadist forces have killed hundreds of the thousands of people in Southwest Asia and the Middle East ever since.

U.S.-sponsored authoritarian regimes in Central America killed over 300,000 people during Ronald Reagan's two terms. Lavish funding, training and equipment from Washington fueled this epic bloodshed. Victims were murdered and maimed as punishment for—and warnings against—participation in [popular struggles](#) to redistribute land and improve working and social conditions for peasants and workers in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.

Tens of thousands of Iranians were executed with U.S. economic, political, and military assistance and sponsorship by the Iranian dictator Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, who was installed into power after a CIA-engineered coup overthrew Iran's democratically elected Left government in 1953.

Between 1980 and 1988, the U.S. backed Iraq in an epic war with Iran. This horrific conflict produced at least 1 million Iranian casualties, including 300,000 soldiers killed and untold thousands still suffering from Iraqi chemical weapons developed with U.S. assistance.

The U.S.-sponsored and U.S.-armed Israeli government has killed hundreds of thousands if not millions (estimates vary) of Palestinians. It is a major recipient of U.S. military assistance as it continues to impose its vicious apartheid and settlement regime on the Palestinians with an iron fist.

An estimated 465,000 Syrians have been killed or gone missing in the ongoing Syrian Civil War, a conflict that has been significantly fueled by the U.S. and allied powers including Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

Saudi Arabia, the most reactionary government on Earth, has slaughtered untold tens of thousands of dissenters and ethnic (Shia Muslim) minorities with U.S. arms, economic assistance, and diplomatic cover. It is home to the extreme Sunni-Wahabbist ideology that has fueled mass-murderous jihadists affiliated with al-Qaeda and Islamic State, which have received lavish funding from Saudi Arabia. The Saudi kingdom is a prized U.S. ally that has been visited by both President Obama and Trump in recent years. Trump went to Riyadh last May to seal a \$110 billion arms deal with the Saudis.

Untold tens of thousands of Black Africans died at the hands of the U.S. supported apartheid regime of South Africa during the Cold War era.



U.S.-backed regimes and paramilitary forces (especially the UNITA armies that waged war on socialist Angola in the 1970s and 1980s) have killed many hundreds of thousands if not millions more in Africa since 1945. (Many hundreds of thousands of Congolese have died at the hands of the U.S.-sponsored Rwandan regime and related Congolese death squads in the post-Mobuto era. The current significantly U.S.-instigated South Sudanese civil war has killed an estimated 300,000.)

This is a very partial list. For a more comprehensive record, see William Blum, *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower* (Common Courage, 2005) and Ward Churchill, *On the Justice of Roosting Chickens: Reflections on the Consequences of U.S. Arrogance and Criminality* (AK Press, 2003).

Given this record, it is hardly surprising that the United States has long been the nation that is most viewed by people the world over as the greatest threat to peace and security on the planet. This while the imperial homeland's reigning media and politics culture claims that the United States is an exceptionally noble and democratic force for good and liberty the

world over, leaving untold millions of U.S. Americans childishly clueless about the eternally and absurdly asked question: “why oh why do they hate wonderful us?”

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