

Coverup of Extensive War Crimes: The BBC, of course!

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [Media Disinformation](#)

In-depth Report: [Fallujah: US War Crimes](#)

"If people really knew [the truth], the war would be stopped tomorrow. But of course, they don't know and can't know". – David Lloyd George, Prime Minister of Great Britain, 1917

"The US has now admitted using white phosphorus as a weapon in Falluja last year, after earlier denying it" the BBC reports (sic!) (1)

The BBC – in its notorious role of advocate of "national interests" continues: *"The substance can cause burning of the flesh but is not illegal and is not classified as a chemical weapon."*

Burning of the flesh!? Much Ado About Nothing, one would say!

But let's keep reading.

What about *"but is not illegal and is not classified as a chemical weapon"*?

In the same article (Hello!? It's in the very same article! At the very bottom but still there!) one reads:

But Professor Paul Rodgers, of the University of Bradford's department of peace studies, said white phosphorus could be considered a chemical weapon if deliberately aimed at civilians.

He told PM: "It is not counted under the chemical weapons convention in its normal use but, although it is a matter of legal niceties, it probably does fall into the category of chemical weapons if it is used for this kind of purpose directly against people."

The change of Professor Bradford's word *"people"* into BBC word *"civilian"* is worth of notice.

But let's keep reading.

The BBC must defend its role of national interests' advocate. To the point to be ridiculous:

Washington is not a signatory to an international treaty restricting the use of the substance against civilians.

What? Please, read it again: **AGAINST CIVILIANS!!!**

But let's keep reading. (If you can...)

The BBC reports (sic!):

A Pentagon spokesman, Lt Col Barry Venable, confirmed to the BBC the US had used white phosphorus "as an incendiary weapon against enemy combatants" – though not against civilians, he said.

He said earlier denials had been based on "poor information"

Poor information? Give me a break!

I imagine it's the same "poor information" that made Mr. Robert H Tuttle – US Ambassador to the UK – write to the Independent, protesting:

"US forces participating in Operation Iraqi Freedom continue to use appropriate lawful, conventional weapons against legitimate targets. US forces do not use napalm or white phosphorus as weapons." (The Independent, 15 Nov. 2005)

PINOCCHIO! PINOCCHIO! PINOCCHIO! You should read what your employer writes, Mr. Ambassador!

But let's keep reading.

The BBC reports (sic!):

San Diego journalist Darrin Mortenson, who was embedded with US marines during the assault on Falluja, told the BBC's Today radio programme he had seen white phosphorous used "as an incendiary weapon" against insurgents. However, he "never saw anybody intentionally use any weapon against civilians", he said.

Of course you didn't see "anybody intentionally use any weapon against civilians" Mr Mortenson. Remember what you wrote back in April 2004?

They say they have never seen what they've hit, nor did they talk about it as they dusted off their breakfast and continued their hilarious routine of personal insults and name-calling.

So, if the marines using white phosphorous "have never seen what they've hit", how could you Darrin?

But let's keep reading.

Toward the end the BBC News website article reads:

Globalsecurity.org, a defence website, says: "Phosphorus burns on the skin are deep and painful... These weapons are particularly nasty because white phosphorus continues to burn until it disappears... it could burn right down to the bone."

Right! But remember what the BBC writes at the beginning of its article?

The substance can cause burning of the flesh but is not illegal and is not classified as a chemical weapon.

But let's keep reading.

The BBC News reports (sic!):

A spokesman at the UK Ministry of Defence said the use of white phosphorus was permitted in battle in cases where there were no civilians near the target area.

Very generic statement that means nothing! Which kind of use? For which purpose?

No civilians? In a city? The world saw images of dead women, children and old people. No doubts there were civilians in Fallujah.

Now that the US Department of State was forced to admit the truth: **The US DID use white phosphorous**, the BBC sees the problem:

BBC defence correspondent Paul Wood says having to retract its denial is a public relations disaster for the US.

This is the same Paul Wood who – as quoted by Helen Boaden, Director of BBC News – said:

“But I repeat the point made by my editors, over many weeks of total access to the military operation, at all levels, we did not see banned weapons being used, deployed, or even discussed. We cannot therefore report their use.” (2)

Maybe the BBC “*did not see banned weapons being used, deployed, or even discussed*”, but last year lots of people DID see and DID report:

On November 10, 2004, the Washington Post reported:

Some artillery guns fired white phosphorous rounds that create a screen of fire that cannot be extinguished with water. Insurgents reported being attacked with a substance that melted their skin. (3)

On the same day, November 10, 2004, Islam OnLine reported:

FALLUJAH, November 10 (IslamOnline.net & News Agencies) – US troops are reportedly using chemical weapons and poisonous gas in its large-scale offensive on the Iraqi resistance bastion of Fallujah, a grim reminder of Saddam Hussein’s alleged gassing of the Kurds in 1988.

The US occupation troops are gassing resistance fighters and confronting them with internationally-banned chemical weapons,” resistance sources told Al-Quds Press Wednesday, November 10. (4)

Dahr Jamail, one of the few real journalists who didn’t go to bed with the military, reported repeatedly and extensively on Fallujah:

The U.S. military has used poison gas and other non-conventional weapons against civilians in Fallujah, eyewitnesses report. “Poisonous gases have been used in Fallujah,” 35-year-old trader from Fallujah Abu Hammad told IPS. “They used everything — tanks, artillery, infantry, poison gas. Fallujah has been bombed to the ground.” (...) Macabre accounts of killing of civilians are emerging through the cordon U.S. forces are still maintaining around Fallujah. (...) “Doctors in Fallujah are reporting to me that there are patients in the hospital there who were forced out by the Americans,” said Mehdi Abdulla, a 33-year-old ambulance

driver at a hospital in Baghdad. "Some doctors there told me they had a major operation going, but the soldiers took the doctors away and left the patient to die." (...) Abu Hammad said he saw people attempt to swim across the Euphrates to escape the siege. "The Americans shot them with rifles from the shore," he said. "Even if some of them were holding a white flag or white clothes over their heads to show they are not fighters, they were all shot.." Hammad said he had seen elderly women carrying white flags shot by U.S. soldiers. "Even the wounded people were killed. The Americans made announcements for people to come to one mosque if they wanted to leave Fallujah, and even the people who went there carrying white flags were killed." (5)

A cameraman with the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) who witnessed the first eight days of the fighting told of what he considered atrocities. Burhan Fasa'a has worked for LBC throughout the occupation of Iraq. "I entered Fallujah near the Julian Quarter, which is near the General Hospital," he said during an interview in Baghdad, "There were American snipers on top of the hospital shooting everyone." (...) "I saw at least 200 families who had their homes collapsed on their heads by American bombs," Burhan said while looking at the ground, a long ash dangling from his cigarette, "Fallujans already needed everything; I mean they already had no food or medicine. I saw a huge number of people killed in the northern part of the city, and most of them were civilians." (...) "I saw cluster bombs everywhere, and so many bodies that were burned, dead with no bullets in them. So they definitely used fire weapons, especially in Julian district. I watched American snipers shoot civilians so many times. I saw an American sniper in a minaret of a mosque shooting everyone that moved." He also witnessed something which many refugees from Fallujah have reported. "I saw civilians trying to swim the Euphrates to escape, and they were all shot by American snipers on the other side of the river." (6)

One has to ask: What was the BBC doing?

David Edwards and David Cromwell of Media Lens – an excellent watchdog "correcting for the distorted vision of the corporate media" – issued a series of alerts on this issue. (7) Media Lens challenged the BBC:

We at Media Lens do not know whether US forces have used banned weapons in their attack on Fallujah. However, it is remarkable that the BBC is, in effect, suppressing repeated and persistent reports of their alleged use. Even more depressing is the failure of the BBC to convey the sheer scale of the horror inflicted upon Iraqi civilians. (8)

To save its image – all they care about, apparently! – the BBC went public with an article on its website (9) where Director of News Helen Boaden quoted BBC correspondent Paul Wood:

"But I repeat the point made by my editors, over many weeks of total access to the military operation, at all levels, we did not see banned weapons being used, deployed, or even discussed. We cannot therefore report their use.

"Of course, we keep an open mind and will always investigate, and report, any hard evidence which comes to light."

Of course! When challenged by Media Lens, Director of News Helen Boaden showed all her fair play:

Dear David Cromwell

Thank you for your further email. However, I do not believe that further dialogue on this matter will serve a useful purpose.

Yours sincerely

Helen Boaden

Director, BBC News

Notes:

1) **Iraq probes US phosphorus weapons**, BBC News website
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4442156.stm

2) **Did BBC ignore weapons claim?**, NewsWatch, BBC News, 14 April 2005

http://news.bbc.co.uk/newswatch/ukfs/hi/newsid_4390000/newsid_4396600/4396641.stm

3) **U.S. Forces Battle Into Heart of Fallujah**, by Jackie Spinner, Karl Vick and Omar Fekeiki, Washington Post, November 10, 2004

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A35979-2004Nov9.html>

4) **US Troops Reportedly Gassing Fallujah**, Islam OnLine, November 10, 2004

<http://www.islamonline.org/English/News/2004-11/10/article05.shtml>

5) **'Unusual Weapons' Used in Fallujah**, by Dahr Jamail, November 26, 2004

http://www.dahrjamailiraq.com/hard_news/archives/hard_news/000137.php

6) **An Eyewitness Account of Fallujah**, by Dahr Jamail, December 16, 2004

http://www.dahrjamailiraq.com/hard_news/archives/2004_12_19.php

7) **Among them, please read:**

"NO GREAT WAY TO DIE" - BUT THE GENERALS LOVE NAPALM, 30 March 2005

http://www.medialens.org/alerts/05/050330_no_great_way_to_die.php

RAPID RESPONSE MEDIA ALERT: DOUBT CAST ON BBC CLAIMS REGARDING FALLUJAH, 18 April 2005

http://www.medialens.org/alerts/05/050418_doubt_cast_on_bbc.php

BBC SILENT ON FALLUJAH, 17 May 2005

http://www.medialens.org/alerts/05/050517_bbc_silent_on_fallujah.php

BBC STILL IGNORING EVIDENCE OF WAR CRIMES, 24 May 2005

http://www.medialens.org/alerts/05/050524_bbc_still_ignoring_evidence.php

8) **"NO GREAT WAY TO DIE" - BUT THE GENERALS LOVE NAPALM**, 30 March 2005

http://www.medialens.org/alerts/05/050330_no_great_way_to_die.php

9) See Note 2

10) (Email, 21 March, 2005) Published in **"NO GREAT WAY TO DIE" - BUT THE GENERALS LOVE NAPALM**, 30 March 2005

http://www.medialens.org/alerts/05/050330_no_great_way_to_die.php

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