

US Crimes against the People of Iraq, Vietnam, Nicaragua, ... : Denial, Selective Perception and Military Atrocities.

By [Felicity Arbuthnot](#)

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

March 19 2021 marks 19 years since the US-UK led war on Iraq in 2003.

This article by Felicity Arbuthnot first published on September 22, 2010 recalls the atrocities and crimes against humanity committed against the people of Iraq, Vietnam, Nicaragua, and many more.

When the horrors of the sadistic, near necrophile behaviour of U.S., personnel at Abu Ghraib prison, west of Baghdad, first showed the tip-of-the-iceberg-lie of "liberation": cruelty, depravity and bestiality on a scale which apparently dwarfed all that Saddam Hussein's regime had been accused of, President George W. Bush said: " This does not represent the America I know."

He should have. It was under the watch of his father, George Bush, Snr., that in 1991, thousands of Iraqi conscripts were buried alive in southern Iraq, by US army tanks and bulldozers. "What you saw was a bunch of buried trenches, with peoples arms and things sticking out of them", said Colonel Anthony Moreno who participated.(1)



Sixteen years earlier, in 1975, Bush Snr., with Henry Kissinger and Vernon Walters, set up “Plan Condor”, under which CIA-enlisted exiles, orchestrated : “.. the torture and assassination of leftist leaders (under which) Latin American military rulers, also ‘disappeared’ thousands of their opponents.” (2)

This followed in the bloody footsteps of the CIA 1966 Phoenix Project, designed to “cleanse” South Viet Nam of Communists (Viet Cong.) “Specially designed torture chambers were constructed in all forty four provinces. Rape of women suspects, electric shock, water torture, and hanging from ceilings were standard methods during interrogations.” (3) Further: “The U.S.’s Phoenix Program killed tens of thousands of Vietnamese.

Vietnamese prisoners were thrown into ‘tiger cages’ – built by Texas military contractor RMK-BRJ, the forerunner of Halliburton subsidiary KBR .. and routinely tortured.” (See 2.) Halliburton has, of course, hit financial bonanzas in Iraq and Afghanistan, along the occasional slightly bumpy legal path.

1st Photos of Viet Mass Slaying

WEATHER
Saw flurries and
colder today.
High in the upper 30s.
Details on Page 5-C.

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128TH YEAR—NO. 324

OHIO'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER
CLEVELAND, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1969

96 PAGES 10 CENTS



A clump of bodies on a road in South Vietnam.

Exclusive

This photograph will shock Americans as it shocked the editors and the staff of The Plain Dealer. It was taken by a young Cleveland area man while serving as a photographer with the U.S. Army in South Vietnam.

It was taken during the attack by American soldiers on the South Vietnamese village My Lai, an attack which has made world headlines in recent days with disclosures of mass killings allegedly at the hands of American soldiers.

This photograph and others on two special pages are the first to be published anywhere of the killings.

This particular picture shows a clump of bodies of South Vietnamese civilians which includes women and children. Why they were killed raises one of the most momentous questions of the war in Vietnam.

Cameraman Saw GIs Slay 100 Villagers

By JOSEPH ESSETERHAS
(c) 1969, The Plain Dealer

Fast forward to the revelations this month that twelve soldiers from (U.S.,) 5th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division have been charged with seventy six crimes, ranging from murder, to taking or appropriating pictures of the dead, keeping body parts, including fingers, a skull, a leg bone and a tooth. Allegations also include: “..hitting, kicking, strangling, dragging and spitting on ..” a colleague with one, the highest ranking accused, a Staff Sergeant, also allegedly showing him fingers from a corpse to dissuade him from going to the army authorities.(4) Bodies were “cut up and photographed”, states the (UK) Telegraph.

An army spokeswoman said the, as yet, unproven charges were: “ .. an aberration in terms of the behavior of our forces, if true ... I don't believe the allegations here, against those few individuals, are representative of the behavior or the attitudes of the entire force.”

Sadly, history, recent and earlier, hardly supports this sanguine view. A few quickly collected reminders, from the uncountable include:

In Vietnam :

The “elite” Tiger Force : U.S. troops tortured and executed prisoners and cut off their ears as souvenirs and to make into necklaces. “There was a period when just about everyone had a necklace of ears,” one soldier remembered.

“When women and children in one village crawled into a bunker to try to hide, GIs threw grenades into the bunker and ignored the pleas and screams of the wounded until all were dead. Such actions were not limited to this one unit—they were typical of U.S. forces in Vietnam.



The widespread murder and torture had a strategic purpose—to terrorize the people, drive them away from the revolutionary fighters, and to force them to follow U.S. orders.” (5)

“Of the tens of thousands of South Vietnamese detained, at least twenty thousand were summarily executed ... the severed heads of those executed were frequently displayed in the villages. Even more common was collecting the ears of dead Communist troops.” (6)

In a terrifying overview: “Torture is an American Value”, S. Brian Willson gives some salutary background to U.S., policy:

"I became aware of torture as a U.S. policy in 1969 when I was serving as a USAF combat security officer working near Can Tho City in Vietnam's Mekong Delta. I was informed about the CIA's Phong Dinh Province Interrogation Center (PIC) at the Can Tho Army airfield where supposedly 'significant members' (of Viet Cong) were taken for torture as part of the Phoenix Pacification Program. A huge French-built prison nearby was also apparently utilized for torture of suspects from the Delta region. Many were routinely murdered.

"Naive, I was shocked! The Agency for International Development (AID) working with Southern Illinois University, for example, trained Vietnamese police and prison officials in the art of torture ("interrogations") under cover of 'public safety.' American officials believed they were teaching 'better methods', often making suggestions during torture sessions conducted by Vietnamese police."

A chilling sleight of hand, Willson points out, was that: "Instead of the recent euphemism 'illegal combatants', the United States, in Vietnam, claimed prisoners were 'criminal', and therefore exempt from Geneva Convention protections." Think Guantanamo, Bagram, Abu Ghraib, Camp Bucca, think "renditions" and the uncounted, unknown secret prisons and secreted away human beings.

Far from being an "aberration", Willson states: "The use of torture as a function of terror, or its equivalent in sadistic behavior, has been historic de facto U.S. policy." (7)

And, lest forgotten: "From 1981 to 1985, John Negroponte was President Reagan's ambassador to the bloody U.S.-backed regime in Honduras. Negroponte oversaw the training of the Honduran army. According to the Baltimore Sun, a secret CIA-trained Honduran army unit, Battalion 316, used "shock and suffocation devices in interrogations.... Prisoners often were kept naked and, when no longer useful, killed and buried in unmarked graves."

"Negroponte also oversaw the brutal Contra war against Nicaragua. The CIA supplied the Contras with a manual titled 'Psychological Operations In Guerilla Warfare.' It called for the use of assassinations, kidnappings, extortions, and other violence for propagandistic effect. " (8)

Willson scales the decades in tracing the parallels in behaviour, the linguistics are depressingly familiar : "When indigenous Nicaraguan resistance fought against the occupying U.S. forces in the late 1920s, the Marines launched counterinsurgency war. U.S. policymakers insisted on "stabilizing" the country to enforce loan repayments to U.S. banks. They defined the resistance forces as "bandits," an earlier equivalent to the "criminal prisoners" in Vietnam and "illegal combatants" in Iraq. Since the United States claimed not to be fighting a legitimate military force, any Nicaraguan perceived as interfering with the occupiers was commonly subjected to beatings, tortures, and beheadings."

In Nick Gier's "Beheading, Hooding and Waterboarding: Torture in Viet Nam, Latin America and Iraq", the America unrecognised by Bush Jnr., walks tall. An Abu Ghraib Military Intelligence e-mail, dated 17th August 2003, reads of the prisons inmates: "The gloves are coming off . . . Col. Boltz has made it clear that we want these individuals broken." (9)

In fact the 6th March 2003, Defense Department "Working Group Report on Detainee Interrogations in the Global War on Terrorism" requested by Donald Rumsfeld, read:

“In order to respect the President’s inherent constitutional authority to manage a military campaign, (prohibition of torture) must be construed as inapplicable to interrogations undertaken pursuant to his Commander-in-Chief authority.”

On 20th March Iraq was illegally invaded and in April: “Rumsfeld issues a final policy approving twenty four special interrogation techniques, some of which need his permission to be used.”(10) With yet again, so little regard for international law or the U.S., Constitution, at the top, it is little wonder there is often either scant or none for either, leading to a culture of depravity down the chain of command..

In a supreme irony, John Negroponte was named U.S., Ambassador to Iraq in April 2004, just as the enormity of the Abu Ghraib torture scandal was becoming known.

It is widely reported that the aspect most concerning Commanders regarding the latest alleged depravities by troops, is that it might cause widespread anger, further turning the Afghans against the U.S., presence. It is hard to find shame, surprise, humility or regret expressed up the chain of Command.

A recent report in to standards in the U.S., army cites an increase in drug abuse and bad behavior, seemingly coming at the same time that the Army enlisted thousands of recruits who, in previous years, would have been ruled ineligible because of drug abuse or other criminal convictions. According to the report, nearly twenty percent of the soldiers who’ve enlisted in the Army since 2004 — perhaps as many as ten thousand — would “not have been eligible for entry into the Army before.”

“I think we’ve got to understand that the force we have today is different from the force we had ten years ago,” said Gen. Peter W. Chiarelli, the vice Chief of Staff of the Army, who oversaw the study. “We’ve got kids that are going to have some behavioral health issues.” He pondered on whether he had “.. a force capable of doing whatever the nation asks it to do? “

Cheer up General, the good news is that it is hard to spot the difference.

Felicity Arbuthnot, distinguished journalist, Veteran War Correspondent, Research Associate of the Centre for Research on Globalization, Associate Editor of Global Research.

Notes

1. War Crimes, Ramsey Clark and Others, Maisonneuve Press, 1992.
2. <http://revcom.us/a/1241/ustorture.htm>
3. <http://www.newwest.net/index.php/main/article/9930/>)
4. <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2010/09/09/100321/stryker-brigade-soldiers-kept.html#ixzz0zm70e384>
5. See 2
6. See 3
7. <http://www.vvaw.org/veteran/article/?id=579>

8. See 2

9. See 2.

10. <http://www.counterpunch.org/stephens05132005.html>

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