

Obama's Ludicrous 'Barrel Bomb' Theme: Singling Out Assad

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The U.S. government has dropped hundreds of thousands of tons of bombs on Iraq alone in the last dozen years - and even hailed the start of the bombing campaign in 2003 as "shock and awe" - but now has coyly and repeatedly decried the Syrian government's supposed use of crude "barrel bombs."

This hyper-hypocritical propaganda theme was given voice in President Barack Obama's Sept. 28 speech to the United Nations General Assembly when he denounced anyone who doesn't favor "regime change" in Syria as advocating "support [for] tyrants like Bashar al-Assad, who drops barrel bombs to massacre innocent children."



At the start of the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, President George W. Bush ordered the U.S. military to conduct a devastating aerial assault on Baghdad, known as "shock and awe."

Yet, Obama offered no criticism of various U.S. administrations and American allies that have leveled whole cities, killing countless men, women and children. That slaughter has included two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan in 1945 and the devastation of Indochina during the 1960s and 1970s with more bomb tonnage than was dropped in all of World War II. Millions, including countless children, were killed in these bombing campaigns.

More recently, Obama's predecessor, President George W. Bush ordered the devastation of Fallujah and other Iraqi cities to suppress resistance to the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq. Obama himself has boasted of ordering military strikes in seven countries, mostly

aerial bombardments with many confirmed civilian dead.

In 2014, Israel used American warplanes and armaments to blast apart Gaza killing some 2,100 people – the vast majority civilians and many of them children, including four little boys playing on a beach. President Obama not only refrains from criticizing Israel's indiscriminate use of these devastating weapons but stays silent on Israel's rogue nuclear arsenal and today ponders which giant “bunker buster” bombs should be added to Israel's bristling arsenal.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia is dropping U.S.-supplied ordnance, reportedly including cluster bombs, on the helpless population of Yemen with Obama's tacit approval and reportedly with U.S. intelligence assistance.

On Monday, the Saudi air force apparently bombed a wedding party on Yemen's Red Sea coast killing more than 130 people, including women who had taken refuge in a tent, according to various news reports.

One surviving relative said it was difficult to determine the exact number of dead because the bodies were blasted into so many bloody pieces. “I saw no body intact,” [said](#) Ahmed Altabozi, the uncle of one of the victims.

Yet, while President Obama has avoided any direct public rebukes of U.S. or allied militaries for their slaughter of civilians, he singled out Syria's embattled government for using a homemade weapon in its desperate fight against terrorists of the Islamic State and Al Qaeda's Nusra Front.

Further, Obama claimed that President Assad dropped the “barrel bombs to massacre innocent children” when there is no evidence that Assad had any such intent. Obama's comment amounted to crude and deceptive propaganda.

By contrast, when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu launches one of his periodic “lawn mowing” operations against the people of Gaza and many children are cut down in the process, Obama stands mute, apparently judging that the exercise in recurring butchery is just one of those “price is worth it” moments.

Obviously, any killing of civilians in wartime is to be deplored – whoever is dropping the bombs and whatever the weapon's degree of lethality – but it was still stunning to watch Obama apply such selective outrage. Indeed, much of the UN General Assembly seemed genuinely shocked by Obama's blatant double standards.

Propaganda Buzz Phrase

But it's really all par for the course. Whenever propagandists develop their “themes” for a conflict, they look for certain “hot button” phrases that make the behavior of a “black-hatted enemy” appear particularly venal. “Barrel bomb” has become the propaganda buzz phrase of choice associated with the Syrian conflict.

Yet, it seems likely this clumsy, improvised weapon – supposedly dropped from helicopters – would be far less lethal than rocket-propelled bombs delivered from afar by jet planes or drones, the approach favored by the U.S. government and its “allies.”

Civilians would have a much better chance to seek safety in a bomb shelter before some “barrel bomb” is shoved out the door of a helicopter than when a sophisticated U.S.-made bomb arrives with little or no warning, as apparently happened to the victims of that wedding in Yemen.

And that is not to mention the U.S. bombs that involve depleted uranium, napalm, phosphorous and cluster munitions, which present other humanitarian concerns. However, while U.S.-assisted or U.S.-directed slaughters of civilians attract little attention in the mainstream U.S. media, there are endless denunciations of the Syrian government’s “barrel bombs.”

The propaganda drumbeat is such that the American people are told that they must support “regime change” in Syria even if it risks opening the gates of Damascus to a victory by the Islamic State and Al Qaeda terrorists.

This odd “humanitarian” equation, tallied up by the State Department and “human-rights” NGOs, holds that to secure revenge for Syria’s alleged use of “barrel bombs,” the world must accept the possibility of the black flag of Sunni terrorism flying over a major Mideast capital while its streets would run red with the blood of Christians, Alawites, Shiites and other “heretics.”

Then, apparently, the United States would have little choice but to lead a massive expeditionary force into Syria to oust the Islamic State and Al Qaeda, ensuring the deaths of hundreds of thousands more innocents and sending millions more fleeing into a destabilized Europe.

But such is the power of propaganda in managing public perceptions. Use a phrase like “barrel bomb” over and over again as if it is a uniquely evil weapon when, in fact, it is far less lethal and destructive than the ordnance that the United States routinely deploys or hands out to its “allies” like candy on Halloween. Soon the people lose all perspective and are open to manipulation. [See Consortiumnews.com’s “[The Power of False Narrative.](#)”]

Once the U.S. public is softened up with the propaganda and psy-ops – also known as “[strategic communications](#)” or Stratcom – the only acceptable option is “regime change” in Syria even if that prospect holds the likelihood of a far worse human catastrophe.

By hearin “barrel bomb” enough times, the judgment of American citizens is clouded and any practical suggestion for a realistic political settlement of Syria’s conflict is deemed “appeasement” of a tyrant, which was the clear message of President Obama’s UN tirade on Monday.

And, thus, the killing continues; the chaos grows worse.

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, America’s Stolen Narrative, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). You also can order Robert Parry’s trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes America’s Stolen Narrative. For details on this offer, [click here](#).

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