

## **“Responsibility to Kill” (R2K): Washington Gives Green Light to Toxic Terror in Bahrain**

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*“Responsibility to Protect ” (R2P) or “Responsibility to Kill” (R2K)?*

Just as Bahrainis are being poisoned in their homes from indiscriminate firing of massive teargas by regime forces, Washington is showing its approval by going ahead with an arms sales deal to the Persian Gulf kingdom.

The number of civilian deaths has also risen dramatically since the appointment of two American and British police chiefs in December who were assigned – officially – to improve the human rights record of the Bahraini forces.

Last year, the Obama administration put on hold the sale of \$53 million worth of weapons to Bahrain amid uproar by human rights groups.

Ostensibly, the White House said that the shipment would only go ahead if the US-backed Sunni monarchy enacted democratic reforms to benefit the heavily discriminated Shia majority on the tiny oil-rich island state. The appointments of former Miami police boss John Timoney and his British counterpart, John Yates, were a tacit part of the reform package.

Since a pro-democracy uprising began last February, the unelected Al Khalifa ruling family has cracked down brutally on largely peaceful demonstrations. More than 50 people have been killed by regime forces, and thousands have been injured and incarcerated – huge numbers proportionate to the indigenous population of less than 700,000.

However, far from improving human rights, the Bahraini regime has stepped up repression over the past two months. Nine people have died in the past two weeks alone.

A marked change in regime tactics is the massive increase in teargas being deployed by the Saudi-backed riot police. Every night whole villages are submerged in toxic fumes resulting in a number of deaths, especially among the very young and elderly.

The youngest victim was a five-day-old baby girl, Sadiya Faisal, who died in the village of Balad Al Qadeem; the oldest was an 82-year-old woman, Salma Muhsin, from Barbar. Both victims, as with many others, died from suffocation in their homes. When relatives tried to eject the gas canisters from the dwellings, regime forces threw them back in. There is no doubt that the state forces are acting under orders for such systematic deployment. Bahrainis are convinced that Timoney and Yates are giving the orders, which in turn means Washington and London.

Also, the teargas being used now is a far more toxic than the previous variety. The new type

gives off distinct yellow fumes and is reckoned to be 10 times stronger than regular CS gas. Residents say that their homes are constantly laced with the acrid smell even long after riot police have vacated the area. The number of deaths does not reflect the thousands of injuries from intoxication. There are reports of many pregnant women losing babies from miscarrying.

As pointed out by London-based Campaign Against the Arms Trade, teargas is supposed to be used in riot control situations, not in confined areas, and certainly not in civilian homes.

In Bahrain, the gas is being used more like a chemical weapon against civilians. Its indiscriminate, massive use in mainly Shia villages and residential districts in the capital, Manama, is patently a policy of “toxic terrorism” and “collective punishment” against the 70 per cent of the population demanding that the Western-backed regime gives way to democratic government.

When the assignments of Timoney and Yates were announced by Bahrain’s King Hamad Al Khalifa at the end of last year, it was mooted then that the move was a whitewash to burnish the regime’s badly soiled international image [1]. This is now evidently the case.

Latest figures show that more than half of all deaths – 21 – from teargas poisoning in Bahrain over the past year have occurred since the arrival of Timoney and Yates to their posts.

The deterioration in human rights should not be surprising as both police chiefs are hardly exemplars of good conduct. John Yates was forced to resign from Scotland Yard last year over a phone-tapping scandal involving police officers and Rupert Murdoch’s gutter press. British police sources say that Yates has been personally involved in many other forms of corruption and embezzlement. Sources say that Yates was a top mover in a financial scam in the Cayman Islands.

Meanwhile, Irish-American John Timoney is notorious for his gratuitous disregard for civil liberties and use of savage policing tactics. Five years ago, the Miami New Times dubbed him “America’s worst cop” [2].

If the green light for repression needed to be any brighter, then Washington just turned the switch with the latest approval of the \$53 million arms deal to Bahrain.

Preposterously, Washington is maintaining that the weapons do not include means for internal repression, and are only for national defence. (The British government maintains a similar cynical fiction about its arms sales to its former colony.) A pertinent question is why is such “national defence” material needed since the US Navy’s Fifth Fleet is moored in Bahrain?

A sleight of hand by the Obama administration now adds a new twist. Because the US government is releasing the arms to Bahrain in a series of packages worth around \$1 million each rather than the originally scheduled complete consignment, it is not obligated to disclose what the weapons inventory includes.

Of course, all this only seems incongruous and contradictory if we believe the rhetoric from Washington (and London) about their commitment to democratic freedom and human rights. Bahrain is a classic case study of how Western geopolitical interests are closely

aligned with repression and violation of human rights, and of how deeply disingenuous is Washington and London's rhetoric.

The truth is that Washington's oil interests are entwined with repressive regimes in the Persian Gulf and are fundamentally opposed to the cause of democracy in these sheikdoms. The other factor, as Michel Chossudovsky points out in his forthcoming book *Towards A World War III Scenario*, is that the Arab regimes are being reinforced and tooled up by Washington as part of its war plan in the region towards Iran and beyond.

So the notion that Washington is painstakingly trying to cajole the Bahraini regime (or any other regime) to enact democratic reforms is a crass delusion. Indeed, any moves by the Bahraini people to establish democracy on their island must be choked off. And from the massive amounts of teargas being fired into homes, it is evident that Washington's minion in the Gulf is following those orders exactly to the letter.

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#### NOTES

[1] Bahrain: Car Bomb in Capital Follows Appointment of American and British Police Chiefs to Lead 'Reforms' <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=28050>

[2] John Timoney, America's Worst Cop <http://www.miaminewtimes.com/2007-09-20/news/john-timoney-america-s-worst-cop/>

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Finian Cunningham has written extensively on international affairs, with articles published in several languages. Many of his recent articles appear on the renowned Canadian-based news website [Globalresearch.ca](http://Globalresearch.ca). He is a Master's graduate in Agricultural Chemistry and worked as a scientific editor for the Royal Society of Chemistry, Cambridge, England, before pursuing a career in journalism. He specialises in Middle East and East Africa issues and has also given several American radio interviews as

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