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“Riding with the Bad Boys”: The Rise of Iraqi Death Squads

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Global Research, November 30, 2005
30 November 2005

Region: Middle East & North Africa
Theme: Crimes against Humanity
In-depth Report: IRAQ REPORT

The New York Times confirmed today that the “Iraqi (security) forces are carrying out executions in predominantly Sunnis neighborhoods.” Hundreds of men have been taken from taken from their homes by men in Iraqi uniforms and either “found dead in ditches or fields, with bullet holes to their temples, acid burns to their skin, and holes in their bodies apparently made by electrical drills. Many have simply vanished”. (Dexter Filkins, *“Sunnis accuse Iraqi Military of Kidnappings and Slayings”* NY Times)

The Times merely reiterates what has been echoing through internet for some time now, that the Iraqi Interior Ministry is using lethal force to undercut the Sunni-led resistance and terrorize the public. The plan was first uncovered in an article by Seymour Hersh in January 2005. Hersh reported that the Pentagon was intending to trigger “The Salvador Option”; a strategy which involves the training of “death squads” to execute a bloody secret war against “alleged” insurgents.

“Do you remember the right-wing execution squads in El Salvador?” one official asked Hersh. “We founded them and we financed them. The objective now is to recruit locals in any area we want.”

Then he added ominously, “We’re going to be riding with the bad boys.”

The authorization for the death squads comes straight from the Oval Office. According to Chris Floyd, “Through a series of secret executive orders, George W. Bush has given Rumsfeld the authority to turn the entire world into a ‘global free-fire zone’’. (Chris Floyd, *Darkness Visible: The Pentagon plan to foment terrorism is now in Operation*)

Floyd’s observations are consistent with what we already know of Rumsfeld’s involvement in overseeing the development of the Iraqi security apparatus. Following the presidential elections in Iraq, Rumsfeld paid a surprise visit on the newly-appointed al-Jaafari to discourage any changes in the Interior Ministry where American agents were training Iraqi goons in the fine art of torture and assassination.

Commenting to BBC, Rumsfeld issued a clear “hands off” warning to al-Jaafari: “Its important that the new government be attentive to the competence of the people in the ministries and that they avoid unnecessary turbulence.” He said it was important for the security forces to continue building their strength because US forces were not going to be there forever.

The genocidal attacks reported by the New York Times are the predictable upshot of a process that was initiated by the Pentagon to destroy the Iraqi resistance through violence

alone. As yet, there has been no effort to engage in dialogue with members of the resistance. This suggests that the Bush administration still believes that the dilemma they face can be resolved without a political solution.

There can be no political solution without direct negotiations with the Iraqi resistance. The smoke-and-mirrors phantom that the Bush administration mistakes for democracy has nothing to do with the serious formation of a legitimate Iraqi government. Voting, in itself, does not signify democracy unless there is broad acceptance among the many factions in the society. The massive demonstration of daily violence indicates a clear rejection of the legitimacy of the state. This can only be decided by eliminating the factors that prop up the puppet regime (the occupation) and engaging in a political process free from outside coercion.

The death squads are in fact just one part of a three-pronged strategy to crush the resistance and establish Iraq as a corporate-colony of American energy giants. The other phase of the operation involves the systematic decimation of Sunni cities.

In the last few months the US military has carried out numerous assaults on Sunni cities to break the resistance and destroy its ability to wage war. In consecutive operations, the occupation forces have followed the same ruthless pattern of wanton destruction and collective punishment they perfected in their siege of Falluja. Ghali Hassan's shocking article, *"Iraq: A Criminal Process"* (Global Research) is an invaluable resource for those who really want to grasp the breadth of the war crimes being perpetrated in Iraq.

Hassan says:

"Just before the U.S. forces attacked al Qaim last 29 August, a thriving town of 150,000 people in western Iraq, they cordoned it off, cut electricity, water and food supplies. Then they indiscriminately and disproportionately blanketed the town, from the ground and from the air, with artillery shells, cluster bombs and napalm bombs with the full knowledge that civilians, particularly women and children, would be killed.

When it was all over, the U.S. Marines entered the city to fight (with air cover) those who were still alive. Humanitarian aides and medical supplies were prevented from entering the town, in gross violations of international law and the Geneva Conventions. This cycle of criminal process to legitimize the colonization of Iraq is depicted by the Bush-Blair axis as the "political process" towards "democracy."

The slaughter and destruction in western Iraq are not simply isolated incidents that are kept from the media. They are, in fact, a pattern of willful devastation of city after city executed by the Defense Dept. to break the back of the resistance by decimating the civilian enclaves where they draw their support. The results have meant "scores of casualties due to 'indiscriminate bombing' by US forces. Paralleling the atrocities committed in other towns and cities, all of which savagely attacked and destroyed the entire population of Tal Afar are now 'ethnically cleansed' refugees". (G. Hassan)

The death squads and the intentional destruction of the Sunni heartland comprise the first two parts of the three-pronged strategy to defeat the Iraqi resistance. The final leg on the stool is the propaganda war that is being directed against the American people to conceal the details of the military's war crimes. The arrest or liquidation of independent journalists reporting from the front has allowed the Pentagon's "embedded" legions to shape a

narrative of benign intervention in the name of fighting terrorism. According to the Washington Post not one of the more then one thousand prisoners captured in Tal Afar was a foreign fighter. This should put to rest the Pentagon's spurious claim that Sunni cities are "Al Qaida strongholds."

American media now functions as an annex of the War Department. The news is fashioned to meet the policy objectives of the state and its constituents. The war that appears on TV stations across America, where US soldiers are dutifully ushering a backwards Muslim nation towards democracy and free enterprise, bears no resemblance to the gruesome realities of the colonial war that is devastating Iraqi society.

The media's performance in Iraq has been the most successful part of the entire campaign. It continues to embellish, obfuscate or divert attention from the clear facts of America's criminal involvement.

The media has unfailingly provided the ever-shifting rationale for the ongoing occupation and continued to mobilize public support for the most unpopular war in American history. Its embedded propagandists have been more vital to the war-effort than laser-guided technology, cluster-bombs or detention centers.

The Bush administration's three-pronged strategy for Iraq precludes a political solution because it is designed as a model for future wars. The Washington warlords and their boardroom constituents have no intention of negotiating the terms of global rule; that is the exclusive duty of the White House mandarins.

Negotiation and diplomacy are signs of weakness. The administration will remain faithful to its right-wing mandate; concealing its real goals behind the smokescreen of withdrawal, while ruling according to its basic precepts of force and deception.

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