

The Boston Marathon, This Thing called Terrorism, and the United States

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[The Anti-Empire Report](#)

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What is it that makes young men, reasonably well educated, in good health and nice looking, with long lives ahead of them, use powerful explosives to murder complete strangers because of political beliefs?

I'm speaking about American military personnel of course, on the ground, in the air, or directing drones from an office in Nevada.

Do not the survivors of US attacks in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan, Somalia, Libya and elsewhere, and their loved ones, ask such a question?

The survivors and loved ones in Boston have their answer – America's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

That's what Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, the surviving Boston bomber has said in custody, and there's no reason to doubt that he means it, nor the dozens of others in the past two decades who have carried out terrorist attacks against American targets and expressed anger toward US foreign policy. [1](#) Both Tsarnaev brothers had expressed such opinions before the attack as well. [2](#) The Marathon bombing took place just days after a deadly US attack in Afghanistan killed 17 civilians, including 12 children, as but one example of countless similar horrors from recent years. "Oh", an American says, "but those are accidents. What terrorists do is on purpose. It's cold-blooded murder."

But if the American military sends out a bombing mission on Monday which kills multiple innocent civilians, and then the military announces: "Sorry, that was an accident." And then on Tuesday the American military sends out a bombing mission which kills multiple innocent civilians, and then the military announces: "Sorry, that was an accident." And then on Wednesday the American military sends out a bombing mission which kills multiple innocent civilians, and the military then announces: "Sorry, that was an accident." ... Thursday ... Friday ... How long before the American military loses the right to say it was an accident?

Terrorism is essentially an act of propaganda, to draw attention to a cause. The 9-11 perpetrators attacked famous symbols of American military and economic power. Traditionally, perpetrators would phone in their message to a local media outlet beforehand, but today, in this highly-surveilled society, with cameras and electronic monitoring at a science-fiction level, that's much more difficult to do without being detected; even finding a public payphone can be near impossible.

From what has been reported, the older brother, Tamerlan, regarded US foreign policy also as being anti-Islam, as do many other Muslims. I think this misreads Washington's

intentions. The American Empire is not anti-Islam. It's anti-only those who present serious barriers to the Empire's plan for world domination.

The United States has had close relations with Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Qatar, amongst other Islamic states. And in recent years the US has gone to great lengths to overthrow the leading secular states of the Mideast – Iraq, Libya and Syria.

Moreover, it's questionable that Washington is even against terrorism per se, but rather only those terrorists who are not allies of the empire. There has been, for example, a lengthy and infamous history of tolerance, and often outright support, for numerous anti-Castro terrorists, even when their terrorist acts were committed in the United States. Hundreds of anti-Castro and other Latin American terrorists have been given haven in the US over the years. The United States has also provided support to terrorists in Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Kosovo, Bosnia, Iran, Libya, and Syria, including those with known connections to al Qaeda, to further foreign policy goals more important than fighting terrorism.

Under one or more of the harsh anti-terrorist laws enacted in the United States in recent years, President Obama could be charged with serious crimes for allowing the United States to fight on the same side as al Qaeda-linked terrorists in Libya and Syria and for funding and supplying these groups. Others in the United States have been imprisoned for a lot less.

As a striking example of how Washington has put its imperialist agenda before anything else, we can consider the case of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, an Afghan warlord whose followers first gained attention in the 1980s by throwing acid in the faces of women who refused to wear the veil. This is how these horrible men spent their time when they were not screaming "Death to America". CIA and State Department officials called Hekmatyar "scary," "vicious," "a fascist," "definite dictatorship material". [3](#) This did not prevent the United States government from showering the man with large amounts of aid to fight against the Soviet-supported government of Afghanistan. [4](#) Hekmatyar is still a prominent warlord in Afghanistan.

A similar example is that of Luis Posada who masterminded the bombing of a Cuban airline in 1976, killing 73 civilians. He has lived a free man in Florida for many years.

USA Today reported a few months ago about a rebel fighter in Syria who told the newspaper in an interview: "The afterlife is the only thing that matters to me, and I can only reach it by waging jihad." [5](#) Tamerlan Tsarnaev may have chosen to have a shootout with the Boston police as an act of suicide; to die waging jihad, although questions remain about exactly how he died. In any event, I think it's safe to say that the authorities wanted to capture the brothers alive to be able to question them.

It would be most interesting to be present the moment after a jihadist dies and discovers, with great shock, that there's no afterlife. Of course, by definition, there would have to be an afterlife for him to discover that there's no afterlife. On the other hand, a non-believer would likely be thrilled to find out that he was wrong.

Let us hope that the distinguished statesmen, military officers, and corporate leaders who own and rule America find out in this life that to put an end to anti-American terrorism they're going to have to learn to live without unending war against the world. There's no other defense against a couple of fanatic young men with backpacks. Just calling them insane or evil doesn't tell you enough; it may tell you nothing.

But this change in consciousness in the elite is going to be extremely difficult, as difficult as it appears to be for the parents of the two boys to accept their sons' guilt. Richard Falk, UN special rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian territories, stated after the Boston attack: "The American global domination project is bound to generate all kinds of resistance in the post-colonial world. In some respects, the United States has been fortunate not to experience worse blowbacks ... We should be asking ourselves at this moment, 'How many canaries will have to die before we awaken from our geopolitical fantasy of global domination?'" [6](#)

Officials in Canada and Britain as well as US Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice have called for Falk to be fired. [7](#)

President Kennedy's speech, half a century ago

I don't know how many times in the 50 years since President John F. Kennedy made his much celebrated 1963 speech at American University in Washington, DC [8](#) I've heard or read that if only he had lived he would have put a quick end to the war in Vietnam instead of it continuing for ten more terrible years, and that the Cold War might have ended 25 years sooner than it did. With the 50th anniversary coming up June 13 we can expect to hear a lot more of the same, so I'd like to jump the gun and offer a counter-view.

Kennedy declared:

Let us re-examine our attitude toward the Soviet Union. It is discouraging to think that their leaders may actually believe what their propagandists write. It is discouraging to read a recent authoritative Soviet text on Military Strategy and find, on page after page, wholly baseless and incredible claims such as the allegation that "American imperialist circles are preparing to unleash different types of war ... that there is a very real threat of a preventative war being unleashed by American imperialists against the Soviet Union" ... [and that] the political aims - and I quote - "of the American imperialists are to enslave economically and politically the European and other capitalist countries ... [and] to achieve world domination ... by means of aggressive war."

It is indeed refreshing that an American president would utter a thought such as: "It is discouraging to think that their leaders may actually believe what their propagandists write." This is what radicals in every country wonder about their leaders, not least in the United States. For example, "incredible claims such as the allegation that 'American imperialist circles are preparing to unleash different types of war'."

In Kennedy's short time in office the United States had unleashed many different types of war, from attempts to overthrow governments and suppress political movements to assassination attempts against leaders and actual military combat - one or more of these in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, British Guiana, Iraq, Congo, Haiti, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Cuba and Brazil. This is all in addition to the normal and routine CIA subversion of countries all over the world map. Did Kennedy really believe that the Soviet claims were "incredible"?

And did he really doubt that that the driving force behind US foreign policy was "world domination"? How else did he explain all the above interventions (which have continued non-stop into the 21st century)? If the president thought that the Russians were talking nonsense when they accused the US of seeking world domination, why didn't he then disavow the incessant US government and media warnings about the "International

Communist Conspiracy”? Or at least provide a rigorous definition of the term and present good evidence of its veracity.

Quoting further: “Our military forces are committed to peace and disciplined in self-restraint.” No comment.

“We are unwilling to impose our system on any unwilling people.” Unless of course the people foolishly insist on some form of socialist alternative. Ask the people of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, British Guiana and Cuba, just to name some of those in Kennedy’s time.

“At the same time we seek to keep peace inside the non-Communist world, where many nations, all of them our friends ...” American presidents have been speaking of “our friends” for many years. What they all mean, but never say, is that “our friends” are government and corporate leaders whom we keep in power through any means necessary – the dictators, the kings, the oligarchs, the torturers – not the masses of the population, particularly those with a measure of education.

“Our efforts in West New Guinea, in the Congo, in the Middle East, and the Indian subcontinent, have been persistent and patient despite criticism from both sides.”

Persistent, yes. Patient, often. But moral, fostering human rights, democracy, civil liberties, self-determination, not fawning over Israel ... ? As but one glaring example, the assassination of Patrice Lumumba of the Congo, perhaps the last chance for a decent life for the people of that painfully downtrodden land; planned by the CIA under Eisenhower, but executed under Kennedy.

“The Communist drive to impose their political and economic system on others is the primary cause of world tension today. For there can be no doubt that, if all nations could refrain from interfering in the self-determination of others, the peace would be much more assured.”

See all of the above for this piece of hypocrisy. And so, if no nation interfered in the affairs of any other nation, there would be no wars. Brilliant. If everybody became rich there would be no poverty. If everybody learned to read there would be no illiteracy.

“The United States, as the world knows, will never start a war.”

So ... Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Cuba, and literally dozens of other countries then, later, and now, all the way up to Libya in 2012 ... they all invaded the United States first? Remarkable.

And this was the man who was going to end the war in Vietnam very soon after being re-elected the following year? Lord help us.

Bush’s legacy

This is not to put George W. Bush down. That’s too easy, and I’ve done it many times. No, this is to counter the current trend to rehabilitate the man and his Iraqi horror show, which partly coincides with the opening of his presidential library in Texas. At the dedication ceremony, President Obama spoke of Bush’s “compassion and generosity” and declared that: “He is a good man.” The word “Iraq” did not pass his lips. The closest he came at all was saying “So even as we Americans may at times disagree on matters of foreign policy, we share a profound respect and reverence for the men and women of our military and their

families.” [9](#) Should morality be that flexible? Even for a politician? Obama could have just called in sick.

At the January 31 congressional hearing on the nomination of Chuck Hagel to be Secretary of Defense, Senator John McCain ripped into him for his critique of the Iraq war:

“The question is, were you right or were you wrong?” McCain demanded, pressing Hagel on why he opposed Bush’s decision to send 20,000 additional troops to Iraq in the so-called ‘surge’.

“I’m not going to give you a yes-or-no answer. I think it’s far more complicated than that,” Hagel responded. He said he would await the “judgment of history.”

Glaring at Hagel, McCain ended the exchange with a bitter rejoinder: “I think history has already made a judgment about the surge, sir, and you are on the wrong side of it.” [10](#)

Before the revisionist history of the surge gets chiseled into marble, let me repeat part of what I wrote in this report at the time, December 2007:

The American progress is measured by a decrease in violence, the White House has decided – a daily holocaust has been cut back to a daily multiple catastrophe. And who’s keeping the count? Why, the same good people who have been regularly feeding us a lie for the past five years about the number of Iraqi deaths, completely ignoring the epidemiological studies. A recent analysis by the Washington Post left the administration’s claim pretty much in tatters. The article opened with: “The U.S. military’s claim that violence has decreased sharply in Iraq in recent months has come under scrutiny from many experts within and outside the government, who contend that some of the underlying statistics are questionable and selectively ignore negative trends.”

To the extent that there may have been a reduction in violence, we must also keep in mind that, thanks to this lovely little war, there are several million Iraqis either dead, wounded, in exile abroad, or in bursting American and Iraqi prisons. So the number of potential victims and killers has been greatly reduced. Moreover, extensive ethnic cleansing has taken place in Iraq (another good indication of progress, n’est-ce pas? nicht wahr?) – Sunnis and Shiites are now living more in their own special enclaves than before, none of those stinking mixed communities with their unholy mixed marriages, so violence of the sectarian type has also gone down. On top of all this, US soldiers have been venturing out a lot less (for fear of things like ... well, dying), so the violence against our noble lads is also down.

One of the signs of the reduction in violence in Iraq, the administration would like us to believe, is that many Iraqi families are returning from Syria, where they had fled because of the violence. The New York Times, however, reported that “Under intense pressure to show results after months of political stalemate, the [Iraqi] government has continued to publicize figures that exaggerate the movement back to Iraq”; as well as exaggerating “Iraqis’ confidence that the current lull in violence can be sustained.” The count, it turns out, included all Iraqis crossing the border, for whatever reason. A United Nations survey found that 46 percent were leaving Syria because they could not afford to stay; 25 percent said they fell victim to a stricter Syrian visa policy; and only 14 percent said they were returning because they had heard about improved security.

How long can it be before vacation trips to “Exotic Iraq” are flashed across our

TVs? “Baghdad’s Beautiful Beaches Beckon”. Just step over the bodies. Indeed, the State Department has recently advertised for a “business development/tourism” expert to work in Baghdad, “with a particular focus on tourism and related services.” [11](#)

Another argument raised again recently to preserve George W.’s legacy is that “He kept us safe”. Hmm ... I could swear that he was in the White House around the time of September 11 ... What his supporters mean is that Bush’s War on Terrorism was a success because there wasn’t another terrorist attack in the United States after September 11, 2001 while he was in office; as if terrorists killing Americans is acceptable if it’s done abroad. Following the American/Bush strike on Afghanistan in October 2001 there were literally scores of terrorist attacks – including some major ones – against American institutions in the Middle East, South Asia and the Pacific: military, civilian, Christian, and other targets associated with the United States.

Even the claim that the War on Terrorism kept Americans safe at home is questionable. There was no terrorist attack in the United States during the 6 1/2 years prior to the one in September 2001; not since the April 1995 bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City. It would thus appear that the absence of terrorist attacks in the United States is the norm.

William Blum speaking in Wisconsin, near Minnesota

Saturday, July 13th, the 11th Annual *Peacestock: A Gathering for Peace* will take place at Windbeam Farm in Hager City, WI. *Peacestock* is a mixture of music, speakers, and community for peace in an idyllic location near the Mississippi, just one hour’s drive from the Twin Cities of Minnesota. *Peacestock* is sponsored by Veterans for Peace, Chapter 115, and has a peace-themed agenda. Kathy Kelly, peace activist extraordinaire, will also speak.

You can camp there and be fed well, meat or vegetarian. Full information at: <http://www.peacestockvfp.org>

Notes

1. William Blum, *Rogue State: A Guide to the World’s Only Superpower*, chapters 1 and 2, for cases up to about 2003; later similar cases are numerous; e.g., Glenn Greenwald, “[They Hate US for our Occupations](#)”, *Salon*, October 12, 2010 [↪](#)
2. *Huffington Post*, April 20, 2013; *Washington Post*, April 21 [↪](#)
3. Tim Weiner, *Blank Check: The Pentagon’s Black Budget* (1990), p.149-50. [↪](#)
4. William Blum, *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II* [↪](#)
5. *USA Today*, December 3, 2012 [↪](#)
6. *ForeignPolicyJournal.com*, April 21, 2013 [↪](#)
7. *The Telegraph* (London), April 25, 2013; *Politico.com*, April 24 [↪](#)
8. [Full text of speech](#) [↪](#)
9. [Remarks by President Obama at Dedication of the George W. Bush Presidential Library](#) [↪](#)
10. *Los Angeles Times*, February 1, 2013 [↪](#)
11. [Anti-Empire Report, #52, December 11, 2007](#) [↪](#)

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