

What's Become of Americans?

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Imagine knocking on America's door and being told, "Americans don't live here any longer. They have gone away."

But isn't that what we are hearing, that Americans have gone away? Alan Shore told us so on ABC's Boston Legal on March 14:

When the weapons of mass destruction thing turned out not to be true, I expected the American people to rise up. They didn't.

Then, when the Abu Ghraib torture thing surfaced and it was revealed that our government participated in rendition, a practice where we kidnap people and turn them over to régimes who specialize in torture, I was sure then the American people would be heard from. We stood mute.

Then came the news that we jailed thousands of so-called terrorist suspects, locked them up without the right to a trial or even the right to confront their accusers. Certainly, we would never stand for that. We did.

And now, it's been discovered the executive branch has been conducting massive, illegal, domestic surveillance on its own citizens. You and me. And I at least consoled myself that finally, finally the American people will have had enough. Evidently, we haven't.

In fact, if the people of this country have spoken, the message is we're okay with it all. Torture, warrantless search and seizure, illegal wiretappings, prison without a fair trial or any trial, war on false pretenses. We, as a citizenry, are apparently not offended.

There are no demonstrations on college campuses. In fact, there's no clear indication that young people even seem to notice. . . .

The Secret Service can now declare free speech zones to contain, control and, in effect, criminalize protest. Stop for a second and try to fathom that. At a presidential rally, parade or appearance, if you have on a supportive t-shirt, you can be there. If you're wearing or carrying something in protest, you can be removed.

This! In the United States of America.

Readers tell me that Americans don't live here any more. They ask what responsible American citizenry would put up with the trashing of the Bill of Rights and the separation of powers, with wars based on deception, and with pathological liars in control of their

government? One reader recently wrote that he believes that “no element of the U.S. government has been left untainted” by the lies and manipulations that have driven away accountability. So-called leaders, he wrote, “talk a great story of American pride and patriotism,” but in their hands patriotism is merely a device for “cynical manipulation and fraud.”

The Bush regime acknowledges that 30,000 Iraqi civilians, largely women and children, have been killed as a result of Bush’s invasion. Others who have looked at civilian casualties with greater attention have come up with numbers three to six times as large. The Johns Hopkins study accounted for 98,000 civilian deaths. Andrew Cockburn, using more sophisticated statistical analysis, concluded that 180,000 Iraqis died as a result of Bush’s invasion. The former prime minister Iyad Allawi says that Iraqi sectarian violence alone is claiming 50–60 deaths per day, or 18,000–22,000 annually, a figure that could quickly worsen.

Some were killed by “smart bombs” that weren’t very smart and dropped on hospitals, schools, and weddings. Others were mistaken for resistance fighters and killed. Still others were killed by spooked, trigger-happy U.S. troops. And many died due to the breakdown of the Iraqi health system.

[Now comes a report](#) in the online edition of *Time* magazine that U.S. Marines went on a rampage in the village of Haditha and deliberately slaughtered 15 unarmed Iraqis in their homes. The Iraqis were still in their bed clothes, and 10 of the 15 were women and children.

The Marines turned in a false report that the civilians were killed by an insurgent bomb. But the evidence of wanton carnage was too powerful. Pressed by *Time*’s collection of evidence, U.S. military officials in Baghdad opened an investigation. *Time* reports that “according to military officials, the inquiry acknowledged that, contrary to the military’s initial report, the 15 civilians killed on Nov. 19 died at the hands of the Marines, not the insurgents. The military announced last week that the matter has been handed over to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, which will conduct a criminal investigation.”

If this story is true, under Donald Rumsfeld and George Bush’s leadership, proud and honorable U.S. Marines have degenerated into the Waffen SS. Those of us raised on John Wayne war movies find this very hard to take.

A fish rots from the head. Clearly, deception in the Oval Office is corrupting the U.S. military. One reader reported that on March 19 his local PBS station aired a program which discussed the deaths of two young American soldiers in friendly fire incidents similar to Pat Tillman’s death. In each case, he reports, “elements within the military falsified reports and attempted to shift blame to either enemy combatants or allied (Polish) forces.”

The neocons have yet to tell us the real reason for their assault on Iraq, which has so far produced 20,000 dead, maimed, and wounded U.S. soldiers, between 30,000 and 180,000 (and rising) dead Iraqis, and demoralized U.S. Marines to the point that they commit atrocities on women and children.

Would real Americans accept these blows for the sake of an undeclared agenda? Perhaps it is true that Americans don’t live here any longer.

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