

“WMD Double Standards”: U.S. War Crimes and the Extensive Use of Chemical Weapons against Civilians

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The United States has no legal or moral authority to bomb or attack Syria and they are chemical war criminals themselves, on a much grander scale than any other country in history.

The US media has no problem with the fact that their leaders obtained positions of power by guaranteeing they would follow the rule of law but have become worse war criminals than their predecessors. In an interview with the Voice of Russia renowned author Dr. Edward Herman discussed these matters and more.

Hello! This is John Robles, I'm speaking with Dr. Edward Herman. He is Professor Emeritus at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. He is also the author of several books, namely "Manufacturing Consent", which he wrote with Noam Chomsky, and the "Srebrenica Massacre: Evidence, Context, Politics".

Robles: Hello Sir! It is a pleasure to be speaking with you again.

Herman: Good to be with you, John.

Robles: Regarding this situation in Syria, does the US in your opinion have the legal authority to launch military action or bomb Syria?

Herman: That's one of the clearest things we can say "no" to. They certainly do not. The UN was organized to prevent war, aggression, cross-border attacks by individuals – it is very clear. And in fact, the Nuremberg Tribunal, you should actually read this: "war is essentially an evil thing. Its consequences are not confined to the belligerent states alone, but affect the whole world. To initiate a war of aggression therefore is not only an international crime, it is the supreme international crime, differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole". That's from the Nuremberg Tribunal.

So, the whole UN system was built in order to prevent war, to make it illegal to cross borders without the vote of the Security Council. And the only basis for crossing a border otherwise is immediate self-defense. And there is no way that Syria is threatening the United States, and that it doesn't even pretend that it has anything to do with self-defense of the United States.

So, the answer is absolutely no, the legal status is non-existent. And if you read Secretary John Kerry's and Obama's statements, only the media picked up the fact, in past years they

have both said that they will abide by International Law. International Law controls this great country's behavior. But now that they are in power and want to go to war, they say that they are not constrained by this, they can just go across borders and bomb.

It is just amazing! And it is amazing how the mainstream media of the United States don't pick this subject up. It's since the United States is regularly crossing borders and attacking other countries in violation of the UN Charter, the media played down, they play as if this is not an issue. It is only when somebody else, one of our targets crosses a border that we get excited.

Robles: I see. Following that line of thought, I read recently...now this goes back to 2002, and I was wondering if you could comment on it. I read a piece of legislation in the US Government, some people called it the Hague Invasion Act. Are you familiar with that?

Herman: Uh-huh.

Robles: It protects all US personnel and allies from being subjected to International Law basically or being tried for war crimes. And it allows for, literally, a military action against the Hague which would require an invasion to physically remove, for example if they've arrested somebody. Can you comment on it?

Herman: It was a brazen piece of legislation. In fact I think that was the time they were discussing the International Criminal Court. And in the International Criminal Court it was theoretically going to be possible that the United States and its soldiers and leaders could be brought before the Court. And that got some of the members of the Congress and Senate very upset. So, they actually got through this incredible piece of legislation that if anybody tried to take one of our soldiers and try them, we would be prepared to invade that country. It was a lunatic piece of legislation and I doubt if it ever would be applied, but it shows the spirit of this country - we are above the Law.

Our leaders have impunity ... in fact, Harry Truman made this famous statement that "the buck stops with him". This is not true! Impunity starts with him. Here is a man who dropped two atomic bombs on two cities and wiped out quickly 200 000 civilians. I mean, this was one of the great war crimes in human history. But nobody has ever suggested that Harry should have been brought before a tribunal. And of course George Bush and these guys, they're all immune. Bush in his autobiography openly acknowledges that he supported waterboarding, which is a well-known form of torture...

Robles: Yes, since the Korean war.

Herman:...which is internationally illegal, it is illegal in the US law. But Obama comes along having promised to enforce the law, but he won't bring George Bush to trial. So, all these guys are immune from the law, they have impunity. This is the superpower right to have impunity. Only lesser peoples can be brought before a court.

Robles: Back to Syria, does the United States, do they have the moral authority and the support of the American people to launch any kind of an operation against Syria?

Herman: I don't think they have the moral authority in the least. And in fact this whole business of pursuing of Syria, first, it is not even proven that the Syrian Government used chemical weapons. But even apart from that, the hypocrisy involved in this is amazing.

As the United States Government committed aggression against Iraq, it has used chemical weapons itself during the Vietnam War, the United States have used Agent Orange. In fact, its use of chemical weapons in the Vietnam War was the most extensive use of chemical weapons since World War I.

And we of course supported Iraq when it used chemical warfare against Iran. We even supplied Iraq with various kinds of arms, protected against being attacked in the United Nations, and were attacking our enemy – Iran. So, it was okay. And they were, actually, recently sold I think 600 some million dollars' worth of cluster bombs to Saudi Arabia. And of course Israel famously used a huge number of cluster bombs in Lebanon in 2006, just before the truce. The cluster bomb is a vicious, essentially illegal weapon.

So, here is the United States doing all these horrible things, including chemical warfare, using white phosphorus in Fallujah, depleted uranium. It has dirty hands. The moral case falls because of this incredible hypocrisy. And the American people don't go on the offensive – this other part of your question – does it have support at home, and the answer is – in spite of the huge propaganda effort that the Government and the media are carrying out, I think it still only 60% of the polled public is against attacking Syria. The public doesn't want it. The moral case is badly compromised. So, it is really an outrage.

Robles: Thank you very much Dr. Herman. It was a pleasure speaking with you.

Herman: It was good to be on John.

Robles: Okay, thank you Sir, I appreciate it.

That was the end of part one of an interview with Dr. Edward Herman – a Professor Emeritus of Finance at the Wharton School, at the University of Pennsylvania and the author of "Manufacturing Consent".

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