

Rock Creek Free Press

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A FIERCELY INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

Washington, D.C.

Afghanistan: America's Longest War

The Longest Lost War

By JAMES PETRAS / ICH

Despite almost a decade of warfare, including an invasion and occupation, the US military and its allies and client state armed forces are losing the war in Afghanistan. Outside of the central districts of a few cities and the military fortresses, the Afghan national resistance forces, in all of their complex local, regional and national alliances, are in control of territory, people and administration.

The prolonged unending war has become a major drain on the morale of the

US armed forces and undermined civilian support in the US, limiting the capacity of the White House to launch new imperial wars. The annual multi-billion-dollar military expenditures are exacerbating the out-of-control budget deficit and forcing harsh unpopular cuts on social programs at all levels of government. There is no end in sight, as the Obama regime keeps increasing the number of troops by the tens of thousands and military expenditures by the dozens of billions but the resistance advances, both militarily and politically.

Faced with rising popular discontent and demands for fiscal restraint by a wide spectrum of banking and citizen groups,

Obama and the general command have sought "partial exit" via the recruitment and training of a large-scale, long-term Afghan mercenary army and police force under the direction of US and NATO officers.

The US Strategy: The Making of an Afghan Neocolony

Between 2001 and 2010, the US military expenditures total \$428 billion dollars; the colonial occupation has led to over 7,228 dead and wounded as of June 1, 2010. As the US military situation deteriorates, the White House escalates the number of troops resulting in a greater number of killed and wounded. During the past 18 months of the

See AFGHANISTAN p. 7

Afghan Invasion Also Based on Lies

By MATT SULLIVAN / RCFP

By now most Americans recognize that the invasion of Iraq was totally unjustified and illegal under international law. The claim that Iraq possessed WMD has been shown to be false and documents released (such as the Downing Street Memo) prove that the WMD claim was nothing less than a deliberate deception with "intelligence fixed" to support the attack.

But many Americans still think of the Afghan war as the "right war", or to use Obama's words the "absolutely essential"

war; but the Afghan war is just as illegal and just as immoral and unjustified as the war in Iraq.

The Afghan war is illegal because only the UN Security Council can authorize the use of force among member states and the UN did not authorize the Afghan invasion. The only exception to this UN prohibition on the use of force would be if one member country were to attack another; but Afghanistan did not attack the US.

US officials, including the president, often cite the terrorist attacks of 9/11/2001

See LIES p. 8

Soldiers Ordered to Kill Iraqi Civilians

Wikileaks Soldier Reveals Orders for "360 Rotational Fire" Against Civilians in Iraq

FROM AFTER DOWNING STREET

Ethan McCord, one of the soldiers seen in the now-famous Wikileaks video in which two American Apache helicopters fire upon a relaxed, unhurried gaggle of men in Baghdad, has stated in an interview with World Socialist Website that he witnessed numerous times the indiscriminate slaughter of civilians in Iraq after IED attacks. McCord is one of the soldiers seen helping two wounded children after the attack. He has stepped forward with open opposition to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and written a letter of apology for his part in the incident to the mother of the children, who has accepted his apology. The mother's husband was killed in the attack and found with his body shielding that of one of his children.

McCord said to reporter Bill Van Auken: "We had a pretty gung-ho commander, who decided that because we were getting hit

See ORDERS p. 4

Plight Of Black Poor Continues To Worsen

By SHERWOOD ROSS

"The conditions now, in my view, are unquestionably worse in the inner cities," attorney and civil rights stalwart David Ginsburg told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. "Education is worse. Housing is worse. Unemployment is worse. We now have a drug problem that we didn't have in 1967 and 1968. There are millions of handguns. The cities have been essentially disregarded by the federal government."

Ginsburg knew what he was talking about. He served as executive director of President Lyndon Johnson's National Commission on Civil Disorders, formed after explosive race riots swept the nation in 1967. He believed white America was responsible for that unrest by penning African-Americans into ghettos. "White institutions created it (the ghetto), white institutions maintain it and white society condones it," he said, according to his obituary in the *New York Times*.

Ginsburg, who died May 23rd at his home in Alexandria, VA, at age 98, made

See PLIGHT p. 2



German Prosecutors to Investigate Israeli Attack as State Crime

By JOHN GOETZ/DER SPIEGEL

Public prosecutors in Germany are looking into a war crimes complaint filed against Israel by two members of parliament with the Left Party and a human rights activist who were on board the *Mavi Marmara* when Israeli troops stormed it 11 days ago.

Eleven days ago, the Israeli military stormed the Turkish ship *Mavi Marmara*, part of a flotilla carrying pro-Palestinian activists toward the Gaza Strip in an attempt to break the Israeli

blockade. Now, it has become a case for German prosecutors.

Human rights activist Norman Paech and two German parliamentarians from the far-left Left Party, Annette Groth and Inge Höger, have filed criminal complaints for "numerous potential offences, including war crimes against individuals and command responsibility ... as well as false imprisonment."

At 5:10 a.m. on May 31, the complaint reads, Höger, Groth and Paech heard from the captain of the *Mavi Marmara*

See STATE CRIME p. 7

Eyewitness Contests Israeli Account

By JESSE STRAUSS AND DENNIS BERNSTEIN / PACIFICA

Fatima Mohammadi was on board the *Mava Marmara* on May 31 when it was attacked in international waters by Israeli commandos who killed nine activists and wounded many more in stopping the Turkish-flagged ship from running the Gaza blockade.

After the attack, the Israeli government quickly released video showing the commandos descending by ropes from

See EYEWITNESS p. 7

19 Year Old American Killed by Israelis Four Shots To The Head



Nineteen-year old Furkan Dogan, was killed by Israeli Commandos when they stormed the aid ship *Mavi Marmara*. He was shot once in the chest and 4 times in the head. Dogan was a US citizen, born in Troy, New York while his father was obtaining his MBA in accounting from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Dogan carried a US passport and a Turkish permanent resident

Gulf Oil Disaster

See: Background Report: How Deep Sea Oil Wells are Drilled p.5

Doomsday Scenario: Well Casing Failure

By ROB KALL / OPEDNEWS

Right from the beginning, it was reported that Halliburton's job was to cement and seal the well casing. But I misunderstood what that meant. I took it to mean that Halliburton's job was to seal the connection between the well-head and the top of the pipe that was drilled 18,000 feet to the ground. Wrong.

Halliburton's job was to seal the well casing. When a well like the Gulf disaster well on BP's Macondo prospect oil field is drilled, they start with a big hole — about 22 inches in diameter. Then, after a few or five thousand feet, they go to a smaller diameter, say 16

See DOOMSDAY p. 4

Electronic Voting Machine Fraud Exposed (Again)

By BRAD FRIEDMAN/ BRADBLOG

Nobody in the South Carolina Democratic Party had ever heard of Alvin Greene, the jobless candidate for the Democratic US Senate nomination, before he reportedly defeated state legislator Vic Rawl on June 8. That, despite the jobless candidate's lack of actual campaigning, campaign website, or even spending any money on a campaign as far as anyone can tell. And there remain questions at this hour, as to where he even came up with the \$10,440 filing fee to get on the ballot in the first place. Greene's interview on MSNBC last night is one of the most bizarre ever seen on television.

Unless something changes between

now and November, however, Greene's inexplicable victory will pit him against the state's often-controversial, and far-Rightwing Republican incumbent, Sen. Jim DeMint.

But where some have suggested Greene was a "plant" in the race, experts now examining the actual election result data from both SC's unverifiable Election Day touch-screen machines and its electronically counted paper-ballot absentee voting system are noting "curious" and even "staggering" disparities, suggesting what some Election Integrity experts are describing as "clear signs of ELECTION FRAUD in South Carolina"...

The 'Plant' Theory
SC's Democratic US House Rep. Jim

See ELECTION FRAUD p. 8

New York Times Propaganda

Planted Story on Afghan Mineral Wealth Designed to Prolong US Occupation, Spur Neocon-Backed Petraeus Presidential Candidacy

By WEBSTER G. TARPLEY/TARPLEY.NET

To provide a new and spurious economic looting argument for making the US occupation of Afghanistan virtually endless, and to advance the candidacy of General David Petraeus as the principal neocon warmonger candidate for president on the Republican ticket in 2012 — these are the purposes of the story planted in the June 13, 2010 *New York Times* under the byline of James Risen, who is acting as stenographer for the neocons in the great tradition of his predecessor Judith Miller. In retrospect, this article may well be

seen as the opening gun of an overt push to place General Petraeus in the White House in 2012 as the new Field Marshal von Hindenburg.

According to this story, a Pentagon survey has determined that Afghanistan possesses at least \$1 trillion worth of valuable minerals, including iron, copper, cobalt, gold, and lithium — with lithium being especially valuable because it is used in batteries for computers and for the new designs of electric automobiles. Of course, none of this is news, as the article itself concedes. The surveys done

by the US occupation authorities over the last several years are explicitly based on careful studies done by the Soviets during their own occupation of Afghanistan during the 1980s. The basic outlines of what is being presented by Risen as front-page news were already published in a May 2004 World Bank report, which was used to dictate minerals legislation to the Afghan government. More recently, Afghan mineral wealth has been hyped by the Afghan embassy in Washington on various occasions, and was a featured

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Big Pharma Lies About Statin Drugs Exposed

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Chemical In Antibacterial Soaps Produces Toxic Dioxins

By: S. L. BAKER / NATURALNEWS

Dioxins are a group of highly toxic compounds that are persistent environmental pollutants. People are exposed to dioxins through the environment and the food chain. The highest levels of these compounds are found in soils, sediments and food such as dairy products, meat, fish and shellfish. And, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), this exposure can cause reproductive and developmental problems, damage the immune system, interfere with hormones and also cause cancer.

So you would never flush dioxins into your water supply, right? If you use antibacterial soaps and other antibacterial products, you could be doing the equivalent of just that.

In 2003 and 2009, University of Minnesota civil engineering professor William Arnold and his colleague Kristopher McNeill published their discovery that the antibacterial agent triclosan, when exposed to sunlight, generates a specific group of four dioxins. Now, in a new study, a team of scientists from the University of Minnesota's Institute of Technology, Pace Analytical (Minneapolis), the Science Museum of Minnesota and Virginia Tech, have documented how triclosan is transformed into dioxins that are accumulating in the environment. This research, just published in the journal *Environmental Science and Technology*, concludes dioxins originating from triclosan (found in many hand soaps, deodorants and dishwashing liquids) account for a huge increase in total dioxins now polluting Mississippi River sediments.

Efforts to cut down on dioxin contamination resulting from industrial pollution have been underway for several decades.

However, the issue of triclosan in antibacterial consumer products has been virtually ignored. And the research team has found that over the last 30 years, while levels of all the other dioxins have dropped by 73 to 90 percent, the levels of dioxins derived from the antibacterial soap ingredient triclosan have risen by 200 to 300 percent.

For the new study, which was headed by Jeff Buth, a recent University of Minnesota Ph.D. graduate in chemistry, the researchers examined sediment samples from Lake Pepin, an enlargement of the Mississippi River located 120 miles downstream from the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. They analyzed sediment cores (which contain a record of accumulated pollutants in the lake over the past 50 years) and checked for amounts of triclosan, the four dioxins derived from triclosan, and the entire family of dioxin chemicals.

The results? In the most current sediments, triclosan-derived dioxins account for about 30 percent of the total dioxin mass. "These four dioxins only come from triclosan. They didn't exist in Lake Pepin before triclosan was introduced," Dr. Arnold said in a statement to the media.

Triclosan was first added to commercial liquid hand soap in 1987. Four years later, nearly 80 percent of commercial liquid hand soaps contained it, the researchers noted. And what happens to this chemical when people use triclosan-containing products to wash their hands and dishes? About 96 percent of it ends up in residential drains, leading to large loads of triclosan-contaminated water that enters treatment plants.

Unfortunately, triclosan cannot be completely removed during the wastewater treatment process. So when treated wastewater is released



back into the environment, there's triclosan still in it and sunlight converts some of the triclosan (and related compounds) into dioxins.

That's how the triclosan and dioxins ended up in Lake Pepin sediments, the researchers explained. The chemicals stuck to organic particles in the river and then sank into sediment when they reached the calmer waters of the lake.

In addition to the environmental danger that arises from triclosan's ability to morph into dioxin, the chemical has also been linked to disruptions of hormonal function and may play a role in the evolution of bacterial resistance to antibiotics — yet the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has done little to address these concerns. In April, the FDA announced it would finally at least study the triclosan situation.

S. L. Baker is a widely published writer whose work has appeared in Newsweek, Health, the Atlanta Journal and Constitution, Yoga Journal, and many others. She is also a feature writer and Health Science Editor for NaturalNews.com

Planted Story on Afghan Mineral Wealth Designed to Prolong US Occupation, Spur Neocon-Backed Petraeus Presidential Candidacy

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theme of the visit here last month by Afghan President Karzai.

Candidate Petraeus Touts "Stunning Potential"

This planted puff piece is based on anonymous "senior US government officials." The only exception is General David Petraeus, the warlord of the US Central Command, the theater of operations in which Afghanistan is located. Petraeus is directly cited as saying that the Afghan mineral riches, whose presence the US has confirmed, represent a "stunning potential" for the future development of the country. The implied message from Petraeus to the Washington elite is, to paraphrase, support me and cash in on the riches of Afghanistan, or else wimpy Obama's self-serving pullout timetable will allow the Chinese to move in.

The repackaging and rehashing of the Afghan mineral story at this time represents a bid to mobilize political support by Wall Street, major minerals corporations, and other predatory interests to keep the US occupation of Afghanistan

going far beyond the July 2011 date set by Obama for the beginning of a gradual pullout of US forces. The article makes clear that, if the US should depart from Afghanistan, the immense mineral wealth will fall easy prey to China. China, it is noted, has already taken over a copper mine in Afghanistan. In March of this year, it was a sudden alarm in Washington that Karzai's Afghanistan was slipping into the Chinese orbit that motivated Obama's hasty visit to Kabul. The implication is that, whether or not these minerals can actually be developed by the United States, it is imperative to stay in Afghanistan to make sure that they are denied to the Chinese.

During this week's hearings on the wretched state of the Afghan military adventure conducted by the Senate Armed Services Committee, committee chair Senator Carl Levin asked if, in the professional military judgment of General Petraeus, Obama's announced goal of starting the US departure from Afghanistan were advisable. Petraeus pointedly refused to endorse Obamas July

2011 target, first remaining silent for a prolonged interval, then hemming and hawing, and finally offering a highly qualified and grudging assent, while warning that it is necessary to be very careful with timetables. In other words, Petraeus has decided to leave open the option of clashing with Obama over the conduct of the Afghan war. One can imagine a scenario in which Petraeus sometime around July 2011 resigns his command in protest over Obama's desire to cut and run, and vows to take the issue to the voters. He might even take a leaf from von Hindenburg's book and accuse Obama of wanting to stab his gallant forces in the back, just when final victory is within their grasp. The precedents for this kind of politics are not good.

For the full story go to: www.tarpley.net

Webster G. Tarpley is an economic historian, radio host and author of 9/11 Synthetic Terror: Made in USA, Obama, The Postmodern Coup and Surviving The Cataclysm and many other books.

Plight Of Black Poor Continues To Worsen

PLIGHT from p. 1

the statement quoted above in 1992 comparing the situation then with the Sixties, but he might just as well have spoken today comparing our grim realities with the bleak Nineties. That's because a poverty-stricken black underclass continues to be a source of profits for the unscrupulous.

Slumlords charge exorbitant rents. Convenience stores charge higher prices. Military recruiters have their pick of jobless youth desperate for work. And the for-profit, private prisons increase their head count (and income) as the judicial system hands off the young drug peddlers caught in the legal web. As the Kaiser Family Foundation reported, African-Americans fill 40 percent of the nation's prison cells. Yet they make up just 13 percent of the nation's population.

It's a fact, the *Associated Press* reported, that "More than three times as many black people live in prison cells as in college dorms," according to a Census Bureau finding in 2006. "It's one of the great social and economic tragedies of our time," Marc Morial, president and CEO of the Urban League, commented. "It points to the signature failure in our education system and how we've been raising our children."

Indeed, a report released this May by the US Department of Education finds the US has 16,122 "high poverty" schools, and that students in them "are more likely to be minorities," an AP story said. What's more, the number of such schools is up from 12 percent of the total in the 1999-2000 school year to 17 percent of the total in the 2007-2008 school year. In President Bush's "no child left behind" era, it seems entire schools got left behind.

As for housing, Habitat For Humanity reports that "95 million (Americans) experience housing problems, including cost burden, overcrowding, poor housing quality and homelessness." That's nearly one-third of a nation. Here, blacks again, are getting the worst of it. Writing about Philadelphia in the Huffington Post on February 11th of this year, journalist James Sanders says wretched conditions persist: "Predominantly black parts of town — North Philly, and the so-called 'Badlands,' for instance — are all too synonymous with crime and poverty. Too many black students drop out of high school, and give in to lives on the streets or in gangs." The situation is similar in San Francisco where substandard public housing, high crime rates, and "dissatisfaction with underperforming urban schools" have combined to ignite a black exodus from the city, according to the August 28, 2007 *USA Today*. In Springfield, MO, writes Cheryl Fischer of the Kuumba Human Rights Focus Group, the city's own records show that 35 percent of African Americans live in substandard housing and 5 percent live in dilapidated housing. As well, 70 percent of African Americans

in that city earn \$20,000 or less annually, and only 12% of African Americans earn from \$30,000 to \$60,000 annually.

The Urban League's (UL) report put unemployment among blacks nationally at nearly 15 percent in 2009, compared with 8.5 percent for whites and 12.1 percent for Hispanics. It also showed a median income for whites of \$55,530 compared to \$34,218 for blacks. The UL called for a job-creation and job-training investment of \$168 billion over the next two years. FYI, back in 1962, Whitney Young, then UL's executive director, called for a "Marshall Plan" to help black Americans that was largely ignored by President Johnson. LBJ was intent on "winning" the war in Viet Nam. The US preferred making wars overseas to helping African Americans at home in those days and Presidents Bush and Obama have followed in his footsteps.

As the National Low Income Housing Coalition reported this April, a family needs to earn \$38,360 a year to afford to rent a decent two-bedroom home, but that "rents continue to rise while wages continue to fall" in the current recession. Its *Out of Reach 2010* report shows once again that "prevailing incomes and wages are simply not enough to allow a family to afford a decent home in their community," said Sheila Crowley, NLIHC president. The national two-bedroom Fair Market Rent is a staggering \$959 a month. In addition, 74% of metro renters live in an area where having two full-time jobs at the minimum wage would still not allow them to afford that price. "The persistence

of high rates of unemployment and under-employment is making it ever more difficult for families to secure decent housing. Unfortunately, the situation is not likely to improve any time soon." Center for Economic Policy and Research Co-Director Dean Baker commented. Of course, the US could have built 7,779,092 affordable housing units with the \$1 trillion it has now flushed down the sewers of Iraq and Afghanistan, says the National Priorities Project of Northampton, MA. But the brilliant brains running Washington instead have got 5,000 coffins shipped home for the same money, not to mention one million funerals in Iraq alone. Of course, the profits of oil companies and defense contractors have been stupendous.

Nothing in the above is meant to detract from the remarkable gains by African Americans who have pushed themselves into the middle-class, despite the formidable odds against them. An examination of US Census data will indicate this has been going on at least since the 1940s. But overall, for Black America, it is as David Ginsburg remarked: "Education is worse. Housing is worse. Unemployment is worse." It's the same today as in the Nineties or Sixties. So where's the civil rights movement?

Sherwood Ross is a Miami-based public relations consultant who formerly reported for major dailies and wire services. Disclosure: during the Sixties he served as News Director in the Urban League, an organization with which he has no connection today and for which he does not speak. Reach him at sherwoodross10@gmail.com

Big Pharma Lies About Statin Drugs Exposed

By MIKE ADAMS/NATURALNEWS

To hear Big Pharma tell it, statin drugs are "miracle" medicines that have prevented millions of heart attacks and strokes. But a recent study published in the *British Medical Journal* tells a completely different story: For every heart attack prevented by the drug, two or more people suffered liver damage, kidney failure, cataracts or extreme muscle weakness as a result of taking the drug.

Statin drugs, in other words, harm far more people than they help.

Julia Hippisley-Cox and Carol Coupland led the study which examined data from over two million patients, including over 225,000 patients who were new statin drug users.

They found that for every 10,000 women being treated with statins, there were only 271 fewer cases of heart disease.

And yet, at the same time, the statin drugs caused 74 cases of liver damage, 23 cases of acute kidney failure, 39 cases of extreme muscle weakness and 307 cases of cataracts.

Statin drugs, in other words, helped 271 people but harmed 443 people. This demonstrates how they are wreaking havoc with the health of those who take them; causing damage that far outweighs any benefit they might offer.

Big Pharma's highly deceptive advertising implies that statin drugs help everyone who takes them. So if 10,000 people took the drugs, we're promised, heart attacks would be prevented in all 10,000 people.

That's the implied message in the drug ads, anyway.

But this is just a wild exaggeration and distortion of the facts. Most drugs don't work on most people, and statin drugs only "work" on about 2.7% of those who take them. Yet they cause serious damage in about 4.4% of those who take them.

So if you take statin drugs, your odds of benefiting from them is less than 3 out of 100. But your odds of being harmed by them are more than 4 out of 100. For 96 out of 100 people, statin drugs do nothing except make the drug companies rich and pollute the waterways every time you flush the toilet.

Statin drugs, then, are basically a crap shoot with your health.

Keep the pharma profits rolling

From the point of view of Big Pharma, they have the added benefit of causing other diseases that often result in yet more drugs or medical procedures being prescribed. Kidney dialysis makes big money for hospitals, by the way. It's a multi-billion-dollar business all by itself. Statin drugs are therefore a way for the sick-care industry to recruit new patients into kidney dialysis, knowing that some percentage of statin drug users are going to end up with full-blown kidney failure.

What's really interesting about all this is how easy it is to fool doctors into prescribing statin drugs. Doctors mistakenly think these are miracle drugs, but they're never read the research. They've been convinced by drug reps, misleading medical journal articles and Big Pharma advertising -- and they bought it!

Mainstream doctors, you see, are perhaps the most gullible people on the planet. They'll gladly prescribe a drug that harms more people than it helps -- by the millions -- because they can be almost effortlessly swayed into pushing poison pills through "science babble" language used by drug companies to promote their pills.

Doctors are literally walking around today thinking statin drugs are such miracle lifesavers that some doctors openly talked about dripping the drug into the public water supply! That's how convinced they are about the drug's benefits. They think everyone should be taking statins whether they need them or not!

It's downright loony. But that's characteristic of western medicine, isn't it? Proclaim your poison to be "miracle medicine" while utterly ignoring the truth that those drugs harm far more people than they help (and they simply don't work on more than 90% of people who take them).

The statin scam

Statin drugs are a scam, plain and simple, and the doctors who prescribe them are puppets used by Big Pharma to sell high-profit drugs to people who for the most part won't even benefit from them. That this research exposing the truth about statin drugs even appeared in the *British Medical Journal* is a minor miracle all by itself, by the way. But it does indicate that the wall of lies constructed about statins by Big Pharma is starting to crack.

If the truth about statins were openly known, the drugs wouldn't be prescribed to anyone, and drug companies would be sued for billions of dollars for their false advertising and marketing manipulations.

Until that happens, just remember this: Any doctor who recommends a statin drug is a con man drug pusher. If they don't have the honesty to research the truth about these drugs and stop prescribing them, they certainly cannot be trusted with your health. If they're pushing statin drugs on you, they're really just working for Big Pharma, not for you, and they're not interested in real science and the real impacts of drugs on patients.

It brings up another hugely important question in modern medicine: Why don't doctors have the capability to question the false beliefs of their own industry? As you might have guessed, that's the topic of another story altogether.

Mike Adams is the Health Ranger. Sources for this story include: www.reuters.com/

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A FIERCELY INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

Helen Thomas: an Appreciation

By PAUL CRAIG ROBERTS

The propagandists for the Israel Lobby, who occupy the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page while pretending to be journalists, are determined to remove Helen Thomas from the annals of journalism. In case you have already forgotten, a few days ago the distinguished career of Helen Thomas, the 89-year-old doyen of the White House Press Corps, was ended by the Israel Lobby, which made an issue about her opinion that immigrant Jews should leave Palestine and go back to their home countries.

The White House Correspondents' Association fell in line with the demands of the Israel Lobby, and the cowardly president of the organization added the association's disapprobation to that of the neoconservative cabal.

Having removed Helen Thomas from the journalism scene, the Israel Lobby is now working with its agents on the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page to eliminate the Helen Thomas Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Society of Professional Journalists.

A nonentity in the world of journalism, James Taranto, apparently is associated with the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page, although Wikipedia reports that he was incapable of graduating from journalism school at California State University, Northridge. On a *Wall Street Journal* web site, Taranto writes: "We've been calling Thomas 'American journalism's crazy old aunt in the attic' for years," and he asks who would now accept the Helen Thomas award after Ms. Thomas revealed she really was crazy by criticizing Israel.

I would for one. Of course, the Society of Professional Journalists would never give the award, assuming the distinguished award survives the assault of the Israel Lobby's assassins, to a critic of Israel. Helen excepted, American journalists are cowards. With the concentrated ownership of the corporate media today, no independently-minded journalist can have a career in print or TV media. You defend the Washington/Tel Aviv line, or you are out of work.

The absence of independently-minded journalists on the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page is an extraordinary change from my days as Associate Editor of that page. The editorial page editor, Robert Bartley was ambitious and forced himself to tolerate talented colleagues. Mere opinion was not our task. Often we scooped the reporters on the news side of the paper. Our editorials reported new developments and provided factual analysis.

I was hired as Jude Wanniski's replacement. Jude, Associate Editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, was fired, allegedly because the journal's brass caught him handing out election campaign literature on a train platform, but if you believe American journalism was ever that pure, I have a bridge in Brooklyn for sale.

Jude was fired, because the neoconservatives got rid of him by telling Bartley that Wanniski was over-shadowing him. That was too much for Bob's ego. Jude, of course, being a real journalist, was objective toward the Palestinians and, thus, had earned the enmity of the Israel Lobby.

Once Bob was rapidly declining with prostate cancer, neoconservatives engineered the takeover of the editorial page. Today the once proud *Wall Street Journal* editorial page is a leading apologist for Israeli/American war crimes and police states.

To return to the nonentity, James Taranto, who wants to throw Helen Thomas down the memory hole: Helen Thomas' opinion that Israelis should stop stealing the villages, homes, and lands of Palestinians, while confining Palestinians to the equivalent of the Warsaw Ghetto, is equated by Taranto to the advocacy of "ethnic cleansing" by Helen.

Of course, it is the Israelis who are doing the ethnic cleansing. Many Jews have documented Israel's ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, such as Uri Avnery, a former member of the Israeli terrorist organization Irgun; Ilan Pappé, Israel's most distinguished historian and author of *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*; and the Israeli peace group ICHAD, who have been my house guests. The Israeli newspaper, *Haaretz*, is far more critical of Israeli policy than Helen Thomas, and so is MIT professor Noam Chomsky; the distinguished British journalist and film maker John Pilger; and

the distinguished scholar Norman Finkelstein, the son of Holocaust survivors.

But Taranto prefers an 89-year old adversary.

Israel is an unnatural state. It was created by terror that was accommodated by craven British and US "diplomacy". Israel exists for one reason only: the US government provides the money, weapons, and diplomatic protection. Any other government that murdered thousands of civilians in other countries, as Israel does routinely in Lebanon, Gaza, and the West Bank, would have its entire government and military on trial before the War Crimes Tribunal at the Hague. Israelis have no worse enemy than their own government.

Every time the rest of the world tries to hold the Israeli government accountable for its crimes, the US vetoes the UN resolution. America has become the enabler of the Zionist-hijacked Israeli government. And the Israeli government knows it. Israeli government leaders have publicly bragged for decades about their control over the US government. US Admiral Tom Moorer, Chief of Naval Operations and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff after whom the F-14 "Tomcat" jet fighter was named, declared publicly: "No American President can stand up to Israel." Apparently no American journalist can either.

I am a critic of Israel's heartless policy toward the Palestinians, but I do not want Israel destroyed. I want it moved or reformed. Bring the small number of Israelis to America before there is a nuclear war over the fact that they are where they should not be. To try to claim a land and dispossess its people on the basis of a spurious two thousand year old deed is an audacious act of conquest and dispossession.

My proposal to relocate Israelis in the US is rhetorical, but why not insist that the Israelis, who are heavily dependent on US largess, reform? Why should Americans support an apartheid racist state that denies citizenship to the rightful inhabitants? What kind of morality, if any, does the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page represent when it defends Israelis who force Palestinians into ever-shrinking ghettos, deprived of water, food, medical care and schools? Why must Palestinians live in dread of Israeli bulldozers arriving to flatten their homes in order to create space for Zionist "settlers."

Allegedly, the US is a superpower, but, in fact, it is a puppet state of the Israeli government. Witness, for example (the examples are numerous), the fate of the Goldstone Report on Israeli war crimes committed in Israel's assault on Gaza during December 2008-January 2009. Goldstone is a Zionist Jew and a distinguished judge. He was given the task by the United Nations to investigate the Israeli attack on Gaza. Being an honest person, he provided evidence of Israeli war crimes.

What was the result? The bought-and-paid-for US Congress voted, on the instructions of their master, the Israel Lobby, to deep-six the Goldstone Report by a vote of 344 to 36.

Amazing, isn't it, there were only 36 US Representatives who were not owned by the Israel Lobby.

Of course, James Taranto serves the Israel Lobby. The *Wall Street Journal* editorial page, not even a shadow of its former self, when it speaks, speaks for Israel and for the Bush/Cheney militarist police state.

The *Wall Street Journal* editorial page has fallen into the low ranks of Brownshirt propaganda. The fact that management tolerates the continuation of totally nonobjective journalism shows why print newspapers are failing everywhere.

The hubris of Taranto, a mere propagandist who will never come close to the league in which Helen Thomas resides, causes him to think that he is fit to pass judgment on a real journalist. Taranto epitomizes the hubris of the neoconservatives. Not a single one of them has the smallest accomplishment. Yet, blinded with arrogance, they remain in ignorant bliss of their status as prostitutes.

Paul Craig Roberts was Assistant Secretary of the Treasury in the Reagan administration. He was Associate Editor of the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page and Contributing Editor of *National Review*. He is coauthor of *The Tyranny of Good Intentions*. He has held numerous academic appointments, including the William E. Simon Chair, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University, and Senior Research Fellow, Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



Israel's Greatest Loss: Its Moral Imagination

By HENRY SIEGMAN

If a people who so recently experienced such unspeakable inhumanities cannot understand the injustice and suffering its territorial ambitions are inflicting, what hope is there for the rest of us?

Following Israel's bloody interdiction of the Gaza Flotilla, I called a life-long friend in Israel to inquire about the mood of the country. My friend, an intellectual and a kind and generous man, has nevertheless long sided with Israeli hardliners. Still, I was entirely unprepared for his response.

He told me—in a voice trembling with emotion—that the world's outpouring of condemnation of Israel is reminiscent of the dark period of the Hitler era.

He told me most everyone in Israel felt that way, with the exception of Meretz, a small Israeli pro-peace party. "But for all practical purposes," he said, "they are Arabs."

Like me, my friend personally experienced those dark Hitler years, having lived under Nazi occupation, as did so many of Israel's Jewish citizens. I was therefore stunned by the analogy. He went on to say that the so-called

human rights activists on the Turkish ship were in fact terrorists and thugs paid to assault Israeli authorities to provoke an incident that would discredit the Jewish state. The evidence for this, he said, is that many of these activists were found by Israeli authorities to have on them ten thousand dollars, "exactly the same amount!" he exclaimed.

When I managed to get over the shock of that exchange, it struck me that the invocation of the Hitler era was actually a frighteningly apt and searing analogy, although not the one my friend intended.

See MORAL p. 6

War on the World: Obama's Surge in State Terror

By CHRIS FLOYD

Most sentient beings have long recognized that murdering civilians in foreign countries — especially through the cowardly methods of "secret war" — is entirely counterproductive ... if your actual aim is to enhance America's national security by reducing violent extremism and hatred for the United States, that is. However, if your aim is to perpetuate and expand a militarist empire and the bloated, brutal, corrupt, war-profiteering system that supports it, why then, secret war and civilian slaughter are perfectly logical and remarkably effective methods.

And that is why our highly intelligent and cool, pragmatic president is now vastly expanding the use of secret war, subversion, sabotage and murder into even more countries around the world, and giving America's secret, unaccountable death squads and covert operators even more power to carry

out their lawless operations. As one Pentagon mandarin gushed, Obama is allowing "things that the previous administration did not."

That quote comes from a remarkably candid story in *The Washington Post* on Obama's "surge" in America's secret war on the world, which now encompasses no fewer than 75 countries.

(By the way, *The Post* is often a very good source of information about the operations and machinations of the militarist empire — not because its editors are seeking to expose the empire's crimes and atrocities, but because they approve of them. And, thus, they will often write about them, in detail, in the most straightforward manner: "Hey, look at the cool stuff our boys are doing now!")

As the story notes: The Obama administration has significantly expanded a largely secret US war against al Qaeda and other radical groups, according to senior

military and administration officials.

Special Operations forces have grown both in number and budget, and are deployed in 75 countries, compared with about 60 at the beginning of last year. Plans exist for pre-emptive or retaliatory strikes in numerous places around the world.

What's more, Obama has brought the covert operators and death squad leaders into the inner circle at the White House.

Special Operations commanders have also become a far more regular presence at the White House than they were under George W. Bush's administration, when most briefings on potential future operations were run through the Pentagon chain of command and were conducted by the defense secretary or the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"We have a lot more access," a second

See SURGE p. 4

Lift the Siege of Gaza

By PATRICK J. BUCHANAN

In June 1948, our wartime ally imposed a blockade on Berlin, cutting off and condemning to death or Stalinist domination 2 million Germans, most of whom, not long before, had cheered Adolf Hitler.

Harry Truman responded with the Berlin airlift, in perhaps the most magnanimous act of the Cold War.

For nine months, US pilots flew into Tempelhof, carrying everything from candy to coal, saving a city and earning the eternal gratitude of the people of Berlin, and admiration everywhere that moral courage is admired.

That was an America that lived its values.

And today, President Obama should end his and his country's shameful silence over the inhumane blockade of Gaza that is denying 1.5 million beleaguered people the basic necessities of a decent life.

Time to start acting like America again.

That bloody debacle in the Eastern Mediterranean at the end of May was an inevitable result of Israel doing what it always seems to do: going beyond what is essential to her security, to impose collective punishment upon any and all it regards as hostile to Israel.

Israel claims, and film confirms, that its commandos rappelling down onto the Turkish ship were attacked with sticks and metal rods. One was tossed off a deck, another tossed overboard into a lifeboat.

But that 2 a.m. boarding of an unarmed ship with an unarmed crew, carrying no munitions or weapons, 65 miles at sea, was an act of piracy. What the Israeli commandos got is what any armed hijacker should expect who tries to steal a car from a driver who keeps a tire iron under the front seat.

And the response of these highly trained naval commandos to the

resistance they encountered? They shot and killed nine passengers, and wounded many more.

But we have a blockade of Gaza, say the Israelis, and this flotilla was a provocation. Indeed, it was. And Selma was a provocation. The marchers at Edmund Pettus Bridge were disobeying orders of the governor of Alabama and state police not to march.

Yet, today, liberal Democrats who regard Martin Luther King as a moral hero for championing nonviolent civil disobedience to protest injustice are cheering not the unarmed passengers trying to break the Gaza blockade, but the Israelis enforcing the blockade.

Where were these fellows when "Bull" Connor really needed them?

Comes the retort: Israel is a friend and ally, and we stand with our friends.

But is not Turkey a friend and ally of 50 years, whose soldiers died alongside ours in Korea and who accepted Jupiter missiles targeted on Russia, even before the Cuban missile crisis? Was it not Turkey whose citizens were wounded and killed in the bloody debacle?

Why are we not at least even-handed between our friends?

On the trip to Israel where he was blindsided by news that Israel would build 1,600 new housing units in East Jerusalem, Joe Biden told Shimon Peres, "There is absolutely no space between the United States and Israel when it comes to Israel's security."

And that is the problem.

America is a superpower with interests in an Arab world of 300 million and an Islamic world of 1.5 billion — interests Israel treats with indifference if not contempt when it comes to doing what she regards as necessary for her security.

While Israel had a right to build a wall to protect her people from terror attack, did she have a right to build it on

Palestinian land?

While Israel had a right to go after Hezbollah when her soldiers were shot on the border and several kidnapped, did Israel have a right to conduct a five-week bombing campaign that smashed Lebanon, killing hundreds of civilians and creating upward of a million refugees?

While Israel had a right to go into Gaza to stop the firing of crude rockets on Sderot, did she have a right to smash utilities and public buildings and kill 1,400 people, most of them civilians?

Is whatever Israel decides to do in the name of her security fine with us, because there is "absolutely no space" between our interests and hers, our values and Israel's values?

Even with Winston Churchill's Britain, there was "space" between us on strategic goals and national policies.

Israel has a right to secure Gaza to deny Hamas access to weapons, especially rockets that could reach Israel. But that does not justify denying 1.5 million people what they need to live in decency.

According to *The Washington Post*, "80 percent of the population (of Gaza) depends on charity. Hospitals, schools, electricity systems and sewage treatment facilities are all in deep disrepair."

With our silence, we support this. And we wonder why they hate us.

Obama should tell the Israelis that Joe got it wrong. There is space between us. The Gaza siege must end. And America will herself be sending aid, but will also support Israel's right to inspect trucks and ships to see to it no weapons get through to Gaza.

Let's start behaving like who we once were.

Patrick J. Buchanan is co-founder and editor of *The American Conservative*. He is also the author of seven books, including *Where the Right Went Wrong*, and *A Republic Not An Empire*. His latest book is *Churchill, Hitler, and the Unnecessary War*.



War on the World: Obama's Surge in State Terror

SURGE from p. 3

military official said. "They are talking publicly much less but they are acting more. They are willing to get aggressive much more quickly."

The White House, he said, is "asking for ideas and plans ... calling us in and saying, 'Tell me what you can do. Tell me how you do these things.'"

Obama has made such forces a far more integrated part of his global security strategy [than Bush]. He has asked for a 5.7 percent increase in the Special Operations budget for fiscal 2011, for a total of \$6.3 billion, plus an additional \$3.5 billion in 2010 contingency funding.

The story notes that the bureaucratic turf wars between the Pentagon and State Department that had hindered some covert operations under the cantankerous Donald Rumsfeld have now disappeared with the smooth comity between Obama's team of Hillary Clinton and Robert Gates, the long-time Bush Family factotum who now mentors the eager young Democratic president in the ancient ways of oligarchy and militarist empire. And of course, Obama hand-picked Stanley McChrystal — master of America's darkest arts in the war of aggression in Iraq — to lead his "surge" in Afghanistan.

Indeed, Obama has been so lavish and relaxed in his use of death squads and secret war that the only complaint voiced these days by our Special Oppers — who, *The Post* notes, "consider themselves a breed apart" — is that they have to spend too much time in current war zones, and not enough plying their wares in new territory:

Although pleased with their expanded numbers and funding, Special Operations commanders would like to devote more of their force to global missions outside war zones. Of about 13,000 Special Operations forces deployed overseas, about 9,000 are evenly divided between Iraq and Afghanistan.

Yes, it's a lot more fun to skulk around in unsuspecting foreign nations, "taking out" a suspect here, "renditioning" another to some secret hellhole there, arming and funding local terrorist groups to kill, maim and destroy, or paying off sleazy local informants who happily sell their business rivals or personal enemies into captivity. It is indeed a noble calling, requiring "a breed apart" from the common herd.

But oddly enough, some of the Pentagon's compadres in covert war are discovering that the practice is not achieving its publicly stated objectives. As Gareth Porter at *Antiwar.com* reports, even the push-button killers of the CIA are waking up to the fact that their remote-control slaughter of Pakistanis with drone-fired missiles is creating more hatred and more enemies for the United States:

Some CIA officers involved in the agency's drone strikes program in Pakistan and elsewhere are privately expressing their opposition to the program within the agency, because it is helping al Qaeda and its allies recruit, according to a retired military officer in contact with them.

"Some of the CIA operators are concerned that, because of its blowback effect, it is doing more harm than good," said Jeffrey Addicott, former legal adviser to US Special Forces and director of the Center for Terrorism Law at St Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas, in an interview with IPS.

Addicott said the CIA operatives he knows have told him the drone strikes are being used effectively by al Qaeda and Taliban leaders to recruit more militants. ...

Because the drone strikes kill innocent civilians and bystanders along with leaders from far away, they "enrage the Muslim male," said Addicott, thus making him more willing to join the movement. The men in Pakistan's tribal region "view Americans as cowards and weasels," he added.

Weasels? Well, that is a "breed

apart." I guess, so perhaps the covert warriors should be proud of the sobriquet. (And, of course, it is not just the Muslim male who is infuriated by the civilian slaughter and turning to violent reaction, as evidenced by the growing number of female suicide bombers.)

But these inklings of CIA sentience — and perhaps the first stirrings of awareness that the stated objectives are not the real aim of the program — have not prevented our stalwarts from continuing to push their murderous buttons (or is it click their murderous mouses?)

CIA officers "are very upset" with the drone strike policy, Addicott said. "They'll do what the boss says, but they view it as a harmful exercise."

Addicott said the drone program has been driven by President Barack Obama, rather than by the CIA. "Obama's trying to show people that we're winning," he added.

Addicott then makes this telling observation:

"They have informed high-level CIA officials about their concerns that the program is backfiring, Addicott told IPS."

"The people at the top are not believers," said Addicott, referring to the CIA. "They know that the objective is not going to be achieved."

And there you have it. The "people at the top" are indeed well aware that the stated objectives of the ever-expanding drone program — and the ever-expanding Terror War — are not going to be achieved. They are not meant to be achieved. They are meant only to give the illusion "that we're winning," to keep the great game going, to keep the money and the power rolling in.

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Soldiers Ordered to Kill Iraqi Civilians

ORDERS from p. 1

by IEDs a lot, there would be a new battalion SOP [standard operating procedure]. He goes, "If someone in your line gets hit with an IED, 360 rotational fire. You kill every m***** on the street." Myself and Josh and a lot of other soldiers were just sitting there looking at each other like, "Are you kidding me? You want us to kill women and children on the street?" And you couldn't just disobey orders to shoot, because they could just make your life hell in Iraq. So like with myself, I would shoot up into the roof of a building instead of down on the ground toward civilians. But I've seen it many times, where people are just walking down the street and an IED goes off and the troops open fire and kill them."

The deliberate killing of civilians is a war crime (Nanking 1937, Hankow 1938, German Invasion of Poland 1939.) McCord is one of a growing number of soldiers and support groups who have renounced their actions in Iraq. He said:

"I was the gung-ho soldier. I thought I was going over there to do the greater good. I thought my job over there was to protect the Iraqi people and that this was a job with honor and courage and duty. I was hit by an IED within two weeks of my being in Iraq. And I didn't understand why people were throwing rocks at us, why I was being shot at and why we're being blown up, when I have it in my head that I was here to help these people."

McCord says the scenes captured in the Wikileaks video are "an every-day occurrence in Iraq." McCord says that when he found the two children wounded in the van, another soldier began to vomit and ran off. Then he recounts:



Ethan McCord

"That's when I saw the boy move with what appeared to be a labored breath. So I stated screaming, 'The boy's alive.' I grabbed him and cradled him in my arms and kept telling him, 'Don't die, don't die.' He opened his eyes, looked up at me. I told him, 'It's OK, I have you.' His eyes rolled back into his head, and I kept telling him, 'It's OK, I've got you.' I ran up to the Bradley and placed him inside. My platoon leader was standing there at the time, and he yelled at me for doing what I did. He told me to 'stop worrying about these m***** kids and start worrying about pulling security.' So after that I went up and pulled security on a rooftop.

McCord says about his mental state afterwards:

"I went to see a staff sergeant who was in my chain of command and told him I needed to see mental health about what was going on in my head. He told me to 'quit being a p*****' and to 'suck it up and be a soldier.' He told me that if I wanted to go to mental health, there would be repercussions, one of them being labeled a 'malingerer,' which is actually a crime in the US Army."

McCord says the greater story is being overlooked, and that rather than blame individual soldiers, the Army itself should be examined, and its system of training soldiers.

"Instead of people being upset at a few soldiers in a video who were doing what they were trained to do, I think people need to be more upset at the system that trained these soldiers. They are doing exactly what the Army wants them to do."

McCord echoes Major General Smedley D. Butler, the double Medal of Honor winner who resigned his commission and in 1935 became a critic of the nation's wars, traveling the country with his book and famous speech *War is a Racket*. McCord said in the interview:

"I am not part of any party. Was I hopeful? Yes. Was I surprised that we are still there? No. I'm not surprised at all. There's something else lying underneath there. It's not Republican or Democrat; it's money. There's something else lying underneath it where Republicans and Democrats together want to keep us in Iraq and Afghanistan."

McCord talks about the ongoing effects of war:

"I still live with this every day. When I close my eyes I see what happened that day and many other days like a slide show in my head. The smells come back to me. The cries of the children come back to me. The people driving this big war machine, they don't have to deal with this. They live in their \$36 million mansions and sleep well at night."

DOOMSDAY from p. 1

inches, then 12 inches, 11 inches, 9 inches. That initial drilling hole is the well casing. It's like a several mile long inverted cone. When the well is completed, they put a heavier duty four inch pipe all the way down the well. That's what the oil is supposed to flow through.

Halliburton's job was to seal all three plus miles of well casing with concrete, so the four inch pipe was surrounded with concrete. New disclosures make it clear that BP made decisions to cut costs which reduced the safety of the job Halliburton did. A huffingtonpost.com article reports that, as part of an investigation, congressmen Henry Waxman and Bart Stupak wrote:

Despite warnings from its own engineers, "BP chose the more risky casing option, apparently because the liner option would have cost \$7 to \$10 million more and taken longer," Waxman and Stupak said.

In the brief e-mail, Morel said the company is likely to make last-minute changes in the well.

"We could be running it in 2-3 days, so need a relatively quick response. Sorry for the late notice, this has been nightmare well which has everyone all over the place," Morel wrote.

BP apparently rejected advice of a subcontractor, Halliburton Inc., in preparing for a cementing job to close up the well. BP rejected Halliburton's recommendation to use 21 "centralizers" to make sure the casing ran down the center of the well bore. Instead, BP used six centralizers.

In an e-mail on April 16, a BP official involved in the decision explained: "It will take 10 hours to install them. I do not like this." Later that day, another official recognized the risks of proceeding with insufficient centralizers but commented: "Who cares, it's done, end of story, will probably be fine."

Now, there is speculation from multiple sources that there were problems with the seal job. Washingtonblog.com reports, using multiple sources and videos, that there is concern that the casing may have been compromised, causing leaks far below the surface of the sea floor. They report that Cameron international, the manufacturer of the blowout preventer (BOP) at the top of the wellhead, that was supposed to shut the well, may have broken parts from the casing blocking the BOP from closing. Washingtonblog also reports:

Indeed, loss of integrity in the well itself may explain why BP is drilling its relief wells more than ten thousand feet beneath the leaking pipes on the seafloor (and see this).

On June 14, recently-retired Shell Oil President John Hofmeister said that the well casing below the sea floor may have been compromised:

[Question] What are the chances that the well casing below the sea floor has been compromised, and that gas and oil are coming up the outside of the well casing, eroding the surrounding soft rock. Could this lead to a catastrophic geological failure, unstoppable even by the relief wells?

John Hofmeister: This is what some people fear has occurred. It is also why the "top kill" process was halted. If the casing is compromised the well is that much more difficult to shut down, including the risk that the relief wells may not be enough. If the relief wells do not result in stopping the flow, the next and drastic step is to implode the well on top of itself, which carries other risks as well.

As noted June 14 in *The Engineer* magazine, an official from Cameron International — the manufacturer of the blowout preventer for BP's leaking oil drilling operation — noted that one cause of the failure of the BOP could have been damage to the well bore:

"Steel casing or casing hanger could have been ejected from the well and blocked the operation of the rams."

Oil industry expert Rob Caverner believes that the casing might be damaged beneath the sea floor, noting:

"The real doomsday scenario here is if that casing gives up, and it does come through the other strings of pipe. Remember, it is concentric pipe that holds this well together. If it

Gulf Oil Disaster

Doomsday Scenario: Well Casing Failure

comes into the formation, basically, you've got uncontrolled [oil] flow to the sea floor. And that is the doomsday scenario."

Caverner also said BP must "keep the well flowing to minimize oil and gas going out into the formation on the side"

Business Week reports on details from the Waxman-Stupak congressional investigative committee letter,

Well Design Five days before the blast, BP concluded the method to secure the final 1,200 feet of well, called a liner/tieback, was too time-consuming and expensive, the lawmakers said. Using an alternative called a long-string casing would save at least three days and about \$7 million to \$10 million.

A liner/tieback approach provided multiple barriers to block the flow of gas that could trigger an explosion. The single steel liner had two places to seal the well: at the cement on the bottom of the sea and at the wellhead.

"BP was aware of the risks of the single casing approach," the lawmakers said.

Centering the Casing

Standard industry practice is to center the well casing to reduce the risk that channels will form in cement, letting gas flow up the well, according to the letter. BP told Halliburton on April 15 it would use six devices called centralizers on the well, while Halliburton's modeling showed 21 were needed, the lawmakers said.

When an objection was raised, BP's Morel wrote back that it was too late to get more equipment to the rig: "It's a vertical hole, so hopefully the pipe stays centralized," he said.

When 15 units were found in Houston, BP's well team leader Gregory Walz objected. "It will take 10 hours to install them,"

Walz said, according to the letter. "I do not like this."

Halliburton account representative Jesse Gagliano ran a computer model using seven centralizers. His April 18 report on the cementing design said the "well is considered to have a severe gas-flow problem," according to the letter.

Cement Bond

The decision to skip the so-called cement bond log, a test to assess the integrity of the seal, "may have been driven by concerns about expense and time," the lawmakers said. Conducting the test using a team from Schlumberger Ltd. would have cost \$128,000, while canceling the work was about \$10,000, the lawmakers said.

The committee contacted Gordon Aaker, a failure analysis consultant with Engineering Services LLP in Houston, who said it was "unheard of" not to conduct the test and called BP's decision "horribly negligent."

Mud Circulation

The American Petroleum Institute recommends use of weighted mud to fill a well during the drilling process before cementing, the lawmakers said. The process, which can take as long as 12 hours, lets workers test for gas influxes and eliminate debris.

"BP decided to forego this safety step," Waxman and Stupak said.

Lockdown Sleeve

BP opted against placing a final piece of equipment to hold the well's casing in place, called a lockdown sleeve, the lawmakers said. The device prevents the casing from floating above the head of the well and letting gases build up.

Both Transocean and Halliburton officials have told committee staff this was a key procedural mistake, the lawmakers said.

If the casing is broken, as now seems highly likely, attempts to close the well at the top will fail. Leaks from breaks in the casing will just increase. For the same reason, it would not help to stop the well 10,000 feet below. That, it is hypothesized, is why BP is drilling the two wells, as ordered by the Obama administration, all the way down to the bottom of the well.

What we don't know is whether the casing problems were caused by Halliburton, if Halliburton did an incomplete job, not sealing large sections of the well. We now know that Halliburton accepted instructions from BP to use insufficient components — centralizers — to seal the well. That's just one factor that has bubbled up from BP's well of secrecy. When is it the contractor's responsibility, to say no when the contracting company gives orders to do a job in an way that they both know is un-safe?

If the oil is leaking through breaks and openings in what we now know to be substandard, cheaper than

recommended casing, which is only supposed to be very temporary, that oil could be oozing or gushing from the surface anywhere near the oil field.

Are the robotic mini-subbs searching for such leaks? Has secretive BP found any of these leaks and not reported them? If the oil is leaking through breaks in the casing then that undersea video of gushing oil coming out of the riser pipe atop the BOP, which the world has been focusing on may represent just a tiny portion of the oil that the BP well is leaking.

One geologist, Chris Landau, suggests that if the casing is broken, it will be that much more difficult to ever seal the well and the solution may be to drill MORE wells, to take the pressure off the out of control leaking well. Of course, there are risks with every well drilled a mile or more deep. There are other companies besides Halliburton which do casing sealing. But are there enough mega-drilling ships like the sunken Deepwater Horizon? There are not many of these high end, \$600 million plus rigs that take upwards of three years to build, and most are under contract with Oil companies from other nations. There may not be the drilling resources to drill those additional wells.

My source inside BP sent me this note:

BP said today that their revised plan would capture up to 53,000 bbl/day of oil by 7/1.

THAT means that they acknowledge that the leak is greater than 53K bbl/day. THAT means that they've measured the flow and have known, probably since day 1, the day to day flow rate.

Further:

BP, which said that further enhancements will increase the collection capacity to as high as 80,000 barrels a day by mid-July, submitted its latest plan after Watson, the federal government's second-in-command for the spill response, told the company Friday [June 11] its previous plan didn't meet the bill and gave BP a 48-hour deadline to come up with a revised scheme.

THAT means that they think the leak is greater than 53K bbl/day, and maybe up to 80K bbl/day, which would be in line with what a lot of other people in the business are saying.

After all, I think it was in 2008 that they bragged about their new flow-rate-measuring ability (you can Google that).

Of course, these new higher numbers to which BP now admits only reflect the flow from the riser that they are showing. They do not include any oil leaking through the casings, coming to the sea-bed surface at other points 5,000 feet below the surface of the gulf. It would be nice to know whether the coast guard, the Navy or even James Cameron have deployed resources to explore whether there are other leaks. So many questions. Not enough answers. Not enough questions from the Obama administration.

My source inside BP also tells me that there is considerable likelihood that the gas explosion that led to the sinking of the Transocean's Deepwater Horizon drilling rig, like air in water pipes, probably shocked and damaged the well casing. In addition, as oil combined with mud rushes through the casing, with pockets of gas sending additional shocks to the casing system, it is likely that further erosion of the casing's structural integrity will occur. This could lead to a total breakdown of the connection of the casing to the BOP at the top, which would lead to an increase in oil flow from the 80-100,000 barrels per day most scientists estimate to 600,000 barrels a day. If the last ditch effort using the pair of deep alternate wells fails to stop the gusher, it is HIGHLY likely that this breakdown of the casing will eventually happen. That's why it's so important to drill additional wells to take pressure off the system, though even that idea is highly speculative.

I've said it before. We are not at war. There should not be secrets. There should not be what seems to be collusion between the government and BP to suppress information, minimize flow estimates and prevent the media from covering this catastrophe.

Rob Kall is executive editor, publisher and site architect of OpEdNews.com, Host of the Rob Kall Bottom Up Radio Show (WNJC 1360 AM), President of FutureHealth, Inc. inventor. He is also published regularly on the Huffingtonpost.com

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Drillship Discoverer Americas working in the Gulf.

An Introduction to Drilling Offshore Oil Wells

Introduction:

This article provides basic information about oil drilling in the Gulf of Mexico so that readers will be better able to understand news and information relating to the BP well disaster.

How Oil Companies Decide Where to Drill Offshore Oil and Gas Wells:

When it comes to deciding where to drill an offshore oil or gas well, oil companies look at a variety of information, including data from seismic survey vessels, and then make an "educated guess" on where the best spot might be to begin drilling.

As technology has advanced, and our understanding of oil geology has improved, oil companies are getting much better at finding producible oil reservoirs in the ground. Two decades ago nearly one out of eight exploratory (or wildcat) oil wells was successful. Today nearly 1 in 3 of all exploratory oil and gas wells are successful.

It's a good thing too! As wells are drilled in deeper water, and deeper into the earth, an offshore oil well may cost \$70,000,000 or more to drill! Once a well has been successfully drilled, an oil company may spend an additional half billion dollars to get the oil back to a refinery.

How Oil Companies get Permission to Drill in a Particular Area:

The United States has exclusive rights over any oil or gas found up to 200 miles from its coastlines. In areas where this 200 mile "economic zone" overlaps another country's economic zone (such as the case with Mexico in the Gulf of Mexico), the overlapping zones are split evenly between the two countries.

In the Gulf of Mexico (and other areas of the world) the seafloor is divided into rectangular "blocks" approximately 2 or 3 miles square. There are thousands of these blocks in the Gulf, and any company wanting to drill within a particular block must own the mineral rights to do so.

On the United States' side of the Gulf of Mexico, the Minerals Management Service (MMS) is responsible for overseeing all offshore oil and gas drilling, including leasing the mineral rights to these blocks. MMS is a bureau of the Department of the Interior and collects over \$5 Billion in revenue each year from the sale of inland and offshore oil and gas leases.

When oil companies decide they want to drill in a particular block, they must first make sure no one else owns the rights. To manage this, MMS has periodic auctions for any unleased land eligible to be drilled on. Oil companies can submit their bids to MMS to drill in a particular block and if they are the highest bidder, they are usually given the right to do so.

Anadarko and Mariner Energy recently paid over \$52,000,000 for one single block (Walker Ridge 793) in the Gulf of Mexico.

The Different Types of Offshore Oil Drilling Rigs:

Once an oil company obtains the rights to drill within a particular lease area, it must find an oil rig that is capable of drilling the well. As the search for oil has expanded into deeper and deeper water, oil rigs have become larger and more sophisticated.

Most major oil companies do not own their own oil drilling rigs. Instead, they outsource the job of actually drilling the oil well to a drilling contractor who has the people, equipment, and expertise to drill in the safest, most efficient, and environmentally friendly way possible. The largest of these contractors is Transocean, but Diamond Drilling, Pride, Frontier, and Sea-Drill also have a large presence in the industry.

There are several different types of oil drilling rigs. I'll give you a brief overview here but the two major types involved in deepwater offshore drilling are the last two.

Jackups:

Jackup oil rigs are limited to shallow water drilling (typically less than 300 feet). As their name suggests, these units are towed to a prospective drilling lease and then "jacked up" into position.



Jack-up rig in the gulf

A jackup typically has three or four long legs (up to 350 feet high) that run through the hull up into the air. Once the jackup is over the proposed well location, each leg is jacked down to the sea-floor until they support the weight of the entire unit lifting it out of the water.

Once the weight of the barge is fully supported and the unit begins to rise out of the water, the legs are jacked down further until the unit is 10-40' in the air. When all safety checks are complete and the unit is found to be secured, the unit will switch to drilling mode and begin drilling the well.

Semi-Submersibles:

Semi-submersibles are what most people think of when they hear the term "oil rig". Once these units are over the proposed well drilling location, they flood their huge ballast tanks with seawater and partially submerge below the surface of the water.

Two huge pontoons on the bottom provide the buoyancy to keep the unit floating. Since the majority of a semi-submersible buoyancy is located well beneath the surface of the water, semi-submersibles are very stable even in 10-20 foot seas. They can maintain their position over a proposed oil or gas well two separate ways.

The traditional method of keeping a semi-submersible on location is through the use of anchors. Up to twelve anchors are run out away from the unit and set on the



Semi-submersible platform

ocean floor. The tension in the anchor chain or cable is increased by use of a large winch and once the oil rig is positioned over the well, only a few minor adjustments need to be made to keep the unit on location.

Semi-submersibles were typically limited to drilling in water depths less than 2000 feet, but today's advanced semi-submersibles can be anchored in water depths over 8,000'.

The second method of keeping a semi-submersible on location is through what's called a dynamic positioning system or "DP" system.

With a DP system, the semi-submersible uses position information from high tech GPS systems and radio beacons on the ocean floor to constantly monitor its position. If the DP computer detects that the oil rig is drifting off location (either from the wind, waves, or current), huge thrusters under the rig will apply thrust to push it back over the well.

It's not unusual for a modern dynamically positioned oil rig to stay within 5 feet of a wellhead more than a mile below the surface of the water over a 24 hour period.

While semi-submersibles have the advantage of being very stable in rough environments, they are somewhat limited by the amount of equipment and supplies they are able to store on board.

Drillships:

Over the last 15 years, drillships have been built to meet the growing demand for highly capable ultra-deepwater drilling rigs.

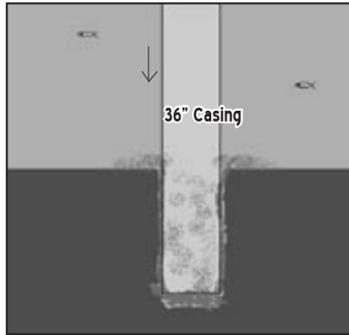
Built on traditional ship bodies, these drilling rigs are massive in size and can stretch nearly 3 football fields in length. Although they are not quite as stable as semi-submersibles, but they have a much larger storage capacity.

Today's generations of deepwater drillships use the dynamic positioning system for maintaining their position. They are capable of working for extended periods without the need for constant resupplying.

Another benefit of a drillship (especially those operating in the Gulf of Mexico), is their speed and maneuverability. Where most semi-submersibles are evacuated and left to the mercy of the environment when a hurricane approaches, drillships can secure their operation and sail out of harms way. This simple fact alone has saved oil companies 10's of millions of dollars over the last 5 hurricane seasons.

The First Step: "Spud-In"

The first step in actually drilling a well is called "spudding in". When drilling oil wells in deep water (>1000'), this involves forcing 300-400 feet of 36" diameter metal tubing called "casing" into the ground. This 36" diameter casing will form the backbone of the well and provide the support for the remaining phases of the well construction plan.



Spudding-in: 36" casing is sunk into ocean floor.

The 36" casing is lowered to the seafloor by "drill pipe". Each section of drill pipe is anywhere from 30-45 feet long and about 6" in diameter. The drill pipe is connected end to end and gradually lowered down into the well and back up to the surface as needed.

To help speed up the time connecting hundreds of sections of drill pipe together every time you want to lower a drill bit, casing, or other piece of equipment into the well, the drill pipe is stored in the derrick three or four sections at a time. This saves the drilling companies time and money.

Each section of drill pipe is called a "joint", and when two or more "joints" connected and "racked back" in the derrick they are then called a "stand".

Because the seafloor in the Gulf of Mexico is covered in a deep layer of loose sediment (deposited by the Mississippi River), you don't really need to "drill" the 36" casing into the ground. In most cases, pumping sea-water through the end of the casing using the ships massive pumps is all you need to do to get the pipe to settle into the ground.

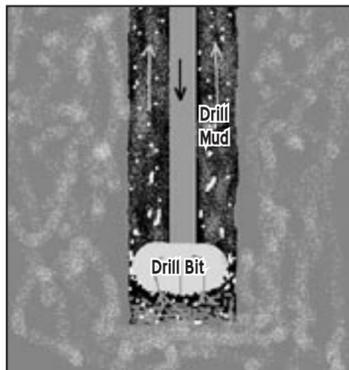
As the casing gets deeper and deeper into the ground, some rigs use giant "hammers" to pound the casing into the ground to the desired depth.

When the 36" casing is set to the correct depth, we unlatch the drill pipe from it and pull the drill pipe back to the surface so that we can get the next section of casing and proceed to step 2 of our well drilling program.

The Second Step: Drilling a Hole for Second String of Casing

The next step is to lower a drill bit down inside the 36" casing we just set into the seafloor. Once the drill bit enters inside the 36" casing it will be drilled 2000-3000' into the ground. The bit must be large enough to accommodate the next section of "casing", in this example 22".

As you can see in the following diagram, the drill bit is connected to the drill pipe which runs all the way back to the surface of



Drilling mud carries debris away from spinning bit.

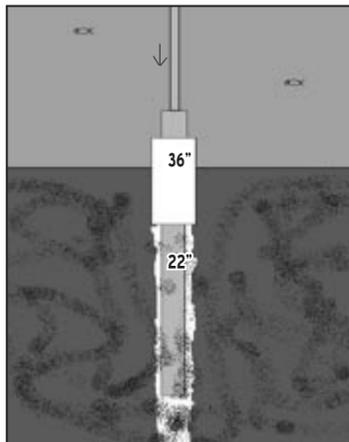
the water to the drill ship.

As the bit is rotated in the well bore (the hole that is cut into the ground), high pressure drilling fluids called "mud" is pumped down the center of the drill pipe and out through nozzles in the drilling bit.

As the drill bit cuts away at the rock formations, the drilling fluid then carries the chipped rock pieces out of the hole to prevent them from building up on the bottom of the well.

Drilling "mud" has several other important functions besides clearing out rock bits from around the bit.

First, it keeps the bit cool as it turns through layer after layer of hard rock formations. Second, it keeps the bit and the drill pipe lubricated to help keep it from getting stuck



22 inch casing lowered into well

in the ground. Perhaps most importantly, the "mud" helps prevent the well from caving in or "taking a kick" or a blow-out.

After drilling deep enough to "run" the 22" casing, the drill bit and all the drill pipe is brought back to the surface and then the 22" casing is lowered down to the seafloor. Using an underwater Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV), the 22" casing is lined up so that it will pass through the 36" casing and into the freshly drilled hole.

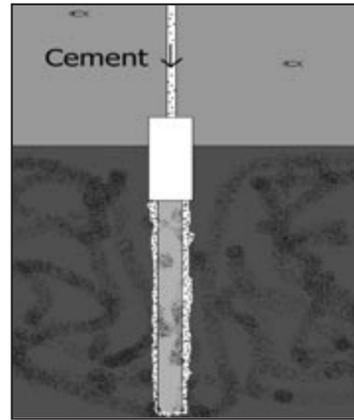
This second section of casing to be installed (the 22" casing) is usually between 1000' to 3000' in length.

The Third Step: Cementing the First Two Casing Sections in Place

Once the 22" casing is set inside the 36" casing, the two different sized casings are cemented in place. This is accomplished by pumping cement down the drill pipe (represented in yellow in the picture below) and out through a special nozzle on the end of the pipe.

This is a very critical step in the operation. The cement must be mixed very carefully and every effort is made to ensure the nozzle is lowered to the correct position inside the casing. Once the cement has been pumped down the drill pipe and back up around the sides of the casing (filling in the space between the casing and the drilled well hole (see picture above) it takes anywhere from 4-12 hours for it to harden up or "set".

If a mistake is made during the cementing



22" casing cemented inside the 36" casing

operation, it can be very costly to fix.

The Fourth Step: Connecting the Blowout Preventer (BOP) and Marine Riser On Top of the Well Head

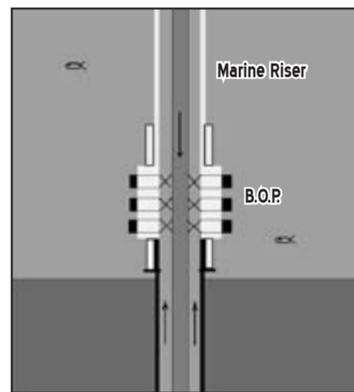
Formations in the ground are under tremendous pressure. When drilling in areas where oil, water, or gas may be present, there is a possibility this pressure may escape out through the well you are drilling. When this happens it's called a "blow out".

This concept is very similar to popping a balloon. Think of the air inside the balloon as a formation of oil. When you poke through the surface of the "formation", the air escapes out the hole and more often than not, the balloon violently explodes.

To control these formation pressures, a large underwater control valve called a Blowout Preventer (BOP) is placed on top of the wellhead. This is why it's very important to have run the first two sections of casing and properly cemented them in place.

The BOP sits directly on top of the wellhead on the ocean floor. In the event a blowout or "kick" occurs, giant valves inside the BOP can seal off the well keeping any oil, gas, and any excessive pressure contained within the ground.

If not for the blow out preventer, oil and gas would escape directly to the sea causing tremendous damage to the environment. Ensuring the BOPs are properly maintained and tested is one of the highest priorities



Mud flows down the drill pipe and back up the marine riser

of both the drilling contractor and the oil company involved in drilling the well. BOP testing is also closely watched by the Minerals Management Service (MMS) mentioned at the beginning of this series.

The BOP is rigidly connected to the drilling rig by way of the marine riser. Drill pipe can be lowered down through the marine riser, through the BOP, into the wellhead, and then down into the well to drill deeper into the ground. As the drilling fluid or mud is pumped through the drill pipe and out through the drill bit, it circulates all the way around up through the marine riser back to the oil rig.

As mentioned earlier drilling fluid helps clear the rock bits or "cuttings" that are constantly being chipped away as the drill bit drills deeper into the ground. Marine riser allows these "cuttings" to be brought back up to the oil rig to be collected and disposed of.

In the drawing above, you can see the drilling fluid being pumped down the drill

pipe. Once the drilling fluid or "mud" shoots out of the nozzles in the drill bit, it returns back up the marine riser in the space between the drill pipe and the inner wall of the marine riser.

This is especially helpful to the environment to prevent any contaminated cuttings from affecting the local marine life.

Once the mud returns to the drilling rig, the cuttings are filtered out and the mud is reused. Being able to reuse drilling mud is very important because it can be extremely expensive to buy. Oil companies can spend millions of dollars for drilling fluid on every well they drill.

Why are Blow Out Prevents (BOPs) and Marine Riser so Important:

As mentioned above, oil well blowouts or "kicks" as they are sometimes called, are uncontrolled releases of pressure from underground formations into the well hole or "well bore".

These "blow-outs" are not only bad for the well, but they can be extremely bad for the drilling rig and everyone on board if they are not properly dealt with.

Many oil rig workers have lost their lives to explosions and fires when uncontrolled gases from blow-outs escaped from the well up to the surface of the water.

Drilling fluid is much heavier than sea water. In some cases it can be more than twice as heavy as seawater. This is helpful when drilling a well because it's weight creates enough pressure to keep any pressure in the oil or gas formation from escaping back up through the well.

The heavier the drilling fluid you use when drilling a well, the less likely you are to have formation pressure escaping back up into the well and up your marine riser.

On the other hand, if the drilling fluid you are drilling with is too heavy, you run the risk of breaking or cracking the well. When this happens, your drilling fluid begins leaking out into the underground formation. This is also very bad, because without being able to circulate the mud back up through the marine riser, you will be unable to drill any deeper.

As the well is drilled deeper and deeper, the mud weight operating window gets smaller and smaller.

The Fifth Step: Drilling the Remaining Sections of the Well

The remaining sections of the well are drilled the same way as the 22" casing was drilled in the earlier step only now the cuttings and mud are circulated back up to the drillship to be processed.

The drill crews will drill deeper into the ground so that the next section of casing can be run and cemented into place. There is no set limit on how long each section of casing will be, this decision is left up to the drilling engineers that have closely analyzed the survey data and any data from nearby or "offset" wells.

As the drill bit continues to make its way towards the oil or "pay zone", the drilling crew closely monitors the amount of fluid in the storage tanks as well as the pressure of the formation to ensure that the well is not experiencing a blow-out or kick.

If it is determined that the well is experiencing a "blow-out" or kick, the Blow Out Preventer (BOP) control valves are closed and the drill crew must take measure to stabilize the well. To stabilize a well that has experienced a "kick", the drill crew is usually able to control it by pumping heavier drilling fluids into the well to "force" the kicked pressure back into the formation.

Determining if a Well has a Produceable Amount of Oil or Gas:

Once the geologists are happy with the logs of the well, a series of test called "logs" will be conducted to determine how much oil and gas (if any) is present in the formation. The process is called logging because the information is "logged" into a database as it is collected.

This is accomplished by sending high tech measurement devices into the hole that can detect various features of the formation.

Using a combination of sound wave tools, electrical wave tools, and radiation measurement instruments, geologist are able to take readings inside the well which will assist them in determining the presence of oil.

However, just because there is oil or gas at the bottom of the well doesn't always mean it is worthwhile to pump it out. Oil companies must decide whether the amount of oil present in the formation is worth investing hundreds of millions of dollars in additional equipment to pump it out and back to a refinery.

In some instances, an oil company may decide to "test flow" a well to help determine how much oil is there. When test flowing a well, oil is allowed to flow up from the well into storage tanks. The pressure is recorded and if it remains at certain levels over a certain amount of time, the oil companies may decide that investing more money to "produce" the well is worth the costs.

Conclusion:

The process of drilling an oil well (even when boiled down to the most basic elements) is very complicated and there are many opportunities for things to go wrong. Oil companies can invest over \$100,000,000 in a single well only to find out there is no oil present.

There are substantial risks involved with drilling an oil well, but the rewards can be tremendous. One successful oil well can easily cover the expenses of multiple dry wells (sometimes referred to as dusters).



Israel's Greatest Loss: Its Moral Imagination

MORAL from p. 3

A million and a half civilians have been forced to live in an open-air prison in inhuman conditions for over three years now, but unlike the Hitler years, they are not Jews but Palestinians. Their jailers, incredibly, are survivors of the Holocaust, or their descendants. Of course, the inmates of Gaza are not destined for gas chambers, as the Jews were, but they have been reduced to a debased and hopeless existence.

Fully 80% of Gaza's population lives on the edge of malnutrition, depending on international charities for their daily nourishment. According to the UN and World Health authorities, Gaza's children suffer from dramatically increased morbidity that will affect and shorten the lives of many of them. This obscenity is a consequence of a deliberate and carefully calculated Israeli policy aimed at de-developing Gaza by destroying not only its economy but its physical and social infrastructure while sealing it hermetically from the outside world.

Particularly appalling is that this policy has been the source of amusement for some Israeli leaders, who according to Israeli press reports have jokingly described it as "putting Palestinians on a diet." That, too, is reminiscent of the Hitler years, when Jewish suffering amused the Nazis.

Another feature of that dark era was absurd conspiracies attributed to the Jews by otherwise intelligent and cultured Germans. Sadly, even smart Jews are not immune to that disease. Is it really conceivable that Turkish activists who were supposedly paid ten thousand dollars each would bring that money with them on board the ship, knowing they would be taken into custody by Israeli authorities?

That intelligent and moral people, whether German or Israeli, can convince themselves of such absurdities (a disease that also afflicts much of the Arab world) is the enigma that goes to the heart of the mystery of how even the most civilized societies can so quickly shed their most cherished values and regress to the most primitive impulses toward the Other, without even being aware they have done so. It must surely have something to do with a deliberate repression of the moral imagination that would otherwise enable people to identify with the Other's plight. Pirkey Avot, a collection of ethical admonitions that is part of the Talmud, urges: "Do not judge your fellow man until you are able to imagine standing in his place."

Of course, even the most objectionable Israeli policies do not begin to compare with Hitler's Germany. But the essential

moral issues are the same. How would Jews have reacted to their tormentors had they been consigned to the kind of existence Israel has imposed on Gaza's population? Would they not have seen human rights activists prepared to risk their lives to call their plight to the world's attention as heroic, even if they had beaten up commandos trying to prevent their effort? Did Jews admire British commandos who boarded and diverted ships carrying illegal Jewish immigrants to Palestine in the aftermath of World War II, as most Israelis now admire Israel's naval commandos?

Who would have believed that an Israeli government and its Jewish citizens would seek to demonize and shut down Israeli human rights organizations for their lack of "patriotism," and dismiss fellow Jews who criticized the assault on the Gaza Flotilla as "Arabs," pregnant with all the hateful connotations that word has acquired in Israel, not unlike Germans who branded fellow citizens who spoke up for Jews as "Juden"? The German White Rose activists, mostly students from the University of Munich, who dared to condemn the German persecution of the Jews (well before the concentration camp exterminations began) were also considered "traitors" by their fellow Germans, who did not mourn the beheading of these activists by the Gestapo.

So, yes, there is reason for Israelis and for Jews generally, to think long and hard about the dark Hitler era at this particular time. For the significance of the Gaza Flotilla incident lies not in the questions raised about violations of international law on the high seas, or even about "who assaulted whom" first on the Turkish ship, the *Mavi Marmara*, but in the larger questions raised about our common human condition by Israel's occupation policies and its devastation of Gaza's civilian population.

If a people who so recently experienced on its own flesh such unspeakable inhumanities cannot muster the moral imagination to understand the injustice and suffering its territorial ambitions—and even its legitimate security concerns—are inflicting on another people, what hope is there for the rest of us?

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By Deborah Blum

It was Christmas Eve 1926, the streets aglitter with snow and lights, when the man afraid of Santa Claus stumbled into the emergency room at New York City's Bellevue Hospital. He was flushed, gasping with fear: Santa Claus, he kept telling the nurses, was just behind him, wielding a baseball bat.

Before hospital staff realized how sick he was — the alcohol-induced hallucination was just a symptom — the man died. So did another holiday partygoer. And another. As dusk fell on Christmas, the hospital staff tallied up more than 60 people made desperately ill by alcohol and eight dead from it. Within the next two days, yet another 23 people died in the city from celebrating the season.

Doctors were accustomed to alcohol poisoning by then, the routine of life in the Prohibition era. The bootlegged whiskies and so-called gins often made people sick. The liquor produced in hidden stills frequently came tainted with metals and other impurities. But this outbreak was bizarrely different. The deaths, as investigators would shortly realize, came courtesy of the US government.

Frustrated that people continued to consume so much alcohol even after it was banned, federal officials had decided to try a different kind of enforcement. They ordered the poisoning of industrial alcohols manufactured in the United States, products regularly stolen by bootleggers and resold as drinkable spirits. The idea was to scare people into giving up illicit drinking. Instead, by the time Prohibition ended in 1933, the federal poisoning program, by some estimates, had killed at least 10,000 people.

Although mostly forgotten today, the "chemist's war of Prohibition" remains one of the strangest and most deadly decisions in American law-enforcement history. As one of its most outspoken opponents, Charles Norris, the chief medical examiner of New York City during the 1920s, liked to say, it was "our national experiment in extermination." Poisonous alcohol still kills — 16 people died just this month after drinking lethal booze in Indonesia, where bootleggers make their own brews to avoid steep taxes — but that's due to unscrupulous businessmen rather than government order.

I learned of the federal poisoning program while researching my new book, *The Poisoner's Handbook*, which is set in jazz-age New York. My first reaction was that I must have gotten it wrong. "I never heard that the government poisoned people during Prohibition, did you?" I kept saying to friends, family members, and colleagues.

I did, however, remember the US government's controversial decision in the 1970s to spray Mexican marijuana fields with Paraquat, an herbicide. Its use was primarily intended to destroy crops, but government officials



Detroit Police bust up brewery

also insisted that awareness of the toxin would deter marijuana smokers. They echoed the official position of the 1920s — if some citizens ended up poisoned, well, they'd brought it upon themselves. Although Paraquat wasn't really all that toxic, the outcry forced the government to drop the plan. Still, the incident created an unsurprising lack of trust in government motives, which reveals itself in the occasional rumors circulating today that federal agencies, such as the CIA, mix poison into the illegal drug supply.

During Prohibition, however, an official sense of higher purpose kept the poisoning program in place. As the *Chicago Tribune* editorialized in 1927: "Normally, no American government would engage in such business. ... It is only in the curious fanaticism of Prohibition that any means, however barbarous, are considered justified." Others, however, accused lawmakers opposed to the poisoning plan of being in cahoots with criminals and argued that bootleggers and their law-breaking alcoholic customers deserved no sympathy. "Must Uncle Sam guarantee safety first for soups?" asked Nebraska's *Omaha Bee*.

The saga began with ratification of the 18th Amendment, which banned the manufacture, sale, or transportation of alcoholic beverages in the United States. High-minded crusaders and anti-alcohol organizations had helped push the amendment through in 1919, playing on fears of moral decay in a country just emerging from war. The Volstead Act, spelling out the rules for enforcement, passed shortly later, and Prohibition itself went into effect on Jan. 1, 1920.

But people continued to drink — and in large quantities. Alcoholism rates soared during the 1920s; insurance companies charted the increase at more than 300 more percent. Speakeasies promptly opened for business. By the decade's end, some 30,000 existed in New York City alone. Street gangs grew into bootlegging empires built on smuggling, stealing, and

manufacturing illegal alcohol. The country's defiant response to the new laws shocked those who sincerely (and naively) believed that the amendment would usher in a new era of upright behavior.

Rigorous enforcement had managed to slow the smuggling of alcohol from Canada and other countries. But crime syndicates responded by stealing massive quantities of industrial alcohol — used in paints and solvents, fuels and medical supplies — and redistilling it to make it potable.

Well, sort of. Industrial alcohol is basically grain alcohol with some unpleasant chemicals mixed in to render it undrinkable. The US government started requiring this "denaturing" process in 1906 for manufacturers who wanted to avoid the taxes levied on potable spirits. The US Treasury Department, charged with overseeing alcohol enforcement, estimated that by the mid-1920s, some 60 million gallons of industrial alcohol were stolen annually to supply the country's drinkers. In response, in 1926, President Calvin Coolidge's government decided to turn to chemistry as an enforcement tool. Some 70 denaturing formulas existed by the 1920s. Most simply added poisonous methyl alcohol into the mix. Others used bitter-tasting compounds that were less lethal, designed to make the alcohol taste so awful that it became undrinkable.

To sell the stolen industrial alcohol, the liquor syndicates employed chemists to "renature" the products, returning them to a drinkable state. The bootleggers paid their chemists a lot more than the government did, and they excelled at their job. Stolen and redistilled alcohol became the primary source of liquor in the country. So federal officials ordered manufacturers to make their products far more deadly.

By mid-1927, the new denaturing formulas included some notable poisons — kerosene and brucine (a plant alkaloid closely related to strychnine), gasoline, benzene, cadmium, iodine, zinc, mercury salts, nicotine, ether, formaldehyde,

chloroform, camphor, carbolic acid, quinine, and acetone. The Treasury Department also demanded more methyl alcohol be added — up to 10 percent of total product. It was the last that proved most deadly.

The results were immediate, starting with that horrific holiday body count in the closing days of 1926. Public health officials responded with shock. "The government knows it is not stopping drinking by putting poison in alcohol," New York City medical examiner Charles Norris said at a hastily organized press conference. "[Y]et it continues its poisoning processes, heedless of the fact that people determined to drink are daily absorbing that poison. Knowing this to be true, the United States government must be charged with the moral responsibility for the deaths that poisoned liquor causes, although it cannot be held legally responsible."

His department issued warnings to citizens, detailing the dangers in whiskey circulating in the city: "[P]ractically all the liquor that is sold in New York today is toxic," read one 1928 alert. He publicized every death by alcohol poisoning. He assigned his toxicologist, Alexander Gettler, to analyze confiscated whiskey for poisons — that long list of toxic materials I cited came in part from studies done by the New York City medical examiner's office.

Norris also condemned the federal program for its disproportionate effect on the country's poorest residents. Wealthy people, he pointed out, could afford the best whiskey available. Most of those sickened and dying were those "who cannot afford expensive protection and deal in low grade stuff."

And the numbers were not trivial. In 1926, in New York City, 1,200 were sickened by poisonous alcohol; 400 died. The following year, deaths climbed to 700. These numbers were repeated in cities around the country as public-health officials nationwide joined in the angry clamor. Furious anti-Prohibition legislators pushed for a halt in the use of lethal chemistry. "Only one possessing the instincts of a wild beast would desire to kill or make blind the man who takes a drink of liquor, even if he purchased it from one violating the Prohibition statutes," proclaimed Sen. James Reed of Missouri.

Officially, the special denaturing program ended only once the 18th Amendment was repealed in December 1933. But the chemist's war itself faded away before then. Slowly, government officials quit talking about it. And when Prohibition ended and good grain whiskey reappeared, it was almost as if the craziness of Prohibition — and the poisonous measures taken to enforce it — had never quite happened.

Deborah Blum is a professor of science journalism at the University of Wisconsin and author of *The Poisoner's Handbook: Murder and the Birth of Forensic Medicine in Jazz Age New York*.

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Gaza Relief Ship Eyewitness Refutes Israeli Account of Attack

EYEWITNESS from p. 1

helicopters onto the top deck, followed by a melee as some activists resisted with sticks and knives.

But the Israeli video did not reveal the precise sequence of events, nor did it make clear why the Israelis resorted to so much lethal force that nine people were killed — sometimes with multiple gunshots at close range — and many others were left wounded. No Israeli commandos died, though some were injured.

In an interview, Mohammadi, who was lightly wounded herself, claimed that the Israeli video was misleading both in terms of how the clash began and how the massacre proceeded.

Mohammadi said she saw unarmed colleagues and friends shot and thrown into the Mediterranean Sea, some dying right before her eyes.

But she added that her experiences at sea and later in Israel have only solidified her commitment to what she calls the new civil rights movement.

An Iranian-American from Chicago, Mohammadi is committed to sailing again to break the siege on Gaza. Even as she recovers from her wounds, the 31-year-old is imagining her next trip to Gaza by flotilla. She says she's even planning to help finance a boat that leaves from Lake Michigan.

Mohammadi returned to Chicago after a grueling six days in Israeli custody. She says that what she witnessed on the boat was shocking and is important for her to get out to the rest of the world.

According to her eyewitness account, Israeli commandos opened fire before they left their zodiac attack boats.

"I said my morning prayers on the top deck ... and as soon as I finished, about two meters away from me, a cameraman from Turkey, who speaks very little English, was shot twice by two different guns.

"One was with a rubber pellet on the forearm, and then in the back of the arm with a live round. I jumped over and turned his arm, and then myself and another brother carried him downstairs. He was bleeding profusely."

Mohammadi also spoke about the chaos on the third deck, where the seriously wounded were carried, dragged even as they bled out all over the blood-soaked deck of the Mava Marmara.

She said the unwounded passengers were prevented by the Israeli commandos from treating the wounded and the only doctor on board had been shot by the commandos.

"It was extremely gruesome. There was blood all the way down the stairs. ... I literally was sliding on [it] as I was moving around.

"The volunteers had been bringing people down as they were shot, at very close range ... and as we now know, based on autopsy reports, nine bodies had been martyred with 30 gunshot wounds, and most of the injured were similarly wounded, in the sense that none of them that I saw were shot once, they were all shot multiple times at very close range and almost all of them with live ammunition."

When some of the activists tried to bring

their most severely injured colleagues to an Israeli helicopter, to be treated for their wounds and flown to hospital for emergency care, the commandos on board, refused to act, and even prevented basic treatment that may have saved lives, she said.

"One of the last patients that I treated was a gentleman who was shot at close range in the left side of his head, but directly into his head," Mohammadi said.

"We were trying to control the bleeding and it was impossible to do. We resuscitated him multiple times, and he was very, very, very close to death. ...

"[Other flotilla passengers] put this gentleman up on a stretcher, and the brothers were trying to take him up to the top deck because the helicopters were arriving to take the most critically wounded."

"As the brothers were carrying these severely wounded individuals," she said, "the soldiers would beat the brothers, literally with the backs of their guns."

"They would beat their hands and try to get them to drop the injured onto the ground, literally kicking them in the knees and hitting them on the back of the head with their guns. ...

"There were four that died on the boat, and there were nine fatalities total."

According to this math, five of the wounded people who made it off the vessel ended up dead. Whether their lives could have been saved by a different Israeli approach once the ship had been taken over is impossible to know.

One of the most haunting parts of the experience for Mohammadi was the fact that six people are still missing, and she is sure that the commandos threw several people over board — she wasn't sure if they were dead or alive.

"I heard splashes while I was going between the decks ... and there are others who would corroborate that bags were placed over people's heads and they were not sure whether they were dead or alive, and then they were thrown overboard."

Many of the horrid images drawn by Mohammadi were corroborated by an hour-long video, released on Wednesday.

Filmmaker Iara Lee, another passenger, was able to smuggle it off the boat. The video, posted on Lee's Web site, Cultures of Resistance, depicts scenes of wounded and dying people being carried up the bloody stairs, and those who tried to walk slipping between blood-spattered walls.

Despite the grisly scenes on the Mavi Marmara, Mohammadi said she plans to continue her struggle to both support the Palestinian people and dismantle Israel's stronghold on Gazan daily life.

Mohammadi said momentum for that change is growing, and in her words, "By land, by sea, by air or by prayer, we're going to get there."

Dennis Bernstein and Jesse Strauss based this report primarily on interviews done for "Flashpoints" on the Pacifica radio network. You can access the audio archives at www.flashpoints.net. You can get in touch with the authors at dbernstein@jgc.org and jstrauss@riseup.net.

AFGHANISTAN from p. 1

Obama regime more soldiers were killed or wounded than in the previous eight years.

The White House and Pentagon strategy is premised on massive flows of money, arms and an increase in the number of surrogates, mainly subsidized warlords and puppet western educated ex-pats. The White House "development aid" involves, literally, purchasing the transient loyalties of clan leaders. The White House attempts to give a veneer of legitimacy by running elections, which enhance the corrupt image of the incumbent puppet regime in Kabul and its regional associates.

On the military front, the Pentagon launches one "offensive" after another, announcing one success after another, followed by a retreat and return of the Resistance fighters. The US campaigns disrupt trade, agricultural harvests and markets, while the air assaults targeting "Taliban" and militants, more frequently than not end up killing more civilians celebrating weddings, religious holidays and shoppers at markets than combatants. The reason for the high percentage of civilian killings is clear to everyone except the US Generals: there are no distinctions between "militants" and millions of Afghan civilians since the former are an integral part of their communities.

The key and ultimately decisive problem facing the US occupation is that it is a colonial enclave in the midst of a colonized people. The US, its local puppets and its NATO allies are a foreign colonial army and its Afghan military and police recruits are seen as mere instruments perpetuating illegitimate rule. Every action, whether violent or benign, is perceived and interpreted as transgressing the norms and historical legacies of a proud and independent people. In everyday life, every move by the occupation is disruptive; nothing moves except by command of the foreign directed military and police. Under threat of force, people fake co-operation and then provide assistance to their fathers, brothers and sons in the Resistance. The recruits take the money and turn their arms over to the Resistance. The paid village informants are double agents or identified by their neighbors and targeted by insurgents.

The Afghan collaborators, Washington's closest allies, are seen as corrupt traitors; transient rulers who have their bags packed and US passports in hand, ready to flee when the US is forced to exit. All the programs, "reconstruction" funds, training missions and "civic programs" have failed to win the allegiance of the Afghan people, now as in the past as well as in the future, because they are seen as part of the US military occupation ultimately based on violence.

Ten Reasons Why the Afghan Resistance Will Win:

1. The Resistance has deep roots in the population — family community, linguistic and cultural ties which the US does not possess nor can "invent"; nor can these ties be bought, traded or replicated by their Afghan 'collaborators' or imposed by propaganda.

2. The Resistance has fluid borders and broad international support especially with Pakistan but also with other anti-imperialist, Islamic groups who provide arms and volunteers and who engage in actively attacking the logistical transport supply lines of US-NATO military in Pakistan. They also pressure overseas US client regimes like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Somalia opening multiple fronts.

3. Widespread infiltration, voluntary, active and passive support of the Resistance among the US recruited and trained Afghan military and police results in crucial intelligence on troop movements. Desertions and absenteeism undermines "military competence".

4. The scope and breadth of Resistance activity over extends the imperial armies at its current strength and causes it to rely on unreliable Afghan security, which have no stomach for killing their brethren, especially when directed against communities with relatives or ethnic kin.

5. Resistance allies are more loyal, less corrupt and reliable because of deeply shared beliefs. US allies are loyal only because of ephemeral monetary gratification and the temporary presence of US military force.

6. The Resistance appeals to the people in the name of a return to law and order in everyday life, which preceded the disruptive invasion. The US promise of positive outcomes following a successful war, have no popular resonance after a decade long destructive occupation.

7. The US has no belief system that can compete with the religious-nationalist-traditionalist appeal of the Resistance to the vast majority of village, small town and displaced rural population.

8. The Resistance's support of Iraqi, Palestinian and other anti-imperialist forces has a positive appeal among the Afghan people who have seen the destructive results of US wars in Iraq and proxy wars in Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen. The US backed Israeli assault of Lebanon and the humanitarian ship destined for Palestine and the highly visible presence of Zionist militants in the US government, repels the more politically aware opinion leaders in Afghanistan.

9. Afghans have, by force of circumstances, longer staying power in resisting the US military occupation, than the US people who have other, far more pressing needs and the US military with growing commitments in the Gulf.

10. The Afghan Resistance does not normally kill civilians in combat missions since the US troops and NATO are clearly identified. Whereas, the opposite is not true. The Afghans who are part of the villages in occupied communities are subject to assassinations by "Special Forces" and drone bombings. In these circumstances ordinary people suffer the same military assaults as Resistance fighters.



A Failed Mission: The Incapacity to Build a Reliable, Effective Afghan Mercenary Army

A US government audit published in late June of this year demolished the Obama regime's claims that it is succeeding in building an effective Afghan mercenary army and police capable of buttressing the current client regime in Kabul. The Report, based on a detailed analysis and field observations argues that the Obama Pentagon relies on "standards [which are] woefully inadequate, inflating the abilities of Afghan units that Mr. Obama called 'core to our mission'" (Financial Times, June 7, 2010, p1). In other words, Obama continues to play the con game, which he inaugurated during his electoral campaign with his phony promises of 'change' and 'ending the wars', and continued with his bail out of Wall Street in the name of 'saving the economy'. He followed up by escalating the war in Afghanistan by sending 30,000 more troops and increasing military and police expenditures to \$325.5 billion, approximately 132% higher than the last year of the Bush Administration (Congressional Research Service, FY 2010 Supplemental for Wars ... June 2010).

The Obama regime's phony claims of progress were based on self-serving bureaucratic and technical criteria, rather than the actual fighting performance and behavior of the Afghan mercenary army. The military command's reports and progress reports were based on how many courses were taught, the length and breadth of training and the amount and quality of arms and equipment supplied to the Afghan troops. As the number of Afghan units passing the "training missions" increased from zero to 22, between 2008 - 2009, the Pentagon claimed extraordinary progress. To correct the errors, the Pentagon has turned to "field assessments by commanders" — which is also failing, since the officials have a vested interest in inflating the performance of the Afghans mercenaries under their command in order to secure promotions and merit badges. The Obama regime plans to increase the Afghan military from 97,000 in November 2009 to 134,000 in October 2010, to 171,000 in October 2011 a 75% increase in two years (Congressional Research Service 2010, p 13). The same increase occurs with the police: from 93,800 in November 2009 to 134,000 in October 2011 a 43% increase.

Obama's claim that the war is gradually being handed over to the US "trained" Afghan army is fully belied by two other basic facts. The White House has requested \$1.9 billion — double the 2009 level under Bush — for military construction of new bases and installations for a "long term presence" (which the con-man Obama claims does not mean a "permanent presence"). Secondly, using the familiar double-talk of the Obama regime, Secretary of Defense Gates and Admiral Mullen, Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff now argue that Obama's campaign promise of beginning the retirement of troops in July 2010 really means "a day we start transitioning ... not a date we're leaving", which would be based on "conditions on the ground ... a several year process" (Gates Testimony before Senate Armed Services Committee, December 2, 2009). In plain English "transitioning" is not "leaving". It means staying, fighting and occupying Afghanistan for decades. It means adding more troops, building more bases. It means spending another \$400 billion over the next 5 years. And it means doubling the number of American soldiers killed and wounded over the next 3 years, from over seven thousand to fourteen thousand.

The criteria of 'success' in Afghanizing the war is belied by the growing Americanizing of the bases, combat troops and expenditures. The reason is that the Afghan army figures are as phony as Obama's promises. The number of US personnel is growing because the Afghan political puppets are so corrupt, ineffective and despised by their people that Washington has to surround them with "monitors", "advisers" and "operatives" who in turn are totally incapable of relating to the needs and practices of the communities. Increased US "aid" has led to greater corruption, more unfulfilled promises and greater animosity from the would be popular recipients.

The fundamental problem is that this is an American war and that is why Afghan units suffer a 50% reduction of strength due to a minimum, a 20% desertion rate, admitted by US military officials (Congressional Research, op cit, p.14). In other words, the Afghan recruits, take the money and their arms and return to their villages, neighborhoods, families, and perhaps not a few, use their military training, joining with the National Resistance. With such high levels of disaffection among Afghan recruits and even officials it is not surprising that the Resistance has such high quality intelligence on US troop movements. Given the degree of disaffection it is not surprising that some of the US intelligence collaborators are double agents or vulnerable to exposure and execution. Faced with a billion dollar recruitment program with high rates of desertion and the "turning of guns on their mentors," the White House, Pentagon and Congress refuse to recognize the reality that the imperial occupations is the source of the resistance of almost the whole people. Instead they call for more trainees, more funds for "training programs", more "transparent" mercenary contractors.

The reality is that with a bigger American occupation, with escalating military expenditures, the Resistance is growing, surrounding the major cities, targeting meetings in the center of Kabul and rocketing the biggest US military bases around the country. It is clear that the US has lost the war politically and is in the process of losing it militarily.

Despite the most advanced military technology, the drones, the Special Forces, the increase in the number of trainees, advisers, NGOers and the building of more military bases, the Resistance is winning. The White House by adding to the millions of displaced and murdered and maimed Afghans is increasing the hostility of the vast majority of the Afghans. Civilian killings are turning more and more of their military recruits into deserters and "unreliable" soldiers. Some of whom are 'turned' into committed combatants for the 'other side'. As in Indo-China, Algeria and elsewhere, a popular, highly motivated guerrilla resistance army, deeply embedded in the national-religious culture of an oppressed population is proving more resistant, enduring and victorious over an alien high tech imperial army. Obama's 'rule or ruin' Afghan War, sooner rather than later, will ruin America and end his shameful presidency.

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German Prosecutors to Investigate Israeli Attack on Aid Ships

STATE CRIMES from p. 1

via the ship's loudspeaker that the Israeli soldiers who had boarded the ship as part of the commando operation were taking over control of the ship. An hour later, Israeli soldiers ordered the Germans on deck, where their backpacks and other belongings were searched. Their hands were temporarily bound.

German Jurisdiction?

It wasn't until 9:10 p.m. that parliamentarian Annette Groth was given the possibility of contacting the German Embassy. At 2 a.m. on June 1, the Germans were brought to the airport in a prisoner transport vehicle for their flight back home.

According to international criminal law, expert Florian Jessberger of Berlin's Humboldt University, "there is cause to believe that false imprisonment was perpetrated as understood by German law." He says that German criminal law would have jurisdiction "irrespective of the fact that the act was perpetrated on the high seas."

German public prosecutors told

SPIEGEL ONLINE that they were currently investigating whether there was enough evidence to warrant pursuing the case further.

'Barbaric'

The Israeli raid of the Mavi Marmara, which resulted in the deaths of nine activists onboard the ship, unleashed a storm of criticism against Israel and its ongoing blockade of the Gaza Strip. It has also severely damaged Israel's relations with Turkey.

The blockade began in 2007 after the Islamist militants from Hamas took over power in Gaza. Israel claims that many of those traveling with the flotilla had ties to Hamas or other terrorist groups, but the activists deny the charge.

Upon returning home to Germany, Höger told reporters that "we felt like we were in a war, like we had been kidnapped." Her colleague Groth spoke of a "barbaric act."

John Goetz writes for Der Spiegel. © SPIEGEL ONLINE 2010

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Dubious South Carolina Election Result Highlights Danger of Black Box Voting

ELECTION FRAUD from p. 1

41 victory Greene reportedly sailed to on Tuesday.

'Staggering' E-Vote 'Red Flags'

So, what else, besides or in addition to the "plant" theory, could account for Greene's remarkable "victory"?

South Carolina uses ES&S' 100% unverifiable Direct Recording Electronic (DRE, in this case touch-screen) voting machines at the polling place. The machines, also used in many other states (such as Arkansas, where we recently reported on the disappearance of thousands of votes on May 18th, which neither state nor local officials are able to explain to this day) are both off-angled and easily manipulated in such a way that it's almost impossible to detect the systems have been gamed.

As we've written, nearly every time there is an election in South Carolina, whoever the machines end up announcing as the "winner," will likely be the winner, since there is literally



Unverifiable voting machines. No paper trail means no recount possible

no way to guarantee that even a single vote ever cast on such machines was actually recorded as per the voter's intent. It's an insane way to run a democracy, as The BRAD BLOG has spent years, and literally thousands of articles, trying to point out.

Last night, we snarkily Tweeted to that end: Maybe we should recount ballots in SC 2 make sure Alvin Greene actually won. Oh, wait. Never mind. #BallotFreeVoting #DumbAsses

Today, however, we're delighted to see that actual mainstream media are beginning to note the disparities in the patterns of absentee paper-ballot voting versus the polling place results as cast and recorded on ES&S's 100% faith-based voting machines — the very same machines which have been decertified in state after state, based on repeated scientific reports on their multiple vulnerabilities.

The disparities being found by "three different teams" of unnamed "national academic experts," in their early comparisons between result patterns in the Election Day DRE-tallied "ballots" and the optically-scanned absentee paper ballots are already startling, and raising serious red flags suggesting

electronic vote tampering...even as reported in the corporate mainstream media today.

As reported by Politico (yes, Politico!):

One potential red flag: A significant difference between the results of absentee and Election Day ballots. According to [Rawl campaign manager Walter] Ludwig, of the state's 46 counties, half have a disparity of greater than 10 percentage points between the absentee and election day ballots.

"The election day ballots all favor Mr. Greene. We don't know what it means," Ludwig said in an interview. "We did significantly better on absentees than Election Day, which is according to the mathematicians, quite significant. The other reason is, it didn't happen in any other races on the ballot."

In Lancaster County, Rawl won absentee ballots over Greene by a staggering 84 percent to 16 percent margin; but Greene easily led among Election Day voters by 17 percentage points.

In Spartanburg County, Ludwig said there are 25 precincts in which Greene received more votes than were actually cast and 50 other precincts where votes appeared to be missing from the final count.

"In only two of 88 precincts, do the number of votes Greene got plus the number we got equal the total cast," Ludwig said.

Greene also racked up a 75 percent or greater margin in one-seventh of all precincts statewide, a mark that Ludwig notes is even difficult for an incumbent to reach.

Those are some remarkable numbers already, and we even heard them picked up by MSNBC earlier today (yes, MSNBC!)

'Rigging the Machines'

Election integrity experts — those who are willing to actually be named — are already drawing a bead on SC's e-voting system, as much, or more so, than the "plant" theory.

NYU media professor Mark Crispin Miller, author of two books on the issue, *Foiled Again: The Real Case for Electoral Reform and Loser Take All: Election Fraud and The Subversion of Democracy, 2000 - 2008* [Disclosure: The BRAD BLOG is heavily cited in the former, and contributed an investigative chapter to the latter] sent a note to his sizeable e-mail list this morning citing "clear signs of ELECTION FRAUD in South Carolina."

"With DRE machines deployed statewide (and op-scans used to "count" the absentee ballots), stealing Greene's race would be a cinch," Miller wrote. "Nor is there any reason whatsoever to believe the numbers tossed out by ES&S, the right-wing private company that makes and maintains both those DREs and op-scans."

Miller quotes an email from Jonathan Simon, co-founder and Executive Director of the Election Defense Alliance, asking "Let's assume Greene was a plant, how does that get him 59% of the votes statewide?"



Greene - unlikely candidate, even more unlikely winner

Simon, a long-time critic of e-voting, known for reporting on the extraordinary and still-unexplained disparities between Election Night results and Exit Polls in the 2004 Presidential race, suspects foul-play on the machines.

"[Greene] was a complete unknown to all voters, D and R. There was no campaign, period, certainly not to Democratic voters, and no evidence at all of one to GOP voters urging them to crossover vote in the D primary (the strategy that was credited with some bizarre results in D primaries in 2008)."

"So, whether Greene was or a plant or not can't really be the issue: you can plant a guy in a race but you can't get him 59% of the vote — unless you're rigging the machines."

He went on to point to the same concerns we'd Tweeted last night in regard to the unverifiable ES&S voting system used across the state, and called for the machines to be impounded immediately for investigation.

"The machines are ES&S no-paper-trail DREs, 100% pure, unadulterated faith-based voting. The only question that I want to ask is why James Clyburn and Keith Olbermann and everybody else are focusing on the candidates, when it is so blatantly obvious that they should be talking about the DRE machines. Time to impound a few of those suckers, assuming the code is not self-deleting."

The BRAD BLOG has long called for federal law requiring the 22-month retention of all election-related materials to be applied to the sensitive memory cards used in voting systems to both program the "ballot" and record voter preferences. Routinely, those memory cards, which are likely to hold evidence of either manipulation or failure, if there is any in an election, are erased with days or weeks following an election.

Democrats in South Carolina would do well to get to court immediately and ask for not just an impounding of the machines themselves, but of those memory cards before the important information on them is deleted for good.

Will Corporate Media follow the trail this time?

Simon added one other noteworthy thought in his email, regarding the corporate mainstream media's astounding lack of willingness, generally, to even broach the issue of machine-based election fraud at all.

"AOL 'Politics Daily' moderators apparently thought my Comment questioning the veracity of the DRE counts was 'not a constructive contribution' to the dialogue and accordingly blocked it from publication. Don't know whether to cry or laugh. I wonder why the riggers decided to go this far out on the limb: inebriation, stupidity, hubris, or just because they know they can?"

We don't know, of course, whether there were "riggers" or not at this hour. But we can certainly confirm the corporate media's years-long propensity to examine every other explanation for such anomalous elections, except for the one which might also be the most obvious.

Neither Simon nor Miller had likely seen Politico's report yet, as quoted above, when their emails were sent out. That report, though it doesn't specifically discuss the possibilities of e-voting manipulation out loud, certainly begins to draw an inescapable focus on the possibility — for a refreshing change.

This story sounds as if it is likely to have legs. We'll see if the corporate mainstream media have the courage — and intellectual honesty — to begin focusing on what would seem to be the obvious first suspect here — the e-voting system — or whether they'll take a sudden turn, as they often do, and settle for more speculative reasons for Alvin Greene having "won" the Democratic nomination for the US Senate in South Carolina.

As ES&S is the largest concealed vote-counting vendor in the nation, and millions of votes will be cast on its systems — and those of the few other companies whose machines are equally vulnerable, but used across the entire nation anyway — between here and November, we won't be surprised at all if the media determine it's better to ignore the issue entirely, rather than risk informing the public that the entire voting system on which our "democracy" rests, is built entirely on systems which are easily manipulated in such a way that is virtually impossible to detect...unless one actually bothers to try and do so.

Brad Friedman is an L.A.-based investigative journalist/blogger, political commentator, broadcaster, author, Commonwealth Institute Fellow and the Publisher and Executive Editor of The BRAD BLOG.



Afghan Invasion Also Based on Lies

LIES from p. 1

as moral justification for the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan. But even if you accept the Bush administration's theory of 9/11, there is still no justification for attacking Afghanistan.

According to the official narrative of 9/11, 15 of the 19 hijackers were from Saudi Arabia, but none of them were from Afghanistan. According to the Bush administration, the attacks were planned in Hamburg, the terrorists trained at flight schools in Florida and the funding was from the ISI, the Pakistani intelligence service.

The invasion of Afghanistan, we

were told, was necessary because the Taliban refused to hand over the terrorist leader, Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden, in statements released after 9/11, denied that he had anything to do with the attacks and denounced them as un-Islamic. Despite this, the Taliban offered to turn over bin Laden to US authorities, all the required was some routine paperwork which specified the evidence against Mr. bin Laden. The Bush administration could not provide the evidence. In fact, the FBI has never listed 9/11 as one of the crimes of bin Laden because, as the FBI spokesman said, they have no proof.

A video of undocumented origin did conveniently appear in 2003 which seemed to show bin Laden "confessing" to involvement in the plot. Experts who have analyzed the video find many discrepancies. The person in the video does not look like bin Laden, speaks the wrong dialect, uses the wrong hand to write (Osama was a leftie) and is wearing jewelry which bin Laden would not have done. In short, the video is almost certainly a fake. The US intelligence services have recently admitted to fabricating Osama videos, so we have very good reason to be skeptical of such a convenient find as this 2003 video.

In the years since 2001 much evidence has emerged that in fact the attacks of 9/11 were not carried out by foreign terrorists at all. The most important of that new evidence

is the now scientifically proven fact that World Trade Center Building 7 was imploded on 9/11 with explosives in a controlled demolition. (See Architects and Engineers for 9/11truth AE911truth.org for the details).

There are many unresolved questions about what happened on 9/11 and who was involved. What is not in dispute is the fact that the US government has never produced any evidence that bin Laden or anyone else from Afghanistan was involved in any way.

Just as fictitious WMD was a poor excuse for war in Iraq, the search for one accused bad guy, Osama bin Laden, is pretty thin rational for the invasion and occupation of an entire country.

Matt Sullivan is editor of the Creek.

News Bites

Are Surveillance Drones Coming to US Skies?

Allgov.com
State and federal officials, especially the Department of Homeland Security, are pressuring the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to allow pilotless planes of all sizes to move through US airspace in order to carry out a variety of missions. Border patrol operations are already using Predators to help monitor areas near Mexico, and homeland security officials want to expand this use to guard the border with Canada and spot drug smugglers off American coastlines. The ability of the pilotless aircraft to fly up to 20 hours at a time makes them attractive to law enforcement.

Other proponents of drones include tornado researchers who want to send them into storms to gather data; energy companies seeking to monitor pipelines; and police pursuing suspects in cars.

The FAA has been at work since 2006 on plans to allow unmanned aircraft to fly over the US Officials in the Department of Defense have accused FAA officials of dragging their feet, but the agency insists it's erring on the side of safety.

Green Exercise Improves Mental Health

NaturalNews
A study recently published in Environmental Science and Technology has shown that green exercise leads to improved mood and self-esteem. 'Green exercise' refers to any physical activity that takes place in the presence of nature. It can be as simple as a walk through the park or time spent gardening. All that really matters is that the body is in motion and nature is in sight.

The current study, conducted by Jules Pretty and Jo Barton, examined data from ten previous studies in order to assess the effect of green exercise on health outcomes. From these studies, a total of 1,252 individuals were included in the analysis, allowing the authors to show that green exercise improves mood and self-esteem.

The most notable improvement for both markers of mental health occurred after only five minutes of physical activity, suggesting that green exercise imparts immediate positive effects. This finding offers great news for those looking to fit more exercise into their daily routine. Even on the busiest of days, it's possible to carve out five minutes for a walk.

Oil Spill Estimate Rises Again

Allgov.com
The amount of oil flowing into the Gulf of Mexico could be 12 times higher than the federal government originally estimated, based on new figures released out of Washington. The US Department of Energy, in collaboration with the Department of the Interior, US Geological Survey and the National Incident Command's Flow Rate Technical Group is now saying the flow-rate range could be 35,000 to 60,000 barrels of oil a day. The first official estimate pegged the spill at 5,000 barrels a day.

If the flow rate is on the high end, at 60,000 barrels, that would mean about 2.5 million gallons of oil a day is polluting the gulf—an amount equal to the Exxon Valdez spill every four days.

Only last week, federal officials estimated the flow rate at only between 25,000 and 30,000 barrels a day. BP has said it is currently capturing only 15,000 barrels a day.

What's going on in Australia?

Irene North
Australia has started moving towards internet filters and censorship on a scale only seen in China. The Australian government wants Internet Service Provider (ISP) data retention on all net activity and now, they want to link passports to internet activity. While the government is denying it would capture individual browsing histories, unnamed sources from ISPs are saying that the original data set sent to ISPs from the government said that they would require allied personal information, including passport numbers.

The Australian government already uses a national facial recognition database for people who have been arrested, and they want to implement it for driver's licenses. The Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) in New South Wales has admitted converting people's faces into biometric identifiers, one has to wonder exactly what the hell is happening in Australia.

"The technetronic era involves the gradual appearance of a more controlled society. Such a society would be dominated by an elite, unrestrained by traditional values. Soon it will be possible to assert almost continuous surveillance over every citizen and maintain up-to-date complete files containing even the most personal information about the citizen. These files will be subject to instantaneous retrieval by the authorities."

Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages: America's Role in the Technetronic Era*, 1970

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