

Collateral Damage: A U.S. Strategy in War?



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Summary

For decades, U.S. military officials have used the euphemism “collateral damage” to refer to the deaths of civilians and destruction of property that resulted from military operations. As a public relations device, this term has helped mask the true toll of aggressive actions and given the impression that any harm inflicted was purely unintentional. Military officials also repeatedly assert that they make every effort to minimize these accidental results. As former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld stated in an ABC interview shortly after the Iraq invasion in 2003, “Our preference is, as a country, to have as little collateral damage as possible.”

The reality is that the U.S. military has made very little effort to avoid massive destruction in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and in some cases, policies and practices seem intended to drive up the level of devastation.

This report provides an analysis of international laws related to the use of aggressive force; assesses the death toll from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; describes the military policies that have driven up the level of devastation and the public relations campaigns aimed at masking those impacts. It concludes with a description of the costs of the war to Iraqis and Americans.

Key Findings

1) The government uses the following public relations tactics to mask the true toll of the current U.S. wars:

- **Banning photographers** on U.S. military bases from covering the arrival of caskets containing the remains of U.S. soldiers killed overseas;
- **Paying Iraqi journalists** to write positive accounts of the U.S. war effort;

- **Inviting U.S. journalists to "embed"** with military units but requiring them to submit their stories for pre-publication review;
- **Erasing journalists' footage** of civilian deaths in Afghanistan; and
- **Refusing to disclose statistics** and information on civilian casualties.

2) The military has several policies and practices that boost death and destruction rates:

- **Immunity for contractors:** Former head of the Coalition Provisional Authority L. Paul Bremer gave security contractors a green light to act recklessly in 2004 when he declared all contractors immune from prosecution.
- **Impunity for top-level officials and decision-makers:** Only a handful of people have been charged with crimes related to the wars, and almost all who have are enlisted soldiers. Given the impunity enjoyed by those at the top, officers and civilian policymakers face less pressure to ensure that troops under their command behave in a professional and restrained manner on the battlefield.
- **Implementation of the “light footprint” policy:** In the initial phases of the invasion, the military decided to rely on heavy bombing to keep the number of troops on the ground as low as possible. This “light footprint” policy was a major factor in the uncontrolled and

widespread looting and violence that erupted during this period.

more than double the rate for the rest of the population.

- **Failure to distinguish between civilians and military targets:** U.S. troops have been directed to shoot indiscriminately at vehicles and people who act “suspiciously” around checkpoints and military convoys, resulting in numerous instances of innocent victims.

3) Costs:

- **Death toll:** As many as a million Iraqis have died as a result of the war. Thus far, the Pentagon has paid \$42.4 million in compensation or condolence payments to victims. If those funds had been distributed equally among more than a million victims, it would have come to \$41.05 per person.
- **Refugees:** Five-and-a-half years into the Iraq War, Iraqis are now the second-largest group of displaced people in the world, totaling more than five million citizens.
- **U.S. expenditures:** Instead of the expected \$60 billion predicted by supporters of the war before the invasion, more than \$650 billion has been spent in the past five years.
- **Deaths and injuries to U.S. troops:** In addition to the more than 37,000 dead or physically injured, an estimated 19% of all those who have served suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.
- **Suicides among U.S. troops:** The U.S. government does not track suicides among veterans, but a CBS investigation suggests that the suicide rate among veterans is

Collateral Damage: An Introduction

What do American officials call the bombing and killing of innocent civilians? “Collateral damage.” This seemingly neutral term obscures what is known about war, helping to ensure that operations behind collateral damage, especially those that may violate international or U.S. laws against war crimes, are very lightly investigated or not at all. For decades now, government public relations campaigns have used the phrase “collateral damage” with the aim of inducing thoughtlessness and passivity within the citizenry. The public relations campaigns that have accompanied the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have endeavored to induce this same response.

The American public has a difficult time discerning what is currently happening on the ground in Afghanistan and Iraq because of public relations campaigns waged by the U.S. government. Lack of coverage and analysis on the wars from mainstream news outlets create further challenges to comprehending the costs of fighting these wars. However, in the new age of the War on Terror, knowing the costs of such operations is of the utmost importance for the American public. The War on Terror has ushered in a period of open-ended, indefinite, and indeterminate war. In the name of pre-emptive self-defense, the Bush administration has justified its actions as essential to protect our national security. Understanding the costs of these policies in terms of destruction to life, property, and social systems as well as the monetary costs is critical, particularly for the younger generations that will bear the brunt of the economic and social consequences.

As this report documents, in Iraq and Afghanistan, environments of impunity are coupled with a lack of distinction between civilian populations and an enemy that U.S. officials believe must be destroyed. Consequently, almost anyone can be labeled as an enemy to

justify U.S. actions, regardless of the expense to the civilian populations.

Proportionate Self-Defense vs. Aggressive Action

Article 2(4) of the UN charter maintains a general prohibition on force and only considers its use acceptable as a means of legitimate self-defense in the event of an attack on a nation. In a paper for the American Society of International Law's Task Force on Terrorism, law professor Mary Ellen O'Connell writes that a nation may use force to repel an attack in progress, or to prevent future attacks following an initial attack.¹ In addition, the use of force as a means of self-defense must also be both necessary and proportional. This means there must be "convincing evidence not merely of threats and potential danger but of *an attack being actually mounted*" and any "possible civilian casualties must be weighed in the balance" so to not cause destruction to civilian life or property that is disproportionate to the objective of self-defense. Otherwise, the use of force, regardless of claims to self-defense, is viewed as an aggressive act.

Initial Numbers and Banned Weapons

The issue of proportionality of force during self-defense raises concerns about the U.S. response to the September 11 attacks. These attacks resulted in the deaths of 2,974 people. Yet in the first eight-and-a-half weeks of the Afghanistan War and six weeks of the Iraq War at least 10,406 civilians were killed.² This is more than three times the people killed in the September 11 attacks. Additionally the use of cluster bombs,^{*} napalm,^{**} and depleted

^{*} It is worth noting that in 2008 over 100 countries agreed to ban the use and production of cluster bombs because of the bomb's indiscriminate nature. Cluster bombs release hundreds of smaller explosive bomblets, many of which do not explode upon hitting the ground. The remaining bomblets, like land-

uranium^{***} (DU) in both Afghanistan and Iraq further suggest that civilian casualties were not weighed in the balance when the United States undertook the use of force.³

mines, kill and maim victims long after their original purpose has expired. Cluster bombs released over Afghanistan were the same color, yellow, as the emergency food packets that were airdropped for the starving populations residing within the bombed areas, causing untold deaths of people who mistook bombs for food.

^{**} In 1980, the UN banned the use of napalm, deeming it a weapon which was indiscriminate and excessively injurious; napalm ignites and sticks to structures and bodies killing initially through immolation and asphyxiation. Those who survive the initial effects suffer intensely painful and severe burns that eventually kill many of the victims. In Iraq the Pentagon initially denied using napalm, claiming the military had destroyed its last batch in 2001. U.S. officials were later forced to admit to using napalm after soldiers reported its use. Col. Randolph Alles, who commanded Marine Air Group 11, based at Miramar Marine Corps Air Station, told a reporter, "the generals love napalm. It has a big psychological effect." (San Diego Union-Tribune, August 5, 2003). Like the use of cluster bombs, the United States did not ratify the treaty ban on napalm and continued to develop and use the chemical.

^{***} DU (depleted uranium) munitions, whose use is considered illegal by the UN Sub Commission on Human Rights, were also used by the United States in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Once fired, DU does not stop after hitting the wall of a building like traditional rounds. Instead DU penetrates through many houses before slowing down, killing anyone along its path. This brutal fact makes the use of DU projectiles particularly dangerous to civilians when used in densely populated areas. Moreover, DU ignites into a radioactive aerosol burning at incredibly high temperatures while releasing the substance into the environment. This radioactive material can be absorbed into the bodies of inhabitants of the area, leading to adverse health problems and affecting the population years after the wars have ended. The Seattle Post-Intelligencer reported that highly populated areas where DU was used were, "contaminated with abnormally high levels of radiation." Some scientist, such as Dr. Rosie Bertell, president of the International Institute of Concern for Public Health and editor in chief of International Perspectives in Public Health, have claimed that DU exposure is consistent with Gulf War Syndrome.

A Once-Held American View on War and Reckless Endangerment

In the War on Terror, the ability to engage in military conflict has been simplified and streamlined under the guise of national security. Under the U.S. Constitution, the decision to carry out war is not to be taken lightly. As President Dwight D. Eisenhower, a five-star general and Supreme Commander of the Allied forces, stated,

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the clouds of war, it is humanity hanging on a cross of iron.⁴

War brings inescapable destruction, and for that reason resorting to violent engagement is restricted under international treaties and laws unless it is essential for a nation's self-defense. Even then, war must be carried out with intense effort to minimize its effects on innocent lives. Engaging in reckless, excessive, aggressive war carries the possibility of disadvantageous consequences and personal punishment, as leaders and commanders of the Axis powers during World War II and the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s found. Certainly future generations will also look at the U.S. actions during this period not only to judge, but also as a cautionary tale about war itself. Engaging in policies and actions that recklessly endanger civilian populations and destroy their well-being can quickly turn support into hatred, driving people to take up arms against the United States and any other nation or group thought to be assisting America. If aggressive U.S. acts multiply, the ability to justify military action will become more difficult and resistance against the slaughter of millions will rightly solidify around the world. Other nations will not look kindly at the kill-

ing of millions, particularly when justification for using violence is questionable and the proportion of destruction caused in response to the September 11 attacks greatly outweighs the destruction caused by those initial attacks.

In the course of the wars with Iraq and Afghanistan there have been numerous allegations of war crimes, including crimes against peace and crimes against humanity. At the Nuremberg trials U.S. chief counsel Justice Robert Jackson made it clear that the U.S. view was one that held the highest German officials responsible for war crimes and crimes against peace. Jackson said:

We must make clear to the Germans that the wrong for which their fallen leaders are on trial is not that they lost the war, but that they started it. And we must not allow ourselves to be drawn into a trial of the causes of the war, for our position is that no grievances or policies will justify resort to aggressive war. It is utterly renounced and condemned as an instrument of policy.⁵

Thus, Jackson intended to lay out a marker of responsibility that was later applied in the *Yamashita* case by the U.S. Supreme Court. Yamashita, a General of Japan's Imperial Army, was charged by the United States with "unlawfully disregarding and failing to discharge his duty as a commander to control the acts of members of his command by permitting them to commit war crimes."⁶ Beneath the idea of command responsibility lurks personal responsibility. Officials cannot defend themselves with claims of "superior orders" when they, or any reasonable person, would know that the actions taken would increase harm without concern for civilians. A policy of war in which the deaths and suffering of civilian populations are of no concern produce a practice and pattern of activities will tend to fall within the legal framework of crimes against peace and against humanity. To have no concern for a civilian population during war indicates a totalist view where all people of a country are seen as the enemy. Totalism, the state of unrestricted power of government, denies proportionality. The only mission is to destroy the enemy with no concern for restraint. For example, viewing the attacks on Fallujah (explained in more detail

later in the next section) within the totalist category is hardly a stretch and should be examined as a key model of U.S. recklessness and disproportional use of force against the ‘enemy’. As Justice Jackson said, “*If certain acts of violation of treaties are crimes, they are crimes whether the United States does them or whether Germany does them, and we are not prepared to lay down a rule of criminal conduct against others which we would not be willing to have invoked against us.*”⁷

A reasonable person would know that terrible harm would result from pursuing a strategy that could fall into the definition and legal framework for war crimes. When applied to war, reckless endangerment results in a strategy gone bad where intentions were hard to discern but the results, and therefore the implications, became obvious for the actors. Reckless endangerment has the following elements in law and must be evaluated in each case: (1) That the accused did engage in conduct; (2) That the conduct was wrongful and reckless or wanton; (3) That the conduct was likely to produce death or grievous bodily harm to another person; and (4) That, under the circumstances, the conduct of the accused was to the prejudice of good order and discipline in the armed forces or was of a nature to bring discredit upon the armed forces.⁸

Reckless conduct is conduct that exhibits a culpable disregard of foreseeable consequences to others from the act or omission involved. The accused need not intentionally cause a resulting harm or know that his conduct is substantially certain to cause that result. The ultimate question is whether, under all the circumstances, the accused’s conduct was of heedless nature causing imminent dangers to the rights or safety of others. It is within this context that the assaults on the Iraqi city of Fallujah can be evaluated. The extent of force used by U.S. military personnel is astounding and highlights the way that the United States has been engaging force in the War on Terror.

American Recklessness and Fallujah

Fallujah was one of the most stable areas of Iraq after the invasion and the arrival of U.S. soldiers was received peacefully. However, after the killing of 17 Iraqi civilians by U.S. forces during a nonviolent protest, and the news of the U.S. abuse, torture, sodomy, and killing of prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison in 2004, tensions quickly mounted within the city, causing violence to erupt. Eventually the city was taken siege and reinvaded twice by U.S. forces. Today the city is mostly ruined, with 60% of buildings damaged or destroyed and a population that is only 30%-50% the size it was before the U.S. siege.⁹

This was precipitated by the killing of four security personnel from Blackwater USA, a private contractor whose freewheeling mercenaries were “operating” in the city. Iraqis hung their dead bodies from a bridge on the outskirts of Fallujah. Top U.S. officials promised an “overwhelming” response to the killings that would “pacify the city.” The assault on Fallujah began on April 4. Marines, backed by air support, bombarded the city with mortars, bombs, missiles, and cannon rounds from gunships. Snipers were used heavily during the assault and were reportedly told to fire on anyone of military age, regardless of whether or not they were armed. Both *Al-Jazeera* and the Associated Press reported on the snipers as well as the use of cluster bombs in the highly populated city:

A spokesman for an Iraqi delegation from the violence-gripped city of Fallujah on Monday accused U.S. troops of using internationally banned cluster bombs against the city... Mohammed Tareq, a spokesman for the governing council of Fallujah and a member of the four-person delegation, said U.S. military snipers were also responsible for the deaths of many children, women and elderly people.¹⁰

The U.S. military destroyed the Nazzal Emergency Hospital in the center of town and occupied the Fallujah General Hospital, prohibiting doctors and ambulances access to the main part of the city to help the wounded — a direct violation of the Geneva Conven-

tions. The U.S. attacks took a heavy toll on civilians as well as insurgents, stimulating growing criticism from the Iraqi Governing Council, where one official stated, "these operations by the Americans are unacceptable and illegal."¹¹ On April 9, 2004, U.S. troops forced as many as 70,000 women, children, and elderly people to evacuate their homes in the city, although some remained (men were not included in this group and it was reported that any male between 15 and 45 trying to flee the city was turned away by the military).¹² In addition to the use of cluster bombs, the military also deployed the incendiary weapon white phosphorus. The Pentagon initially denied the use of white phosphorus, but later U.S. officials admitted that white phosphorus had been used in Fallujah, though only for "illumination," "screening" and "psychological" purposes.¹³ The U.S. government maintains its denial of white phosphorus use against civilians but has admitted to its use as an offensive weapon against enemy combatants. However, the Chemical Weapons Convention bans its use, whether or not it is only used on enemy combatants.

Under increasing pressure from the Iraqi government and international community, the United States handed operations over to the "Fallujah Brigade" in May 2004, resulting in an almost immediate return of control to insurgent forces. On November 7, 2004, U.S. forces again undertook the assault on Fallujah and the use of cluster bombs and white phosphorus was again deployed in an assault that lasted through December. And while 1,600 insurgent deaths were estimated in the two operations, 6,000 civilians were killed during the two assaults.¹⁴ Adding to the totalist nature of the assaults, a U.S. marine was filmed shooting and killing a unarmed and injured Iraqi captive, although a subsequent investigation by the military found the marine guilty of no wrongdoing as his actions were "consistent with the established rules of engagement and the law of armed conflict."¹⁵

The disproportionate number of civilian deaths alone shows how the assaults on Fallujah were imminently dangerous to the rights and safety of the population. Yet looking at the orders and actions taken during the U.S.

operations in Fallujah it is clear that U.S. forces engaged in the reckless endangerment of innocent Iraqis. Furthermore, the use of white phosphorus and cluster bombs in a highly populated city where it was certain to kill innocent people indicates that U.S. conduct was both reckless and wanton. Finally, the order to shoot any military-aged Iraqi, armed or not, as well as the shooting of captive, unarmed, and injured Iraqis is prejudicial to lawfulness and discipline within the armed forces; it disregards the U.S. responsibility to distinguish innocent civilians from real enemies. Combining these actions with the fact that U.S. forces cut off the city's utilities and denied access to medical services for all individuals within the city makes clear that the United States was more concerned with pacifying the city than the foreseeable consequences of such actions on the Iraqi citizenry.

The U.S. Rejection of Command Responsibility

The multiple accounts that asserted U.S. complacency and complicity in war crimes are dispiriting, especially since no high-ranking officials have been held accountable. Almost all soldiers charged with crimes are enlisted soldiers. Given the impunity enjoyed by those at the top, officers and civilian policymakers do not need to burden themselves with ensuring that troops under their command behave in a professional and restrained manner on the battlefield. Instead, they managed to get away with blaming the atrocities committed in Fallujah on a few bad apples operating of their own volition. In reality, this level of destruction can only be accounted for by policies and orders that were developed by high-level commanders and their civilian leadership.

Body Counts

Death in Afghanistan

The mainstream media rarely report on the high level of civilian casualties in Afghanistan. To date there has been only one comprehensive survey of civilian casualties in country. The *Dossier of Civilian Casualties in Afghanistan*, maintained by University of New Hampshire Professor Marc Herold, compiled reports from a multiplicity of verified and crosschecked international media sources. Herold estimates that as of June 20, 2008, some 7,309 Afghan civilians have been killed by U.S.-led forces.¹⁶ Herold records only “impact deaths,” which are defined as deaths caused at the immediate point of explosion or shooting. The figures leave out the injured that die later and therefore represent a *minimum* toll.*

The American public’s seeming lack of interest in the plight of the Afghan populace is not surprising considering that we have to rely on the efforts of a university professor for data on the impacts of a war funded by our taxpayer dollars on civilians in Afghanistan. The government and military get away with simply asserting that they are doing “all they can” to minimize civilian deaths. And of course this is hard to verify in the absence of any official body count. Indeed, in the age of smart and precision-guided bombs U.S. citizens have little reason to question actions or intentions when innocent Afghans are killed in sophisticated airstrikes. Of course the immense public relations campaigns undertaken by U.S. to blur the realities in Afghanistan aid

the public’s lack of interest, but that will be taken up later.

Death in Iraq

Several organizations have taken it upon themselves to study the effects of the current U.S. wars. This report looks at the estimates of four organizations: a media tally from the group Iraq Body Count (IBC); a report by the Iraq Ministry of Health done in partnership with the World Health Organization; a report by Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health working with the School of Medicine at Al Mustansiriya University in Baghdad, Iraq; and an estimate from the Opinion Research Business.

Iraq Body Count’s figures are not an estimate of civilian deaths. Rather, like Herold’s count for Afghanistan, IBC is an updated record of actual deaths which come from cross-checked English language media reports, hospitals, morgues, NGOs and any official figures. As of May 2008, IBC reported a total of 93,818 civilian deaths. Each death recorded by IBC is based on disaggregated data; that is to say, each death reported also has some form of data about the individual, allowing for replication and confirmation. What the IBC numbers show is the *irrefutable minimum* number of civilians who have been killed in Iraq since the invasion and subsequent occupation.

The numbers reported by IBC have been criticized for being too low, misleading people about the violence in Iraq. But IBC itself acknowledges that “many if not most civilian casualties will go unreported” because of the nature of war and of IBC’s reliance on media reports.¹⁷ Under-reporting aside, the death of 90,000 civilians is still shocking. In an attempt to illustrate how high the rates of violence in Iraq are, author and president of the Global Americana Institute, Juan Cole, makes comparisons between death rates in Iraq and vari-

* Though some U.S. officials have questioned these figures, the New York Times, BBC, and Guardian, among others, have cited Professor Herold’s estimates in various articles and reports. The figures are also the only set, according to Herold, which is based on disaggregated data. Each death reported also has some form of data about the individual, allowing for replication and confirmation.

ous other global conflicts that have occurred in recent history:

The Sri Lankan civil war between Sinhalese and Tamils has killed an average of 233 persons a month since 1983 and is considered one of the world's major ongoing trouble spots. That is half the average monthly casualties in Iraq recently. In 2007, the conflict in Afghanistan killed an average of 550 persons a month. That is about the rate recently according to official statistics for Iraq. The death rate in 2006-2007 in Somalia was probably about 300 a month, or about half this year's average monthly rate in Iraq. Does anybody think Afghanistan or Somalia is calm? Thirty years of North Ireland troubles left about 3,000 dead, a toll still racked up in Iraq every five months on average.¹⁸

Astonishingly, Juan Cole's comparisons use monthly casualties in Iraq that include time only after violence had dropped from its high in 2006 and 2007. Using IBC's death figures, deaths average 1,513 a month from the start of the war in March 2003 through May 2008.

In January 2008 the Iraqi Health Ministry and the World Health Organization (WHO) claimed that there had been 151,000 violent deaths in Iraq between March 2003 and June 2006.¹⁹ The Iraqi Health Survey (IHS) figures are an estimate based on responses given by a representative sample of families from various regions of Iraq.²⁰ The 151,000 deaths estimated by the IHS averages to 127 deaths a day and 46,355 per year as a result of violence. Given the population difference of Iraq and the United States, the IHS estimate would represent 499,049 violent deaths in the United States each year. This is three-and-a-half times as many deaths as those who die each year from strokes, the third leading cause of death in the U.S.²¹

These types of comparisons would probably surprise many Americans, but few reporters present the Iraqi death toll in context. Iraqi deaths are reported as numbers which are easily consumed and forgotten, with no further thought for the hundreds of thou-

sands of lost lives or what practices have led to such unintelligible numbers.

The figures reported by both IBC and IHS show the incredible loss of life that occurred as a direct result of actions conducted by U.S.-led forces in the Iraq War. However, neither organization tallies the lives lost to side-effects of the war. As previously stated, the effects of war are not limited to death and destruction caused directly from the attacks, firefights, and bombings that occur during warfare. Wars invariably have "unintentional" side effects which add to the destruction and misery that accompany combat. Of course these unintentional effects are anything but unintentional — when it is known that bombing campaigns on a defenseless nation will leave hundreds of thousands without access to food, shelter, medicine, clean water or electricity, they cannot be considered accidents.

Surveys conducted by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health studied the total effects of the U.S.-led war in Iraq through the end of June 2006. The report was not concerned exclusively with deaths caused directly by fighting, bombings, or airstrikes. Instead, the survey was concerned with determining the total excess number of deaths that had occurred as a result of the U.S.-led war. This included deaths caused directly by the conflict as well as deaths resulting from increased lawlessness, displacement, degraded infrastructure, poorer healthcare and limited access to basic utilities. The school compared the difference between postwar and prewar mortality rates, ascertained by surveying a representative sample of households, and estimated that from the middle of March 2003 through the end of June 2006 excess Iraq deaths totaled 654,965.²²

The Johns Hopkins study was not without its critics, many of whom were military commanders and their civilian leadership. President Bush responded that the report was simply "not credible" and called into question its methodology. However, many experts in the fields of statistics and polling defended the methodology;²³ John Zogby, who heads an international polling agency that has worked in Iraq, claimed, "The sampling is solid [and] the methodology is as good as it gets."²⁴

Frank Harrell Jr., chair of the biostatistics department at Vanderbilt University, deemed the design of the study to be solid, with a "rigorous, well-justified analysis of the data."²⁵ Other experts strongly defend the report and the validity of its findings, claiming, "this is the best estimate of mortality [in Iraq] we have."²⁶

What is most important about the Johns Hopkins study is that the deaths estimated are excess deaths; that is, deaths that occurred solely because of the war and its consequences. The total body-count estimate of 654,965 people is the equivalent of 2.5% of Iraq's population. These deaths occurred in just over a three-year period and since then the number of deaths has continued to rise. According to IBC, 2007 saw almost as many deaths as 2006, which was declared by the UN to be the most deadly and violent year during the occupation. These deaths would not have happened if the invasion had not been carried out. Those responsible for propagating false and misleading information, planning out the invasion, ordering the use of force, and executing the use of force to invade and occupy Iraq arguably are at fault for every excess death that has occurred in Iraq.

Fourteen months after the publication of the Johns Hopkins study, the Opinion Research Business (ORB) group published a survey on civilian deaths, also using data obtained by surveying a representative sample of Iraq's population. ORB estimated that 1,033,000 had died as a result of the Iraq War. The report was largely dismissed and received little coverage by press agencies, although there has been no explanation for why this is. The report is important not only because it is the most recent estimate of casualty figures, but also because its numbers help to legitimize the numbers estimated by the Johns Hopkins report. If these figures are correct, the deaths reported by ORB exceed the number that occurred during the Rwanda genocide of 1994.²⁷

Public Relations Campaigns

As in past wars, officials from the Pentagon, White House, and various other institutions constructed elaborate public relations campaigns to obscure the realities of what is taking place in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Hiding the Truth

The extensive public relations campaigns that have accompanied the Afghanistan and Iraq wars have been extremely effective in keeping damning facts about the wars from the American public. Pentagon officials held briefings to privileged military analysts from several prominent news networks, who then repeated White House talking points to generate favorable coverage of how the Bush administration was handling the war. Analysts who did not repeat the talking points were kept out of briefings.²⁸ The public relations campaigns banned photographers on U.S. military bases from covering the arrival of caskets containing the remains of U.S. soldiers killed overseas.²⁹ They paid Iraqi journalists to write favorable accounts of the U.S. war and planted articles written by anonymous American soldiers in Iraqi publications. Embedded journalists were required to submit their stories to the military for pre-publication review.³⁰ Officials erased journalists' footage of civilian deaths in Afghanistan and³¹ and refused to disclose statistics and information on civilian casualties.

This last effort was brought to light when the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) discovered in April of 2007 that the Department of Defense (DOD) did in fact have volumes of information detailing the impacts on civilians—despite White House and Pentagon officials' repeated assertions that they did not keep such information.

The disclosure was the result of the ACLU suing the DOD under the Freedom of Information Act to obtain files on military

programs that compensate civilians and the families of civilians who are injured, killed, or have property damaged or destroyed because of U.S. forces.

In order to receive money from the U.S. military, victims or their families had to fill out a detailed report of the events that harmed them, their family, or their property. For these grievances to be approved there had to be prior military reports on the incident or overwhelming evidence of U.S. involvement. To date only 496 claims have been released to the ACLU. Of these, the United States recognized and made payments on 164 of the claims. In about half of the 164 claims that resulted in payments the military accepted responsibility and made *compensation* payments. With the other half of paid claims the United States took no responsibility for but made *condolence* payments to show sympathy for the victim or their family. The Government Accounting Office reported in 2007 that condolence payments of up to \$2,500 could be made for each incident of death, injury, or property damage, although compensation payments tend to be higher. In the three years since 2005, \$42.4 million has been paid to Iraqis alone, indicating a large number of grievances that the U.S. military held information on and acknowledged.³²

Source	Body Count: Number of Iraqis killed (between dates)	Value of Life: Amount each victim's family would have received if the \$42.4 million in U.S. government compensation and condolence payments had been divided equally among all victims
Iraq Body Count	93,818 (March 03- May 08)	\$451.94
Iraq Health Survey	151,000 (March 03- June 06)	\$280.79
Johns Hopkins	654,965 (March 03- June 06)	\$64.74
Opinion Research Business	1,033,000 (March 03- August 07)	\$41.05

The Lies that Lead to Invasion

Five years after the U.S. invasion, the UN warned in November 2006 that Afghanistan, wracked by violence, crushing poverty and rampant illegal drug activities, was at serious risk of becoming a “failed state.”³³ How curious this was, for 40 years ago many believed Afghanistan was a model of cooperation between different groups.

As Americans, our responsibility is to judge the actions of our government. But we failed to judge our government appropriately after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. By October 11, 2001 President Bush said that formalities such as evidence and proof were not necessary. “There is no need to discuss innocence or guilt. We know he’s [Osama’s] guilty.”³⁴

The invasion of Afghanistan was premised on the belief that the Taliban had continued to provide a safe haven for bin Laden and his al-Qaeda operatives. As the U.S.-led campaign got underway, the Taliban announced that they would discuss handing bin Laden over to a third country if the United States

halted the bombing and provided evidence that bin Laden was behind the September 11 attacks. However, Bush refused, choosing instead to continue the campaign of airstrikes throughout Afghanistan, which killed and maimed not only members of the Taliban and al-Qaeda but also thousands of Afghan civilians.³⁵

In the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, the Bush administration asserted on multiple occasions that Saddam Hussein was developing weapons of mass destruction and had supported al-Qaeda. In February 2003, just a month before the invasion, Bush stated:

One of the greatest dangers we face is that weapons of mass destruction might be passed to terrorists who would not hesitate to use those weapons. Saddam Hussein has long-standing, direct and continuing ties to terrorist networks. Senior members of Iraq intelligence and al Qaeda have met at least eight times since the early 1990s. Iraq has sent bomb-making and document forgery experts to work with al Qaeda. Iraq has also provided al Qaeda with chemical and biological weapons training. And an al Qaeda operative was sent to Iraq several times in the late 1990s for help in acquiring poisons and gases. We also know

that Iraq is harboring a terrorist network headed by a senior al Qaeda terrorist planner.³⁶

This statement and more than 150 others made prior to the invasion are compiled in a Congressional Research Service report that lists 237 misleading or untrue statements on Iraq made by President George W. Bush, Vice President Richard Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Colin Powell, and then-National Security advisor Condoleezza Rice.³⁷ White House officials never acknowledged the problems intelligence organizations had with the credibility of the evidence used for many of the statements used to gain support for the war. . These people misled the American public, Congress and others throughout the world to support attacking a nation that did not pose any real or immediate threat to the United States.

Creating False Legitimacy

Many of the statements made to justify the invasions of both Afghanistan and Iraq were not only misleading but outright lies. The fact that thousands of innocent lives were destroyed because of invasions that were predicated on false statements and questionable evidence is unacceptable. Even the most ardent militarists maintain that the deaths of thousands must be justified by more than empty claims that it was in the interest of America's security, particularly when officials within our intelligence organizations found these threats based on flimsy or nonexistent evidence.

The fact that the invasions in both Iraq and Afghanistan were carried out under false pretenses calls to question the legitimacy of the invasions, the destruction that resulted as well as the deaths that resulted from the assaults on Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Light Footprint: Bombs and Violence

The large number of bombs used during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars was in part due to the “light footprint” policy that former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld envisioned during his tenure. “Light footprint” meant that the military would put as few U.S. troops on the ground as possible, relying instead on heavy bombings. This policy killed thousands and had considerable indirect consequences that complicated the initial phases of the Iraq War.

In Iraq, the “light footprint” policy has been blamed for the widespread violence and looting that erupted in the wake of the invasion. Many firearms and explosives used by the insurgency were obtained by looting munitions depots once controlled by Saddam’s forces. And although researchers from Human Rights Watch gave coalition forces the exact coordinates to many of these munitions depots, there were not enough coalition and U.S. troops to guard the depots. Hundreds of thousands of pounds of explosives, as well as countless weapons ranging from small arms to rocket-propelled grenades, were taken from the depots.³⁸ Insurgents used these weapons and explosives against American troops and Iraqi civilians, especially those showing friendship with Americans or collaborating and working with them. Pentagon planners thought it more important to guard the oil fields than the national archives, art treasures, or weapons depots.

The *New York Times* reported that many of the problems that accompanied the U.S.-led invasion, including the widespread looting, had been predicted in a State Department study.³⁹ Pentagon officials largely ignored the report until the consequences predicted had come to fruition. By that time the military had to try and catch up with the situation on the ground.

Although some improvements to infrastructure in Afghanistan have been made, the vast majority of the country exists without paved roads or basic access to food, health care, education and clean water. The decades of war that occurred prior to the U.S. invasion left many areas of Afghanistan littered with landmines, but more than six years after the United States entered the country, the UN estimates there are at least 700 square kilometers of land that contain mines, killing hundreds of people every year, most of whom are children.⁴⁰

Violence and Waste

AFGHANISTAN

Although the United States has been on the ground in Afghanistan almost a year and a half longer than it has been in Iraq, it has committed substantially less aid to that country, \$7 billion between 2001 and 2008 compared to \$26.4 billion between 2003 and 2008 for Iraq. Most of the aid given to Afghanistan has gone toward construction in and around Kabul, doing little to improve the lives of the majority of Afghans who live outside of the capital. Moreover, aid money supports high-priced American contractors, while large numbers of Afghans remain unemployed and cannot provide for themselves or their families. As Reuters reported in November 2007, “despite more than \$15 billion of aid pumped into Afghanistan since U.S.-led and Afghan forces toppled the Taliban in 2001, many Afghans still suffer levels of poverty rarely seen outside sub-Saharan Africa.”^{41*} In one case, the United States spent more than \$190 million constructing a road between the cities

* \$15 billion aid amount is the combined total of international aid given to Afghanistan.

Kandahar and Kabul, while the government of Afghanistan had estimated that Afghan construction teams could have done the work for \$35 million.

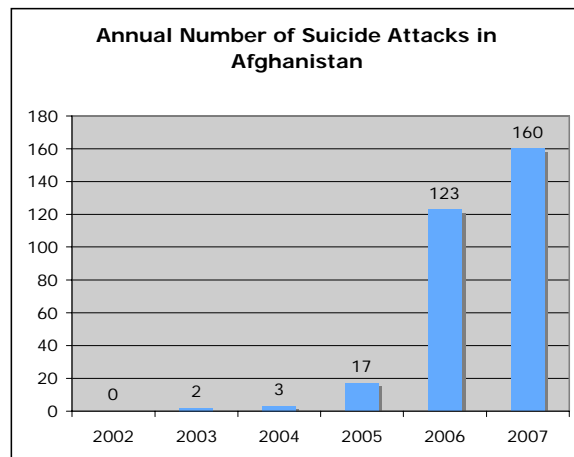
U.S. forces routinely undertake military operations that kill large numbers of civilians, sparking understandable rage among Afghans. One such incident occurred on the night of October 22, 2001. Human Rights Watch (HRW) reports that at around 11p.m. U.S. aircrafts began bombing the village of Chowkar-Karez. The bombing destroyed homes and caused the villagers to flee from the area. As the villagers were trying to escape from the horrific scene, the planes returned and began gunning down the fleeing villagers. This event reportedly lasted for about an hour and resulted in the deaths of 25-35 civilians. Villagers and Human Rights Watch insist that there were no Taliban, al-Qaeda, or any other “legitimate” targets in the area.⁴² The military has declined to explain the event except through unidentified personnel who claimed that Chowkar was a “fully legitimate target” because it contained Taliban and al-Qaeda sympathizers.⁴³ This claim begs the question: what qualifies individuals as sympathizers? One may pluck examples at random to make the same point.

Almost a year later, another startling incident involving U.S. aircraft resulted in 48 Afghan deaths and 117 injuries when a wedding celebration was attacked by a gunship. The military claimed that one of its planes had come under anti-aircraft fire from the group; this assertion was later repudiated in subsequent investigations.⁴⁴ Again U.S. military officials refused to apologize for the mistaken bombing. Astonishingly the U.S. military has carried out three other attacks on wedding ceremonies which resulted in high civilian casualties; all four cases were notable in that the events which unfolded as well as the explanation of flawed intelligence given by the U.S. military were similar. Even as recently as August 21, 2008 the UN reported that a U.S. military operation resulted in 90 civilians deaths, 60 of which were children.⁴⁵

Beginning in 2005, violence in Afghanistan began to escalate both in intensity and frequency. The UN reported more than 8,000

violent deaths in 2007, of which at least 1,500 were civilians.⁴⁶ Reckless U.S. operations against the Taliban have resulted in an outcry from both Afghan civilians and government officials. Afghanistan’s president, Hamid Karzai has repeatedly demanded that coalition forces take more precautions in preserving civilian lives, saying, “our innocent people are becoming victims of careless operations of NATO and International forces...Afghan life is not cheap and it should not be treated as such.”⁴⁷

In response to demands from civilians and international organizations, there have been investigations into at least some of the reported incidents of U.S. excessive force. For example, on March 4, 2007, U.S. Marines indiscriminately opened fire on civilians after their convoy was hit by a suicide bomber. U.S. forces did not distinguish civilians from an enemy, killing 16 civilians and wounding another 24.⁴⁸ The Shinwar Massacre, as it was called, resulted in a 120-member Marine unit being forced to redeploy out of the country because of the hostilities generated by the incident.



[Source: U.S. Department of State]

Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Human Rights Council Philip Alston reported in 2008 on the disturbing reality of extrajudicial killings of civilians with no connections to the Taliban, saying that foreign forces in Afghanistan were operating with impunity. He also cited two American-run military bases

from which foreign and Afghan forces were conducting raids that resulted in civilian killings and for which no one took responsibility.

* These incidents suggest that military and intelligence personnel in Afghanistan are at times operating completely outside of the law, accountable to no one, without worry of recourse. And yet there is a paradox because actions are authorized directly from the White House, as in the case of sadistic torture techniques that have as their purpose intimidation and dehumanizing the captured, who may or may not be guilty of anything.

Innocent civilians from both Afghanistan and Iraq have been subjected to detention at the hands of the United States. Detainees and prisoners were held in different parts of the world on American bases, on prison ships, or in Guantanamo Bay. The detailed abuses at these sites include water-boarding, repeated beatings, and other forms of torture. Retired Army General Antonio Taguba, who investigated the treatment of prisoners that occurred in Abu Ghraib and found widespread negligence and abuse, wrote in June 2008 that “there is no longer any doubt as to whether the current administration has committed war crimes. The only question is whether those who ordered the use of torture will be held to account.”⁴⁹

Like collateral damage, abducting and holding thousands of prisoners who are innocent falls within the category of “in war mistakes will happen.” Some former soldiers who have worked in the prisons that hold prisoners from Afghanistan, Iraq and the larger War on Terror believe that no more than 1% of the more than 90,000 prisoners were guilty of any crime.⁵⁰ Thousands are held by the United States and other allies in a war without end.

IRAQ

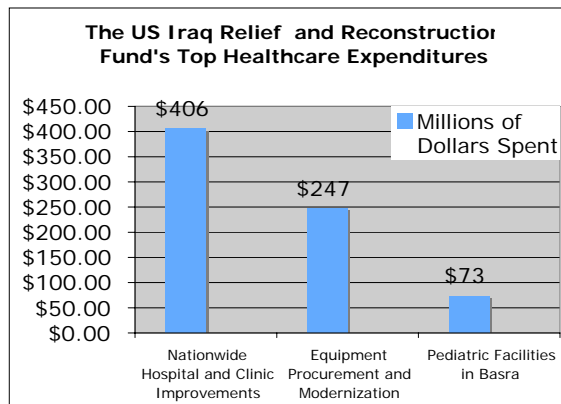
Unlike Afghanistan, Iraqis enjoyed one of the highest standards of living in the Middle East, even under Saddam Hussein’s rule. In interviews conducted by *The Nation*, Army Lieutenant Van Engelen, who had served in Iraq, talked about how a large majority of Iraqis had access to most basic utilities such as electricity, gas, and water before the U.S. invasion, but when U.S. operations got underway “basically, all of that was stripped from them”.⁵¹ Five-and-a-half years into the war, Iraqis still face a lack of access to utilities and services.

Violence and looting have devastated Iraq’s basic utilities such as electricity, water and sewage. The confluence of this damage creates a feedback loop, where the damage to one utility exacerbates the problems caused by the damage to another utility. Intermittent or nonexistent electricity makes it difficult to decontaminate water through boiling. As of July 2008 the electric generation averaged just 11.3 hours a day, one of the highest averages since the invasion.⁵² Contaminated water and non-functioning sewer systems combine to create environments ripe for diseases such as pneumonia and epidemic levels of diarrhea. Children are the most severely affected by this situation; Save the Children reported that in 2005, 122,000 Iraqi children died before their fifth birthday. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported that in 2007 many Iraqis continued to rely on unsafe water supplies, inviting cholera and salmonella, because treatment plants are still not functioning. Those who can afford clean drinking water are forced to pay excessive prices because of the severe lack of supply. At the same time the sewage systems are so deteriorated that there is an overall lack of sanitation, and risks of contamination to existing water supplies by sewage is high.⁵³ These factors came together in 2007 when a massive outbreak of cholera occurred, affecting more than 30,000 people in over 29 districts throughout Iraq. These conditions count as collateral damage.

The lack of utilities and supplies, along with an environment where the demand for health services far exceed what can be provided, create a dire situation for Iraq’s health

* Mr. Alston could only say that forces operating out of the two U.S.-run bases were foreign forces because of the refusal by those operating from the bases to take responsibility for their actions.

systems. During the invasion in 2003, almost all hospitals in Iraq were looted of supplies and equipment, and the lack of security that has existed since the invasion has resulted in the continued looting of hospitals. Much of the population has no access to any form of healthcare, even in cases of medical emergencies, and most Iraqi hospitals are unable to provide services for increasingly common severe trauma cases because of the high violence levels. Private hospitals exist, but for most Iraqis the cost of services at these institutions excludes them from service. In this situation, the U.S. military provides services for almost every major injury for all Iraqis, soldier and civilian alike. However, because of the high demand for services, the military only holds patients for a few days before they are transferred to an Iraqi hospital. *Discovery Magazine* reported in late August 2007 that because of the condition of Iraq's public hospitals, a number of patients who are transferred from military care would not survive — another case of collateral damage.⁵⁴



Masking of the Intentional and Reckless

There are now almost as many contractors in Iraq as there are U.S. military personnel, which number around 190,000.⁵⁵ The invasive presence of contractors fuels discontent with the occupation as unemployment runs as high as 40% and Iraqis see well-paid contractors daily who do seemingly little to reconstruct the country.⁵⁶ The lack of security

and high levels of violence in Iraq further inflate the already hefty price of contractors. Companies add as much as 25% to their cost estimates to pay for security to protect their employees working in Iraq.

Former head of the Coalition Provisional Authority L. Paul Bremer gave security contractors a green light to act recklessly in 2004 when he declared all contractors immune from prosecution. In late 2007 the UN reported that security contractors were killing Iraqi civilians indiscriminately.⁵⁷ The use of force by contractors has become so rampant the UN has demanded that security firms control the actions of their employees and has threatened to charge contractors with crimes against humanity and war crimes for the murder of civilians. The use of force against civilians by security contractors has infuriated Iraqis and fueled tensions between the population and occupying forces. In one instance of unprovoked force, contractors working for Blackwater USA opened fire and killed 17 civilians. *Al Jazeera* quoted a UN official as saying "international humanitarian rights law applies to them [contractors] as well."⁵⁸ None of the crimes committed by security contractors, however, has been prosecuted by the U.S., suggesting that U.S. authorities feel Americans are above the law in Iraq.

While the conduct of contractors in Iraq adds to the opposition felt towards the occupation, U.S. forces on the ground have also added to Iraqis' negative feelings because many U.S. operations are conducted with a lack of regard for Iraqi property and life. During convoy missions, U.S. forces drive at extremely high speeds to avoid the chance of being hit by improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The drivers of the convoys crash into any person, car or other object that gets in their way. Soldiers are ordered not to stop unless absolutely necessary, and pedestrians who step in front of convoys are not deemed to be a necessary or reasonable cause for stopping or even slowing down. Soldiers are directed to shoot at any vehicle that comes too close to convoys.⁵⁹

Unfortunately, the rules of engagement for firing on people or vehicles are often not well explained and the shootings are almost

never investigated. This has resulted in troops engaging in reckless use of force, knowing that there is little chance of consequences for their actions. Pulitzer Prize-winning author Chris Hedges and journalist Laila al-Arian claim that soldiers in convoys are so tense they often fire on any vehicle or person that make them feel uneasy and then plant a weapon on civilian victims, on the off-chance that there is actually an investigation.⁶⁰ Innocent victims who survive and have had a weapon planted on them are taken to a detention center, where they are held indefinitely and face possible abuse or torture.

Checkpoints set up and manned by U.S. forces have also resulted in numerous Iraqis being shot at or killed while driving in their car. Checkpoints are put up and taken down in a short period of time and because of this many Iraqis do not know when checkpoints have been erected. It is common for unaware motorists, particularly at nighttime, to come upon a newly placed checkpoint and not be able to slow down in time. Cars approaching checkpoints that do not show signs of slowing are fired upon.

Collateral Damage: Refugee Flight

Violence that has occurred in Iraq and Afghanistan has not only affected people through the deaths, injuries, and destruction of property, violence has also displaced millions of people. Refugee displacement is part of the collateral damage of war. The plight of refugees has received a limited amount of coverage in the United States but more attention should be paid to the situation as the number of people affected by displacement is truly astounding.

Since 2002 almost all of the one million Afghans displaced after September 11, 2001 have been voluntarily repatriated with assistance from the United Nations High Commission on Refugees. Yet violence, drought, and hunger kept at least 153,000 displaced by the end of 2007, according to the UN.⁶¹ As violence continues to climb in 2008 this number is likely to increase. The United States has now begun military operations and bombings across the border of Afghanistan in sovereign Pakistan, displacing more people and violating international law.

Violence has made the existence of displaced Afghans more difficult. Franz Rautenstein, deputy head of the ICRC delegation in Afghanistan, explains that because of the violence "It's difficult to assist those who have been displaced. We have less access to them now than at any time during the past 20 years, and that's both worrisome and frustrating."⁶² USAID, the U.S. body providing aid assistance to Afghanistan, does not have a budget to help internally displaced people in 2008, and only had a supplemental budget of \$16 million to help displaced people in and around Kabul.⁶³ Kabul is located in the East of Afghanistan and the vast majority of displaced people are located in the South. The fact that over 150,000 displaced people exist in Afghanistan and the U.S. government has not allocated funds to help them again shows what little value the U.S. government places on Afghan lives. The lack of commitment to

the Afghan people is presented in a report by the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief which shows that the United States has disbursed only half of the money it committed to Afghanistan from 2002-2008, while displaced Afghans constitute the group of displaced peoples third-most in need of aid.⁶⁴

The intense levels of violence that have occurred in Iraq have created massive displacement. Five-and-a-half years into the Iraq War, Iraqis are now the third-largest group of displaced people in the world and the group most in need of aid.⁶⁵ In total almost five million Iraqis have been displaced, with two million of those displaced living outside the country.⁶⁶ Most of the displacement has occurred in the last two years, stretching the already limited resources of international aid agencies.

In certain instances, as noted in Fallujah, more than one hundred thousand people fled a single city, knowing their lives were at great risk as long as they remained in their homes. The lack of mainstream news stories that have exposed Iraqi displacement speaks volumes to the effectiveness of the public relations campaigns and the shallow reporting that blanket all consequences of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as collateral damage, that paper-thin justifier of so much and virtually nothing

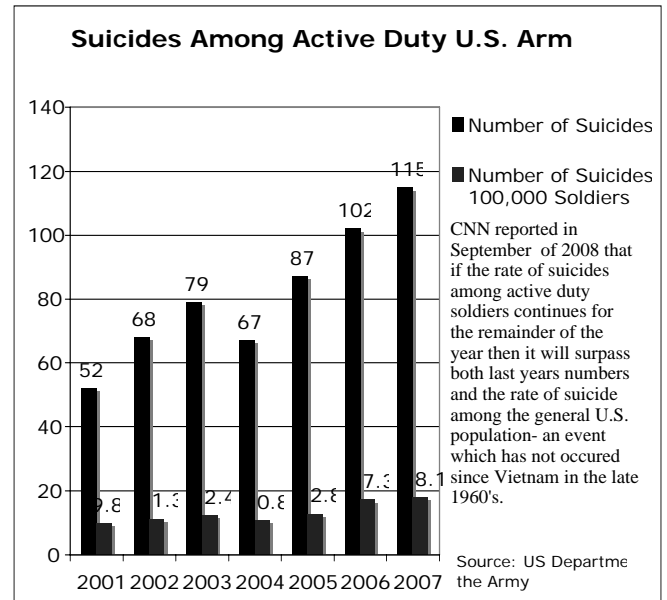
The Burden of War: Cost to the US

Before concluding this report, it is important to consider the human and financial toll on American personnel as a result of the illegal wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

U.S. Personnel Costs

To date, there have been at least 4,669 military deaths and 32,692 injuries in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁶⁷ The bulk of deaths and injuries have occurred in Iraq, where there have been 4,116 confirmed U.S. military deaths and 30,435 injuries as of July 19, 2008.⁶⁸ There have also been at least 172 American contractor deaths but this number is not complete as contractor deaths do not need to be reported to the public like deaths within the military. In Afghanistan there have been at least 553 military deaths and 2,257 injuries. The military pays out \$500,000 for each death that occurs and disability pay to those service members permanently disabled by their injuries.

A new report by the RAND Corporation, a global policy think tank, shows that in addition to the visible physical injuries that have befallen U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. troops face vast psychological and hidden physical costs. RAND estimates that about 19% of the over 1.6 million military service members that have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, about 300,000 in all, have symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or major depression. Another 320,000 suffer from traumatic brain injuries. Because the number of veterans suffering from PTSD and depression are so large, Veterans Affairs hospitals and other mental health facilities are only able to take about half of those seeking treatment.⁶⁹ RAND assessed that the social cost of these conditions over just a two-year period are between \$4 billion and \$6.2 billion for PTSD and depression, with another \$32,000-\$408,000 to treat each brain injury case, depending on the severity.



The emergence of large numbers of service members suffering from PTSD and major depression has also led to an increase in suicides and suicide attempts within the military. In 2008 CNN reported there were 115 suicides within the Army alone; in 2006 there were 102 suicides.⁷⁰ These numbers are deceiving, as they only include the number of active-duty Army personnel who committed suicide, not those who have committed suicide after being discharged from serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. No government agencies track suicides among veterans, but a 2005 CBS News investigation indicates that veterans were more than twice as likely as non-vets to commit suicide.⁷¹

Financial Costs

The cost associated with the injuries to U.S. forces shows how expensive and harmful the wars have been to America. This contradicts the statements made in the lead-up to the wars, when the Bush administration reas-

sured the public that the war would be relatively “inexpensive.” Estimates ranged from \$50 billion to \$60 billion dollars, not all of which would be financed by the American public. The plan was for the revenue from Iraq's oil reserves to pay for much of the cost of the war and subsequent Iraqi reconstruction. Some even speculated that the United States could benefit from the war not only by toppling the Saddam regime and thereby making America more secure, but by gaining increased oil supply from Iraq while remaking the Middle East by adding a large number of U.S. military bases to ensure American hegemony in the area and guaranteeing a reliable flow of oil.

These estimates were completely off-base. Instead of \$60 billion, the United States spent over \$650 billion on the war in five years. A 2006 congressional analysis showed that the Iraq War was costing America almost \$2 billion a week.⁷² Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz and Harvard economist Linda Bilmes put the cost of the war around \$3 trillion, but they claim that those estimates were based on relatively conservative assessments, and the cost is now probably closer to \$4 trillion. This means that the Iraq War is the second-most costly war in U.S. history.

Supporting this estimate, Congressional Budget Office Director Peter Orszag said in testimony before the House Budget Committee that he estimated the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will cost \$2.4 trillion over the next ten years.⁷³ This⁷⁴ amounts to approximately \$21,500 for each American household.

The expected oil revenues have not materialized, while the weapons of mass destruction, which were the original justification for the war, vanished. Even the purported benefit of having strategic U.S. bases in the Middle East lacks popular political support in the United States. A majority of Americans support a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq and over 70% of Iraqis oppose a permanent U.S. presence in their country. American moral authority has gone into debt; the wars caused creating worldwide unease and anger towards U.S. leadership.

Conclusion

Collateral damage is used as a term to make the horrors of war more palatable to the U.S. public, allowing our nation to take on warfare with more ease. In Vietnam, U.S. officials learned that with the advent of new technologies such as television, the horrors of war were more easily transmitted to Americans. Learning from this, U.S. officials have steadily increased their control of information and access that news agencies and reporters in the U.S. have in combat. Since Vietnam there have been at least nine major military operations that the U.S. has been involved in, as well as dozens of covert missions and small interventions. It has continued to refine methods to control and manipulate unsettling information. The effectiveness of these methods is now seen in the multifaceted public relations campaigns of U.S. military and government officials. Controlling the number of major sources that have independent access to events during wartime means that U.S. officials' statements and accounts of events become more difficult to dispute, as the government paints any dissenting or contradictory voice as sympathetic to the enemy, not to be trusted. Yet it is important to remember that much of the world does not get their news from the same sources as Americans and while U.S. officials may have spent the last decades learning how to control the news and information that Americans receive, this is a much more difficult task to accomplish for the rest of the world. As a result, people around the world have an unfiltered view of the actions and consequences of the U.S. campaign against terrorism. The U.S., as a result, is further isolated, no longer a safe haven but a menacing superpower committed to permanent war.

Collateral damage will have a blow-back effect; that is, it will make missions, whether military, humanitarian, or diplomatic, harder to achieve. This also has an immediate effect of exposing U.S. forces and institutions to greater danger. What may have once been a

willingness to cooperate transforms into a hatred that propels people to take up arms against U.S. forces, as they are seen as bringing nothing more than death and destruction.

U.S. officials need to once again take up the ideal of command responsibility and no longer allow reckless operations that take the lives of countless civilians. Those who order and command such operations must be held accountable for their actions and be prosecuted or court marshaled. New agencies of government, secret or otherwise, must also stop their complicity and report on the true levels of death and destruction that have accompanied the U.S. war on Terror. Finally, the American public must also take on the responsibility of educating themselves, seeking out independent and non-American news sources as cross-references. With this knowledge, Americans can demand a stop to the policies that have led to the horrific occurrences in Iraq and Afghanistan.

If current trends continue, the result will be continued infrastructural decay in the United States. Congress should authorize and urge the establishment of a presidential office charged with the responsibility of closing all bases that are used and for torture purposes. Torture should be declared a criminal offense under U.S. law.

Congress should urge continued talks towards the abolition of nuclear weapons as one means of regaining the initiative on proliferation. It cannot do so unless it is prepared to negotiate in good-faith radical cutbacks of nuclear weapons and missiles. The negotiations will begin in 2009 and 2010 under the NPT and the Start talks.

The U.S. is on the road to having troops in Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Philippines, and the Sahara, as well as long-standing armed forces in Europe. These forces are very expensive, especially when added to new costs for expanded warfare in Afghanistan and new weapons systems. These wars are destroying the infrastructure of the U.S., now in desper-

ate need of funds to rebuild highways, harbors, schools, medical facilities, treatment for wounded veterans, and aid for military families. This means that Congress must redirect war and defense expenditures for public repairs and personal savings. It controls the power of the purse and must now use this power responsibly.

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