

The Trial of Saddam

by Paul Wolf, 21 December 2003



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The Trial of Saddam

Brought to you by CMM (Corporate Mindless Media)
The Black Commentator, 18 December 2003

The Bush men are headed for a potentially huge debacle as pressures mount for a trial of Saddam Hussein. In the now familiar pattern of frenzied dysfunction, the administration constructs a wall of propaganda to frame a Disneyland of simultaneously false and contradictory premises, spinning wildly from one solemnly stated intention to another. The President speaks as if there is nothing that he wants more than a speedy and open trial of the demonized captive, yet that is precisely the last thing that the American occupiers of Iraq

should wish for. The show trial that White House spin master Karl Rove envisions as an electrifying election year demonstration of the rightness of America's "mission" in Iraq cannot possibly be made to conform to the facts as they exist.

The stage is being set for madness, in full view of the planet. In his zeal to cheer an ignorant American audience, Bush has promised Iraqis and the international community something he cannot deliver: a forum that allows Iraqis to present evidence and testimony on Saddam Hussein's crimes as they perceive them, and that also garners some degree of international legitimacy. The Trial of the Century must somehow be pulled off in the absence of Iraqi sovereignty, and without exacerbating Iraqi frustration with that status. At the same time, interested international parties are expected to refrain from offering facts that contradict the solitary U.S. version of Middle East history, or to tamper with American prerogatives. Such stage-management in a foreign land is far beyond the capacities of the Bush men -- as we have witnessed every day since the fall of Baghdad.

Irreconcilable promises

Even the President at times appears to sense the contradictions, yet he cannot escape them and reflexively opts for the sound bite, talking himself more tightly into his straightjacket. First, Bush frames the trial as primarily an Iraqi affair: "They were the people that was brutalized by this man: He murdered them; he gassed them, he tortured them." Yet in the next breath, Bush backs away from a trial by the appointed Iraqi Governing Council's new special criminal tribunal, promising only to "work with Iraqis to develop a way to try him that will withstand international scrutiny."

With that attempt at clarification, Bush seemed to brush aside his "own" Iraqis while giving the merest nod to the United Nations and a host of watchdog organizations concerned with issues of law and sovereignty.

Saddam Hussein will be "accorded the protections" of a prisoner of war, says Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. However, there is no legal basis for handing over for trial an American prisoner of war to an agency of a non-sovereign country -- Iraq. And the dominant factions within the administration are determined to resist the encroachment of international authority, even as marginal voices mumble about consultations and other nonsense.

Indeed, it is clear that, less than a week after Saddam Hussein's capture, the administration is attempting to run on two separate policy tracks, one that assures the Iraqis they will very soon have the head of the dictator, while the other speaks of six months before a trial, coinciding with the highly problematic handover of sovereignty to Iraqis. As should be expected, there is no serious consideration among the real powers in the administration for a substantial UN role in Hussein's fate.

Thus, the Bush men have raised everyone's expectations, but are prepared to satisfy none of them. It is as if, as thousands of troops scoured the countryside all these months searching for Saddam, there was no plan for what to do when they caught him. Karl Rove's domestic policy brain may not know it, but his colleagues have stumbled into another crisis in the making.

Ephemeral options

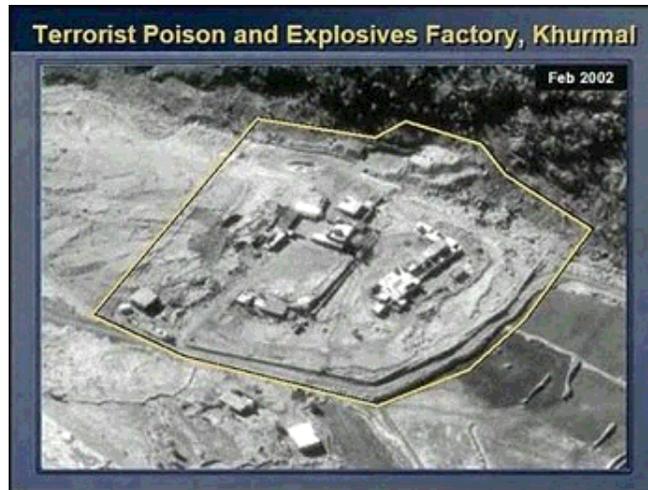
The corporate media repeat each conflicting statement from different corners of the administration, and from different corners of the same officials' mouths, all the while pretending that a coherent plan is evolving for the Trial of the Century. For example, a December 17 Associated Press headline proclaims "Options Emerge Around Saddam Trial Issue." However, the text reveals that every option is at war with the other. The U.S. has "gone along with the Iraqi plan that Saddam's trial should be conducted by a special Iraqi tribunal that was set up just days before Saddam's capture last weekend," the AP reports. But it soon becomes clear that no one is actually speaking for "the U.S." The Iraqis insist that their timetable is measured in weeks, and they are adamant that death is the penalty on conviction. In terms of international collaboration, "that could rule out all of Europe" said a former State Department official. No role for Europe means none for the UN. "There is no question that [the trial] has to be fair, it has to be transparent and it has to stand up to international scrutiny," said Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, Colin Powell's right hand man. He's talking about a six-month schedule, for the benefit of an international audience that cannot participate under terms that will suit Rumsfeld's Iraqis.

If there ever is a "fair" and "transparent" trial of Saddam Hussein, it will be impossible to suppress evidence that the U.S. was a co-conspirator in his crimes from the days of Saddam's youth right up to the moment his army crossed the border into Kuwait, in 1990. Iraqi communists, who are represented in the appointed "government," could not fail to testify that the Baathists' first mission in their rise to power in the Sixties was to butcher hundreds of Communist Party members on lists supplied them by their financiers at the CIA. Iraqis anticipate a trial that remembers the martyrs, many of them victims equally of the U.S. and Hussein. Like Panama's Manuel Noriega, another demonized dictator captured by American troops after the invasion of his country, Saddam's career is inseparable from the Americans.

It is difficult to imagine that the administration would allow such a productive proceeding to occur. However, events since Saddam's capture last Saturday confirm that the Bush men are incapable of escaping, or even recognizing, the trap they have set for themselves, one that is likely to accelerate the dissolution of their fragile arrangements with the Iraqi appointees, and seems certain to further alienate world opinion.

Corporate media are no more capable than the Bush men of comprehending the dangers of treating Saddam Hussein like a domestic campaign prop -- it's all bells, whistles and logos to the vacant, talking heads.

Bush and his handlers see a great prize in the caged Saddam Hussein. In fact, their captive may be booby-trapped to explode in their blind, dumb faces.



Saddam Hussein's Capture: The Bush administration's desperate propaganda end-run and retroactive fix

by Larry Chin, *Online Journal*, 18 December 2003

Saddam Hussein's capture is a spectacular and carefully-timed post-9/11 propaganda event that distracts public attention from the stark and inescapable fact that the Bush administration's invasion of Iraq was illegal and based on false evidence, fabricated pretexts and a multitude of lies. It masks the reality that the US occupation and Iraqi puppet regime is illegitimate, and that the administration's activities leading up to, during, and after the Iraq invasion have been crimes of unprecedented magnitude.

It is, in fact, the ample documentation and reporting of these crimes, and the mounting criticism of an exposed and cornered Bush administration, that this new propaganda campaign is designed to deflect, and obliterate.

The spinning of this latest event is part of a long series of Bush administration red herrings, part and parcel of the fabricated "war on terrorism," which is itself built upon elaborate fabrications, and deceptions about al Qaeda, the CIA and affiliated US intelligence proxies, and a continuing coverup of September 11 (also check here and here), and the "infinite" global war being waged on the 9/11 pretext.

Saddam's capture has no relevance to the fact that the Iraq invasion was illegal, conducted based on fabricated evidence and lies carefully sold to the public. It does not change the fact that there have been no weapons of mass destruction, the absence of them a virtual certainty, even according to UN weapons inspector Hans Blix.

It does not change the fact that the war has never been about Saddam Hussein, but "Saddam pretexts." It has been about long-planned US geostrategic imperatives, most notably the capture of Iraqi oil (approximately 11 percent of world oil), and the clearly-stated official policy directive calling for the protection of "*the United States' vital interest in the region -- uninterrupted, secure US/Allied access to Gulf oil*", in preparation for Peak Oil, the nightmarish reality of energy depletion that has been confirmed by *CNN*, former British

environment minister Michael Meacher, Bush administration insiders and a growing number of analysts, such as George Monbiot.

It does not change the fact that numerous recent Iraq-related crimes, from the dubious suicide of British Ministry of Defense bioweapons expert David Kelly, the dirty tricks campaign against Ambassador Joseph Wilson and the criminal outing of CIA operative Valerie Plame Wilson, and the mysterious death of the State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research Near East and South Asian division's (INR/NESA) John Kokal, lead directly to the White House.

It does not change the fact that Saddam Hussein is a former US ally and CIA asset who has the goods on his former allies and partners, including George H.W. Bush. Declassified documents confirm the long and close relationship between Saddam Hussein and the United States. Reports of less-than-savory dealings between Saddam, Donald Rumsfeld and other US officials have also been amply documented.

It does not change the well-documented fact that the Bush administration was hellbent on invasion, without regard to the rule of law. A November 6, 2003, *New York Times* article ("Iraq Said to Have Tried to Reach Last-Minute Deal to Avert War" by James Risen) underscores this fact:

"As American soldiers massed on the Iraqi border in March and diplomats argued about war, an influential adviser to the Pentagon received a secret message from a Lebanese-American businessman: Saddam Hussein wanted to make a deal.

"Iraqi officials, including the chief of the Iraqi Intelligence Service, had told the businessman that they wanted Washington to know that Iraq no longer had weapons of mass destruction, and they offered to allow American troops and experts to conduct a search.

"The businessman said in an interview that the Iraqis also offered to hand over a man accused of being involved in the World Trade Center bombing in 1993 who was being held in Baghdad. At one point, he said, the Iraqis pledged to hold elections.

"The messages from Baghdad, first relayed in February to an analyst in the office of Douglas J. Feith, the under secretary of defense for policy and planning, were part of an attempt by Iraqi intelligence officers to open last-ditch negotiations with the Bush administration through a clandestine communications channel, according to people involved.

"The efforts were portrayed by Iraqi officials as having the approval of President Saddam Hussein, according to interviews and documents.

"The overtures, after a decade of evasions and deceptions by Iraq, were ultimately rebuffed."

Saddam's capture also does not answer questions about how the "fall of Baghdad" actually occurred, how and why Iraq was suddenly surrendered, why the Iraqi military stopped fighting (after three weeks in which the US and its "mightiest military on earth" was pinned down by stiff Iraqi resistance). (These and other details about the Iraq operation have been analyzed by retired US Army Special Forces Master Sergeant Stan Goff.)

Nor does it address the possibility that Saddam Hussein was initially spirited away as the result of a secret deal struck by the Bush administration, immediately after National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice's trip to Moscow. Recall that Vladimir Putin, who had condemned

the war in Iraq when it was launched, stated, "*A US defeat would not be in Russia's interests.*" According to a report from *Al-Jazeera*, Saddam was seeking asylum with Russia. Indeed, the timing of the Saddam capture, in the wake of US-Russian tensions regarding Iraq debt, reconstruction and oil, should raise questions about Russia's behavior throughout the US invasion.

There is, however, one way in which the capture could be made relevant: that is if Saddam Hussein -- or the image of Saddam that the world will experience over carefully controlled media -- is forced to "sing" and issue "admissions" favorable to the Bush agenda. These may include "new revelations" and "new evidence" that will retroactively and fraudulently justify the Bush administration's war -- silencing antiwar opposition and paving the propaganda path for George W. Bush's election.

At a December 16 press conference, the sadistic Donald Rumsfeld, whose cozy relationship with Saddam has been captured in photographs by the National Security Archive, gleefully announced that the CIA is in charge of Saddam Hussein's imprisonment, and "may well" be in charge of his interrogation. Recent reports suggest that torture has already begun. Larry Johnson, former deputy director of the State Department's Office of Counterterrorism said, "We're not going to torture the guy, but you don't have to use physical pressure. The type of pressure you can use is keeping someone in a lead cell all the time with constant noise and limiting his sleep and what he eats."

There are, of course, a host of questions regarding the Saddam capture itself, which is no different from other questionable post-9/11 arrests of "villains" such as Khalid Shiekh Mohammed, highly dubious arrests, raids conducted by post-9/11 intelligence agencies, and the myths created in the wake of these actions, and the frequently resurfacing tapes of former (and possibly still) US intelligence asset/legend/myth Osama bin Laden. What really happened, and when? What is authentic, and what has been manufactured? In the post-9/11 world of official secrecy and deception, these questions will likely never be answered (or even asked).

Questions about the timing of the event, and the political spin, have been raised by Congressman Jim McDermott, who told a Seattle radio station on Monday, December 15, that the U.S. military could have found Saddam "a long time ago if they wanted:"

Asked if he thought the weekend capture was timed to help Bush, McDermott chuckled and said: "Yeah. Oh, yeah."

The Democratic congressman went on to say, "There's too much by happenstance for it to be just a coincidental thing."

When interviewer Dave Ross asked again if he meant to imply the Bush administration timed the capture for political reasons, McDermott said: "I don't know that it was definitely planned on this weekend, but I know they've been in contact with people all along who knew basically where he was. It was just a matter of time till they'd find him."

"It's funny, McDermott added, "when they're having all this trouble, suddenly they have to roll out something."

There is no doubt that a Saddam show trial aids a George W. Bush presidency that has come under increasing fire and watching its public approval drop like a stone.

The capture deflects attention from fierce and continuing Iraqi resistance to the occupation, problems with still-undeliverable Iraqi oil, diplomatic flaps between the US and other nations regarding Iraq reconstruction spoils, barring of antiwar allies from even bidding on reconstruction, and more corruption involving Halliburton.

In addition, it distracts from growing problems for the Bush faction, including:

- The United States is currently training and housing the Mujahadeen Khalq (MEK) terrorist group as a terror proxy and covert action force for future operations in Iran, with the enthusiastic and active support of Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, who view these terrorists as "freedom fighters."
- White House is being blasted by the US military community itself.
- The Bush White House is being pressured for its secrecy on 9/11, and is also being sued by a prominent 9/11 widow (also see www.septembereleventh.org [as well as her Open Letter to Bush and Amended Complaint --ratitor])
- Bush administration's continuing problems with the world economy and financial markets.

The capture also coincides with the re-appearance of legendary Reagan-Bush "fixer" James Baker as an official new White House foreign policy envoy, and manager of Iraq debt. Some view the Baker appointment as a move to repair the Bush administration's foreign policy in a way that restores traditional "multilateralism" (UN involvement, etc.).

Could the Saddam arrest -- and what appears to be a process conducted by "international consensus" -- be a part of this new rescue agenda?

America's corporate media organs have relentlessly played the White House's tune for public consumption. America Online's main web news headline of December 16 shouted the question, "Arrest Erasing Doubt on War?" and even featured a poll titled "Are we winning now?" while a recent Time magazine cover shouted, "We Got Him."

The ruthless and self-congratulatory George W. Bush has already begun gloating, beating his favorite 9/11 pretext like a drum. Leaders of the US puppet regime in Iraq, led by longtime US figurehead-CIA asset Ahmed Chalabi of the Iraqi National Congress, jumped at the new opportunity to repeat old Saddam demonizations, in the hopes of igniting Iraqi support for the illegitimate occupation. Pro-Iraq regime removal neocons and neoliberals, led by Senator Joe Lieberman, co-signer of the 1998 Iraq Liberation Act, took the opportunity to blast antiwar adversaries, such as current Democratic front runner Howard Dean, who offered little resistance, and applauded Saddam's capture. Prominent Democrats, with few exceptions, have reflexively fallen back on congratulations to the White House, and other ludicrous statements ringing with hawkish jingoism, the many months of criticism quickly dropped.

Criticism outside of the US appears to be firm, however. When the noisy and boastful arrogance dies down, there is the possibility that this desperate propaganda "home run" by the Bush faction could easily backfire:

Iraqi cheer fades into ire at US (*Reuters*)

Regimes desperate to remain in power resort to desperate measures, many of them successful thanks to overwhelming media control, and mass public ignorance bred by this control.

Red herrings, no matter how elaborate, cannot hide the facts from astute observers who will not be swayed by official lies, media distortions and futile attempts to rewrite history.

This writer notes with horror that the invasion and occupation predicted in "The Deep Politics of Regime Removal In Iraq: Overt Conquest, Covert Operations" has occurred as predicted and its correctly named players have behaved as brutally as anticipated. The larger war agenda, built upon decades of national security and foreign policy directives of successive US administrations going back to the 1950s, continues to unfold, threatening mankind itself. This "endless war" is likely to expand, regardless of who occupies the US White House in 2004.

- America's War for Global Domination (Michel Chossudovsky)
- Bush's Operation Clean Sweep: World War IV in 2004? (John Stanton)
- New era of nuclear weapons: Bush buildup begins with little debate in Congress
- Beyond Bush II (Michael C. Ruppert)

It is this larger reality, not the propaganda and smokescreens, that must be understood, prepared for, and acted upon.

Larry Chin is a freelance journalist and an Online Journal Associate Editor.

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A new era of colonialism?

by Kalinga Seneviratne, *Inter Press Service*, 22 December 2003

Last Sunday, when US President George W Bush addressed the nation on television from the White House, he said with a sombre face that the former Iraqi leader's arrest would not mean an end to the occupation's armed resistance.

"The capture of Saddam Hussein does not mean the end of violence in Iraq," Bush declared

at the conclusion of a short statement that declared Saddam's detention as "crucial to the rise of a free Iraq".

The mood of President Bush's announcement of what looks on paper to be a second major American victory in Iraq, is in sharp contrast to his triumphant appearance in full battle gear on board an American aircraft carrier in May to announce a US victory and the end of hostilities in Iraq.

The US has suffered more casualties in Iraq since then, than during the hostilities which Bush declared over in May. The American president's resignation to more resistance this time around, perhaps reflects the fact that within the administration there is a realisation that the resistance they are facing could be anti-colonial in nature.

Speaking from Cairo, Egyptian writer Sayyid Nassar told the international media that Saddam's arrest "will not destroy the Iraqi resistance against the US occupier", rather it will encourage "feeling of Arab solidarity with the Iraqi people". He warned that the resistance would diversify, be more creative and even become more intense.

In 1994, I was in Iraq for 10 days reporting for an international news agency on the impact of economic sanctions on the Iraqi people.

One evening during a chat, my information ministry minder said the trouble Americans have dealing with Iraqis is that they have to deal with educated and highly sophisticated people, not illiterate Bedouins (tent-dwellers) from the deserts.

Though Saddam was a feared figure in Iraq, on the aftermath of the first Gulf War, what I found was that most Iraqis don't trust what the Americans say either.

After the fall of Baghdad in April, loyalty to Saddam or his Ba'ath Party ceased to be the catalyst for resisting American designs on Iraq. Now that Saddam is in American custody, those who resisted joining the resistance against the Americans may well be encouraged to do so, knowing that if the US forces leave, he will go with them (literally).

"Those (Shiites) who dislike US policies or who are opposed to the idea of occupation no longer need to be apprehensive that the US will suddenly leave and allow Saddam to come back to power," observed University of Michigan's Iraq specialist Juan Cole.

The circumstances of Saddam's capture may have had a sobering impact on the American political elite who tend to believe that their country is on a mission to save the Iraqis from the clutches of a dictator.

"Given the location and circumstances of his capture, it makes clear that Saddam was not managing the insurgency and that he had very little control or influence," noted Senator Jay Rockefeller, the Democratic leader on the Senate Intelligence Committee.

"This is significant and disturbing because it means the insurgents are not fighting for Saddam; they are fighting against the United States," he added.

Critics argue that what is being seen in Iraq is the first battle of a modern era of "colonialism" where resource-rich countries would be invaded and occupied by great powers with an eye on those resources. The difference with the earlier era of colonialism - which started 500 years ago via European gun boats and missionaries - is that today the modern communication media plays a great role as part of the imperialist war machine, both as a weapon in its armoury and as a missionary for spreading the American gospel of "freedom and democracy".

Rather than the American high-tech weaponry, it's the international clout of their media, especially the news media, which has allowed President Bush to promote the slogan that the war in Iraq is about bringing freedom and justice to the Iraqi people.

Saddam's capture came at a time when even this flag-waving media found it difficult to ignore a chorus of voices coming from within the US itself, raising doubts on whether the "reconstruction" of Iraq is the goal of the administration at all.

Rania Masri of the US-based Institute for Southern Studies has pointed out that US administrator Paul Bremer is quietly "transforming the Iraqi economy for foreign ownership and foreign plunder" by removing all tariff and trade restrictions, which has already destroyed the Iraqi textile and poultry industries. He has also imposed a 15 per cent flat tax and allowed 100 per cent foreign ownership of almost all Iraqi industries, which would result in the removal of profits from the country.

Thus, when the US administration talks about bringing freedom and justice to the Iraqi people, some are asking "freedom from what?" and "justice to whom?"

Instead, what is likely to be seen in the months leading to the US presidential elections next year, would be a consistent parading of Saddam Hussein to answer accusations of mass murder, war crimes and what not, to deflect attention from the colonial "plunder" of Iraq by Bush's friends - many of whom have already got a large slice of the US\$18.6 billion (\$31.7 billion) reconstruction contracts.

Perhaps, this would change if, as predicted by Nassar, the resistance becomes bolder and more pronounced, now that Saddam is out of the way.

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General Plans Changes in Afghan Strategy

Associated Press, 20 December 2003

In a significant switch in strategy, U.S. troops plan to set up bases to provide reconstruction aid in provinces plagued by Taliban attacks, the new U.S. commander in Afghanistan said Saturday in his first interview since taking charge.

Lt. Gen. David Barno told The Associated Press that the move will make the troubled south and east safer for aid workers and open the way for landmark Afghan elections next summer. He also predicted a sharp reaction from insurgents.

They're "going to realize that's the death knell to terrorist organizations in that part of the country," said Barno. "We'll be prepared for that."

A wave of violence this year has belied U.S. claims to have brought security to Afghanistan, two years after an American-led assault drove the Taliban from power for harboring al-Qaida chief Osama bin Laden.

Attacks have forced the United Nations and other aid groups to withdraw from some regions, undermining aid delivery and confidence in the reconstruction efforts of the U.S.-backed government ahead of elections slated for June.

The United Nations has even accused the U.S. military of playing into the hands of Taliban agitators in its hunt for terror suspects, with two botched raids that killed 15 Afghan children earlier this month.

In a bid to deliver more aid to impoverished civilians, the United States and allies including Britain and New Zealand have set up nine joint civilian-military units charged with creating islands of stability across the country.

So far, most of the so-called Provincial Reconstruction Teams are in relatively secure regions. Now, the U.S. military is deploying teams across a broad swath of the country dominated by Pashtuns, Afghanistan's largest ethnic group from which the hardline Islamic Taliban draw their main support.

Barno, who took command of the 11,000-strong U.S. force here on Nov. 27, said there will be at least 12 such reconstruction teams by March and more later, including dangerous missions in the capitals of Zabul and Uruzgan provinces that were shunned by aid groups because Taliban militants reportedly roam freely.

"We are looking at a significant alteration of our strategy in the south and east," Barno said at his office in the fortified U.S. Embassy compound in Kabul.

The military teams will help distribute reconstruction aid bolstered by an extra \$1.2 billion recently released by the U.S. Congress.

That aid, combined with the opening of the south and east by a string of new military operations, will cause "a dramatic change in the amount of involvement of the people in that area in support of the central government and the future of Afghanistan," Barno said.

Aid groups worry that their attempts to remain independent in the eyes of Afghans, including Taliban sympathizers, has been compromised by U.S. involvement in delivering assistance.

But Barno suggested it was time for relief groups to accept that they could not be neutral after a stream of deliberate attacks on de-miners and well-diggers, and said he hoped aid workers would return to Pashtun areas.

"They probably have to, and they are, realizing that they are now operating in a different world," he said.

"We don't have the capacity in the coalition to (provide protection) in every town, in every village across the country, but we can provide a great deal of assistance and intelligence sharing," Barno said.

At least 11 aid workers have been killed in attacks this year, including a French U.N. refugee worker who was gunned down at short range by suspected Taliban in the eastern city of Ghazni in November.

The top U.N. official in Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, warned last week that the world body may have to abandon its two-year effort to help reconstruct the war-battered country unless security improves.

Barno said insurgents were reduced to "very small and very focused attacks. As this future continues to unfold, the terrorist organizations are challenged to show that they exist at all."

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White House Covers Tracks by Removing Information

The Daily Mis-Lead

In a high-tech cover-up, the *Washington Post* this morning reports the White House is actively scrubbing government websites clean of any of its own previous statements that have now proven to be untrue. Specifically, on April 23, 2003, the president sent his top international aid official on national television to reassure the public that the cost of war and reconstruction in Iraq would be modest. USAID Director Andrew Natsios, echoing other Administration officials, told *Nightline* that, "In terms of the American taxpayers contribution, [\$1.7 billion] is it for the US. The American part of this will be \$1.7 billion. We have no plans for any further-on funding for this."

The president has requested more than \$166 billion in funding for the war and reconstruction efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan this year. But instead of admitting that he misled the nation about the cost of war, the president has allowed the State Department "to purge the comments by Natsios from the State Department's Web site. The transcript, and links to it, have vanished." (The link where the transcript existed until it caused embarrassment was www.usaid.gov/iraq/nightline_042403_t.html).

When confronted with the dishonest whitewash, the administration decided to lie. A Bush spokesman said the administration was forced to remove the statements because, "there was going to be a cost" charged by *ABC* for keeping the transcript on the government's site. But as the *Post* notes, "other government Web sites, including the State and Defense departments, routinely post interview transcripts, even from *Nightline*," and according to *ABC News*, "there is no cost."

This story is not the first time the President has tried to hide critical information from the American public. For instance, the president opposed the creation of the independent 9/11 investigative commission, and has refused to provide the commission with critical information, even under threat of subpoena. Similarly, after making substantial budget cuts,

the president ordered the government to stop publishing its regular report detailing those cuts to states. And when confronted with a continuing unemployment crisis, the president ordered the Department of Labor to stop publishing its regular mass layoff report.

It is also not the first time the administration has sought to revise history and public records when those records become incriminating. As the *Post* reports "After the insurrection in Iraq proved more stubborn than expected, the White House edited the original headline on its Web site of President Bush's May 1 speech, "President Bush Announces Combat Operations in Iraq Have Ended," to insert the word 'Major' before combat." And the "Justice Department recently redacted criticism of the department in a consultant's report that had been posted on its Web site."

Sources:

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6. "Shooting the messenger: Report on layoffs killed", *Freedom of Information Center*, 01/03/2003.

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Petition to House Government Reform Committee

From: info@leonardpeltier.org

Here's the new petition to the House Govt Reform Committee asking them to include their Reign of Terror & the case of Leonard Peltier in their investigation of the FBI.

Please sign & distribute widely.

FBI Misconduct - Pine Ridge "Reign of Terror" & Leonard Peltier

DC Police Spying Operation Exposed

From: "Priscilla", Sat, 20 Dec 2003

The lead editorial in the December 17, 2003, *Washington Post*, commenting on a public D.C. City Council investigation into police spying, brutality and pre-emptive arrests against demonstrators, is evidence that the national campaign to defend the First Amendment is effectively striking back at the war waged today by various law enforcement agencies against dissent in the United States.

Citing the litigation brought by the Washington D.C.-based Partnership for Civil Justice (*International Action Center, et al., v. The United States, et al.*) the *Post* Editorial opens with an excerpt from July 10, 2003, ruling by U.S. District Court Judge Gladys Kessler:

"The District of Columbia, through [assistant police chief Alfred Broadbent] seems to be admitting that it maintains widespread, extensive spying operations on the activities and operations of political advocacy organizations, such as Plaintiffs [International Action Center, et al.], on the basis of their political philosophies and conduct protected under the First Amendment. Moreover, Chief Broadbent admitted in his testimony that such operations are carried on even in the absence of allegations of criminal activities by the organizations being spied upon." The *Post* editorial goes on to cite three other major protest cases being handled by the Partnership for Civil Justice.

The Washington DC Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), along with the FBI, Secret Service and National Park Police, have been the subject of a broad-based legal and political action campaign to win justice for those who have been the victims of police misconduct.

The Partnership for Civil Justice (PCJ) has filed four major lawsuits in Washington DC in the past three years that have uncovered a body of evidence showing that law enforcement agencies have been engaged in systematic and coordinated efforts to spy on and disrupt political organizations engaged in First Amendment protected activities. Evidence obtained in the discovery phase of litigation also includes police undercover operatives engaged in violent assaults against peaceful demonstrators protesting against George W. Bush during the January 20, 2001 Inaugural Parade. (For more information on the lawsuits go to www.justiceonline.org)

In the last few weeks more than 20,000 organizations and individuals have signed on to a petition opposing the FBI's illegal spying operation against the U.S. antiwar movement. The FBI operation was revealed in an internal FBI memorandum, written ten days before the October 25 demonstration in Washington DC that demanded Bring the Troops Home Now, End the Occupation of Iraq, that was the subject of a *New York Times* story on November 23. To see the petition go www.votenowar.org.

As the spotlight on police and law enforcement misconduct gets brighter as a result of the litigation and political action campaigns, elected officials in Washington D.C. have scheduled two days of hearings to scrutinize the police department in the District of Columbia.

The following is the statement of Mara Verheyden-Hilliard, given on behalf of the Partnership for Civil Justice and National Lawyers Guild Mass Defense Committee on December 17, 2003, at the Public Oversight Hearing on Current Policies and Practices of the MPD Related to Demonstrations, Committee on the Judiciary, District of Columbia Council.

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STATEMENT OF MARA VERHEYDEN-HILLIARD On Behalf of the Partnership for Civil Justice and National Lawyers Guild Mass Defense Committee December 17, 2003 Public Oversight Hearing On Current Policies and Practices of the MPD Related to Demonstrations Committee on the Judiciary District of Columbia Council

Litigation by the Partnership for Civil Justice (PCJ) over more than a three year stretch has uncovered systematic police abuse of demonstrators and revealed that the District of

Columbia Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) is engaged in an ongoing illegal domestic spying operation on political activists and that it has used undercover agent provocateurs to commit felonious assaults against peaceful demonstrators.

Today's hearing will include dramatic video footage of MPD undercover police officers carrying out violent assaults against protestors at the Inauguration of George Bush. This footage was obtained by and is in the possession of the Partnership for Civil Justice, which is litigating on behalf of activists who were assaulted.

The illegal conduct carried out by the MPD - which was exposed in the litigation filed by the Partnership for Civil Justice and the National Lawyers Guild - is just the tip of the iceberg regarding law enforcement's illegal violation of the First and Fourth Amendments. It is not only the MPD but the U.S. Secret Service, FBI and National Park Police, in cooperation and coordination with the MPD, that have waged a war against dissent in Washington, D.C.

We salute Councilmember Kathy Patterson for holding these hearings. It is evidence that elected leaders can be responsive to the rising people's movement in the United States that is using both street demonstrations and legal action to push back the government to a constitutional line and to defend free speech rights.

The purpose of the lawsuits is to win justice for those whose rights have been violated, and it is also to ensure accountability by police and law enforcement officials. MPD Chief Charles Ramsey, Mayor Anthony Williams and other officials have made the avoidance of accountability a primary focus of their conduct after the egregious violations of demonstrators' rights in episode after episode in the District of Columbia. This is evidenced in their public conduct as well as when the Chief testified under oath in a recent deposition conducted by the Partnership for Civil Justice.

The police department and Mayor of Washington have ratified the shocking and illegal conduct of law enforcement both by word and by deed. They have repeated their illegal tactics time and time again. It has only been through the litigation by activists that the truth of these unconstitutional actions has been brought to light. As we fight for justice in the Courts, we again thank the Council for providing public forum and for using its authority to oversee the police department to also seek accountability and change on behalf of the people of Washington, D.C. and the people of the United States who come to Washington, D.C. to exercise their First Amendment rights.

The Partnership for Civil Justice's First Amendment litigation on behalf of demonstrators in Washington DC includes:

- *Alliance for Global Justice, et al v. District of Columbia, et al*
 - IMF/World Bank Demonstrations in April 2000
 - Includes class action claim for mass arrest of over 700 lawful protestors in advance of days of protests, calculated as a preemptive political sweep to take activists off the streets; the illegal raid, seizure and closure of the convergence center; confiscation of political literature; brutal beatings of peaceful activists.

- *International Action Center, et al v. United States of America, et al*
 - Counter Inaugural Protests against George W. Bush in January 2001
 - Violent assaults by MPD agents provocateurs; detention of protestors and splintering of groups

and assemblies by the Civil Disturbance Units (CDUs); infiltration and domestic spying by the MPD posing as activists; joint unconstitutional action with the Bush-Cheney Inaugural Committee and federal government to deny access to the parade route.

- *Bolger, et al v. Ramsey, et al*
 - Antiwar demonstrations in April 2002
 - Arrest based on political ideology, targeting anarchists, or persons perceived by their manner of dress to be or to associate with anarchists in the absence of any criminal activity.

- *Barham, et al v. Ramsey, et al*
 - Anti-war and IMF/World Bank Demonstrations in September 2002
 - Class action certification. Rounding up and jailing over 400 people, including activists, legal observers and passers-by, in advance of weekend of planned protests against corporate globalization and war against Iraq that was calculated to take political activists off the streets and disrupt their ability to assemble and advocate for change in U.S. policy.

- upcoming litigation: April 12, 2003
 - police beating of peaceful demonstrators at anti-war march including the filmed beating of a protester while held down by police officers.

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