

NEWSLETTER #3 ON TERRORISM, 9-11 AND WAR ON TERROR, OCTOBER 24, 2011 Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace

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Think of all the great leaders for peace and justice. There is no one way. But some leaders must be thoroughly grounded in knowledge--information that is comprehensive and connected and will thereby lead to wise action. These newsletters provide that knowledge.

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The Chief Idea Connecting All of These Books and Articles is the NEGATIVE
EFFECTS OF WAR ON TERROR ON US CITIZENS AND US DEMOCRACY

Herman, Susan. *Taking Liberties: the War on Terror and the Erosion of Democracy*. Oxford UP, 2011. 9/11 anti-terrorism measures have severely affected the lives of ordinary citizens: “eroding our privacy, ignoring the Constitution, violating human rights, making itself less transparent, and minimizing the role of the American people in our democracy.”. See *Civil Liberties* (Summer 2011) for Herman’s discussion of the book. Herman is President of the ACLU.

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'Top Secret America' by Dana Priest and William Arkin investigates growth of secret world since 9/11

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'Top Secret America' investigates growth of secret world since 9/11

[BOB DROGIN Los Angeles Times \(MCT\) azdailysun.com](#) | Posted: Sunday, October 23, 2011 5:00 am

The CIA was nominally in charge when Navy SEALs flew deep into Pakistan in radar-evading Stealth helicopters in May to kill Osama bin Laden and when Predator drones fired missiles to kill Anwar al-Awlaki in Yemen last month.

But America's fabled spy service was eclipsed in both raids by a far more secretive group that flies 10 times as many drones as the CIA. Based in North Carolina, it runs its own intelligence division, flies its own reconnaissance planes and has its own satellites. Its leaders don't speak in public. It has no media spokesman or public website.

In "Top Secret America," Dana Priest and William M. Arkin, two of America's most relentless reporters, pull the curtains back on JSOC, or Joint Special Operations Command, to reveal a self-sustaining secret Pentagon army that has captured or killed more al-Qaida militants "than the rest of the U.S. government forces combined." This is an invaluable book, a breathtaking investigative account of America's vast new secret world. It is not light reading, but it offers an indispensable guide to anyone who worries about the explosive growth of what the authors call America's terrorism-industrial complex since the Sept. 11 attacks a decade ago.

In their book, based on several hundred interviews, Priest and Arkin map out a largely invisible parallel universe of more than 1,300 federal agencies, nearly 2,000 private companies and 854,000 people doing "top secret" work. Spending for counter-terrorism, they note, has skyrocketed without members of Congress or anyone else really knowing what works and what does not.

A few examples: Some \$81 billion is spent to gather foreign intelligence. The Homeland Security Department spends \$58 billion, while the Pentagon spends untold billions more on counter-terrorism and homeland security. With so many duplicative agencies, bureaus, programs and gizmos, the counterterrorism effort is beset with "disturbing dysfunction."

Priest, who has won two Pulitzer Prizes for her reporting, is an intrepid tour guide to this uncharted world. Visiting suspect sites around the country, she shares her frustrations at chasing what she calls "buildings without addresses, offices without floors, acronyms without explanation."

Arkin is the kind of sleuth who mines impenetrable government documents to write directories of nuclear weapons, classified code names and much more. So when Priest searches for a mysterious underground bunker in rural Maryland, Arkin digs into his stash of "contracts for guard and facility

maintenance services" and reports that the buried facility is 90,000 square feet and has a helicopter pad on top. And it's hardly the biggest government bunker. In all, Arkin determines that 33 large complexes for top secret intelligence work have been built around Washington in recent years -- equivalent in size to three Pentagons. That doesn't include five new buildings to house the ever-expanding CIA, a vast new complex for the National Security Agency in Utah and scores of other facilities around the country. Much of the top secret work is doled out to savvy corporate contractors, which have boomed in the recession. Some offer shiny BMWs and fat bonuses to hire away CIA analysts and others with top secret security clearances so they can then offer them back to government agencies at inflated prices.

The burden is substantial. The authors cite a recent study by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (another group created in the last decade) which found that private contractors make up 29 percent of the workforce in intelligence agencies but cost 49 percent of personnel budgets. Does the bloated system work? The two plots that have come closest to causing mass murder in the United States -- the attempt to blow up a Northwest Airlines jet over Detroit in December 2009 and the attempt to detonate a car bomb in New York's Times Square in May 2010 -- both failed because the bombers were incompetent, not because of U.S. efforts. Both were intelligence failures.

Robert Gates, the former CIA chief and Defense secretary, tells the authors that he is appalled at the constant fear-mongering about dirty bombs, killer germs, a cyber Pearl Harbor and other threats. U.S. courts have tried 46 terrorism cases involving 125 people in recent years, he points out. "So, I would say the numbers of extremists are very small. Let's stay calm."

There are no heroes or villains here -- it's more a story of a system run amok. In Washington, it is said, the easiest way to get more money is to fail. After the tragedy of Sept. 11, Congress gave a virtual blank check to America's secret security agencies and provided no public accountability to stop fraud or malfeasance. Priest and Arkin explain better than Congress ever has the staggering waste and ineptitude that inevitably has followed.

Posted in [Books-and-literature](#) on Sunday, October 23, 2011 5:00 am Updated: 11:12 pm.

Read more: http://azdailysun.com/entertainment/books-and-literature/top-secret-america-investigates-growth-of-secret-world-since/article_99a6a604-4b5e-5a05-aaf9-4be095cbadc3.html#ixzz1bho5hc6Y

--Engelhardt, Tom. *The United States of Fear*. Haymarket, 2011. "How the country—gripped by terror fantasies—was locked down, and how a brain-dead Washington elite profited while America quietly burned."

The Anti-Empire Report by William Blum October 4th, 2011
www.killinghope.org

The crime of making Americans aware of their own history

Is history getting too close for comfort for the fragile little American heart and mind? Their schools and their favorite media have done an excellent job of keeping them ignorant of what their favorite country has done to the rest of the world, but lately some discomfiting points of view have managed to find their way into this well-defended American consciousness.

First, Congressman Ron Paul during a presidential debate last month expressed the belief that those

who carried out the September 11 attack were retaliating for the many abuses perpetrated against Arab countries by the United States over the years. The audience booed him, loudly.

Then, popular-song icon Tony Bennett, in a radio interview, said the United States caused the 9/11 attacks because of its actions in the Persian Gulf, adding that President George W. Bush had told him in 2005 that the Iraq war was a mistake. Bennett of course came under some nasty fire. *FOX News* (September 24), carefully choosing its comments charmingly as usual, used words like "insane", "twisted mind", and "absurdities". Bennett felt obliged to post a statement on Facebook saying that his experience in World War II had taught him that "war is the lowest form of human behavior." He said there's no excuse for terrorism, and he added, "I'm sorry if my statements suggested anything other than an expression of love for my country." (*NBC* September 21)

Then came the Islamic cleric, Anwar al-Awlaki, an American citizen, who for some time had been blaming US foreign policy in the Middle East as the cause of anti-American hatred and terrorist acts. So we killed him. Ron Paul and Tony Bennett can count themselves lucky.

What, then, is the basis of all this? What has the United States actually been doing in the Middle East in the recent past?

- the shooting down of two Libyan planes in 1981
- the bombing of Lebanon in 1983 and 1984
- the bombing of Libya in 1986
- the bombing and sinking of an Iranian ship in 1987
- the shooting down of an Iranian passenger plane in 1988
- the shooting down of two more Libyan planes in 1989
- the massive bombing of the Iraqi people in 1991
- the continuing bombings and draconian sanctions against Iraq for the next 12 years
- the bombing of Afghanistan and Sudan in 1998
- the habitual support of Israel despite the routine devastation and torture it inflicts upon the Palestinian people
- the habitual condemnation of Palestinian resistance to this
- the abduction of "suspected terrorists" from Muslim countries, such as Malaysia, Pakistan, Lebanon and Albania, who were then taken to places like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, where they were tortured
- the large military and hi-tech presence in Islam's holiest land, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere in the Persian Gulf region
- the support of numerous undemocratic, authoritarian Middle East governments from the Shah of Iran to Mubarak of Egypt to the Saudi royal family
- the invasion, bombing and occupation of Afghanistan, 2001 to the present, and Iraq, 2003 to the present
- the bombings and continuous firing of missiles to assassinate individuals in Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan, and Libya during the period of 2006-2011

It can't be repeated or emphasized enough. The biggest lie of the "war on terrorism", although weakening, is that the targets of America's attacks have an irrational hatred of the United States and its way of life, based on religious and cultural misunderstandings and envy. The large body of evidence to the contrary includes a 2004 report from the Defense Science Board, "a Federal advisory committee established to provide independent advice to the Secretary of Defense." The report states:

"Muslims do not hate our freedom, but rather they hate our policies. The overwhelming majority voice

their objections to what they see as one-sided support in favor of Israel and against Palestinian rights, and the long-standing, even increasing, support for what Muslims collectively see as tyrannies, most notably Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Pakistan and the Gulf states. Thus, when American public diplomacy talks about bringing democracy to Islamic societies, this is seen as no more than self-serving hypocrisy."

The report concludes: "No public relations campaign can save America from flawed policies."
(*Christian Science Monitor*, November 29, 2004)

The Pentagon released the study after the *New York Times* ran a story about it on November 24, 2004. The *Times* reported that although the board's report does not constitute official government policy, it captures "the essential themes of a debate that is now roiling not just the Defense Department but the entire United States government."

"Homeland security is a rightwing concept fostered following 9/11 as the answer to the effects of 50 years of bad foreign policies in the middle east. The amount of homeland security we actually need is inversely related to how good our foreign policy is." – Sam Smith, editor of *The Progressive Review*

“Alleged Inhumane Conditions for Post-9/11 Suspects Sparks Scrutiny of US Detention Policies”, Amy Goodman, Democracy, October 16, 2011

Video Report: “Ten years after the 9/11 attacks, detention policies in the United States are facing increasing scrutiny both here and abroad. American citizen Tarek Mehanna is set to stand trial this month on charges of ‘conspiring to support terrorism’ and ‘providing material support to terrorists.’ Mehanna is accused of trying to serve in al-Qaeda’s ‘media wing.’ He was 27 years old when he was arrested in October 2009 and has been held in solitary confinement since then. Mehanna was originally courted by the FBI to become an informant.”

READ | DISCUSS | SHARE <http://www.nationofchange.org/alleged-inhumane-conditions-post-911-suspects-sparks-scrutiny-us-detention-policies-1318780890>

“America's Costly War Machine “

Linda J. Bilmes and Joseph E. Stiglitz, Los Angeles Times September 18, 2011, RSN

Intro: "Fighting the war on terror compromises the economy now and threatens it in the future."

READ MORE <http://readersupportednews.org/opinion2/266-32/7478-americas-costly-war-machine>

PENTAGON BUDGET FILM

<http://vimeo.com/28433517>

Monday, 12 September 2011 “The Legacy of 9/11 And The War on Intellectuals,”

Stephen Zunes, Op-Ed, NationOfChange: “My argument was that the more the United States has militarized the region, the less secure the American people had become. I noted how all the sophisticated weaponry, brave fighting men and women, and brilliant military leadership the United States possessed would do little good if there were hundreds of millions of people in the Middle East and beyond who hated us. Even though only a small percentage of the population supports Osama bin

Laden's methods, I argued, there would still be enough people to maintain dangerous terrorist networks as long as his grievances resonated with large numbers of people.” READ | DISCUSS | SHARE
<http://www.nationofchange.org/legacy-911-and-war-intellectuals-1315802690>

“Ten Years Later, Still Equating Terrorism with Islam”

Elizabeth Whitman, News Report, NationOfChange, September 11, 2011.: “Karen Keyworth is frustrated by the racial profiling and ignorance frequently displayed towards Muslims and Arabs in the United States after 9/11. U.S. society is ‘not doing a good job separating out terrorism from Islam’, she told IPS. A Muslim for 35 years, she said she has witnessed and experienced the ‘incredible ignorance’ of those who equate Islam with terrorism, a belief she senses has worsened steadily since 9/11. The effects of profiling have been seen and felt in a range of ways, but a less visible one has been the increase in enrolment in Islamic schools across the U.S.” MORE:
<http://www.nationofchange.org/ten-years-later-still-equating-terrorism-islam-1315804689>

Joseph E. Stiglitz,| “The Price of 9/11”

Project Syndicate, 9-1-11, RSN

Joseph E. Stiglitz writes: "The September 11, 2001, terror attacks by Al Qaeda were meant to harm the United States, and they did, but in ways that Osama bin Laden probably never imagined. President George W. Bush's response to the attacks compromised America's basic principles, undermined its economy, and weakened its security."

READ MORE <http://readersupportednews.org/off-site-opinion-section/56-56/7320-the-price-of-911>

Noam Chomsky, “9/11 and the Imperial Mentality”

Noam Chomsky, TomDispatch, Common Dreams, Sept. 6, 2011, RSN

Noam Chomsky writes: "The United States, first under George W. Bush and then Barack Obama, rushed right into bin Laden's trap ... Grotesquely overblown military outlays and debt addiction ... may be the most pernicious legacy of the man who thought he could defeat the United States - particularly when the debt is being cynically exploited by the far right, with the collusion of the Democrat establishment, to undermine what remains of social programs, public education, unions, and, in general, remaining barriers to corporate tyranny."

READ MORE <http://readersupportednews.org/off-site-opinion-section/423-national-security/7326-911-and-the-imperial-mentality>

“ Rumsfeld: Obama Has Accepted Bush Doctrine”

Tim Mak, Politico, RSN September 7, 2011

Mak writes: "President Obama had campaigned against many of the major programs of President Bush's war on terror, but often his national security policy has mirrored that of his predecessor."

READ MORE <http://www.readersupportednews.org/news-section2/421-national-security/7339-focus--rumsfeld-obama-has-accepted-bush-doctrine>

Greg Jaffe, “This Is the American Era of Endless War”

The Washington Post, Sept. 6, 2011 RSN

Greg Jaffe reports: "Today, radical religious ideologies, new technologies and cheap, powerful weapons have catapulted the world into 'a period of persistent conflict,' according to the **Pentagon's** last major assessment of global security. 'No one should harbor the illusion that the developed world can win this conflict in the near future,' the document concludes."

READ MORE <http://readersupportednews.org/news-section2/306-10/7325-this-is-the-american-era-of-endless-war>

“35K Worldwide Convicted for Terror, Dissidents Often Targeted”

Martha Mendoza, Associated Press, September 5, 2011, RSN

Martha Mendoza reports: "At least 35,000 people worldwide have been convicted as terrorists in the decade since the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States. But while some bombed hotels or blew up buses, others were put behind bars for waving a political sign or blogging about a protest."

READ MORE <http://readersupportednews.org/news-section2/328-121/7318-35k-worldwide-convicted-for-terror-dissidents-often-targeted>

9/11, Intimidation via Framing, by George Lakoff, Reader Supported News, 11 September 11

The use of 9/11 to consolidate conservative power: Intimidation via framing.

My wife, Kathleen, and I stood gaping at the TV as we watched the towers fall. Kathleen said to me, "Do you realize what Bush and Cheney are going to do with this?" We both realized very well. Until 9/11, the Bush presidency was weak. On 9/11, Cheney understood that the attack was an opportunity to take control, and take control he did. Colin Powell recommended calling the attack a crime. But Cheney understood that if it were framed as an act of war, then Bush and Cheney would be given war powers. So war it was, a metaphorical "war" on terror. The American people, intimidated by the vision of the towers falling, accepted the framing. Democrats, seeing the reaction of their constituents, went along with the framing. Except for my congresswoman, Barbara Lee. I ran to my computer to be the first to congratulate her on her no vote.

Terror meant everyone should be afraid of terrorists. Throughout the Midwest the predictable happened. A highly memorable event raises one's judgment of the probability that it will happen to them. All over America people started being afraid of terrorists. Bush asked for and got unlimited war powers and the Patriot Act.

From 9/11 on, the American people have been subject to conservative intimidation by framing. I've

now written five books explaining how framing works in the brain and what citizens could do about it - *Moral Politics*, *Don't Think of an Elephant*, *Whose Freedom?*, *Thinking Points*, and *The Political Mind*. The books were based on results from the cognitive and brain sciences on how reason about social and political issues really works - primarily in terms of morally-based frames, metaphors, and narratives, and only secondarily, if at all, in terms of policy, facts, and logic. Those books were widely used by Democrats in the 2006 and 2008 elections - and they helped.

But since the 2008 election, conservative intimidation of the electorate via framing has come back big time, with no adequate Democratic defense against it. With a Democratic president in office, Democrats, both citizens and office-holders, turned their attention to policy and logical, fact-based arguments for the policies. In response to the president's health care policies, conservatives attacked on the moral front, choosing two moral values from their value system: freedom ("government takeover") and life ("death panels"). Knowing well that morality trumps lists of policy details, lists of facts, and logic, conservatives won that framing encounter, and have kept winning. Why? Because people, using their real reason, normally think unconsciously in terms of morally based systems of frames, metaphors, and narratives.

Since the 2008 election, America has returned to post-9/11 conservative intimidation by framing. The intimidation does not use violence. It uses media. When conservatives, using their moral system, are able to frame the main values that define public discourse, the media follows suit, because that is how "mainstream" public discourse has been defined. The media, encountering more conservative language, picks up on that language and uses it. Since conservative language evokes conservative frames and values, which are carried with it, the media (liberal or not) winds up helping conservatives. Even arguing against conservatives, liberal pundits in the media first quote what they say. Liberals in the media help the conservatives by quoting their language, even to argue against it.

In the post-2008 return to 9/11 style intimidation by framing, conservatives have been winning. They have protected banks from financial regulation, health insurance companies from government insurance, and corporations from serious environmental regulation. They have successfully attacked the very idea of the public - public education, employees, unions, parks, housing, and safety nets.

Here's how public intimidation by framing works. . . .

<http://www.readersupportednews.org/opinion2/291-144/7393-focus-911-intimidation-via-framing>

FBI INFORMANTS

Center for Human Rights and Global Justice. *Targeted and Entrapped: Manufacturing the "Homegrown Threat" in the United States*. NYU School of Law, 2011. Rev. *The Public Eye* (Summer 2011). Three high-profile terrorism prosecutions in which government informants devised terrorism plots that were then prosecuted. The human toll of the FBI's pre-emptive counterterrorism strategy is numerous and cruel.

FBI vs “TERRORIST” CATHOLIC WORKERS

“The FBI’s Terrorist Investigation of Casa Maria” by Michael Komba. *Casa Maria* Catholic Worker Newsletter (July 2011). The FBI in 2003 accused Mr. Komba of breaking a window at an army recruiting center, ordinarily a vandalism charge, but upgraded to terrorism because a recruiting center. Years later he acquired his file that disclosed he was investigated along with many other opponents of the wars. **Let’s all recognize how grossly distorting is the so-called War on Terror, which quickly became both foreign and domestic McCarthyism.** So let us all prepare not to be intimidated by our police bullies. A big help: **Howard Zinn**, who had a 423 page FBI file, wrote an essay entitled “Federal Bureau of Intimidation,” in which he urged us all to expose bully agents (not all).

Peace and Labor Activists Cry Foul Over **FBI** Probe

Peter Wallsten, *The Washington Post*

Peter Wallsten writes: "The search was part of a mysterious, ongoing nationwide terrorism investigation with an unusual target: prominent peace activists and politically active labor organizers. The probe - involving subpoenas to 23 people and raids of seven homes last fall - has triggered a high-powered protest against the Department of Justice and, in the process, could create some political discomfort for President Obama with his union supporters as he gears up for his reelection campaign." READ MORE <http://readersupportednews.org/news-section2/315-19/6264-peace-and-labor-activists-cry-foul-over-fbi-probe>

“EU Slammed for Complicity With US War Crimes,” Associated Press, Sept. 3, 2011
RSN

The Associated Press reports: "Europe's human rights chief launched a blistering attack Thursday on European governments' counterterrorism actions, accusing them of helping the United States commit 'countless' crimes in the past 10 years."

READ MORE <http://readersupportednews.org/news-section2/355-europe/7286-eu-slammed-for-complicity-with-us-war-crimes>

“Obama Bans War Criminals, Except Our Own. ”

Nat Hentoff, *The Star Democrat*, RSN August 19, 2011

"By executive order on August 4, President Barack Obama refused entry to the United States of war criminals and human-rights violators. He ignored,

as he often does, the deeply documented factual evidence of war crimes committed by the Bush-Cheney administration along with grim proof that the Obama administration also violates our anti-torture laws and the UN Convention Against Torture we signed."

READ MORE <http://readersupportednews.org/off-site-opinion-section/123-123/7110-focus-obama-bans-war-criminals-except-our-own>

Transforming Terror

by [Karin Lofthus Carrington](#)

U Calif P, 2011

This inspired collection offers a new paradigm for moving the world beyond violence as the first, and often only, response to violence. Through essays and poetry, prayers and mediations, *Transforming Terror* powerfully demonstrates that terrorist violence—defined here as any attack on unarmed civilians—can never be stopped by a return to the thinking that created it. A diverse array of contributors—writers, healers, spiritual and political leaders, scientists, and activists, including Desmond Tutu, Huston Smith, Riane Eisler, Daniel Ellsberg, Amos Oz, Fatema Memissi, Fritjov Capra, George Lakoff, Mahmoud Darwish, Terry Tempest Williams, and Jack Kornfield—considers how we might transform the conditions that produce terrorist acts and bring true healing to the victims of these acts. Broadly encompassing both the Islamic and Western worlds, the book explores the nature of consciousness and offers a blueprint for change that makes peace possible. From unforgettable firsthand accounts of terrorism, the book draws us into awareness of our ecological and economic interdependence, the need for connectedness, and the innate human capacity for compassion.

US NATIONAL SECURITY STATE **FEARMONGERING**

“100% Scared, National Security Complex Grows On Terrorism Fears”

Tom Engelhardt, TomDispatch

Excerpt: "The National Security Complex has, in fact, grown fat by relentlessly pursuing the promise of making the country totally secure from terrorism, even as life grows ever less secure for so many Americans when it comes to jobs, homes, finances, and other crucial matters. It is on this pledge of protection that the Complex has managed to extort the tidal flow of funds that have allowed it to bloat to monumental proportions, end up with a **yearly national security budget of more than \$1.2 trillion**, find itself encased in a cocoon of self-protective **secrecy**, and be 100% assured that its officials will never be brought to justice for any potential crimes they may commit in their 'war' on terrorism."

READ MORE <http://www.readersupportednews.org/opinion2/294-159/6231-100-scared-national-security-complex-grows-on-terrorism-fears>

“The Pentagon's Fake Jihadists

Tom Engelhardt, TomDispatch Reader Supported News, August 12, 2011

Engelhardt writes: "Talk about a potential Frankenstein situation - and all we can do is ask questions. Just what monsters, for example, might the military's computer specialists be helping to forge? And who exactly is supervising those 'specialists' and their vituperative messages?"

READ MORE <http://www.readersupportednews.org/opinion2/282-98/7004-focus-the-pentagons-fake-jihadists>

“The Phony Tough-on-Terror Crowd”

The New York Times, Editorial

Intro: "Republicans and Democrats are championing bills to further militarize the prosecution of terrorists, beyond anything even President George W. Bush proposed."

READ MORE <http://readersupportednews.org/opinion2/294-159/6423-focus-the-phony-tough-on-terror-crowd>

Jeremy Scahill | CIA's Somalia Prison Facility

Democracy Now!

Intro: "In a new investigative report published by The Nation magazine, independent journalist and Democracy Now! correspondent Jeremy Scahill reveals the CIA is using a secret facility in Somalia for counterterrorism as well as an underground prison in the Somali capital of Mogadishu."

READ MORE

Bin Laden's Gone. Can My Son Come Home?

Frank R. Lindh, *The New York Times*

Frank R. Lindh the father of John Walker Lindh writes: "John was a scapegoat, wrongly accused of terrorism at a moment when our grieving country needed someone to blame because the real terrorist had gotten away. Now that Bin Laden is dead, I hope President Obama, and the American people, can find it in their hearts to release John, and let him come home. Ten years is enough."

READ MORE <http://www.readersupportednews.org/off-site-opinion-section/55-55/6048-bin-ladens-gone-can-my-son-come-home>

“After Osama bin Laden” by Editors of *The Nation*, May 23, 1011

The killing of Osama bin Laden is a moment not for triumphal chest-thumping but for sober reflection. In the decade since September 11, 2001, what has the United States done in response to those horrific attacks? What did it cost us? And where do we go from here?

Out of the despair and wreckage of that day, two notions of the enemy came to dominate the American conscience. One was the terrorist mastermind behind the attack, Osama bin Laden, a figure whose infamy grew in proportion to his elusiveness. His face was seen only in mysterious, sporadic videos; his taunting words heard only in audiotapes of unverifiable authenticity; until May 1, he reportedly “lived in a cave somewhere.” But no matter how seemingly spectral bin Laden became, there was still a person somewhere who could be brought to justice, resources he controlled that could be seized, weapons that could be neutralized, a legion of followers who could be pursued and apprehended—in short, a material network of terrorism that could be disabled and held accountable.

But rather than dedicate itself wholly to these tasks, the Bush administration chose to create another monster, one even more shadowy than bin Laden and, because of this purposeful vagueness, one far more useful and ultimately more dangerous—terror itself. As the hunt for bin Laden was botched, dismissed as “irrelevant” and then largely forgotten, the country went to war against this limitless enemy.

Simply put, the "war on terror" if waged properly would be an intelligence war, not a military conflict.

Beethoven1

At first we attacked those who had harbored bin Laden, the Taliban in Afghanistan, in a mission that was ill defined but at least bore some contestable relation to September 11. Then we went to war against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, a regime that had no involvement in 9/11 and no relation to bin Laden or Al Qaeda. In the name of fighting this open-ended “war on terror,” more than 50,000 US and coalition troops have been killed or wounded, and hundreds of thousands of Afghan, Iraqi and Pakistani civilians have been slain. America spent \$3 trillion, and counting, pursuing it. We’ve spied on citizens without warrants and engaged in torture,

extraordinary rendition, indefinite detention, racial profiling, unmanned drone strikes against civilians, assassinations and other dark arts. Fundamental legal concepts like the writ of habeas corpus and the check on executive power were profoundly eroded. The “war on terror” grew into a global cause as other countries used it to justify clampdowns on dissent.

In one sense, then, bin Laden succeeded all too well. The purpose of terrorism is to provoke a disproportionate, counterproductive and irrational response that makes a nation less secure and less free. America chose to become that place.

In the end bin Laden proved to be mortal. He lived not in some ascetic cave on the Afghan border but in a well-fortified complex in Abbottabad, a tony city favored by Pakistan’s military elite, just thirty-five miles from Islamabad. Questions remain about the legality of the strike, whether bin Laden should have been captured instead of killed and what small part “enhanced interrogation techniques” may have played in locating him. But we can definitively say this: large-scale military invasions and occupations were irrelevant in bringing about his death.

And so bin Laden’s end presents the Obama administration with a unique opportunity to close a dark chapter in American history. That should begin by bringing our troops home from Afghanistan, from a war that has lost whatever rationale it may have once had. Now especially, with bin Laden eliminated and Al Qaeda’s operations there largely destroyed, the political space exists to end our occupation by reducing US forces and accelerating peace talks among Afghanistan’s many factions and neighbors.

Then it will be time to end the global war on terror. The Obama administration has already backed away from the rhetoric of a permanent war against a stateless enemy, but it has

continued too many of the Bush administration's extralegal, go-it-alone policies. These tactics are particularly ill suited to the foreign policy challenges facing the United States. To the extent that Al Qaeda still exists, it is a decentralized set of groups in different parts of the world. To combat it, Washington needs the cooperation of Arab and Muslim nations. As the historic revolutions of the Arab Spring demonstrate, Al Qaeda has resoundingly lost the battle of ideas there. The streets of Egypt, Syria, Bahrain, Yemen and other countries hunger not for a clash of civilizations but for democracy, development and engagement with the world. Only by shifting our foreign policy away from viewing Islam as an enemy to supporting the nonviolent uprisings sweeping the Arab world can we seize this chance to achieve peace.

When faced with real attacks and credible, imminent threats of terrorism, American leaders have the duty and prerogative to take action. But with such awesome power comes responsibility—to see the danger clearly for what it is and to act accordingly, proportionately, justly. As John Quincy Adams warned, America “goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy.”

The Editors

May 4, 2011 | This article appeared in the May 23, 2011 edition of The Nation.

END OF WAR ON TERROR NEWSLETTER #3 OCT. 24, 2011