

By Chris Floyd

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Many, many years ago, I noted in the Moscow Times that shortly after the 2003 invasion, the United States had begun hiring some of Saddam's old torturers as the invaders sought to quell the then-nascent "insurgency" -- i.e., the opposition to foreign occupation that when carried out by white men, such as the French during World War II, goes by the more ringing name of "resistance." Here's part of that report, from August 29, 2003:

Here's a headline you don't see every day: "War Criminals Hire War Criminals to Hunt Down War Criminals."

Perhaps that's not the precise wording used by the Washington Post this week, but it is the absolute essence of its story about the Bush Regime's new campaign to put Saddam's murderous security forces on America's payroll.

Yes, the sahibs in Bush's Iraqi Raj are now doling out American tax dollars to hire the murderers of the infamous Mukhabarat and other agents of the Baathist Gestapo – perhaps hundreds of them. The logic, if that's the word, seems to be that these bloodstained "insiders" will lead their new imperial masters to other bloodstained "insiders" responsible for bombing the UN headquarters in Baghdad – and killing another dozen American soldiers while Little George was playing with his putts during his month-long Texas siesta.

Naturally, the Iraqi people – even the Bush-appointed leaders of the Potemkin "Governing Council" – aren't exactly overjoyed at seeing Saddam's goons return, flush with American money and firepower. And they're certainly not reassured by the fact that the Bushists have also re-opened Saddam's most notorious prison, the dread Abu Ghraib, and are now, Mukhabarat-like, filling it with Iraqis – men, women and children as young as 11 – seized from their homes or plucked off the street to be held incommunicado, indefinitely, without due process, just like the old days. As The Times reports, weeping relatives who dare approach the gleaming American razor-wire in search of their "disappeared" loved ones are referred to a crude, hand-written sign pinned to a spike: "No visits are allowed, no information will be given and you must leave." Perhaps an Iraqi Akhmatova will do justice to these scenes one day.

[One of the first stories out of the gate](#) from the gigantic new release of classified documents on

the Iraq War by Wikileaks details the willing connivance and cooperation between the American invaders and their Iraqi collaborators in perpetrating heinous tortures against Iraqis. As we know, the Americans themselves were not exactly averse to atrocious maltreatment of the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis they have rounded up, overwhelmingly without charges or evidence, over the long, long years of this godforsaken enterprise. (As we've often noted here before, at one point early in the Iraq War, the Red Cross estimated that 70-90 percent of the more than 20,000 Iraqis then being held by the Americans as "suspected terrorists" were not guilty of any crime whatsoever. And of course many thousands more have been "churned" through the system since then. Which is doubtless one of the main reasons why there is still an active "insurgency" in Iraq after so many years of continuous "counter-insurgency." And yes, even after the "victorious" surge led by St. David Petraeus, and after the bogus "end of combat operations" declared by the Peace Laureate himself.)

But the Guardian story focuses on another key feature of the entire American Terror War -- indeed, of American foreign policy for a great many bipartisan decades: using proxies to do your dirty work. The Wikileaks documents spell out case after case of torture by the American-installed Iraqi lackeys -- often under the watchful eyes of American forces ... and countenanced, officially and formally, by the invaders. The Guardian reports:

This is the impact of Frago 242. A frago is a "fragmentary order" which summarises a complex requirement. This one, issued in June 2004, about a year after the invasion of Iraq, orders coalition troops not to investigate any breach of the laws of armed conflict, such as the abuse of detainees, unless it directly involves members of the coalition. Where the alleged abuse is committed by Iraqi on Iraqi, "only an initial report will be made ... No further investigation will be required unless directed by HQ".

...Hundreds of the leaked war logs reflect the fertile imagination of the torturer faced with the entirely helpless victim -- bound, gagged, blindfolded and isolated -- who is whipped by men in uniforms using wire cables, metal rods, rubber hoses, wooden stakes, TV antennae, plastic water pipes, engine fan belts or chains. At the torturer's whim, the logs reveal, the victim can be hung by his wrists or by his ankles; knotted up in stress positions; sexually molested or raped; tormented with hot peppers, cigarettes, acid, pliers or boiling water -- and always with little fear of retribution since, far more often than not, if the Iraqi official is assaulting an Iraqi civilian, no further investigation will be required.

Most of the victims are young men, but there are also logs which record serious and sexual assaults on women; on young people, including a boy of 16 who was hung from the ceiling and beaten; the old and vulnerable, including a disabled man whose damaged leg was deliberately attacked. The logs identify perpetrators from every corner of the Iraqi security apparatus -- soldiers, police officers, prison guards, border enforcement patrols.

As the Guardian notes, the Americans were fully aware of what their charges were doing:

....There is no question of the coalition forces not knowing that their Iraqi comrades are doing this: the leaked war logs are the internal records of those forces. There is no question of the allegations all being false. Some clearly are, but most are supported by medical evidence and some involve incidents that were witnessed directly by coalition forces.

It should also be noted that many of the Iraqi "interrogation techniques" noted above have also featured systematically in the American gulag during the Bush-Obama years. In fact, we know that there is a trove of photographic evidence of rapes and tortures that have been seen by top American elected officials, including members of Congress, who talked openly of how sickening these documented atrocities were. Yet this evidence is still being withheld from the American people -- [at the express order of Barack Obama](#) , and the connivance of his fellow militarists in Congress.

Speaking of the Peace Laureate, the Wikileaks document show that these countenanced and/or winked-at atrocities by the American-installed structure in Iraq are still going on today. They are not just relics of the bad old Bush years:

And it does continue. With no effective constraint, the logs show, the use of violence has remained embedded in the everyday practice of Iraqi security, with recurrent incidents up to last December. Most often, the abuse is a standard operating procedure in search of a confession, whether true or false. One of the leaked logs has a detainee being beaten with chains, cables and fists and then confessing to involvement in killing six people because "the torture was too much for him to handle".

These are the direct fruits of the staggering act of evil that was -- and is -- the illegal, immoral invasion and occupation of Iraq. No, let's go further than that. These acts are just the *latest* fruits in an astonishingly brutal and coldly deliberate 20-year effort to destroy the Iraqi people: an effort carried out through four presidential administrations -- two Republicans, two Democrats -- with the complicity of successive British governments. It is a crusade that has involved two massively destructive major military campaigns and more than a decade of draconian sanctions, all of which have led to the needless deaths of more than one and a half million innocent people.

The Bush-Clinton sanction regime -- which also included a continual military component of bombing attacks -- is part and parcel of what has happened in Iraq during the past hellish decade ... and what is still happening there. As Joy Gordon notes in her landmark study of this cold-blooded berserkery, [Invisible War](#) , the sanctions regime:

caused hundreds of thousands of deaths; decimated the health of several million children; destroyed a whole economy; reduced a sophisticated country, in which much of the population lived as the middle class in a First World country, to the status of Fourth World countries -- the poorest of the poor, such as Rwanda, Somalia, Haiti; and in a society notable for its scientists, engineers and doctors, established an economy dominated by beggars, criminals and black marketeers.

Gordon's detailed, richly sourced and morally horrifying account of the sanctions era must be read to be believed. However bad you thought it was, the reality was much worse. I hope to be writing much more on this seminal work in the weeks to come. I strongly urge you to read it. But suffice to say for now that the manner in which Bush and Clinton officials used that dead hand of bureaucracy and cool, convoluted legalistic jargon to hide a crazed policy of murderous intent reminded me of nothing so much as the dealings of Nazi officials with the Jewish ghettos of Warsaw and Lodz before their final destruction.

We'll have much more here on the Wikileaks release as people begin combing through the 400,000 documents. Wikileaks has done us all a great service by putting this vast war atrocity -- which is still going on -- back on the front pages, forcing the murderers and their accomplices and "continuers" in the halls of power to scurry around like rats caught in the light, twisting and squealing, trying to find some way to obscure the gobs of blood dripping from their hands and lips.