

Incinerating Iraqis: The Napalm Cover Up

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"You smell that? Do you smell that? Napalm, son. Nothing else in the world smells like that. I love the smell of napalm in the morning. You know, one time we had a hill bombed, for twelve hours. When it was all over I walked up. We didn't find one of 'em, not one stinkin' dink body. The smell, you know that gasoline smell, the whole hill. Smelled like... victory. Robert Duvall, "Apocalypse Now" (1979)

Two weeks ago the UK Independent ran an article which confirmed that the US had "lied to Britain over the use of napalm in Iraq". (06-17-05) Since then, not one American newspaper or TV station has picked up the story even though the Pentagon has verified the claims. This is the extent to which the American "free press" is yoked to the center of power in Washington. As we've seen with the Downing Street memo, (which was reluctantly reported 5 weeks after it appeared in the British press) the air-tight American media ignores any story that doesn't embrace their collective support for the war. The prospect that the US military is using "universally reviled" weapons runs counter to the media-generated narrative that the war was motivated by humanitarian concerns (to topple a brutal dictator) as well as to eliminate the elusive WMDs. We can now say with certainty that the only WMDs in Iraq were those that were introduced by foreign invaders from the US who have used them to subjugate the indigenous people.

"Despite persistent rumors of injuries among Iraqis consistent with the use of incendiary weapons such as napalm" the Pentagon insisted that "US forces had not used a new generation of incendiary weapons, codenamed MK77, in Iraq." (UK Independent)

The Pentagon lied.

Defense Minister, Adam Ingram, admitted that the US had misled the British high-command about the use of napalm, but he would not comment on the extent of the cover up. The use of firebombs puts the US in breach of the 1980 Convention on Certain Chemical Weapons (CCW) and is a violation the Geneva Protocol against the use of white phosphorous, "since its use causes indiscriminate and extreme injuries especially when deployed in an urban area."

Regrettably, "indiscriminate and extreme injuries" are a vital part of the American terror-campaign in Iraq; a well-coordinated strategy designed to spawn panic through random acts of violence.

It's clear that the military never needed to use napalm in Iraq. Their conventional weaponry and laser-guided technology were already enough to run roughshod over the Iraqi army and seize Baghdad almost unobstructed. Napalm was introduced simply to terrorize the Iraqi people; to pacify through intimidation. Cheney, Rumsfeld and Negroponte are old-hands at terrorism, dating back to their counterinsurgency projects in Nicaragua and El Salvador under the Reagan Administration. They know that the threat of immolation serves as a powerful deterrent and fits seamlessly into their overarching scheme of rule through fear. Terror and deception are the rotating parts of the same axis; the two imperatives of the Bush-Cheney foreign policy strategy.

Napalm in Falluja

The US also used napalm in the siege of Falluja as was reported in the UK Mirror ("Falluja Napalmed", 11-28-04) The Mirror said, "President George Bush has sanctioned the use of napalm, a deadly cocktail of polystyrene and jet-fuel banned by the United Nations in 1980, will stun the world.. Reports claim that innocent civilians have died in napalm attacks, which turn victims into human fireballs as the gel bonds flames to flesh. Since the American assault on Falluja there have been reports of 'melted' corpse, which appeared to have napalm injuries."

"Human fireballs" and "melted corpses"; these are the real expressions of Operation Iraqi Freedom not the bland platitudes issuing from the presidential podium.

Dr. Khalid ash-Shaykhli, who was the head of the Iraqi Ministry of Health in Falluja, reported to Al Jazeera (and to the Washington Post, although it was never reported) that "research, prepared by his medical team, prove that the US forces used internationally prohibited substances, including mustard gas, nerve gas, and other burning chemicals in their attacks on the war-torn city."

Dr Shaykhli's claims have been corroborated by numerous eyewitness accounts as well as reports that "all forms of nature were wiped out in Falluja".as well as "hundreds, of stray dogs, cats, and birds that had perished as a result of those gasses." An unidentified chemical was used in the bombing raids that killed every living creature in certain areas of the city.

As journalist Dahr Jamail reported later in his article "What is the US trying to Hide?", "At least two kilometers of soil were removed..exactly as they did at Baghdad Airport after the heavy battles there during the invasion and the Americans used their special weapons."

A cover up?

So far, none of this has appeared in any American media, nor has the media reported that the United Nations has been rebuffed twice by the Defense Dept. in calling for an independent investigation into what really took place in Falluja. The US simply waves away the international body as a minor nuisance while the media scrupulously omits any mention of the allegations from their coverage.

We can assume that the order to use napalm (as well as the other, unidentified substances) came straight from the office of Donald Rumsfeld. No one else could have issued that order, nor would they have risked their career by unilaterally using banned weapons when their use was entirely gratuitous. Rumsfeld's directive is consistent with other decisions attributed to the Defense Secretary; like the authorizing of torture at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, the targeting of members of the press, and the rehiring of members of Saddam's Secret Police (the Mukhabarat) to carry out their brutal activities under new leadership. Rumsfeld's office has been the headwaters for most of the administration's treachery. Napalm simply adds depth to an already prodigious list of war crimes on Rumsfeld's resume'.

Co-opting the Media

On June 10, 2005 numerous sources reported that the "U.S. Special Operations Command hired three firms to produce newspaper stories, television broadcasts and Internet web sites to spread American propaganda overseas. The Tampa-based military headquarters, which oversees commandos and psychological warfare, may spend up to \$100 million for the media campaign over the next five years." (James Crawley, Media General News Service) It's clear that there's no need for the Defense Dept. to shore up its "strategic information" (propaganda) operations in the US where reliable apparatchiks can be counted on to obfuscate, omit or exaggerate the coverage of the war according to the requirements of the Pentagon. The American press has been as skillful at embellishing the imaginary heroics of Jessica Lynch and Pat Tillman as they have been in concealing the damning details of the Downing Street Memo or the lack of evidence concerning the alleged WMDs. Should we be surprised that the media has remained silent about the immolation of Iraqis by American firebombs?

The US "free press" is a completely integrated part of the state-information system. Its meticulously managed message has been the most successful part of the entire Iraqi debacle. By providing the requisite cheerleading, diversions and omissions, the media has shown itself to be an invaluable asset to the men in power; perpetuating the deceptions that keep the public acquiescent during a savage colonial war. Given the scope of the media's culpability for the violence in Iraq, it's unlikely that the use of napalm will cause any great crisis of conscience. Their deft coverage has already facilitated the deaths of tens of thousands of innocent people; a few more charred Iraqis shouldn't matter.