

ratitor's note: With all due respect for Thom Hartmann's lucid observations herein, he misses the mark where Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda are concerned. Two points need constant emphasis: (1) the "proof" that Osama bin Laden was responsible for the 9/11 bombings was never publically established, and (2) bin Laden does not possess the capabilities for such an operation. As international law professor Francis Boyle writes in his book, *The Criminality of Nuclear Deterrence* (Clarity Press:2002, pp.18-19),

"Secretary of State Colin Powell publicly promised that they were going to produce a 'White Paper' documenting their case against Osama bin Laden and the Al Qaeda organization concerning September 11. . . . We never received a "White Paper" produced by the Untied States government as publicly promised by Secretary Powell, who was later overridden by President Bush Jr. What we got instead was a so-called White Paper produced by British Prime Minister Tony Blair. Obviously, Blair was acting as Bush Jr's surrogate . . . neither an elected or administrative official of the U.S. government, not even an American citizen. Conveniently, no American could be brought to task for or even questioned about whatever errors of inadequacies Blair might purvey.

"The Powell/Blair White Paper fell into that hallowed tradition of a "White Paper" based upon insinuation, allegation, rumors, propaganda, lies, half-truths, etc. Even unnamed British government officials on an off-the-record basis admitted that the case against Bin Laden and Al Qaeda would not stand up in court."

Note that the preamble to this white paper -- "Responsibility for the terrorist atrocities in the United States," 10/4/01 -- explicitly confirms Professor Boyle's assertion:

"This document does not purport to provide a prosecutable case against Usama Bin Laden in a court of law. Intelligence often cannot be used evidentially, due both to the strict rules of admissibility and to the need to protect the safety of sources. But on the basis of all the information available HMG is confident of its conclusions as expressed in this document." (<http://www.pm.gov.uk/output/page3554.asp>)

Writing in his essay, *The Enemy Within*, Gore Vidal cites Mohammed Heikal's understanding of 9/11 sponsorship:

Mohammed Heikal is a brilliant Egyptian journalist-observer, and sometime Foreign Minister. On 10 October 2001, he said to the *Guardian*: 'Bin Laden does not have the capabilities for an operation of this magnitude. When I hear Bush talking about al-Qaeda as if it were Nazi Germany or the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, I laugh because I know what is there. Bin Laden has been under surveillance for years: every telephone call was monitored and al-Qaeda has been penetrated by US intelligence, Pakistani intelligence, Saudi intelligence, Egyptian intelligence. They could not have kept secret an operation that required such a degree of organisation and sophistication.'

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**The Crime Of The Century:
A Never-Ending "War Against Terrorism"**
by Thom Hartmann
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During this lull in the fighting between the 2002 election cycle Iraq conflict and the soon-to-come 2004 election cycle conflict, it's a good time to (anonymously) sit in a library or bookstore and browse *The Turner Diaries* and Gore Vidal's *Perpetual War For Perpetual Peace*.

The former was the inspiration for Timothy McVeigh; the latter includes his self-written eulogy. Together, they show how terrorist McVeigh choose the wrong administration -- and terrorist Osama bin Laden, by luck of the draw, chose the right one -- to harm American democracy.

The Turner Diaries is an apocalyptic novel that opens with a convenience store robbery and ends with an Armageddon-style worldwide holocaust leaving only white Anglo-Saxon Protestants standing. The government of the United States responds to a terrorist attack (the bombing of a federal building in Oklahoma) by cracking down on dissent, expanding the power of the Executive Branch, and shredding constitutional civil rights protections. White "patriots" respond by declaring war against the government that had once tried to take away their guns. Thus begins the cycle of violence that ends with the ultimate worldwide war, a vision straight out of the Book of Revelation.

But Tim McVeigh's expectation of a repressive federal reaction to his right-wing terrorism ran into a snag: Bill Clinton knew the difference between a rogue nation and a rogue criminal.

Like every President since George Washington, Bill Clinton knew that nations only declare war against nations. While armies deal with rogue states, police deal with criminals, be they domestic or international.

Like Germany's response to the Red Army Faction, Italy's response to The Red Brigades, and Greece's response to the 17 November terrorist group (among others), Clinton brought the full force of the criminal justice system against McVeigh, and even had Interpol and overseas police agencies looking for possible McVeigh affiliates. The result was that the trauma of the Oklahoma City terrorist bombing was limited, closure was achieved for its victims, the civil rights of all Americans were largely left intact, and the United States government was able to get back to its constitutionally-defined job of ensuring life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for its citizens. (Although the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1996 [Summary, text of law] did begin the process of eroding civil liberties, it was nowhere near as draconian as the Patriot Act, and was only passed after a full year of careful Congressional deliberation.)

Every President from Washington to Clinton understood the logic expressed by our founders when James Madison, on April 20, 1795, wrote: "Of all the enemies to public liberty war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded because it comprises and develops the germ of every other. War is the parent of armies; from these proceed debts and taxes. And armies, and debts, and taxes are the known instruments for bringing the many under the domination of the few.

"In war, too," Madison continued, "the discretionary power of the Executive [Branch of Government] is extended. Its influence in dealing out offices, honors, and emoluments is multiplied; and all the means of seducing the minds are added to those of subduing the force of the people. The same malignant aspect in republicanism may be traced in the inequality of fortunes, and the opportunities of fraud, growing out of a state of war...and in the degeneracy of manners and morals, engendered by both. No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare."

Although numerous recent presidents have declared "wars" on abstractions like poverty, illiteracy, drugs, and a variety of other social ills, all were well aware that these so-called "wars" were, in truth, just politically useful rhetoric. Real war can only be declared by one nation against another: it's not possible to declare a war against an abstraction.

The crime of 911 has been often cited to rationalize the loss of civil liberties and the ongoing traumatizing of the American people with daily "Terror Alerts" and a never-ending "war on terror."

But 911 wasn't an act of war, because it wasn't done against us by a nation. It was, instead, a crime, perpetrated by a criminal and his followers.

It was a horrific crime, certainly. A crime that required strong, swift, and sure response. A crime that other nations, corporations, and individuals may have abetted and must be held accountable for both domestically and in the international venues of the United Nations and the International Criminal Court. A crime deserving a thorough investigation (which has yet to begin).

But Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda are not nations. Bin Laden was a criminal, and his group was a Middle Eastern sort of mafia with terrorist ambitions, initially funded by Poppy bin Laden, who was coincidentally a business partner with Poppy Bush. And, according to most of the world's police and intelligence agencies, Osama is dead (or dying) and his organization is in tatters.

To continue using our military against a criminal organization will only compound the horrific crime of 911, because armies aren't particularly good at police work.

It's time to restore civil liberties to Americans; rein in an Executive Branch intoxicated by warfare; and hand over to American and international police agencies the very real and very big job of dealing with the remnants of al Qaeda around the world, and prevent a recurrence of 911 by investigating who was involved and how they pulled it off in the first place.

Anything less will simply perpetuate this crime of the century.

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