

# **Old Indian Wars Dominate Bush Doctrines**

**by Jack D. Forbes**

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Back in the 1970s I suggested that the way the USA had treated the First American Nations would eventually become a precedent for the treatment of all people. I suspected that the behavior of the bureaucrats of the Interior Department, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the old War Department, with their authoritarian beliefs, would eventually infiltrate the rest of the government and the courts.

With President George W. Bush we are seeing the U.S. policy towards Native Americans being extended to citizens, resident aliens, visitors, enemies, and other countries. Let us examine a few of the Bush doctrines or strategies to discover their precedents within historic US Native policy.

## **Preventive War and Sneak Attacks**

Bush has declared that the US will attack first before an "enemy" has the ability to act. This could, of course, be called "The Pearl Harbor strategy" since that is precisely what the Japanese Empire did. But it also has U.S. precedents against First American Nations. For example, William Henry Harrison, under pressure from Thomas Jefferson to get the American Nations out of the Illinois-Indiana region, marched an invading army to the vicinity of a Native village at Tippecanoe precisely when he knew that Tecumseh was on a tour of the south and west. Prophetstown was a center for the revival of First American culture and political organizing designed to resist the sale of Native lands through crooked treaties.

Harrison marched close to Prophetstown with 1,000 troops in November 1811, invading land which had not been ceded to the United States. His intention was to begin a war before Tecumseh could complete the unification of all of the tribes. The US troops outnumbered the Native Americans and Prophetstown was burned to the ground. It should be stressed that this "preventive" attack led to full-scale warfare all along the border. It did not bring peace!

## **Terrorism and Attacks On Civilians, including their food supply, health, and infrastructure**

Here I refer not only to massacres such as those of the Washita, Sand Creek, and Wounded Knee but also to other forms of terror: (1) allowing white persons and irregular militia groups to hunt down, rape, murder, enslave and drive away Native People in areas such as northern and central California (1849-1850's), southwest Oregon (1850's-60's), Nevada (1850's-60's), Utah (1850's) and elsewhere; (2) allowing Spanish-speaking New Mexicans and whites to continue slave raids against Navajos and others, and allowing the enslavement of Native People in California and Arizona into the late 1860's; (3) constantly removing Native People from their homes as in the Cherokee's and other "trails of tears" wherein large numbers died; and (4) threatening retaliation against an entire community or nation for the

death of any white person (as in the persecution of the Pawnee in Nebraska prior to their involuntary removal to Oklahoma).

Among the many examples of biological warfare is the manner in which the U.S. allowed and encouraged the destruction of the bison herds in order to starve the Plains nations into submission. Finally, jumping into recent years, one can speak of the killing and torturing of up to 200,000 or more Native Americans in Central America by U.S. terrorist forces (the Contras) or by U.S.-funded paramilitaries and armies under presidents Reagan and Bush I.

### **Enemy Combatants, Unprotected by the Constitution**

The U.S. Constitution supposedly governs the behavior of the federal government and also guarantees the rights of citizens and "all persons." But the U.S. repeatedly denied that Native Americans were protected by the Constitution. Now this same idea is being extended to many other classes of persons. The U.S. also repeatedly captured or seized entire communities of First Americans and marched them to detention centers where they were not charged with any crime, were not tried in open court by a jury of their peers, and were not allowed to have any legal representation or habeas corpus rights.

Many entire communities were marched hundreds or even thousands of miles under horrible conditions, with huge death rates, while other captives were arbitrarily shipped to military prisons in far-off places (such as has been done with Muslim prisoners at Guantanamo, Cuba).

### **The U.S. Will Not Seize Property And Will Exercise Trusteeship**

Over and over again the U.S. government seized Native lands, often without any treaties or with fraudulent agreements. After surrender, supposedly the U.S. was to protect Native assets, but such has not been the case. Native Americans lost over 50 million acres of land and even today are in judicial action because of mismanagement of trust funds by the government. The Native Hawaiians, New Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and other groups taken over by the U.S. also have lost property and assets. The idea that the U.S. can exercise judicious trusteeship over Iraqi or other oil is ludicrous.

### **The U.S. Will Obey International Laws And Treaties**

The U.S. has refused to obey its own Constitution in regards to Native nations and has broken virtually every treaty with them. In fact, the U.S. asserts the right to ignore each and every treaty in spite of the Constitution's unequivocal language making all treaties part of the "supreme law of the land." The U.S. has also ignored International Court decisions against it and even now is proposing to violate the UN Charter by attacking another state without Security Council sanction.

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