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America's Hype over WMD: Five Invasion Plots, Three Continents, Identical Lies

By Felicity Arbuthnot

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"I do not understand this squeamishness about the use of gas. We have definitely adopted the position at the Peace Conference of arguing in favour of the retention of gas as a permanent method of warfare.... I am strongly in favour of using poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes."
(Winston S. Churchill, 1874-1965, from War Office minute, 12th May 1919.)

As the sabre rattling against Syria gets ever louder, the allegations ever wilder and double standards, stirring, plotting and terrorist financing (sorry: "aiding the legitimate opposition") neon lit, it is instructive to look at the justifications presented by US Administrations for a few other murderous incursions in recent history.

This month is the twenty third anniversary of **the US invasion of Panama** on 20th December 1989, as Panamanians prepared their Christmas celebrations. A quick check reminds the late Philip Agee recalling President George H.W. Bush telling the American people that the threat from Panama (pop: 3,571,185 – 2011) was such that: **"our way of life is at stake."** Agee referred to this in his aptly named talk "Producing the Proper Crisis."(i) Apt then as now. Nothing changes.

The aim of the invasion was to capture the country's leader **General Manuel Noriega** and, of course, to: "establish a democratic government." Regime change.



With the approaching transfer of control of the Panama Canal to Panama (originally scheduled for 1st January 1990) after a century of US colonial stewardship, America wanted to ensure it was in the hands of malleable allies.

Noriega a CIA asset, since 1967 (ii) who had also attended the notorious School of the Americas, at Fort Benning, Georgia, came to power with US backing, but seemingly his support for the US was cooling. To encapsulate a long story, the US kidnapped him and sentenced him to forty years in jail.

Plans to invade were called: “Operation Prayer Book.” It was later re-named “Operation Just Cause”, with General Colin Powell commenting that it was a moniker of which he approved as: ”Even our severest critics would have to utter ‘Just Cause’ whilst denouncing us.” (Colin Powell, with Joseph E. Persico: “My American Journey”, 1995.)

All military marauding should simply be called: “Operation Silly Name 1, then 2,3,4” etc., until the numbers finally run out.

Twenty seven thousand US troops backed by Apache helicopters decimated much of the small country, with a defence force of just three thousand. George Bush Snr., said he was removing an evil dictator who was brutalizing his own people (sound familiar?) and that the action was needed to:” protect American lives.” It was also to: “defend democracy and human rights in Panama” – and to “protect the Canal.” Surprise, eh?

Manuel Noriega was released from US jail in 2007, extradited to France which had awarded him the country’s highest honour, The Legion d’honneur in 1987. He remained in jail in France until December 2011, when he was returned to Panama, where he is still imprisoned.

In the near forgotten Panama decimation (unless you are Panamanian) the densely populated, poverty stricken neighbourhood of El Chorillo was incinerated by American actions to such an extent that it became named “Little Hiroshima.”

One woman charged that: “The North Americans began burning down El Chorillo at about 6.30 in the morning. They would throw a small device in to a house and it would catch on fire – then they would move to another, they burned from one street to the next, coordinating the burning on walkie-talkies.”



A US soldier was recorded stating: “We ask you to surrender ... if you do not, we are prepared to level each and every building.”

“Everything that moved they shot”, said a city resident.

The dead were consigned to mass graves with witnesses stating that US troops used flame throwers on the dead, noting the bodies shriveling as they burned. Others were bulldozed in to piles.(iii)

There was worse. As the current self righteous, if contradictory statements flow from Washington and Whitehall about Syria’s unproven chemical weapons, proven facts relate to America’s.

“From the 1940s to the 1990s the United States used various parts of Panama as a testing ground for chemical weapons, including mustard gas, VX, sarin, hydrogen cyanide and other nerve agents in ... mines, rockets and shells; perhaps tens of thousands of chemical munitions.” (William Blum: Rogue State, 2002.)

Further, on departing Panama at the end of 1999 they left: “many sites containing chemical weapons. They had also: “conducted secret tests of Agent Orange in Panama ...” In the 1989 invasion, the village of Pacora, near Panama City: “was bombed with (chemicals) by helicopters and aircraft from US Southern Command, with substances that burned skin, caused intense pain and diarrhea.”

Many analysts felt that Panama was the testing ground for Iraq.

Nine months after the poisoning of Panama, on Hiroshima Day 1990, the strangulating US-driven embargo on Iraq was enforced by the UN, after the US Ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie had given the green light for **Saddam Hussein** to invade Kuwait, after Kuwait’s considerable provocation and financial and geographical destabilization.(iv.)

The hype over chemical and other weapons went in to overdrive, leading Saddam Hussein to comment: “I am afraid, one day, you will say ‘You are going to make gunpowder out of wheat.’”

Thirteen months after Panama, America led a thirty one country coalition to “reduce Iraq to a pre-industrial age.” The only chemicals released from Iraq were the poisonous mix from the bombed pharmaceutical and fertilizer factories, the car manufacturing plants and the factories of

Iraq's entire industrial base, including the compounds holding the chemical and biological substances, including medical ones, sold to Iraq by the US, UK Germany and others over the previous decades, sales ironically, still ongoing at the time of the onslaught. (v.)

Highly toxic and radioactive substances were introduced into Iraq however, in the form of up to seven hundred and fifty tonnes of chemically toxic and radioactive depleted uranium munitions (DU) which have a toxic "half life" of 4.5 billion years. Iraq's litany of deformed, still born, aborted babies, infants born with cancers, the tiny graves, silent testimony to weapons of mass destruction of unique wickedness. Iraq was bombed for forty two days and nights.

The hyped chemical weapons alleged to have been manufactured by Iraq were, of course, never deployed.

On 24th March 1999, NATO began to liberate Kosovo from Serbia. (US Silly Name: Operation Noble Anvil) Kosovo had an estimated ten trillion dollars worth of "inexhaustible" minerals in the Trebca mines.

The "liberation" was seventy eight days of relentless bombardment, including use of depleted uranium weaponry. Twenty thousand tonnes of bombs were dispatched. Destroyed systematically were communications centres, fuel depots, airports, traffic communications, trains, markets, the Chinese Embassy – China was against the attack, NATO, resoundingly unconvincingly, said they had the wrong map. And of course, the media centre. Murdering journalists is now another routine, unaccountable war crime.

Before the attack, the Pentagon stated that the Army of Yugoslavia possessed at least two kinds of poisonous gasses, with the facilities to produce them. The US Department of Defense warned Slobodan Milosevic the General Staff of the Yugoslav Army : "If Belgrade uses poisonous gasses sarin and mustard gas against NATO, the response of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization will be devastating."

Oddly, after the air strikes began, NATO mentioned not one word to indicate that it was attacking Serbia's US-stated capacity to produce chemical weapons. (Zagred Globus, 16th April 1999, pp 18-19.)

The industrial scale destruction, however, left the Trebca mines unscathed.



On 14th August 2000, nine hundred heavily armed British, French, Italian, Pakistani and KFOR troops were landed from helicopters at the mines. Managers and workers tried to fight them off and were beaten, tear gassed with plastic bullets used. The resisting staff were arrested.

UN papers described the action as: “ ... induction of democratization in Kosovo.” The attack in fact, paved the way for selling of the mines -containing “the inexhaustible” estimated 77,302,000 tons of coal, copper, zinc, lead, nickel, gold, silver, marble, manganese, iron ore, asbestos and limestone “to name a few” – to private foreign groups. (News reports, websites.)

The “Kosovo Liberation Army” had been: “ ... trained for years and supported with millions of US dollars and German Marks ... through the CIA and BND” (German Intelligence) “for this war, misleadingly called a civil war”(vi) by NATO governments and spokespersons.



DU’s chemical and radiological properties were rained down throughout former Yugoslavia too. By 2001, doctors in the Serb run hospital in Kosovo Mitrovica stated that the number of patients suffering from malignant diseases had increased by two hundred percent since a 1998 survey.

A 2003 study by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) found drinking water and air samples contaminated in Bosnia Herzegovina. There was, of course: “no cause for alarm.” Pekka Haavisto, former Environment Minister of Finland, Heading UNEP, called for a wide and thorough scientific investigation to establish the full extent and hazards of the contamination. The US – cited as the only country to use DU weaponry in that conflict – blocked the request. (vii.)

However alarm was raised in Europe when Italian, Portuguese, Belgian and French peacekeepers in the region developed cancers, within a matter of months, a high proportion of those diagnosed died. Norwegian peacekeepers refused to be deployed.(viii.)

“Less than a month after the war in Yugoslavia ended in 1999, the British National Radiological Protection Board warned British citizens about the dangers from staying in Kosovo because of the contamination of its territories by D.U. weapons.”

The peacekeepers, of course were there for just weeks or months, the people of the region live there, the plight of their health and that of future generations ignored and forgotten by their “liberators.” They had other “tyrants” to topple, other populations to relieve of their lives and limbs and livelihoods.

Iraq, had again been bombed by the US and UK during the Christmas season of 1998, four months before the assault on Yugoslavia and had been back on the invasion radar ever since. The lies were familiar – and relentless, a currently topical example, one of countless:

“2nd September 2002: Experts: Iraq has tons of chemical weapons.

“As some in the Bush administration press the case for a pre-emptive strike against Iraq, weapons experts say there is mounting evidence that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has amassed large stocks of chemical and biological weapons he is hiding from a possible U.S. military attack.

“Washington’s concern is that Iraq could supply those weapons to terrorist groups ... ‘If we wait for the danger to become clear, it could be too late’ said Sen. Joseph Biden, D-Delaware, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee.”

With Biden now Vice President, it is impossible not to wonder whether he has any input in to the Syria spin, with its uncannily similar words.

“Jon Wolfsthal, an analyst with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said Iraq’s inventory is significant: ‘Iraq continues to possess several tons of chemical weapons agents, enough to kill thousands and thousands of civilians or soldiers’, Wolfsthal said.” (ix)

Further: “U.N. weapons experts have said Iraq may have stockpiled more than 600 metric tons of chemical agents, including mustard gas, VX and sarin. Some 25,000 rockets and 15,000 artillery shells with chemical agents are also unaccounted for, the experts said.

“The concern is they either have on hand — or could quickly re-create the capability to produce — vast amounts of anthrax, tons of material”, was Wolfsthal’s additional spin.



“Defense Secretary **Donald Rumsfeld**” asserted :“... Iraq has mobile biological weapons laboratories, which would be nearly impossible for U.S. forces to target.” The lives of thousands

of people were at stake, he said. Indeed, since the invasion, Iraqi deaths at American and British hands or that of their militias, and imposed puppet government, are nothing short of holocaustal.

According to Jonathan Schwartz, who revisited **General Colin Powell**'s pack of lies on Iraq to the UN on 5th February 2003 : “ My colleagues, every statement I make today is backed up by sources, solid sources. These are not assertions. What we're giving you are facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence ...” Powell is now regretful.

Schwartz is unsympathetic. On the fifth anniversary of Powell's misleading nonsense, 5th February 2008, he commented: “As much criticism as Powell has received for this – he calls it ‘painful’ and something that will ‘always be a part of my record’ – it hasn't been close to what's justified. Powell was far more than just horribly mistaken, the evidence is conclusive that he fabricated evidence and ignored repeated warnings that what he was saying was false.”

The entirely illegal invasion of Iraq, based on a trans-Atlantic pack of lies had commenced just forty five days later. Operation Very Silly Name? “Operation Iraqi Liberation”: OIL.

The lies over Libya – which under Colonel Quadaffi came top of the Human Development Index for Africa – are of recent memory. Nevertheless a few reminders:

CIA paid Quislings abound in the above invasions and others over many decades. Meet General Abdul Fatah Younis, Colonel Gaddafi's Interior Minister, who “defected to the opposition” – wonder what his price was – and became chief of staff of the insurgents: “ ... he pleaded for NATO allies to arm the rebels with heavy weapons, including helicopters and anti-tank missiles, to defend the besieged city of Misurata.. He predicted the dictator ... would be ready to use chemical weapons in a last stand against rebels or the civilian population.” (Amazing, words straight out of the current Syria “opposition” check list.)

“Gaddafi is desperate now. Unfortunately he still has about 25 per cent of his chemical weapons, which he might use as he's in a desperate situation. ...”

“Col. Gaddafi is known to have around ten tons of mustard gas remaining from stocks that he had been destroying under the supervision of a United Nations body, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.”(x.)

In context, back in 2002, Neil Mackay, multi-award winning investigations Editor of the Sunday Herald explained that: “Driven by greed and a profound lack of morality, the British government violated the Chemical weapons Convention by selling chemicals “that could be converted to weapons of war.”

Countries benefiting from UK sales, Mackay stated, included Libya, Yemen, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Cyprus, India, Kenya, Kuwait, Malaysia, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Turkey and Uganda, a charge the Department of Trade and Industry “clearly admitted.”

After Tony Blair's embrace of Colonel Gaddafi in March 2004, the British government announced plans to send their experts to Libya to destroy the chemical weapons they had sold, stating that Colonel Gaddafi had mislead Blair over their existence. That they had the remittance documents seems to have escaped them. Identical to UK duplicities over Iraq.

Between the start of Libya's destruction on 19th March 2011 and NATO taking over on 31st March 2011, the US and UK dropped one hundred and ten Cruise missiles on a country with a population of under six and a half million. When NATO assumed command of the "humanitarian intervention" they assaulted this minimal population with 26,500 bomb- releasing sorties.



There were, of course no Presidential tears for Libya's lost children, whose demise would have been preceded by unimaginable terror, in an onslaught which had two Silly Names, one for the US: "Operation Odyssey Dawn" and one for NATO: "Operation Unified Protector", the latter, comment defying.

Quaddafi himself lost three small grandchildren and three sons. In 1986 in another US bombing, he lost a just toddling adopted daughter.

Moments after she learned of his terrible death at the hands of a rabid NATO "protected" mob, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton appeared on television laughing as she said: "We came, we saw, he died."

What an age since she said: "I really believe that it takes a village to raise a child." Now her beliefs are apparently to wipe out the village, its children, parents and lynch the village elder for a tele-opportunity of raucous mirth.

On 4th December 2012, Clinton warned that Syria's President Bashar al-Assad may be moving, guess what – a "chemical weapons stockpile."

"We have made our views very clear. This is a red line for the United States. I'm not going to telegraph in any specifics what we would do in the event of credible evidence that the Assad regime has resorted to using chemical weapons against his own people, but suffice to say we are certainly planning to take action if that eventuality were to occur," she said at a press conference in Prague.

Weapons of course: "could be used to contain sarin gas", according to another U.S. official. Another added: "... we are concerned about any move that might signal that they are somehow ready to use those chemical weapons on their own people." (xii.)

"Déjà vu all over again", as the saying goes.

Syria responded on 6th December: “Syria stresses again, for the tenth, the hundredth time, that if we had such weapons, they would not be used against its people. We would not commit suicide,” Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Al Maqdad told Lebanon’s Al Manar television ...”

“We fear there is a conspiracy to provide a pretext for any subsequent interventions in Syria by these countries that are increasing pressure on Syria.” Indeed. It would hardly be a first.

In late October US troops arrived in Jordan for a major joint exercise near the Syrian border. Operation Silly and Childish Name: “Operation Eager Lion.” Al Assad in arabic translates as: the lion.

Ironically the first allegation of Syria having chemical weapons would seem to have come from John R. Bolton, alleged by Congressman Henry Waxman to have persuaded George W. Bush to include the fairy story of Iraq purchasing yellow cake uranium from Niger in his 2003 State of the Union address. The allegation is unproven, however, since the documents are still classified.

Bolton is involved with a plethora of less than liberal organizations, including the Project for the New American Century, The Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA) and the currently in the news, The National Rifle Association.

Relating to Syria, it should also be remembered that the country has been under increasingly strangulating sanctions since 2004.

Former Chief Weapons Inspector in Iraq, Scott Ritter has written that: “chemical weapons have a shelf life of five years. Biological weapons have a shelf life of three.” They also give off an “ether”, say experts, which can be picked up by satellite surveillance, which Syria, as Iraq before it is certain to be comprehensively subject of.

Heaven forbid Washington, Whitehall, Tel Aviv and the coalition of the coerced are crying “Wolf!” again. Heaven help anyone who believes them.

Notes

i. http://www.serendipity.li/cia/agee_1.html

ii. <http://revcom.us/a/017/us-invasion-panama.htm>

iii. <http://www.addictedtowar.com/docs/panama.htm>

iv. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-war-on-iraq-five-us-presidents-five-british-prime-ministers-thirty-years-of-duplicity-and-counting/20510>

v. <http://www.commondreams.org/headlines02/0908-08.htm>

vi. <http://www.currentconcerns.ch/index.php?id=785>

vii. http://www.iacenter.org/depleted/un_du.htm

viii. <http://www.frontlineonnet.com/fl1803/18030580.htm>

ix. http://articles.cnn.com/2002-09-02/world/iraq.weapons_1_biological-weapons-weapons-inspectors-iraqi-president-saddam-hussein?_s=PM:WORLD

x.<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/8481250/Libya-Col-Gaddafi-still-has-quarter-of-chemical-weapons-stockpile.html>

xi.<http://news.yahoo.com/clinton-assads-chemical-weapons-red-line-us-170103890-abc-news-politics.html>