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The Sociocide of Iraq by Bush/Cheney

The War was a Crime

by RALPH NADER
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Ten years ago George W. Bush and Dick Cheney, as war criminals, launched the sociocide of the people of Iraq – replete with embedded television and newspaper reporters chronicling the invasion through the Bush lens. That illegal war of aggression was, of course, based on recognized lies, propaganda and cover-ups that duped or co-opted leading news institutions such as the New York Times and the Washington Post.

Wars of aggression – this one blowing apart a country of 25 million people ruled by a weakened despot surrounded by far more powerful adversaries – Israel, Turkey and Iran – are major crimes under international law and the UN Charter. The Bush/Cheney war was also unconstitutional, never declared by Congress, as Senator Robert Byrd eloquently pointed out at the time. Moreover, many of the acts of torture and brutality perpetrated against the Iraqi people are illegal under various federal statutes.

Over one million Iraqis died due to the invasion, the occupation and the denial of health and safety necessities for infants, children and adults. Far more Iraqis were injured and sickened. Birth defects and cancers continue to set lethal records. Five million Iraqis became refugees, many fleeing into Jordan, Syria and other countries.

Nearly five thousand U.S. soldiers died. Many other soldiers committed suicide. Well over 150,000 Americans were injured or sickened, far more than the official Pentagon under-estimate which restricts nonfatal casualty counts only to those incurred directly in the line of fire.

So far the Iraq War has monetarily cost taxpayers about \$2 trillion. Tens of billions more will be spent for veterans disabilities and continuing expenses in Iraq. Taxpayers are paying over \$600 million a year to guard the giant U.S. Embassy and its personnel in Baghdad, more than what our government spends for OSHA, whose task is to reduce the number of American workers who die every year from workplace disease and trauma, currently about 58,000.

All for what results? Before the invasion there was no al-Qaeda in Saddam Hussein's secular dictatorship. Now a growing al-Qaeda in Iraq is terrorizing the country with ever bolder car bombings and suicide attacks taking dozens of lives at a time and spilling forcefully over into Syria.

Iraq is a police state with sectarian struggles between the dominant Shiites and the insurgent Sunnis who lived together peacefully and intermarried for centuries. There were no sectarian slaughters of this kind before the invasion, except for Saddam Hussein's bloodbath against rebellious Shiites. The Shiites were egged on by President George H.W. Bush, who promptly abandoned them to the deadly strafing of Saddam's helicopter gunships at the end of the preventable first Gulf War in 1991.

Iraq is a country in ruins with a political and wealthy upper class raking off the profits from the oil industry and the occupation. The U.S. is now widely hated in that part of Asia. Bush/Cheney ordered the use of cluster bombs, white phosphorous and depleted uranium against, for example, the people of Fallujah where infant birth deformities have skyrocketed.

As Raed Jarrar, an Iraqi-American analyst observed: "Complete destruction of the Iraqi national identity" and the sectarian system introduced by the U.S. invaders in 2003, where Iraqis were favored or excluded based on their sectarian and ethnic affiliations, laid the basis for the current cruel chaos and violence. It was a nasty, brutish form of divide and rule.

The results back home in our country are soldiers and their extended families suffering in many ways from broken lives. Phil Donahue's gripping documentary Body of War follows the pain-wracked life of one soldier returning in 2004 from Iraq as a paraplegic. That soldier, Tomas Young, nearing the end of his devastated life, has just written a penetrating letter to George W. Bush which every American should read (http://www.truthdig.com/dig/item/the_last_letter_20130318/).

The lessons from this unnecessary quagmire should be: first, how to stop any more wars of aggression by the Washington warmongers – the same neocon draft dodgers are at it again regarding Iran and Syria. And second, the necessity to hold accountable the leading perpetrators of this brutal carnage and financial wreckage who are presently at large – fugitives from justice earning fat lecture and consulting fees.

In the nine months running up to the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, at least three hundred prominent, retired military officers, diplomats and national security officials publically spoke out against the Bush/Cheney drumbeats to war. Their warnings were prophetically accurate. They included retired Generals Anthony Zinni and William Odom, and Admiral Shanahan. Even Brent Scowcroft and James Baker, two of President George H.W. Bush's closest advisors strongly opposed the invasion.

These outspoken truthsayers – notwithstanding their prestige and experience – were overwhelmed by a runaway White House, a disgraceful patsy mainstream media and an abdicator Congress. Multi-billionaire, George Soros was also courageously outspoken. Unfortunately, prior to the invasion, he did not provide a budget and secretariat for these men and women to provide continuity and to multiply their numbers around the country, through the mass media and on Capitol Hill. By the time he came around to organizing and publicizing such an organized effort, it was after the invasion, in July 2003.

Nine months earlier, I believe George Soros could have provided the necessary resources to stop Bush/Cheney and their lies from stampeding the government, and country, into war.

Mr. Soros can still build the grassroots pressure for the exercise of the rule of law under our constitution and move Congress toward public hearings in the Senate designed to establish an investigative arm of the Justice Department to pursue the proper enforcement against Bush/Cheney and their accomplices.

After all, the Justice Department had such a special prosecutors' office during the Watergate scandal and was moving to indict a resigned Richard Nixon before President Ford pardoned him.

Compare the Watergate break-in and obstruction of justice by Nixon with the horrendous crimes coming out of the war against Iraq – a nation that never threatened the U.S. but whose destruction takes a continuing toll on our country.