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## Return to Bush America: Revisiting American War Crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan

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Republican presidential candidate Jeb Bush, the former governor of Florida and brother of George W. Bush, has been referring to his brother's failed «war against evil doers» in recent comments suggesting that he continues to support the wars of folly and choice waged by the Bush-Cheney administration from 2001 to 2009.

However, when one examines this sordid period of American history, the identities of the real «evil doers» become very apparent. It was Bush, Cheney, and their cabal of neo-conservatives who were the architects of the wars of choice that resulted in countless deaths of Iraqis and Afghans, as well as thousands of American and allied military personnel. It was the Bush-Cheney administration, aided by Jeb Bush's current foreign policy adviser Paul Wolfowitz,

which also left permanent emotional scars on innocent people as a result of its war crimes of kidnapping and torture.

In Iraq, Haditha, Balad and Fallujah joined Oradour, Lidice, Kortelisy, and My Lai among the modern era's worst war crimes. In November 2005 Haditha was the scene of a U.S. massacre of civilians, including women and children. It was followed in March 2006 by a U.S. massacre of civilians in the town of Ishaqi, 10 miles north of Balad.

Not all the war crimes carried out by the United States were the result of murder, torture, and kidnapping. Some were psychological warfare crimes. International law provides for the indictment of propagandists who stoke the flames of hate by supporting war crimes and the unlawful actions of governments during wartime. William Joyce (nicknamed «Lord Haw-Haw»), an Irish-American broadcaster for Nazi Germany, was hanged for treason on 3 January 1946. Mildred Sisk (nicknamed «Axis Sally»), an American who broadcasted messages to Allied troops on Radio Berlin, was convicted of one count of treason following the war. U.S. citizen Iva Toguri D'Aquino («Tokyo Rose»), a broadcaster for Japanese radio during World War II, was convicted of treason. She was pardoned by President Gerald Ford in a deal worked out by Ford's Chief of Staff, Dick Cheney. American television and radio broadcasters like Bill O'Reilly, Sean Hannity, Rush Limbaugh, and other broadcasters who defended American war crimes and were acting on behalf of the Bush administration were no different than their World War II propagandist predecessors for the Axis powers.

A number of U.S. military officers and enlisted personnel discounted the notion that their actions against the people of Iraq and Afghanistan were war crimes. They rallied to the cause of «responding to the 9/11 attack». Yet, the people of Iraq had nothing to do with 9/11. And the people of Afghanistan, cruelly subjugated by the Taliban, had nothing to do with the alliance made between the jihadists who ran Kabul and Kandahar and Al Qaeda.

With respect to U.S. military members who believed they were merely following orders, it is noteworthy to look back at the final coded comments of German Admiral Wilhelm Canaris before his execution for helping a plot to overthrow Adolf Hitler and the Nazis. Canaris, Commander of the German Military Defense Command during World War II, was executed in Flossenbuerg Concentration Camp in April 1945 after an unsuccessful military coup against Adolf Hitler. The DPA German Press Agency reported that, according to Canaris biographer Karl Heinz Abshagen, Canaris tapped a final message on the wall to a Danish inmate in the neighboring cell: «You as an officer will understand, that I was only fulfilling my patriotic duty when I tried to step up against the criminal senselessness of Hitler, leading Germany into disaster».

International law, especially that stemming from the Nuremberg War Tribunal, recognizes that military members and intelligence agents are not only duty bound to disobey unlawful orders to violate rules of conflict but are required to take action against those who issue such orders. In other words, 9/11 was no excuse to carry out war crimes against anyone, Iraqis, Afghans, or those innocent people grabbed from airports and streets around the world.

War crimes involving torture at Guantanamo, Cuba and Abu Ghraib, Iraq gulags were not

limited to Americans. Former United Nations peacekeepers reported that some of the contract Arabic speaking interrogators and torturers used by the U.S. military in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay were war crimes suspects who worked as interrogators for Israeli occupation forces in South Lebanon.

In 1991, after Lebanese prisoners and hostages were released from the Israeli-run prison at El Khiam, UN medical personnel noticed the prisoners had been exposed to significant torture. During the medical examinations, the released prisoners revealed the names of a number of the prison leaders and interrogators to UN authorities. The interrogators and prison leaders were mostly South Lebanese, both Christian and Muslim, all working for the Israeli Defense Force.

In 2000, when Israel evacuated from South Lebanon, the interrogation personnel were transported to Israel. With valid Israeli passports, some of the interrogators emigrated to countries like the United States, Canada, and Australia. Some had been sentenced to death in absentia by Lebanese judicial authorities for their war crimes in Lebanon. A full report on the El Khiam matter was forwarded to the Norwegian government in 1991, and in 2002, to the War Crime Section of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

Many Lebanese interrogators came under investigation by the RCMP for war crimes taking place from 2002, the outset of America's «Global War on Terrorism» and invasion of Afghanistan, to 2004, the year after the U.S. invasion of Iraq. There were credible reports that these Lebanese personnel with Israeli and U.S. passports were hired by the Pentagon and its contractors for interrogation tasks in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo.

To their credit, some U.S. troops were not silent in the face of American war crimes. At the Winter Soldier conference held in Maryland in March 2008, there was sobering testimony about U.S. Marines taking "pot shots" at Iraqi passing and idle vehicles in August 2004 near the Iraqi-Syrian border town of Al Qa'im. One former Marine presented a disgusting tale of abuse committed by his Marine unit. He said that in one case, his unit mortared a tire shop in Al Qa'im by mistake and without compensation to its owner. The former Marine also said that Iraqi prisoners who were wrongly detained were later set free in the middle of the desert after being kicked and punched by Marines. The Marine also revealed that corpses of Iraqis were similarly abused. He said bodies, including decapitated corpses, were run over by Marine vehicles.

In one case, an Iraqi killed in a field was left to rot. Another Marine took a photograph of the rotting corpse and used it as a screen saver on his lap top computer. Marines also shot a mayor of a town near Haditha. The Marines' commander congratulated his troops and said a photograph taken of the dead mayor was «how good Marines should shoot». A former Army Ranger recounted how white phosphorus (WP), a substance normally used for targeting purposes, was used on civilians. WP, also known as "Willie Peter" on civilians in Fallujah leaving the victims of the attacks as horribly burned and disfigured corpses. Such descriptions of war criminality could have come right out of the pages of Nuremberg war crimes testimony by prosecutors. It is also a fact that such war crimes gave impetus to the rise among Sunni Iraqis of the Islamic State in western Iraq.

Jeb Bush and his neo-con advisers and funders would have the world forget the American

atrocities and war crimes carried out in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other countries. No one should ever forget the war crimes of George W. Bush and Dick Cheney and the notion of Jeb Bush becoming president should be as abhorrent an idea to Americans as the idea of a brother of Adolf Hitler wanting to be the Chancellor of West Germany after World War II would have been anathema to the German people.