

America's Deadliest Export and The Endless War on Terror

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Praise for *America's Deadliest Export*: "Blum concentrates on matters of great current significance, and does not pull his punches" — Noam Chomsky.

A safer world for Americans... if they don't leave home

Supporters of US foreign policy have been repeating the point ever since the attacks of September 11, 2001: US counterterrorism policy has worked. How do they know? Because there haven't been any successful terrorist attacks in the United States in all the years since that infamous day.

True, but there weren't any terrorist attacks in the United States in the six years before September 11, 2001 either, the last one being the Oklahoma City bombing of April 19, 1995. The absence of terrorist attacks in the US appears to be the norm, with or without a War on Terror.

More significantly, in the years since 9/11 the United States has been the target of terrorist attacks on scores of occasions, not even counting those in Iraq or Afghanistan — attacks on military, diplomatic, civilian, Christian, and other targets associated with the United States; in the Middle East, South Asia, and the Pacific; more than a dozen times in Pakistan alone. The attacks include the October 2002 bombings of two nightclubs in Bali, Indonesia, which killed more than 200 people, almost all of them Americans and citizens of their Australian and British war allies; the following year brought the heavy bombing of the US-managed Marriott Hotel in Jakarta, Indonesia, the site of diplomatic receptions and 4th of July celebrations held by the American embassy; and other horrendous attacks in later years on US allies in Madrid and London because of the war.

Land of the Free, Home of the War on Terror

David Hicks is a 31-year-old Australian who in a plea-bargain with a US military court served nine months in prison, largely in Australia. That was after five years at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, without being charged with a crime, without a trial, without a conviction. Under the deal, Hicks agreed not to talk to reporters for one year (a terrible slap in the face of free speech), to forever waive any profit from telling his story (a slap – *mon Dieu!* – in the face of free enterprise), to submit to US interrogation and testify at future US trials or international tribunals (an open invitation to the US government to hound the young man for the rest of his life), to renounce any claims of mistreatment or unlawful detention (a requirement which would be unconstitutional in a civilian US court). 'If the United States were not ashamed of its conduct, it wouldn't hide behind a gag order,' said Hicks's attorney Ben Wizner of the American Civil Liberties Union.

Like so many other 'terrorists' held by the United States in recent years, Hicks had been 'sold' to the American military for a bounty offered by the US, a phenomenon repeated frequently in Afghanistan and Pakistan. US officials had to know that, once they offered payments to a very poor area to turn in bodies, almost anyone was fair game.

Other 'terrorists' have been turned in as reprisals for all sorts of personal hatreds and feuds. Many others — abroad and in the United States — have been incarcerated by the United States simply for working for, or merely contributing money to, charitable organizations with alleged or real ties to a 'terrorist organization,' as determined by a list kept by the State Department, a list conspicuously political.

It was recently disclosed that an Iraqi resident of Britain is being released from Guantánamo after four years. His crime? He refused to work as an informer for the CIA and MI5, the British security service. His business partner is still being held in Guantánamo, for the same crime.

Finally, there are those many other poor souls who have been picked up simply for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. 'Most of these guys weren't fighting. They were running,' General Martin Lucenti, former deputy commander of Guantánamo, has pointed out.

Thousands of people have been thrown into hell on earth for no earthly reason. The world media have been overflowing with their individual tales of horror and sadness for years. Guantánamo's former commander, General Jay Hood, said: 'Sometimes we just didn't get the right folks.' Not that the torture they were put through would be justified if they were in fact 'the right folks.'

Hicks was taken into custody in Afghanistan in 2001. He was a convert to Islam and like others from many countries had gone to Afghanistan for religious reasons, had wound up on the side of the Taliban in the civil war that had been going on since the early 1990s, and had received military training at a Taliban camp. The United States has insisted on calling such camps 'terrorist training camps,' or 'anti-American terrorist training camps,' or 'al-Qaeda terrorist training camps.' Almost every individual or group not in love with US foreign policy that Washington wants to stigmatize is charged with being associated with, or being a member of, al-Qaeda, as if there's a precise and meaningful distinction between people retaliating against the atrocities of American imperialism while being a member of al-Qaeda and retaliating against the atrocities of American imperialism while not being a member of al-Qaeda; as if al-Qaeda gives out membership cards to fit into your wallet, and there are chapters of al-Qaeda that put out a weekly newsletter and hold a potluck on the first Monday of each month.

It should be noted that for nearly half a century much of southern Florida has been one big training camp for anti-Castro terrorists. None of their groups — which have carried out many hundreds of serious terrorist acts in the US as well as abroad, including bombing a passenger airplane in flight — is on the State Department list. Nor were the Contras of Nicaragua in the 1980s, heavily supported by the United States, about whom former CIA director Stansfield Turner testified: 'I believe it is irrefutable that a number of the Contras' actions have to be characterized as terrorism, as State-supported terrorism.'

The same applies to groups in Kosovo and Bosnia, with close ties to al-Qaeda, including Osama bin Laden, in the recent past, but which have allied themselves with Washington's

agenda in the former Yugoslavia since the 1990s. Now we learn of US support for a Pakistani group called *Jundullah* and led by a Taliban, which has taken responsibility for the kidnappings and deaths and of more than a dozen Iranian soldiers and officials in cross-border attacks. Do not hold your breath waiting for the name *Jundullah* to appear on the State Department list of terrorist organizations; nor any of the several other ethnic militias being supported by the CIA to carry out terrorist bombing and assassination attacks in Iran.

The same political selectivity applies to many of the groups which are on the list, particularly those opposed to American or Israeli policies.

Amid growing pressure from their home countries and international human rights advocates, scores of Guantánamo detainees have been quietly repatriated in recent years. Now a new analysis by lawyers who have represented detainees at this 21st century Devil's Island says this policy undermines Washington's own claims about the threat posed by many of the prison camp's residents. The report, based on US government case files for Saudi detainees sent home over the past three years, shows inmates being systematically freed from custody within weeks of their return.

In half the cases studied, the detainees had been turned over to US forces by Pakistani police or troops in return for financial rewards. Many others were accused of terrorism connections in part because their Arab nicknames matched those found in a computer database of al-Qaeda members, documents show. In December, a survey by the Associated Press found that 84 percent of released detainees — 205 out of 245 individuals whose cases could be tracked — were set free after being released to the custody of their native countries.

'There are certainly bad people in Guantánamo Bay, but there are also other cases where it's hard to understand why the people are still there,' said Anant Raut, co-author of the report, who has visited the detention camp three times. 'We were struggling to find some rationality, something to comfort us that it wasn't just random. But we didn't find it.'

The report states that many of the US attempts to link the detainees to terrorist groups were based on evidence the authors describe as circumstantial and 'highly questionable,' such as the travel routes the detainees had followed in flying commercially from one Middle Eastern country to another. American officials have associated certain travel routes with al-Qaeda, when in fact, says the report, the routes 'involve ordinary connecting flights in major international airports.' With regard to accusations based on similar names, the report states: 'This accusation appears to be based upon little more than similarities in the transliterations of a detainee's name and a name found on one of the hard drives.'

Raut said he was most struck by the high percentage of Saudi detainees who had been captured and turned over by Pakistani forces. In effect, he said, for at least half the individuals in his report the United States 'had no first-hand knowledge of their activities' in Afghanistan before their capture and imprisonment.

When Michael Scheuer, the former CIA officer who headed the Agency's Osama bin Laden unit, was told that the largest group in Guantánamo came from custody in Pakistan, he declared: 'We absolutely got the wrong people.' Never mind. They were all treated equally: all thrown into solitary confinement; shackled blindfolded, forced to undergo excruciating physical contortions for long periods, denied medicine; sensory deprivation and sleep

deprivation were used, along with two dozen other methods of torture which American officials do not call torture. (If you tortured these officials, they might admit that it's 'torture lite.')

'The idea is to build an anti-terrorist global environment,' a senior American defense official said in 2003, 'so that in 20 to 30 years, terrorism will be like slave-trading, completely discredited.'

When will the dropping of bombs on innocent civilians by the United States, and invading and occupying their country, without their country attacking or threatening the US, become completely discredited? When will the use of depleted uranium and cluster bombs and CIA torture renditions become things that even men like George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, and Donald Rumsfeld will be too embarrassed to defend?

Australian/British journalist John Pilger has noted that in George Orwell's 1984 'three slogans dominate society: war is peace, freedom is slavery and ignorance is strength. Today's slogan, war on terrorism, also reverses meaning. The war is terrorism.'

Saved again, thank the Lord, saved again (August 18, 2006)

Our government has kept us in a perpetual state of fear — kept us in a continuous stampede of patriotic fervor — with the cry of grave national emergency. Always there has been some terrible evil at home or some monstrous foreign power that was going to gobble us up if we did not blindly rally behind it by furnishing the exorbitant funds demanded. Yet, in retrospect, these disasters seem never to have happened, seem never to have been quite real.

– General Douglas MacArthur, 1957

So now we've (choke) just been (gasp) saved from the simultaneous blowing up of as many as ten airplanes headed toward the United States from the UK. Wow, thank you Brits, thank you Homeland Security. And thanks for preventing the destruction of the Sears Tower in Chicago, saving lower Manhattan from a terrorist-unleashed flood, smashing the frightful Canadian 'terror plot' with seventeen arrested, ditto the three Toledo terrorists, and squashing the Los Angeles al-Qaeda plot to fly a hijacked airliner into a skyscraper.

The Los Angeles plot of 2002 was proudly announced by George W. in 2006. It has since been totally discredited. Declared one senior counterterrorism official: 'There was no definitive plot. It never materialized or got past the thought stage.'

And the scare about ricin in the UK, which our own Mr Cheney used as part of the build-up for the invasion of Iraq, telling an audience on January 10, 2003: 'The gravity of the threat we face was underscored in recent days when British police arrested ... suspected terrorists in London and discovered a small quantity of ricin, one of the world's deadliest poisons.' It turned out there was not only no plot, there was no ricin. The Brits discovered almost immediately that the substance wasn't ricin but kept that secret for more than two years.

From what is typical in terrorist scares, it is likely that the individuals arrested in the UK on August 10, 2006 were guilty of what George Orwell, in 1984, called 'thoughtcrimes.' That is to say, they haven't actually done anything. At most, they've thought about doing something the government would label 'terrorism.' Perhaps not even very serious thoughts,

perhaps just venting their anger at the exceptionally violent role played by the UK and the US in the Middle East and thinking out loud how nice it would be to throw some of that violence back in the face of Blair and Bush. And then, the fatal moment for them that ruins their lives forever: their angry words are heard by the wrong person, who reports them to the authorities. (In the Manhattan flood case the formidable, dangerous 'terrorists' made mention on an Internet chat room about blowing something up.)

Soon a government agent provocateur appears, infiltrates the group, and then actually encourages the individuals to think and talk further about terrorist acts, to develop real plans instead of youthful fantasizing, and even provides the individuals with some of the means for carrying out these terrorist acts, like explosive material and technical know-how, money and transportation, whatever is needed to advance the plot. It's known as 'entrapment,' and it's supposed to be illegal, it's supposed to be a powerful defense for the accused, but the authorities get away with it all the time; and the accused get put away for a very long time.

And because of the role played by the agent provocateur, we may never know whether any of the accused, on their own, would have gone much further, if at all, like actually making a bomb, or, in the present case, even making transatlantic flight reservations, since many of the accused reportedly did not even have passports. Government infiltrating and monitoring is one thing; encouragement, pushing the plot forward, and scaring the public to make political capital from it are quite something else.

Prosecutors have said that the seven men in Miami charged with conspiring to blow up the Sears Tower in Chicago and FBI buildings in other cities had sworn allegiance to al-Qaeda. This came after meeting with a confidential government informant who was posing as a representative of the terrorist group. Did they swear or hold such allegiance, one must wonder, before meeting with the informant? 'In essence,' reported the Independent, 'the entire case rests upon conversations between Narseal Batiste, the apparent ringleader of the group, with the informant, who was posing as a member of al-Qaeda but in fact belonged to the [FBI] South Florida Terrorist Task Force.'

Batiste told the informant that 'he was organizing a mission to build an "Islamic army" in order to wage jihad.' He provided a list of things he needed: boots, uniforms, machine guns, radios, vehicles, binoculars, bullet-proof vests, firearms, and \$50,000 in cash. Oddly enough, one thing that was not asked for was any kind of explosive material. After sweeps of various locations in Miami, government agents found no explosives or weapons. 'This group was more aspirational than operational,' said the FBI's deputy director, while one FBI agent described them as 'social misfits.' And, added the *New York Times*, investigators openly acknowledged that the suspects 'had only the most preliminary discussions about an attack.' Yet Cheney later hailed the arrests at a political fundraiser, calling the group a 'very real threat.'

It was perhaps as great a threat as the suspects in the plot to unleash a catastrophic flood in lower Manhattan by destroying a huge underground wall that holds back the Hudson River. That was the story first released by the authorities; after a while it was replaced by the claim that the suspects were actually plotting something aimed at the subway tunnels that run under the river.¹⁶ Which is more reliable, one must wonder, information on Internet chat rooms or WMD tips provided by CIA Iraqi informers? Or information obtained, as in the current case in the UK, from Pakistani interrogators of the suspects, none of the interrogators being known to be ardent supporters of Amnesty International.

And the three men arrested in Toledo, Ohio, in February 2006 were accused of — are you ready? — plotting to recruit and train terrorists to attack US and allied troops overseas. For saving us from this horror we have a paid FBI witness to thank. He had been an informer with the FBI for four years, and most likely was paid for each new lead he brought in. In the Sears case, the FBI paid almost \$56,000 to two confidential informants, and government officials also granted one of them immigration parole so he could remain in the country.

There must be millions of people in the United States and elsewhere who have thoughts about ‘terrorist acts.’ I might well be one of them when I read about a gathering of Bush, Cheney, and assorted neocons that’s going to take place. Given the daily horror of Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, and Palestine in recent times, little of which would occur if not for the government of the United States of America and its allies, the numbers of people having such thoughts must be multiplying rapidly. If I had been at an American or British airport as the latest scare story unfolded, waiting in an interminable line, having my flight canceled, or being told I can’t have any carry-on luggage, I may have found it irresistible at some point to declare loudly to my fellow suffering passengers: ‘Y’know, folks, this security crap is only gonna get worse and worse as long as the United States and Britain continue to invade, bomb, overthrow, occupy, and torture the world!’ How long would it be before I was pulled out of line and thrown into some kind of custody?

If General MacArthur were alive today, would he dare to publicly express the thoughts cited above?

Policymakers and security experts, reports the Associated Press, say that ‘Law enforcers are now willing to act swiftly against al-Qaeda sympathizers, even if it means grabbing wannabe terrorists whose plots may be only pipe dreams.’ The capture of dangerous would-be terrorists has been a growth industry in the United States ever since the events of September 11, 2001. Do you remember the ‘shoe bomber’? Richard Reid was his name and he was aboard an American Airlines flight from Paris to Miami on December 22, 2001; he tried to detonate explosives hidden in his shoes, didn’t succeed, and was overpowered by attendants and passengers. It’s because of him that we have to take our shoes off at the airport.

There was also ‘the underwear bomber,’ Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, referred to above, who tried to set off plastic explosives sewn into his underwear while aboard a Northwest Airlines flight as the plane approached Detroit airport in 2009. But he failed to detonate them properly, producing only some popping noises and a flame; another passenger jumped him and restrained him as others put out the fire. It’s because of Mr Abdulmutallab that we now virtually have to take our underwear off at airports.

And the reason we have strict rules about carrying liquids and gels aboard an airplane? We can thank some other young clowns in Europe in 2006 with pipe dreams about blowing up ten airliners with liquid explosives; they scarcely made it to step one. Since the ‘bomb made from liquids and gels’ story was foisted upon the public, several chemists and other experts have pointed out the technical near-impossibility of manufacturing such a bomb in a moving airplane, if for no other reason than the necessity of spending at least an hour or two in the airplane bathroom.

Then there was Faisal Shahzad, the ‘Times Square bomber,’ who on May 1, 2010 parked his car in the heart of New York City, tried to detonate various explosive devices in the car, but succeeded in producing only smoke. He then walked away from the car, after which he was

arrested. It's because of him that cars are no longer permitted in Times Square. (No, that's a joke, but maybe not for long.)

The incompetence of these would-be bombers in being unable to detonate their explosives is remarkable. You'd think they could have easily gotten that critical and relatively simple part of the operation down pat beforehand. What I find even more remarkable is that neither of the two men aboard the airplanes thought of going into the bathroom, closing the door, and then trying to detonate the explosives. An 8-year-old child would have thought of that. Are we supposed to take the 'threat' posed by such men seriously?

'The Department of Homeland Security would like to remind passengers that you may not take any liquids onto the plane. This includes ice cream, as the ice cream will melt and turn into a liquid.' This was actually heard by one of my readers at Atlanta airport in 2012. He laughed out loud. He informs me that he didn't know what was more bizarre, that such an announcement was made or that he was the only person that he could see who reacted to its absurdity.

Another example of the frightful terrorist threat was in October 2010 when we were told that two packages addressed to Chicago had been found aboard American cargo planes, one in Dubai, the other in England, containing what might, or might not, be an explosive device; which might, or might not, have exploded. Authorities said it was not known if the intent was to detonate the packages in flight or in Chicago.

Now get this. Terrorists, we are told, are shipping bombs in packages to the United States. They of course would want to make the packages as innocuous looking as can be, right? Nothing that would provoke any suspicion in the mind of an already very suspicious American security establishment, right? So what do we have? The packages were mailed from Yemen... and addressed to Jewish synagogues in Chicago... Well folks, nothing to see here, just keep moving.

A tale of two terrorists

Zacarias Moussaoui, the only person ever charged in the United States in connection with the September 11, 2001 attacks, testifying at his 2006 trial in Alexandria, Virginia: the sobbing September 11 survivors and family members who testified against him were 'disgusting'... He and other Muslims want to 'exterminate' American Jews... executed Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh was 'the greatest American.' Moussaoui expressed his willingness to kill Americans 'any time, anywhere'... 'I wish it had happened not only on the 11th, but the 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th.'

Orlando Bosch, one of the masterminds behind the October 6, 1976 bombing of a Cuban passenger plane, blown out of the sky with seventy-three people on board, including the entire young Cuban fencing team, interviewed on April 8, 2006 by Juan Manuel Cao of Channel 41 in Miami:

Cao: Did you down that plane in 1976?

Bosch: If I tell you that I was involved, I will be inculcating myself ... and if I tell you that I did not participate in that action, you would say that I am lying. I am therefore not going to answer one thing or the other.

Cao: In that action 73 persons were killed...

Bosch: No chico, in a war such as us Cubans who love liberty wage against the tyrant [Fidel Castro], you have to down planes, you have to sink ships, you

have to be prepared to attack anything that is within your reach.
Cao: But don't you feel a little bit for those who were killed there, for their families?
Bosch: Who was on board that plane? Four members of the Communist Party, five North Koreans, five Guyanese... Who was there? Our enemies.
Cao: And the fencers? The young people on board?
Bosch: I saw the young girls on television. There were six of them. After the end of the competition, the leader of the six dedicated their triumph to the tyrant. She gave a speech filled with praise for the tyrant. We had already agreed in Santo Domingo, that everyone who comes from Cuba to glorify the tyrant had to run the same risks as those men and women that fight alongside the tyranny.
Cao: If you ran into the family members who were killed in that plane, wouldn't you think it difficult ... ?
Bosch: No, because in the end those who were there had to know that they were cooperating with the tyranny in Cuba.

The difference between Zacarias Moussaoui and Orlando Bosch is that one of them was put on trial and sentenced to life in prison while the other walks around Miami a free man, free enough to be interviewed on television. In 1983 the City Commission of Miami declared a 'Dr Orlando Bosch Day.'

Bosch had a partner in plotting the bombing of the Cuban airliner: Luis Posada, a Cuban-born citizen of Venezuela. He lives as a free man in the United States. His extradition has been requested by Venezuela for several crimes, including the downing of the airliner, part of the plotting having taken place in Venezuela. But the Bush and Obama administrations have refused to send him to Venezuela, for, despite his horrible crime, he's an ally of the empire; Venezuela and Cuba are not. Nor will Washington try him in the US for the crime. However, the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Civil Aviation (1973), of which the United States is a signatory, gives Washington no discretion. Article 7 says that the state in which 'the alleged offender is found shall, if it does not extradite him, be obliged, without exception whatsoever and whether or not the offense was committed in its territory, to submit the case to its competent authorities for the purpose of prosecution.'

Extradite or prosecute. The United States does neither.

This is an extract from [America's Deadliest Export: Democracy — The Truth About US Foreign Policy and Everything Else](#) by William Blum (Zed Books, 2014). Zed Books have just reissued Blum's three classic books, [America's Deadliest Export](#), [Rogue State](#) and [Killing Hope](#) in new updated editions.

William Blum is a writer, historian, and renowned critic of US foreign policy. He is the author of [Killing Hope](#), [Rogue State](#) and [America's Deadliest Export](#). For more information, visit his [website](#).

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