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Starving People, Targeting Them with Biological and Chemical Weapons

by Jennifer Loewenstein

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Israeli authorities blockading the Gaza Strip in 2008 went so far as to calculate how many calories would be needed to avert a humanitarian disaster in the impoverished Palestinian territory, according to a newly declassified military document... [Critics said] the document was new evidence that Israel used food as a pressure tactic to try to force Gaza's Hamas rulers from power...

What bothers me are the number of parallels to this right here, throughout US history. We've used chemical, biological, and nuclear warfare against our alleged enemies, have had concentration camps for far more people than the Japanese; starved our enemies with "sanctions" while denying them medical care at the same time; and much worse -back well into the First World War and the Civil War. But people don't like to remember these things, whether they're about Iraq, Iran, Cuba, Vietnam, or Japan or against the enemies in our midst, like the Red Man – and god only knows how many others. Starving people through sanctions or sieges is, as Allen says, just a primitive form of biological warfare.

In its early years, our beloved, exceptional Republic, used germ warfare by deliberately giving small-pox infected blankets to groups of Native Americans, often wiping out entire tribes – and then grabbing their land. The concentration camps we devised for them still exist in places like the Pine Ridge Reservation of South Dakota, the Tohono O'odham desert outside Ajo, Arizona,

or the dustlands of Oklahoma. Go back to the Crusades for examples of enforced starvation and creative torture such as the art of burning living people at the stake in the name of religion.

As for chemical weapons, how many people know that US forces used “Mark 77,” a new and improved form of Napalm, in Iraq? Or that we’ve permanently poisoned the environments of Basra and Fallujah through the metals used in our weapons? The nuclear cases are well-known, as is the example of depleted uranium and white phosphorus. Reports out three years ago detailed the astonishing rise in birth defects in infants, metals in their systems, and spontaneous abortions by women who’d had no difficulty conceiving prior to our little adventure.

The point isn’t to generate a list, it’s to say that for every barbaric act committed by the Israelis there are parallels that came first in the United States (and before that, in Europe) – one reason our government sits silently by when Israel uses newfangled weapons like DIMEs, with strange chemical components such as tungsten in them, on human beings in Gaza to cause unspeakable amputation wounds.

Personally, I’m surprised by the article – as if it wasn’t common knowledge during Cast Lead and before it that government officials were calculating the number of calories each Gazan could live on per day under the blockade. This was talked about openly in Israel as Tzipi Livni self-righteously exclaimed, “there is no humanitarian crisis in Gaza”. (The Arab media played her saying this over and over while showing war footage in the background that, to my knowledge, has never been seen in this country, as I’m sure you know.)

This was true – and written about – a long time ago when Dov Weisglass spoke openly of putting Gaza on a “starvation diet” (just enough food to live on but to stay hungry) or when the blockade authorities would authorize, week by week, which food stuffs not to let in (hence the reason why, at one point, spaghetti and macaroni were prohibited, and at another point, citrus fruits, or certain vegetables would not be allowed in, etc. It made perfect sense to those cheering on the IDF that one of the first factories bombed in Dec. 2008 was the last remaining flour mill in Gaza. So much for making bread. The Gazans must be made completely dependent on outside aid organizations, often the same ones paying for the US/Israel’s occupation, or the sum total of the damages inflicted on peoples’ homes, businesses, and factories.

Way back in the 1990s and before, curfews and closures left thousands of people ‘food insecure’ or malnourished. It just wasn’t framed the same way as ‘counting calories for a blockade,’ though in essence it was the same tactic. Probably started in 1948. I believe most of us have yet to view Israeli and US history with our eyes wide open. If we could see it that clearly we’d have to renounce our citizenship to live with ourselves. Just as an aside, it is now well known that before 1500 (or 1492, to be exact) somewhere between 10 and 17 million Native Americans (a conservative estimate) lived on this land. By 1900 that number was 250,000. What American history textbook teaches that?

