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## THE DISASTERS THAT U.S. INTERVENTION CREATED

by Sheldon Richman  
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Americans have forgotten about the Iraq war, which began 10 years ago this week, and the Afghan war, the longest in American history, but the U.S. government is still throwing its weight around in both countries.

The Iraq war, the pretext for which was nonexistent weapons of mass destruction, officially ended in 2011 with the withdrawal of virtually all of America's combat troops. But the havoc wreaked by the U.S. invasion and regime change goes on. Over a hundred thousand Iraqis were killed in the war itself, but many more died in the aftermath from sectarian violence and the obliterated infrastructure. (Iraq had never recovered from the destruction inflicted by the U.S. government in the 1991 Gulf War and in the decade of sanctions related to it.) Millions fled their homes.

The U.S. occupation unleashed bitter sectarian violence, complete with U.S.-trained death squads, leading the numerically dominant Shiite Muslims (who are friendly to Iran) to cleanse the Sunnis from Baghdad. A Sunni insurgency against the occupation inflicted heavy casualties until American money managed to have the guns turned on the al-Qaeda affiliate, which was not in Iraq before the U.S. invasion.

On the American side, the deaths approached 4,500, with tens of thousands shattered in body and spirit. For the U.S. taxpayer, the price is over a trillion dollars, with billions lost to sheer corruption in the so-called rebuilding.

The enormity of the crime committed by the Bush administration, with the complicity of cheerleading politicians (Republican and Democrat), journalists, and foreign-policy “experts” cannot be adequately calculated — and the consequences are not all in.

The country is now ruled by a corrupt, authoritarian, and brutal government. The infrastructure is a mess, with water, sanitation, and electricity unreliable. Most significant, the violence continues. Car bombings are common, and the al-Qaeda affiliate is active again — so active that the CIA is “ramping up support to elite Iraqi antiterrorism units,” the *Wall Street Journal* reports. (And you thought the American war was over!) The irony is that these al-Qaeda fighters have been on the American side in the efforts to overthrow Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi and Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad.

If the Iraqi catastrophe isn’t enough to destroy one’s confidence in big government, what would it take?

Meanwhile, in Afghanistan’s capital, Kabul, 300 residents of Wardak province recently held a demonstration demanding that the U.S. government remove its special-operations forces from the province because of the violence they are believed to be supporting.

Last month Afghanistan’s president, Hamid Karzai, gave the Americans until March 10 to leave the province, but so far they have not left and Karzai is willing to compromise. The order came after complaints about raids by U.S.-trained Afghan squads that led to the disappearance of Wardak residents. Nine men disappeared after one such nighttime raid. Murder and torture have also been alleged.

The *New York Times* reports that “the influential Ulema Council ... issued a threatening statement,” which said, “If the Americans once again do not honor their commitments and keep on disobeying, then this will be considered as an occupation, and they may expect to see a reaction to their action.” The *Times* added that the statement “referred to American forces in Afghanistan as ‘infidels,’ echoing language used by the Taliban.”

The U.S. command denies the allegations, and an investigation is underway. It should be noted, however, that the U.S. military trained and supported similarly brutal militias (“death squads”) in Iraq, just as it did in Latin America in the 1980s.

Whatever the investigation reveals, the controversy demonstrates the perils of invasion and occupation. People resent foreign forces on their soil, and the Afghans are no exception. They have driven out foreigners many times in the past, most recently the powerful Soviet Union.

U.S. officials say the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan were key to national security after 9/11. Even Barack Obama, who built a presidential campaign on opposing the Iraq war, claims it did much good after all.

Nonsense.

The 9/11 attacks were criminal acts intended as reprisals for American-sponsored oppression in the Middle East. The U.S. response has not made America safer — it has created new enemies. What did you expect of the corrupt, power-hungry incompetents who call themselves American “public servants”?