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Hypocrite in Chief

Living in a Counterfactual Epoch

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September 6-8, 2013

A hypocrite's work is never done. Thus the need for our Nobel Prize bearing Commander in Chief to execute a needless and devastating war of aggression on a country preoccupied by its own civil war. He should pin that prize to his lapel when he announces his surgical strike on Syria. Let's be clear: wars of aggression are, by the standards we set at the Nuremburg Nazi trials, the "supreme international crime." Crimes for which Nazis were put to death. Anyone who pulls the trigger on a war of aggression is, by our own measure, a war criminal. But President Barack Obama needn't worry about being isolated by his action—the annals of the American presidency are chock full of war criminals. He'll have good company in the pantheon of imperial lore.

Of the numberless hypocrisies of the administration, this one is particularly crude. The White House claims *to need* to punish Syria's Bashar al-Assad regime for the unproven use of chemical weapons (sarin) in Ghouta. Not only does this atrocity, committed by unidentified actors in a civil, ethnic, sectarian, and proxy conflict within Syria, somehow make Syria a national security threat to the United States, but it also suggests we deplore the use of chemical weapons. Neither is remotely true. I think the former could be true if we do bomb Syria, as it may incite Syrians to plot against the empire that slaughtered its men, women and children. The latter cannot be true by virtue of the fact that chemical weapons are a primary element in our military arsenal, and

have been repeatedly handed over to unreliable allies or deployed ourselves, against Vietnam most notably, but recently against Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya.

The author of the August 21st attack has yet to be identified. Suspects include Syria, one of the rebel groups, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. The White House report offered plenty of unverified claims said to be drawn from “streams of intelligence.” Nobody outside the beltway bubble is convinced. We can, however, have “high confidence” in our assessment that the U.S. will use chemical weapons itself if it attacks Syria. At least three sources of American firepower potentially threaten to deposit a destructive payload of depleted uranium on Syrian society and soil should we attack. Destroyers in the Eastern Mediterranean are likely to fire Tomahawk missiles, which have long been rumored to contain depleted uranium, either in their tip or wing. However, this has been disputed by the International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons (ICBUW). At the very least, Naval combat crafts are equipped with anti-missile Gatling guns that use shells with tungsten or depleted uranium. This has been conceded by the military itself. Likewise, A-10 anti-tank aircraft are known to use depleted uranium bullets.

Depleted uranium, although not outlawed by the International Convention of Chemical Weapons (ICCW), are uranium wastes, the leftovers from the uranium that can be usefully enriched (as Iran is prudently, or feverishly, doing this very moment, depending of who you believe). According to Global Research, depleted uranium found its way into the American arsenal thanks to the fact that there are enormous amounts of it leftover from the enrichment process, and that it is cheap to produce. (There is something deeply ironic here, although I’m not sure just what.) But the primary feature of DU is its armor-piercing capability. Not only is it the heaviest of elements, DU bullets keep their shape on impact, thanks to their hideous “self-sharpening ability”, and the fact that they burst into flame on impact, generating radioactive dust. This naturally finds its way into the lungs of those nearby (who are perhaps lending “material support” to rebels, instantly nominating themselves for a double-tap drone strike should the DU not do its lethal work fast enough). Depleted uranium often produces radioactive poisoning, and potentially cancer, as former workers at a U.S. arms plant unhappily discovered. It is also likely to generate deformities in the DNA of the local birth population, as Fallujah has lately experienced. This cruel fate is often referred to by the lovely phrase, “mutagenic potential.”

In any case, we’ve left enough in the ground in Iraq, Libya, and elsewhere for some viable case studies. Naturally, the development of leukemia in 76% of mice injected with DU, a study conducted by our own Armed Forces Radiobiology Institute, has been yawningly ignored by the Pentagon, although there is some suggestion that the upper echelons of international power have suppressed the growing movement to ban depleted uranium. The courageous claimant here is former WHO scientist Keith Baverstock, who eloquently concluded that, “politics has poisoned the well from which democracy must drink.” The wells from which multitudes of Arabs must drink, too.

But DU is only the leading villain in an ensemble cast of malign characters. Alongside it one can observe the flesh-eating effects of white phosphorous ‘shake-n-bake’ bombs, napalm and “mark 77 firebombs,” a mix of kerosene and polystyrene similar to napalm, all used to great effect in Iraq. American-made cluster bombs are an Israeli favorite, such as when it wants to blow up unsuspecting Arab farmers in southern Lebanon. Yet there they sit, our leaders Obama and

Kerry, the urbane sophist and his zombie accomplice, mirroring our nation in miniature: a country whose signal conflicts seemed to carry the mantle of liberty, against the British then the Nazis, but which has since devolved, to borrow anthropologist F.G. Bailey's phrase, into "a babel of inconsistent moralities."

Largely owing to our commitment to chemical weapons, internationalist efforts to ban WMDs in the Middle East have met with typical disinterest. U.N. Security Council Resolution 687 twists in the wind. Agreed to in 1991 to provide a legal umbrella for the U.S. attack on Iraq, it calls for a WMD-free zone in the Middle East and the banning of chemical and biological weapons. Naturally, the looming regional hegemon Israel is the obvious roadblock to the realization of this initiative. In a forgotten instance of considerable irony, Syria proposed the same concept to the Security Council with a draft resolution in 2003, but then U.N. ambassador John Negroponte noted that we might consider it, but then hysterically added—as if snapping to his senses—that this didn't mean we would "adopt it, embrace it or endorse it in any way, shape or form." In other words, best to shelve it with all the other useful ideas the U.S. has nixed since the founding of the U.N.

If you're looking for a link between our degraded civil rights and our depleted uranium, look no further. There it is, in the White House report and its dearth of actual evidence. If only they had added an addendum with the dozens of YouTube videos that factor heavily in their portfolio of supposition. But what reason is there, truly, for yours or my indefinite detention, for the continuous invasion of our privacy, the usurpation of legislative power (the people's tribune) by that of the executive (the ghost of monarchy), and the evisceration of the sovereignty of other nations like Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, and soon Syria? Whether shot from ships or fired from jets, depleted uranium bullets and shells will strike innocent targets with the same fact-less impunity with which our rights are denied. We live in a counterfactual epoch, where the shrill presence of conjecture disguises the voluminous absence of evidence. Hypocrites lie, victims die.