

## War on terrorism lacks consistent rationale

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August 22, 2002—The Bush administration is trying to convince Congress and the American people it wants to rid the world of evildoers and terrorism. However, Bush has been selective about which terrorists must be stamped out and which ones get to stay. He keeps changing his rationale for the need to attack Iraq. His inconsistency and ever-wavering “reasons” make him appear to be lying to Congress and the public.

Bush would appear more credible if he would offer Congress, the American people and the entire world a written list of evildoers and a separate list explaining why certain terrorists don’t appear on the list. Immediately after September 11, Bush was going to track down Osama bin Laden and bring him back “dead or alive.” Suddenly, he has designated Saddam Hussein the world’s scariest terrorist.

Here is something else that makes Bush look bad: In “Making a Killing,” an article in the August 2002 Harper’s, contributing editor and former currency trader Ted Fishman points out that the United States has labeled the African nation of Sudan a “state sponsor of terrorism.” The House and Senate each passed a version of the Sudan Peace Act, proposing that companies doing business in Sudan be banned from the U.S. capital markets.

The Bush administration successfully fought to allow U.S. corporations to continue doing business in Sudan. Fishman writes that in addition to sponsoring terrorism and sheltering terrorists, Sudan has an “appalling human-rights record—including anti-aircraft attacks on relief flights and the routine enslavement of Muslims in the south.” The death toll in the latest Sudanese war is around two million.

If Bush wants to rid the world of evildoers and terrorists, why did he fight the proposed ban on doing business in the terrorist-sponsoring, terrorist-sheltering country of Sudan? Could it be the oil? The inconsistency looks precisely like a lie to any reasonable observer.

In addition, why isn’t Bush going after evildoers who sell arms to terrorists?

The United States, writes Ted Fishman, is one of the world’s four biggest-grossing producers of arms and, together with the United Kingdom, France and Russia exports 83 percent of the world’s arms. The weapons this country exports can easily end up in the hands of “terrorist” states.

According to Fishman, “. . . the [arms] market is so wide open that even if countries were to ban the sale of weapons out of their home factories, they would be almost powerless to stop their

domestic companies' licensees in other countries from selling wherever they please. Brazil, India, Indonesia, Iran, North and South Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Turkey all export arms made under license from the major arms-producing countries."

Some TV commentators have said that from September 11 forward everything changed and that it's now a whole different world. One thing that hasn't changed in this country since the terrorist attacks is the fact that certain U. S. officials continue to allow our nation to sell massive amounts of weapons which can end up in the hands of potential terrorists, just as they have done for many years.

Some of what follows appeared in earlier articles of mine: George W. Bush's father's administration was involved in a cover-up of its military technology assistance to Saddam Hussein, a cover-up also involving the State Department, according to William D. Hartung (*And Weapons for All*, HarperCollins, 1994.) Hartung writes that the late Congressman Henry B. Gonzalez (D-TX) found direct evidence that the George H. W. Bush administration organized the cover-up.

Gonzalez charged that the G. H. W. Bush administration was trying to hide "the true responsibility for the transfer of United States technology to the Iraqi war machine," which lies, "with the White House and the State Department, because they set technology transfer policy." Gonzalez added that the White House and National Security Council devised the cover-up in order to "mislead the Congress and the public . . . about the military nature of the transfers to Iraq."

Hartung points out that, to this day, high government officials haven't been held accountable for the arms sales scandals. Congress has done nothing to remedy this and government investigations have been "derailed indefinitely."

If the George W. Bush administration wants to rid the world of evildoers and terrorism, why not publicly denounce the fact that the massive amounts of weapons sold by the U.S. often go to terrorist states?

In addition, in its zeal to rid the world of evildoers and those who shelter terrorists, why doesn't the Bush administration publicly speak out against the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHISC), located in Fort Benning, Georgia, an institution that has long trained terrorists?

WHISC was called School of the Americas (SOA) until January 17, 2001. Though the name has been changed, the organization remains basically the same, according to the public interest watchdog group, SOA Watch.

David McGowan, (*Derailing Democracy*, Common Courage Press, 2000) says Amnesty International reported in 1998 that SOA is "only one of more than 150 centers in the U.S.A. and abroad where foreign [military] officers are trained. A number of SOA 'alumni' have been implicated in gross human rights violations."

McGowan, quotes a May 22, 1998 Associated Press article, "School of the Americas = School of the Assassins." The AP article says: "Nineteen of the 26 military officers that critics cited in the murder of six Jesuit priests and two women in El Salvador eight years ago were graduates of the School of the Americas." The same article reports, ". . . it was revealed recently that the school [SOA] used manuals that included references to executions, torture and other human rights abuses."

The School of the Americas Watch web site reports the U. S. Army SOA "trains Latin American soldiers in combat, counter-insurgency, and counter-narcotics. Graduates of the SOA are responsible for some of the worst human rights abuses in Latin America."

According to the SOA Watch site, "Among the SOA's nearly 60,000 graduates are notorious dictators Manuel Noriega and Omar Torrijos of Panama, Leopoldo Galtiere and Roberto Viola of Argentina, Juan Velasco Alvarado of Peru" and many others. In addition, the site reports that "lower-level SOA graduates have participated in human rights abuses that include the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero and the El Mozote Massacre of 900 civilians."

Amnesty International reported on May 2, 1998 that "former Panamanian strongman and convicted drug trafficker Gen. Manuel Noriega graduated from [SOA]. So did Roberto D'Aubuisson, architect of El Salvador's right-wing death squad network," according to McGowan.

Granted, few other public officials have made an issue of WHISC in the past. However, if "everything changed" on September 11, and we're now serious about the war on terrorism as never before, shouldn't WHISC and its training of terrorists be on the official list of evildoers to be defeated?

If the American people knew all relevant facts, most of us would probably criticize our government's support of WHISC, its sale of arms to terrorists, and the G. W. Bush administration's support of corporations that do business in Sudan. We might ask why the Bush team's war on terrorism doesn't include the outspoken declaration of war against WHISC-trained terrorists, illicit weapons traders or corporations doing business in Sudan.

According to the above-referenced Hartung book, Admiral Eugene Carroll, U. S. Navy (Ret.), Director of the Center for Defense Information, says "We continue to spend nearly \$300 billion a year for forces to fight in regional conflicts at the same time we are the world's leading seller of the arms which fuel those conflicts."

The "1998 Project Censored" (Peter Phillips and the Project Censored group, Seven Stories Press) says: "[T]he last five times U. S. troops were sent into conflict, they found themselves facing adversaries who had previously received U. S. weapons, military technology or training."

Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Tim Weiner points out (*Blank Check*, 1992) that after the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, the CIA "bought an immense arsenal for the Afghan rebels." During the 1980s, the CIA spent around \$3 billion smuggling weapons to the so-called holy warriors of the Afghan resistance. Weiner says the operation "started small: \$30

million of weaponry a year in 1980. It grew to \$100 million, then \$500 million, then \$700 million a year.”

Weiner continues, “The CIA’s arms shipments to Afghanistan became the biggest covert operation in history, save its wars in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia twenty years ago.” Eventually, says Weiner, “the CIA’s pipeline leaked. It leaked badly. It spilled huge quantities of weapons all over one of the world’s most anarchic areas.”

A dozen or more of the CIA’s Stinger anti-aircraft missiles “wound up in the hands of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards,” writes Weiner, and on October 8, 1987, “Revolutionary Guards on an Iranian gunboat fired one of those Stingers at American helicopters patrolling the Persian Gulf. American weapons, shipped abroad by the CIA, were aimed back at American soldiers.”

A secure nation is one not plagued by fear or danger, Weiner concludes. When politicians claim our “national security” depends on excessive government secrecy, as the Bush administration does today, do they define security in those terms? Or are they claiming security is based on such things as covert arms trading—a lucrative practice for arms traders, but both an economic drain and safety risk for U. S. soldiers and for average Americans?

George W. Bush asks us to believe he wants to rid the world of evildoers and terrorism, but he fights Congress on its proposed ban on doing business in the terrorist-sponsoring country of Sudan. He says nothing about U.S. sanctioned training programs for terrorists, or the ongoing U. S. role in the world’s weapons trade.

Again, we need to ask the Bush administration for a written list of evildoers. We also need a list explaining why certain people who shelter or sell arms to terrorists don’t appear on the list.

By leaving some terrorists off the list, or, in the case of Sudan, by encouraging corporations to do business in terrorist-sheltering countries, is Bush implying that some terrorists are better than others? Or is he simply making it obvious his reasons for this “war” aren’t the ones he publicly claims?

What we need from this administration is simply an honest, consistent rationale.