

UN-DECLARING THE WAR ON TERROR

By Nick Gier

“An undisciplined, spiraling, and hysterical War on Terror. . . is itself more damaging and dangerous than the terrorist threats it is supposedly combating.”

—Ian S. Lustick, Trapped in the War on Terror

“Those who sacrifice liberty for security deserve neither.”

--Ben Franklin

The U. S. is losing two wars—one against drugs and the other against terror. Neither should have been declared in the first place. The main difference between these fraudulent "wars" is that drug users and small dealers are not criminals, but terrorists most certainly are. However controversial, we should take more seriously those who propose that some drugs be legalized, especially those that are less addictive and destructive than nicotine and alcohol.

More drugs are flowing across our borders than ever before, and Afghanistan has just harvested the largest ever opium crop. Far fewer white drug offenders are imprisoned compared to their non-white counterparts, who overload our courts and our prisons, which contain 11 times more inmates per capita than Denmark.

Just as Americans don't believe Bush when he says the economy is great, they are also not taking seriously his constant mantra "we are at war." The only sacrifices that we are making are the ones forced on the middle class and the poor because of Bush's tax cuts, the increase in gas prices, and the loss of privacy.

For decades other countries have fought terrorism without declaring a War on Terror. For example, India has suffered far more civilian deaths in terror attacks than we have. Even though Indian authorities know that most of the terrorists came from neighboring Pakistan, Indians have not overreacted nor have they invaded that country.

Other countries treat terror suspects as criminals, not as enemy combatants. To say that members of Al Qaeda are soldiers is just as absurd as calling the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) "enemy combatants." U. S. authorities laughed off the SLA claim that Patricia Hearst was a "prisoner of war." The SLA claimed that the U.S. had declared war on African Americans, but obviously the problem of race is not a cause for war; rather, it, like the growth of terrorism, calls for serious thinking about why people lash out in such destructive ways.

One of America's finest moments in the so-called War on Terror was the successful prosecution of Zacharias Mousawi, sometimes called the 20th 9/11 hijacker. He was convicted in a civil court on criminal charges, and he will spend the rest of his life in solitary confinement.

In a recent speech President Bush defended his Iraq policies by quoting extensively from Osama bin Laden. He neglected to say that bin Laden condemned Saddam Hussein as traitor to Islam; or that bin Laden took 8 months to recognize Al Qaeda in Iraq, three full years after the war began; or that foreign fighters have never been more than 10 percent of the Iraqi insurgency.

At one time coalition forces were pursuing bin Laden in Afghanistan, but Bush lost interest and decided to invade Iraq instead. Money appropriated for the just war in Afghanistan was diverted to Iraq, and the result is the resurgence of the Taliban and bin Laden still taunting us with his ravings from Eastern Pakistan. Even though we are giving Pakistan \$4 billion a year in military aid, they have recently withdrawn their forces from the area where we know bin Laden is hiding.

Osama bin Laden is not the head of any government nor does he command any troops. He communicates with the outside world by means of a complex system of couriers. The terror suspects recently arrested in Toronto, Bombay, and London do not have any direct connections with him.

The Bush administration's comparisons between bin Laden and Hitler is just plain fear mongering. Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and the Soviet Union were responsible for tens of millions of deaths, and they did constitute a serious threat to the existence of the Free World. Bin Laden and other terrorists have definitely made our lives more difficult and dangerous, but our ability to cope will not be helped by Bush's exaggerations and delusions.

The billions of dollars wasted in Iraq could have been better spent in protecting our ports, fully inspecting air cargo, increasing our intelligence capacity, and controlling the spread of nuclear materials. The greatest causality in our invasion of Iraq and our unconditional support for Israel's recent "shock and awe" attack on Lebanon is the loss of personal intelligence. Muslims who reject militant Islam, and who were previously inclined to cooperate with American and European agents, are now far less likely to do so.

Recent polls demonstrate that Americans are smart enough to see through Bush's fear campaign. When asked to prioritize their national concerns, those polled made a clean distinction between Iraq and terrorism. The top issue at 51 percent was the failure of our Iraq policies, while only 9 percent thought that terrorists were the main problem.

American businesses recovered from 9/11 far more quickly than European companies. Our strength as a nation has always been our capacity to innovate and to take risks. We have proved many times over that Ben Franklin was right when he said that "those who sacrifice liberty for security deserve neither." We have refused to be terrorized by Bush's phony War on Terror.