

By Saul Landau

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Scores of millions of Americans – many who laughed at his fumble mouth antics – now feel the impact of George W. Bush’ eight year legacy. The man who made comedians’ careers has had his revenge. His tax cuts – they paled before the importance of the Iraq war – kissed the asses (the G spot) of the top corporate executives, and other extremely wealthy individuals (they’ve had a fine time since the 1970s, but super good under Bush). By 2001, thanks to the tax cut, Washington received reduced revenues as expenses rose thanks to W’s wars.

The Bushies paid scant attention to the expanding real estate bubble, dubious derivatives and other sneaky banky pranks. Who in Washington cared if government spending rose and revenues dropped? After all, anyone with a home could refinance. Long live credit!

Then in 2007, Bush “had to” bail out non-performing banks, auto companies and insurance giants, a subsidy for the ultra rich that Obama continued. This forced greater government spending while W, as a matter of principle, insisted on providing his friends and benefactors with low or no taxes. But bailouts, plus raging wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, coincided with decreased government revenue. So, the Republicans borrowed. Exciting!

Bush’ presidential term, we recall, began with a yawn. Then on September 11, 2001, fanatical men –15 were Saudis – armed with box-cutters and suicidal urges aroused the passive W and changed U.S. culture. (Interestingly, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld soon met one of Al-Qaeda’s demands – the U.S. removed its base from Saudi Arabia.) Simultaneously, President Bush waged a hi-tech, expensive war against those who attacked with low-priced, low-tech weapons. Bush and Vice President Cheney invaded nations that had little to do with the suicide bombers. Yes, the ruling Taliban let Al-Qaeda run a camp in Afghanistan. Indeed, Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein ran a secular nation, and had received threats from Al-Qaeda. But by calling the invasion of Iraq part of the war on terror because it had links to Al-Qaeda (not) and WMD (not) Bush finessed his bellicose ploy.

The U.S. invaded Afghanistan and months later Iraq – presumably to crush al-Qaeda that didn’t exist in Iraq and who had quickly left Afghanistan after U.S. troops made it inhospitable. Now in 2011, Al-Qaeda or other groups linked or not to the Taliban have made it inhospitable for U.S. troops.

The approximately \$3 trillion cost of the wars, not including Obama’s new “humanitarian” missiles intervention in Libya, does not include costs of the drone wars against “terrorists” in a variety of countries; nor account for the expenses of kill teams and covert lethal shenanigans (all lumped as war on terror). The U.S. intelligence and homeland security “communities” spend about \$80 billion a year, outside of Afghanistan and Iraq. Yet “al-Qaeda and affiliates only have about 4,000 members worldwide. That’s \$20 million per terrorist per year,” according to former Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair (Noah Shachtman, Wired, July 31, 2011).

Since no nation stands behind or for Al-Qaeda, one might question the expenditure. Compare the War on Terror with the cost of 40+ years of Cold War – which cost less. Remember thousands of Soviet ICBMs and missile supplies? Millions of troops and vast military apparatus in both the USSR and China? How come 19 guys with delusions of virgins in Heaven can catalyze the mammoth spending not even visible during the four decades of nuclear standoffs? How did one event provoke two wars that had virtually nothing to do with the event? (See Sibel Edmonds <http://www.boilingfrogspost.com/tag/military-industrial-complex/>)

Not digesting lessons from Vietnam, where the U.S. spent a decade to lose, two U.S. presidents have maintained an occupation in Afghanistan. In early August, 30 U.S. servicemen (mostly Navy Seals) perished when Taliban insurgents shot down their helicopter with one rocket-propelled grenade.

A war on terror, Gore Vidal quipped, will be won when the war on dandruff is won. Meanwhile, it consumes the nation’s treasure. The war on the Taliban, who are not terrorists and could have been paid off to remove bin Laden and pals, makes little sense. Yes, the Taliban hardly reek of

democratic or progressive virtues, but Al-Qaeda now locates its sparse forces in other places.

Pakistan, our uncertain ally, is not listed as a terrorist state despite the routine terrorist bombings there. Its government has allowed U.S. forces to drone bomb targets on its national territory and occasionally attack some Taliban groups. In return Pakistan receives billions of dollars – and some dead Pakistani civilians.

Our enemies have no national boundaries, formal armed forces or regular equipment. A skinny, old guy with rotting kidneys who preached fanatical Islam somehow appealed to some people, perhaps to those whose close relatives got droned, or targeted by kill teams, or simply caught shrapnel from a stray NATO bomb or missile.

Hundreds of suspected and tortured Al-Qaeda operatives remain at Guantanamo. To what avail? The U.S. has not charged most of them with a crime.

Meantime, we're hurting badly economically, the citizens have lost faith in their government as the infrastructure crumbles and the fabled American dream becomes a nightmare. Eternal wars, no taxes for billionaires, screw the middle class and poor! Bush's legacy. George W. Bush belongs in the Worst Presidents Hall of Fame. He has infected the nation with his NSTD (non-sexually transmitted disease). The joke? Many who laughed at or scorned him have bought into his inheritance.

Saul Landau's WILL THE REAL TERRORIST PLEASE STAND UP is distributed by Cinema Libre Studio. He is an Institute for Policy Studies fellow.