

anarchy in kansas

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War Is The Health of the State

Since launching its war against the people who live in Afghanistan last October, the United States military has killed more civilians than were slain in the attacks in the US on September 11. American bombers have laid waste the villages and homes of Afghan non-combatants. Prisoners taken in this war have been treated barbarously, and many were massacred in an American attack on a prison camp in Afghanistan. Those still in custody may well be tried before military tribunals without the limited protections granted to the accused in civilian courts. Meanwhile, the United States and its allies have created a new government in Afghanistan made up of murderous thugs who chose to throw in their lot with US armed forces, and have disarmed regular Afghans in an attempt to prevent the formation of any effective opposition.

At the same time, at home, the government has detained hundreds of people who were born outside the US and don't have the right scraps of paper to satisfy those who presume to control the borders. Their jailers refuse to publicly disclose the evidence that supposedly justifies this mass incarceration, and the authorities have conducted their court

hearings in secrets. Merely being an immigrant from certain countries makes one a suspect to federal law enforcement agents, who have targeted thousands of people for "interviews" simply because they are from the Middle East. Yet, there is little outcry from anyone but the usual suspects, like the ACLU.



Using the current war as a pretext, the government has proposed the largest increase in military spending in 20 years. New American military bases are being created in countries near Afghanistan, which puts them within convenient reach of Iraq and Iran, as well, two countries the United States has been threatening with increased regularity since invading Afghanistan. And the borders, ports, and airports of the United States itself are being increasingly militarized, as well.



Ever since the attacks on September 11, we have heard about how wonderful it is that Americans are pulling together, acting as one, demonstrating their patriotism. But along with all this professed fellow feeling has come increased contempt for and suspicion of those seen as outsiders, not “real” Americans. People from other countries and those who practice Islam have been physically attacked and called any number of racist names on talk radio programs, while anyone who dares to oppose or even question the wanton slaughter of civilians in Afghanistan or the attacks on our remaining freedoms in the US risks being accused by the government of aiding terrorists. While some of us are used to being lied about by those who rule the United States, such name-calling is likely to dissuade many others from publicly speaking out against the terror inflicted by the US military and abuses by domestic police forces.

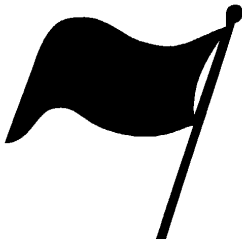
Typically, many of the American news media have contributed to the martial, patriotic, nationalist attitudes that have come to the fore during the war.

Newspapers often unquestioningly repeat the statements of US military spokespeople, while discounting reports of civilian casualties as “unconfirmed.” They act as cheerleaders for the war effort and “interpret” stories in such a way as to make the conduct of the US military seem less reprehensible than it, in fact, is. Two stories from the *Kansas City Star* illustrate how partisan and slanted the coverage of the war in the American press has been. On November 21, 2001, a *Star* article, headlined “Victims of stray bombs in Kabul express little bitterness,” argued at length that reports of casualties had been inflated. To justify the absurd headline, it prominently featured, in both the text and an accompanying photo, one survivor of an American bomb attack that killed two of his relatives and injured 25 others, who is quoted as saying, “It doesn’t matter that two people in my family died.” Of course, others quoted in the article say nothing of the sort and one specifically criticizes US



bombers, but this does not prevent the *Star* from putting a positive spin on the deaths of Afghan civilians at the hands of the US military. Then, on March 4, 2002, the *Star* quoted a leaflet dropped in Afghanistan by US forces as saying, “Hand over Taliban and al-Qaida forces or you will be destroyed.” The accompanying headline,

however, read “Afghans urged to come forward,” as if American death threats are really only gentle and humane advice. Perhaps the US press is afraid that if they don’t follow the government’s lead, they might suffer the same fate as the Al-Jazeera TV channel whose Kabul office was destroyed by a US missile late last year after being criticized by American officials for publicizing the US murder of non-combatants in Afghanistan.



Bad Press Moves North

On March 15, the Bad Press, an anti-government anarchist project, will relocate to Alaska. *anarchy in kansas* will be succeeded by the occasional zine, *anchorage anarchy*, which, as its predecessor was, will be edited by Joe Peacott. Individual issues of either zine are available for \$1. Make all checks payable to Joe Peacott.

You can reach Bad Press at:

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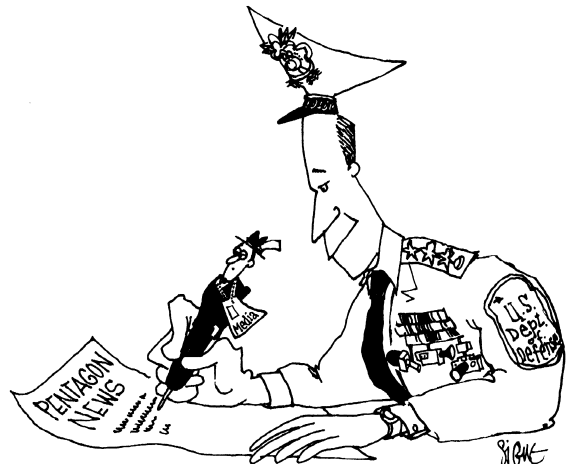
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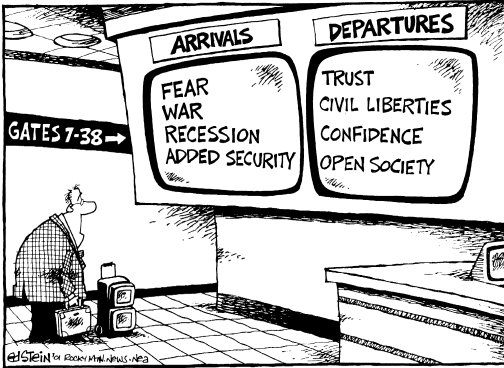
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Of course none of this comes as a surprise. Similar behavior on the part of the military, politicians, and the news media has been seen whenever the government has decided to make war, whether the enemy *du jour* was in the Phillipines, Germany, Vietnam, Grenada, Somalia, Yugoslavia, or Afghanistan. Governments and their supporters always use wartime as an opportunity to accomplish their goals by force, increase their power, and suppress dissent. That this pattern is not new is borne out in the writings of Randolph Bourne during the first world war. In his unfinished essay “The State,” Bourne argued that, “Wartime brings the ideal of the State out into very clear relief,...[f]or war is essentially the health of the State. The ideal of the State is that within its territory its power and influence should be



universal....Its idealism is a rich blood flowing to all the members of the body politic. And it is precisely in war that the urgency for union seems greatest, and the necessity for universality seems most



un

questioned....The more terrifying the occasion for defense, the closer will become the organization and the more coercive the influence upon each member of the herd. All the activities of society are linked together as fast as possible to this central purpose of making a military offensive or a military defense, and the State becomes what in peacetimes it has vainly struggled to become--the inexorable arbiter and determinant of men's businesses and attitudes and opinions." The conduct of the United States government during its current war is just the most recent demonstration of the accuracy of this assessment of the essential relationship between warfare and government.



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