

Dying for the Profit of a Few

by Maj. Danny Sjursten via mitch - Anti War *Tuesday, Aug 21 2018, 10:02pm*

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A Tour of Fruitless American Killing and Sacrifice

Numbness or apathy. These seem to be Americans' go-to responses when each new overseas tragedy unfolds. Recently, it was a bus full of Yemeni children - 40 in fact - [murdered](#) by a Saudi airstrike that represented one tiny speck of catastrophe in an ongoing U.S.-backed coalition campaign. Sure, the dead kids briefly hit the screens of CNN, Fox, and MSNBC; but let's be real: no one really cared. We were all too enthralled in the latest White House drama or too sick of politics to even click on the news. Of course, these were foreign, brown, Muslim children - and the dirty secret is they just don't garner the attention of equally cute American, Caucasian, Christian kids who fall victim to the latest school shooting or terror attack.

Let us then call it like it is - the U.S. refuels warplanes, sells bombs, provides intelligence and otherwise [enables](#) a Saudi terror campaign that's killed tens of thousands of civilians, unleashed the world's worst cholera epidemic in recorded history, and threatens to starve millions of Yemenis.

So that's Yemen. More than a thousand miles to the east, in distant Afghanistan, (remember that country, you know, where we've waged the longest war in our history?) just this week, a US Army Special Forces Sergeant was [killed](#) by an IED strike. By one semi-official count, that makes him the 2,414th American to die in the conflict. That not tragic enough for you? How about this: next year, young men and women born after the 9/11 attacks will undoubtedly start patrolling the Hindu Kush and other Afghan locales. And how's the forever war going? This same week, an increasing [invigorated](#) Taliban killed a couple dozen Afghan soldiers and [seized](#) a government base. Back in 2011, when I had the inauspicious task of patrolling the Arghandab Valley, the US had some 100,000 troops in the country. We still couldn't decisively defeat the Taliban. Now, we've got about 15,000 soldiers there - think we're poised for victory now? Does it even matter? Americans will simply yawn.

So that's Afghanistan. I could go on, of course. We could talk Niger, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Iraq, or Pakistan; really any of the disconnected locales where the US military currently fights, kills, or dies. There's no end in sight folks. It's not that no one cares to be fair. Brave and idealistic men and women continue to join the service and dedicate years and sometimes careers to achieving some measure of stability in the Mideast. It's just that no matter how hard the generals try, no matter how late the staff officers work, and no matter how much the enlisted men sweat, there is no indication (the last 17 years being any measure) that Americans are any safer, that the Greater Middle East is any more secure, or that there's any plausible prospect of victory.

Why bother though, one might reasonably ask? Why scream about the questionable value of training the army of Niger; about shattering all sense of security through regime change in Libya; about why air strikes and SOF raids never seem to stabilize Somalia; about the tinderbox of catastrophe that is Syria; about the way an Anti-American warlord was just [swept](#) to power in Iraq; or about the way hundreds of drone strikes in Pakistan have soured an entire people against Americans for at least a generation? The uncomfortable fact is that: We. Don't. Care.

Yet there's really no excuse. Thing is, we've got an obligation to care, we being citizens in an ostensibly free country and all. Everything the US government does overseas, every special forces raid, every bomb sold, every refueling mission completed and every drone strike executed, is done in our name.

Make no mistake: the people under all those U.S.-dropped, sold, or supported bombs know full well that America is involved, complicit even. From West Africa to South Asia, the ongoing (is it time to admit it's never-ending?) US war-on-terror or whatever we're calling it now, kills, maims, and traumatizes others and occasionally still sacrifices our own men and women. That most of this occurs in towns and villages that the dead soldiers' families can't pronounce or locate on a map is instructive. Fact: perpetual war is a disease to democracy that generates the apathy and numbness we should all be ashamed of.

Shame on us all. On me for trudging through the villages and neighborhoods of Iraq and Afghanistan without measurably improving security; on our congressional leaders for turning a blind eye while one president after another [expands](#) the scope of several undeclared wars; on, most importantly, all of us for the mixture of apathy and numbness infecting our entire public space.

Political conservatives never miss an opportunity to tell us, flippantly, that "all lives matter."

I say prove it.

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