

No U.S. Citizen Safe “Throughout the World”

by Felicity Arbuthnot via sal - Dissident Voice *Wednesday, May 28 2014, 2:03am*

international / prose / post

After the [illegal] attack on Iraq a frequently heard comment from those with no interest in foreign affairs or much, from activists, journalists and political observers of all hues, was: “Soon no American or British citizen will be safe anywhere on earth, for decades to come.” It was repeated after Libya, at every sabre rattling at Iran. Throughout the meddling, funding and support for terrorists in Syria the phrase has resurfaced, as again after US Under Secretary Victoria Nuland boasted of her government’s \$5 billion illegal coup in Ukraine. Guantanamo, renditions, secret prisons and US drone strikes are also cited. Abu Ghraib and other atrocities are unforgotten.

The predictions seemingly were correct. On September 25th 2013, the US Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs issued a “Worldwide Caution” for US nationals traveling anywhere on earth. On 10th April this year it was updated, further alerting travelers to “... the continuing threat of terrorist actions and violence against U.S. citizens and interests throughout the world.” (Emphasis mine.)

Threats are blamed on that old bogey man “... al-Qa’ida, its affiliated organizations and other terrorist groups” who also “continue to plan and encourage kidnappings of US citizens and Westerners ...”

Information suggests that “terrorist attacks are also planned against U.S. interests in multiple regions, including Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. These attacks may employ a wide variety of tactics including suicide operations, assassinations, kidnappings, hijackings, and bombings.”

Targets may be “high-profile sporting events, residential areas, business offices, hotels, clubs, restaurants, places of worship, schools, public areas, shopping malls, and other tourist destinations both in the United States and abroad where U.S. citizens gather ...”

If the warnings are correct, it has to be wondered if the State Department has reflected on cause and effect. Having interviewed over the years, measured people of all walks of life, whose entire families, friends, colleagues have been victims of indiscriminate, random US attacks on a barely imaginable scale, atrocities which, the “international community”, had they been committed by any other nation, would condemn as crimes of enormity by rogue states, are lauded as “liberation.”

The bereaved, friends and helpers, try hour after hour to collect body parts - bits of bone, flesh, a bit of a skull or jaw and attempt to establish by skin colour, texture, which pathetic fragments belong to which beloved person, ensuring the right remains are placed together in the shroud, coffin, these pathetic shredded pieces of infants, children, husbands, wives, sons, daughters, brothers, aunts, uncles, grandparents. The atrocity unsurprisingly usually breeds an all-consuming desire for revenge with which, for anyone who has had direct experience and heard those of the relations, rescuers, it would be impossible not to understand.

One example stays indelibly engraved on my mind, over twenty years of unending US aggression.

Mohammed was just ten years old when he went to overnight with his mother, brothers - including a baby brother just weeks old - and sisters during the 1991 attack on Iraq, to Baghdad's Ameriyah air raid Shelter.

The Shelter, equipped with bunk beds, showers, generator-driven electricity, television, kitchens, was a haven of normality and safety in a city where the electricity and water system had been deliberately destroyed, being "carpet bombed" daily.

This temporary sanctuary was deliberately targeted by the US who had obtained the plans, identified the weak points, the ventilation shafts. All but fourteen of the several hundred mothers, children and elderly for whom the Shelter was reserved, were incinerated.

Mohammed was just ten when he survived the inferno. He rescued an old man "whose flesh came away in my hands" and a baby. His mother and siblings were incinerated. The attack happened on the anniversary of the start of the fire bombing of Dresden in World War 11.

He was twelve when we met. Quiet, dignified, articulate way beyond his years. His story, as so many victims of US bombs, drones and "surgical strikes" across the globe, would haunt the hardest heart.

Eventually I asked: "How do you feel about those who did this?" His composure cracked, perspiration broke out on his face, neck, and backs of his hands: "When I grow up, I am going to join the (elite) Republican Guard - and if I die and if I have to wait a thousand years, I will come back and get my revenge." In the 2003 invasion, he would have been twenty two.

If he survived the further mass incinerations of "Shock and Awe", he would have undoubtedly joined the resistance and attacked those from a country who had burned his family and friends alive. If he survived that and perhaps left Iraq, he and countless who had suffered so wickedly would surely harbor vengeance in their hearts for Americans any place, anywhere, for all time. As, of course, Afghan and Libya victims, drone victims from Yemen, Somalia, Pakistan.

In Pakistan extensive research shows the constant terror of the children, many who have been exposed to the aftermath of drones, seen the bloody, shattered remnants of friends and relatives. For parents and relations is the added terror of being unable to protect them. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is suffered by a generation of children:

"If you bang a door, they'll scream and drop like something bad is going to happen", states a Pakistani mental health professional. His deepest worry is for the long-term ramifications of such psychological trauma on children.

"The biggest concern I have as a (mental health professional) is that when the children grow up, the kinds of images they will have with them, it is going to have a lot of consequences. You can imagine the impact it has on personality development. People who have experienced such things, they don't trust people; they have anger, desire for revenge . . . (children) growing up with these impressions, it causes permanent (mental) scarring and damage."

The searing grief and rage of adults is encapsulated by the vow of a multiply bereaved survivor of just one US atrocity in Iraq: "I have twelve in my family, I have fifty cousins and five thousand in my tribe ..." all of them would be seeking revenge, he intimated. How many times have these emotions been replicated in US targeted countries in the last two plus decades alone?

In majority Muslim nations, according to Pew Research by 2012 President Obama's popularity

ratings had slipped from a woeful 34% to just 15%. Globally, anger over drone strikes and concerns “about how the U.S. uses its power - in particular its military power - in international affairs” dominated.

“There remains a widespread perception that the U.S. acts unilaterally and does not consider the interests of other countries”, the Report noted.

America has, of course, made an art form of portraying the leaders of countries they seek to attack and invade, for oil, minerals, strategic interests as demonic, mass murdering megalomaniacs which threaten the entire planet - especially the US. The not so subliminal message is - so are their populations.

Now it seems, if the US Department of State is to be believed, a global collective psyche has relegated the boot to the other foot and for many, all Americans are George Bush Senior, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama. The latter now unrecognizable as the deliverer of his “New Beginnings” speech at Cairo University (4th June 2009) which included: “The Holy Koran teaches that whoever kills an innocent is as - it is as if he has killed all mankind. And the Holy Koran also says whoever saves a person, it is as if he has saved all mankind.” That was then, this is now. Some more from the State Department’s warning:

Middle East and North Africa

“The U.S. government remains highly concerned about possible attacks against U.S. citizens, facilities, businesses, and perceived U.S. and Western interests.” Terrorist organizations are active in Yemen, Lebanon and “Iraq is experiencing levels of violence not seen since 2007 ... the threat of attacks against U.S. citizens, including kidnapping and terrorist violence, continues, even in Baghdad’s International Zone” (home to the US Embassy.) Goodness, I wonder why?

Bahrain “continues to see increasingly ...lethal IED attacks against Bahraini Government targets to include facilities and security forces.” Nothing to do with grievances against a repressive regime, which fires live rounds on demonstrators, backed by the US, which also has its Fifth Fleet based there?

Algeria, Saudi Arabia and Mali come into the frame and, “In Libya, various groups have called for attacks against U.S. citizens and U.S. interests ... (there have been) specific threats against U.S. government officials and U.S. non-governmental organizations ...Because of the presumption that foreigners, especially U.S. citizens in Libya, may be associated with the U.S. government or U.S. NGOs ...” travelers “should act with extreme caution.” Cause and effect in neon lights.

“Some elements in Iran remain hostile to the United States” and “No part of Syria should be considered immune from violence.” Comments redundant.

Africa

Kenya, Senegal, Mali, Algeria, Niger, Chad, Sudan, Eritrea, Nigeria, Cameroon are flagged up, with “threats against Westerners in Mali and elsewhere increased following the initiation of the U.S.-supported, French-led intervention ... U.S. citizens considering travel by sea near the Horn of Africa, the Gulf of Guinea, or in the southern Red Sea should exercise extreme caution.” U.S. citizens are warned “to avoid all travel” to Somalia. Remember the raids, the drone strikes, ancient and modern?

South Asia

More warnings of "... attacks in the region, possibly against U.S. government facilities, U.S. citizens, or U.S. interests." In Pakistan "a number of extremist groups continue to target U.S. ... interests."

In Afghanistan: "Insurgents continue to target various U.S. and Afghan government facilities." Could anyone possibly be surprised? Neither it seems, are US citizens particularly welcome in India.

In central Asia "anti-U.S. sentiments" have been expressed and attempts may be made "to target U.S. government interests."

In East Asia and the Pacific, there are similar warnings.

At the end of the document there is a "Before You Go" advisory for all but the stoutest hearted, who have planned to travel and not now cowering behind locked doors. It includes: "... The Department of State continues to develop information on potential security threats to U.S. citizens overseas" sharing "credible threat information" ... Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, Country Emergency and Security Messages ..."

On 11th September 2001 a criminal act happened in New York, not a declaration of war. George W. Bush declared revenge on the world, with plans to attack "seven countries in five years." Surely among the biggest acts of terrorism in history. Barack Obama has continued in the mould, Libya, Syria, Ukraine, drones. The all has come back to haunt, reaping what has been sown.

American terrorism comes with bunker buster bombs, missiles, weapons of mass destruction, those who retaliate in unimaginable grief and anger include those encapsulated by Palestine's great late poet, Mahmoud Darwish. In his poem "The Martyr", he writes of a suicide bomber, one who has no family, no home, no hope left:

"I took aim ... with the last thing that belonged to me."

Incidentally it took until 2008 for George W. Bush to state - temporarily putting aside the myriad questions of all to do with September 11th - that those allegedly on the "planes were fifteen Saudis, one Egyptian, one Lebanese and two from the United Arab Emirates." Not one from the countries subsequently ravaged.

As someone wrote, for a swathe of the world: "Your 9/11 is our 24/7."

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Jungle Drum Prose/Poetry. <http://jungledrum.lingama.net/news/story-1155.html>