

PROJECT CENSORED'S TOP 25 NEWS STORIES

Again, the Project Censored team draws attention to the many important national and global news stories that received little or no coverage by the US corporate media during 2006–07.

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Each year, the Project Censored team from Sonoma State University, California, selects and evaluates thousands of published news stories by journalists working in the national and international mainstream as well as alternative press. Students, faculty staff and community experts participate in this process, which ultimately decides on the top 25 stories that were the most underreported by the US corporate media. Following is an edited summary of Project Censored's 2006–07 selection. To see the full report with references and updates, visit the web page http://www.projectcensored.org/censored_2008/index.htm. — Editor

1. No Habeas Corpus for "Any Person"

With approval of the United States Congress and no outcry from corporate media, the Military Commissions Act (MCA), signed by President Bush on October 17, 2006, ushered in military commission law for US citizens and non-citizens alike. While media, including a lead editorial in the *New York Times* of October 19, have given false comfort that American citizens will not be the victims of the draconian measures legalised by this Act—such as military round-ups and life-long detention with no rights or constitutional protections—Robert Parry points to text in the MCA that allows for the institution of a military alternative to the constitutional justice system for "any person" regardless of American citizenship. The MCA effectively does away with habeas corpus rights for "any person" arbitrarily deemed to be an "enemy of the state". The judgement on who is deemed an "enemy combatant" is solely at the discretion of President Bush.

While it is true that some parts of the MCA target non-citizens, other sections [e.g., 950q, 950v] clearly apply to US citizens as well, putting citizens inside the same tribunal system with non-citizen residents and foreigners. Besides allowing "any person" to be swallowed up by Bush's system, the law prohibits detainees once inside from appealing to the traditional American courts until after prosecution and sentencing, which could translate into an indefinite imprisonment since there are no timetables for Bush's tribunal process to play out. Other constitutional protections in the Bill of Rights, such as a speedy trial, the right to reasonable bail and the ban on "cruel and unusual punishment" would also seem to be beyond a detainee's reach.

Parry warns: "Under the cloak of setting up military tribunals to try al-Qaeda suspects and other so-called unlawful enemy combatants, Bush and the Republican-controlled Congress effectively created a parallel legal system for 'any person'—American citizen or otherwise—who crosses some ill-defined line."

(Source: Robert Parry, "Who Is 'Any Person' in Tribunal Law?", *Consortium*, October 19, 2006, <http://consortiumnews.com/2006/101906.html>, and "Still No Habeas Rights for You", *Consortium*, February 3, 2007, <http://consortiumnews.com/2007/020307.html>)

2. Bush Moves toward Martial Law

The John Warner Defense Authorization Act of 2007, which was quietly signed by President Bush on October 17, 2006, the very same day that he signed the Military Commissions Act, allows the President to station military troops anywhere in the United States and take control of state-based National Guard units without the consent of the governor or local authorities, in order to "suppress public disorder".

The law in effect repeals the 1878 Posse Comitatus Act, which placed strict prohibitions on military involvement in domestic law enforcement. As the only US criminal statute that outlawed military operations directed against the American people, it

had been Americans' best protection against tyranny enforced by martial law—the harsh system of rules that takes effect when the military takes control of the normal administration of justice.

The massive Defense Authorization Act grants the Pentagon \$532.8 billion to include implementation of the new law which furthermore facilitates militarised police round-ups of protesters, so-called illegal aliens, potential terrorists and other undesirables for detention in facilities already contracted and under construction, and transferring from the Pentagon to local police units the latest technology and weaponry designed to suppress dissent.

(Source: Frank Morales, "Bush Moves Toward Martial Law", Uruknet, October 26, 2006, <http://www.uruknet.info/?p=27769>)

3. US Military Control of Africa's Resources

In February 2007, the White House announced the formation of the US African Command (AFRICOM), a new unified Pentagon command centre in Africa, to be established by September 2008. This military penetration of Africa is being presented as a humanitarian guard in the global War on Terror. The real objective, however, is the procurement and control of Africa's oil and its global delivery systems. AFRICOM will replace US military command posts in Africa, which were formerly under the control of US European Command (EUCOM) and US Central Command (CENTCOM), with a more centralised and intensified US military presence.

It is in Western and Sub-Saharan Africa that the US military force is most rapidly increasing. In this region, challenge to US domination and exploitation is coming from the people of Africa—most specifically in Nigeria, where 70 per cent of Africa's oil is contained. Environmental and human rights activists have, for years, documented atrocities on the part of oil companies and the military in this region. Oil companies and the Pentagon are attempting to link these resistance groups to international terror networks in order to legitimise the use of the US military to "stabilise" these areas and secure the energy flow. No evidence has been found, however, to link the Niger Delta resistance groups to international terror networks or jihadists. Instead, the situation in the Niger Delta is that of ethnic-nationalist movements fighting, by any means necessary, toward the political objective of self-determination.

The volatility surrounding oil installations in Nigeria and elsewhere in the continent is used by the US security establishment to justify military "support" in African oil-producing states under the guise of helping Africans defend themselves against those who would hinder their engagement in "free trade".

(Source: Bryant Hunt, "Understanding AFRICOM", MoonofAlabama.org, February 21, 2007, http://www.moonofalabama.org/2007/02/understanding_a_1.html)

4. Frenzy of Increasingly Destructive Trade Agreements

The United States and the European Union (EU) are vigorously pursuing increasingly destructive regional and bilateral trade and investment agreements outside the auspices of the World Trade Organization (WTO). These agreements are requiring enormous irreversible concessions from developing countries, while offering almost nothing in return.

The US and EU are demanding unprecedented tariff reductions

as they dump subsidised agricultural goods on undeveloped countries (see story 21), plunging local farmers into desperate poverty. Meanwhile, they use high tariffs and stringent import quotas to protect their own producers. Unprecedented loss of livelihood, displacement, slave labour along with spiralling degradation of human rights and environments are resulting as economic governance is forced from governments of developing countries and taken over by unaccountable multinational firms.

The new generation of agreements extends far beyond the traditional area of trade policy, imposing a damaging set of binding rules in intellectual property, services and investment with much deeper consequences for development and impacts on the poor. US and EU free trade agreements (FTAs) also remove the right to share seeds among indigenous farmers, while profit margins of the world's largest agribusinesses continue to climb. New rules also pose a threat to essential services as FTAs allow foreign investors to take ownership of healthcare, education, water and public utilities. Investment chapters of new FTAs and bilateral investment treaties (BITs) allow foreign investors to sue for lost profits, including anticipated future profits, if governments change regulations, even when such reforms are in the public interest. These rules undermine the sovereignty of developing nations, transferring power to largely unaccountable multinational firms.

(Sources: Oxfam International, "Signing Away The Future" report, March 2007, http://www.oxfam.org/en/policy/briefingpapers/bp101_regional_trade_agreements_0703; Sanjay Suri, "Free Trade Enslaving Poor Countries", March 20, 2007, <http://ipsnews.org/news.asp?idnews=37008>)

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5. Human Traffic Builds US Embassy in Iraq

The enduring monument to US liberation and democracy in Iraq will be the most expensive and heavily fortified embassy in the world—and is being built by a Kuwait contractor

repeatedly accused of using forced labour trafficked from South Asia under US contracts. The \$592 million, 104-acre fortress will be equal in size to Vatican City.

With a highly secretive contract awarded by the US State Department, First Kuwaiti Trading & Contracting (FKTC) has joined the ranks of Halliburton/KBR in Iraq by using bait-and-switch recruiting practices. Thousands of citizens from countries that have banned travel or work in Iraq are being tricked, smuggled into brutal and inhumane labor camps and subjected to months of forced servitude—all in the middle of the US-controlled Green Zone, "right under the nose of the US State Department".

Though Associated Press reported that "[t]he 5,500 Americans and Iraqis working at the embassy are far more numerous than at any other US mission worldwide", there is no mention in corporate media of the 3,000 South Asian labourers living and working in dangerous, abysmal conditions.

The Pentagon has yet to announce, however, any penalty for those found to be in violation of US labour trafficking laws or contract requirements.

(Sources: Associated Press, "New US Embassy in Iraq Cloaked in Mystery," MSNBC, April 14, 2006; David Phinney, "A US Fortress Rises in Baghdad: Asian Workers Trafficked to Build World's Largest Embassy", CorpWatch, October 17, 2007, <http://www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=14173>)

6. Operation FALCON Raids

Under the codename Operation FALCON (Federal and Local Cops Organized Nationally), a series of three federally coordinated mass arrests occurred between April 2005 and October 2006. The operation directly involved over 960 agencies (state, local and federal) and was the brainchild of Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and US Marshals Director Ben Reyna.

In what was the largest dragnet in US history, 30,150 "fugitives" were arrested. The Department of Justice supplied television networks with government-shot action videotape of marshals and local cops raiding homes and breaking down doors, "targeting the worst of the worst criminals on the run", emphasising suspected sex offenders—yet less than 10 per cent of the total were suspected sex offenders and less than two per cent owned firearms. The press has not asked, "Who were the others?" And to date, the US Marshals Service has issued no public statement as to whether the people arrested have been processed or released.

FALCON does make sense as a means of effectively setting up a chain-of-command structure that radiates from the Justice Department and relocates the levers of control to Washington, where they can be manned by members of the administration. Author Mike Whitney warns that the plan behind FALCON appears to have been devised to enhance the powers of the "unitary" executive by putting state and local law enforcement under federal supervision, ready for the institution of martial law (see story 2).

(Sources: Brenda J. Elliot, "Operation Falcon", SourceWatch, November 18, 2006, http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Operation_FALCON; Mike Whitney, "Operation Falcon and the Looming Police State", Ukernel, Feb 26, 2007, <http://uruknet.info/?p=m30971&s1=h1>)

7. Behind Blackwater Inc.

The company that most embodies the privatisation of the military-industrial complex—a primary part of the Project for a New American Century and the neo-conservative revolution—is the private security firm Blackwater. Blackwater is the most powerful mercenary firm in the world, with 20,000 soldiers, the world's largest private military base, a fleet of 20 aircraft including helicopter gunships, and a private intelligence division.

Blackwater is headed by a very right-wing Christian supremacist and ex-Navy SEAL named Erik Prince, whose family has had deep neo-conservative connections. Bush's latest call for voluntary civilian military corps to accommodate the "surge" will add to over half a billion dollars in federal contracts with Blackwater, allowing Prince to create a private army to defend Christendom around the world against Muslims and others.

As Jeremy Scahill points out, private contractors currently constitute the second-largest "force" in Iraq. At last count there were about 100,000 contractors in Iraq, 48,000 of whom work as private soldiers, according to a Government Accountability Office report. These soldiers have operated with almost no oversight or effective legal constraints and are politically expedient, as contractor deaths go uncounted in the official toll. With Prince calling for the creation of a "contractor brigade" before military audiences, the Bush administration has found a back door for engaging in an undeclared expansion of occupation.

(Source: Jeremy Scahill, "Our Mercenaries in Iraq", *Democracy Now!*, January 26, 2007, <http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=07/01/26/1559232>)

8. KIA: the US Neoliberal Invasion of India

Farmers' cooperatives in India are defending the nation's food security and the future of Indian farmers against the neoliberal invasion of genetically modified (GM) seed. As many as 28,000 Indian farmers have committed suicide over the last decade as a result of debt incurred from failed GM crops and competition with subsidised US crops, yet, when India's Prime Minister Singh met with US President Bush in March 2006 to finalise nuclear agreements, they also signed the Indo-US Knowledge Initiative on Agriculture (KIA), backed by Monsanto, Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) and Wal-Mart. The KIA allows for the grab of India's seed sector by Monsanto, of its trade sector by giant agribusinesses ADM and Cargill, and of its retail sector by Wal-Mart.

In one of very few public statements by a US government official regarding the KIA, Nicholas Burns, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, said: "While the civilian nuclear initiative has garnered the most attention, our first priority is to continue giving governmental support to the huge growth in business between the Indian and American private sectors. Singh has also challenged the United States to help launch a second green revolution in India's vast agricultural heartland by enlisting the help of America's great land-grant institutions."

Vandana Shiva translates: "These are twin programs about a market grab and a security alignment."

Through the KIA, Monsanto and the United States have asked for unhindered access to India's gene banks, along with a change in India's intellectual property laws to allow patents on seeds and genes and to dilute provisions that protect farmers' rights. This would be a severe blow to India's food security and self-sufficiency.

At the same time, the KIA has paved the way for Wal-Mart's plans to open 500 stores in India, starting in August 2007, which will compound the outsourcing of India's food supply and threaten 14 million small family vendors with loss of livelihood.

Farmers, however, are organising to protect themselves against



this economic invasion by maintaining traditional seed banks and setting up exemplary systems of community agrarian support.

(Sources: Nicholas Burns, "Heady Times' For India And the US", *Washington Post*, April 29, 2007; Vandana Shiva with Amy Goodman, "Vandana Shiva on Farmer Suicides, the US-India Nuclear Deal, Wal-Mart in India", *Democracy Now!*, December 13, 2006, <http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=06/12/13/1451229>)

9. Privatisation of America's Infrastructure

Americans will soon be paying Wall Street investors, Australian bankers and Spanish contractors for the privilege of driving on American roads, as more than 20 states have enacted legislation allowing public-private partnerships to build and run highways. Investment firms including Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley and The Carlyle Group are approaching state politicians with advice to sell off public highway and transportation infrastructure. When advising state officials on the future of this vital public asset, these investment firms fail to mention that their sole purpose is to pick up infrastructure at the lowest price possible in order to maximise returns for their investors. Investors, most often foreign companies, are charging tolls and insisting on "noncompete" clauses that limit governments from expanding or improving nearby roads.

Despite public concerns, the Bush administration is quietly advancing the plan to build a huge 10-lane NAFTA Super Highway, financed largely through public-private partnerships as a privately operated toll road.

(Sources: Daniel Schulman with James Ridgeway, "The Highwaymen", *Mother Jones*, February 2007, <http://www.motherjones.com/news/feature/2007/01/highwaymen.html>; Jerome R. Corsi, "Bush Administration Quietly Plans NAFTA Super Highway", *Human Events*, June 12, 2006, <http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=15497>)

10. Vulture Funds Threaten Poor Nations' Debt Relief

Vulture funds, otherwise known as "distressed-debt investors", are undermining UN and other global efforts to relieve impoverished Third World nations of the debt that has burdened them for many decades. These funds are financial organisations that buy up debts that are near default or bankruptcy. The vulture fund pays the original investor pennies on the dollar for the debt and then approaches the debtor to arrange a better repayment on the loan or goes after the debtor in court. A problem has arisen in recent years, however, as vulture funds have begun inserting themselves into an increasingly globalised "free market"—where no distinction is made between an irresponsible and defaulted company and a destitute and impoverished nation.

Many of these vulture funds have influential ties to powerful world leaders and the Bush administration. The risk normally faced by distressed-debt investors is virtually eliminated when they have political influence that is greater than the poor nation they are suing. They raise most of their money through legal actions in US courts, where lobbying and political contributions hold influence.

(Source: Greg Palast with Meirion Jones, "Vulture Fund Threat to Third World", BBC Newsnight, February 14, 2007, <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article17070.htm>)

11. The Scam of "Reconstruction" in Afghanistan

A June 2005 report by Action Aid reveals that much of the US tax money earmarked to rebuild Afghanistan actually ends up going no further than the pockets of wealthy US corporations. Additionally, 70 per cent of the aid that *does* make it to a recipient country is carefully "tied" to the donor nation, requiring the recipient to use the donated money to buy products and services from the donor country, often at drastically inflated prices. The US far outstrips other nations in these schemes: Action Aid calculates that 86 cents of every dollar of American aid is "phantom".

Authors Ann Jones and Fariba Nawa suggest that in order to understand the failure and fraud in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, it is important to look at the peculiar system of American aid for international development. International and national agencies—including the World Bank, the IMF and USAID, which traditionally distribute aid money to developing countries—have designed a system that is efficient in funnelling money back to the wealthy donor countries while undermining sustainable development in poor states.

Increasingly frustrated and angry Afghan communities claim that the no-bid, open-ended contracts being awarded to contractors such as Kellogg, Brown & Root/Halliburton, DynCorp, Blackwater and the Louis Berger Group are equivalent to licensed bribery, corruption, theft and money laundering.

(Sources: Ann Jones, "Why It's Not Working in Afghanistan",

Tomdispatch.com, August 27, 2006, <http://www.tomdispatch.com/index.mhtml?pid=116512>; Fariba Nawa, "Afghanistan Inc.", *CorpWatch*, October 6, 2006, <http://www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=13518>)

12. Another Massacre in Haiti by UN Troops

Eyewitness testimony confirms indiscriminate killings by UN forces in Haiti's Cité Soleil community on December 22, 2006, reportedly as collective punishment for a mass demonstration of Lavalas supporters in which about 10,000 people rallied for the return of President Aristide, in clear condemnation of the foreign military occupation of their country.

According to residents, UN forces attacked their neighbourhood in the early morning, killing more than 30 people including women and children.

Footage taken by Haiti Information Project (HIP) videographers shows unarmed civilians dying as they tell of extensive gunfire from UN peacekeeping forces (MINUSTAH).

Although MINUSTAH denied firing from helicopter gunships, HIP captured more than three hours of video footage and a large selection of digital photos illustrating the UN's behaviour in Haiti.

A study in the *Lancet* in August 2006 estimates that 8,000 were killed and 35,000 sexually assaulted in the greater Port au Prince area during the time of the interim government (2004–2006). The study attributed human rights abuses to purported "criminals", police, anti-Lavalas gangs and UN peacekeepers.

(Sources: Haiti Information Project, "UN in Haiti: Accused of Second Massacre", *HaitiAction.net*, January 21, 2007, http://www.haitiaction.net/News/HIP/1_21_7/1_21_7.html)

Footage taken by Haiti Information Project (HIP) videographers shows unarmed civilians dying as they tell of extensive gunfire from UN peacekeeping forces (MINUSTAH).

13. Immigrant Round-ups Gain Cheap US Labour

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has flooded Mexico with cheap, subsidised, US agricultural products that have displaced millions of Mexican farmers. Between 2000 and 2005, Mexico lost 900,000 rural and 700,000 industrial jobs, resulting in deep unemployment. Desperate poverty has forced millions of Mexican workers north in order to feed their families.

The National Campesino Front estimates that two million farmers have been displaced by NAFTA, in many cases related to the increase in US imports.

The demand for undocumented labour in the US economy is structural. Migrants work in nearly all low-paying occupations and have become essential to the US economy in the age of global competition. Part and parcel of the slide has been the replacement of unionised US workers with migrants.

In the wake of 9/11, Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) has conducted workplace and home invasions across the country in an attempt to round up "illegal" immigrants. ICE justifies these raids under the rubric of keeping the US homeland safe and preventing terrorism. However, the real goal of these actions is to disrupt the immigrant workforce in the US and replace it with a tightly regulated non-union guest-worker program. Both the enforcement and the agenda behind this crackdown are alarming many unions.

(Sources: David Bacon, "Which Side Are You On?", *Truthout*, January 27, 2007, http://www.truthout.org/docs_2006/012907L.shtml, and "Workers, Not Guests", *The Nation*, February 6, 2007, http://www.truthout.org/issues_06/020607LB.shtml; Laura Carlsen, "Migrants: Globalization's Junk Mail?", *Foreign Policy in Focus*, February 26, 2007, <http://www.fpif.org/fpiftxt/4022>)

14. US War Criminals Impunity

A provision mysteriously tucked into the Military Commission Act (MCA) just before it passed through Congress and was signed by President Bush on October 17, 2006 (see story 1) redefines torture, removing the harshest, most controversial techniques from the definition of war crimes, and exempts the perpetrators—both interrogators and their bosses—from prosecution for such offences dating back to November 1997.

Author Jeff Stein asks: "Who slipped language into the MCA that would further exempt torturers from prosecution?" The White House denies any involvement or knowledge regarding the insertion of such language, leaving the origin of adjustments to this significant part of the MCA a mystery. Motivation for this provision leads clearly to leadership in the Bush administration, as the passage effectively rewrote the US enforcement mechanism for the Geneva War Crimes Act, which, upon sworn testimonies, would have held former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Vice President Dick Cheney and President George W. Bush guilty of active roles in directing acts of torture upon detainees held at Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib.

A Center for Constitutional Rights spokesperson commented: "This amendment is designed to protect US government perpetrators of abuses during the 'war on terror' from prosecution."

Whatever the source, the amended provision was passed and is now a part of US law.

(Source: Jeff Stein, "A Senate Mystery Keeps Torture Alive— and Its Practitioners Free", *Congressional Quarterly*, November 22, 2006, http://public.cq.com/public/20061122_homeland.html)

15. Toxic Exposure Can Be Transmitted to Future Generations on a "Second Genetic Code"

Research suggests that, contrary to previous belief, our behaviour and our environmental conditions may program sections of our children's DNA. New evidence about how genes interact with the environment suggests that many industrial chemicals may be more ominously dangerous than previously thought. It is increasingly clear that the effects of toxic exposure may be passed on through generations, in ways that are still not

fully understood. "This introduces the concept of responsibility into genetics and inheritance," said Dr Moshe Szyf, a researcher at McGill University in Montreal. "This may revolutionize medicine. You aren't eating and exercising just for yourself, but for your lineage."

The new field of genetic research, called epigenetics, involves what scientists are referring to as a "second genetic code" which influences how genes act in the body. If DNA is the hardware of inheritance, the epigenetic system is the software; it determines which genes get turned "off" or "on" and how much of a certain protein they produce. Now, it seems that this chemical switching system may also act in reverse. Based on the recent data, researchers are intrigued by the notion that some of the genetic changes influenced by our diet, our behaviours or our environment may be passed on from generation to generation.

On average, 1,800 new chemicals are registered with the US federal government each year and about 750 of these find their way into products, all with hardly any testing for health or environmental effects.

The bad news about chemical contamination is steadily mounting, while the number of new chemicals is steadily increasing. In 2005, the EU responded to this situation by trying to enact a new law called Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals (REACH), which requires that chemicals be tested before they are sold—not after. At the same time, US and European chemical industries—and the White House—began working overtime to subvert the European effort to enact REACH. Their efforts failed, however, and the REACH Act was adopted by the European Union in December 2006. Chemical companies throughout the US and Europe are still struggling with how they will respond to the new requirements.

(Sources: Anne McIlroy, "Chemicals and Stress Cause Gene Changes That Can Be Inherited", *Globe & Mail*, March 11, 2006, http://www.precaution.org/lib/06/prn_code_2.060311.htm; Peter Montague, "Some Chemicals are More Harmful Than Anyone Ever Suspected", *Rachel's Democracy & Health News*, October 12, 2006; "European Parliament OKs World's Toughest Law on Toxic Chemicals", *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 14, 2006)

Based on the recent data, researchers are intrigued by the notion that some of the genetic changes influenced by our diet, our behaviours or our environment may be passed on from generation to generation.

16. No Hard Evidence Connecting Bin Laden to 9/11

Osama bin Laden's role in the events of September 11, 2001 is not mentioned on the FBI's "Ten Most Wanted" poster. On June 5, 2006, author Ed Haas contacted the Federal Bureau of Investigation headquarters to ask why the poster, while claiming that bin Laden is wanted in connection with the August 1998 bombings of US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, does not indicate that he is wanted in connection with the events of 9/11.

Rex Tomb, Chief of Investigative Publicity for the FBI, responded: "The reason why 9/11 is not mentioned on Osama bin Laden's Most Wanted page is because the FBI has no hard evidence connecting bin Laden to 9/11. Bin Laden has not been formally charged in connection to 9/11... In the case of the 1998 United States embassies being bombed, bin Laden has been formally indicted and charged by a grand jury. He has not been formally indicted and charged in connection with 9/11 because the FBI has no hard evidence connecting bin Laden to 9/11."

Haas asks: "If the US government does not have enough hard evidence connecting bin Laden to 9/11, how is it possible that it had enough evidence to invade Afghanistan to 'smoke him out of his cave'?"

Though the world was to have been convinced by the December 2001 release of a bin Laden "confession video", the Department of Defense issued a press release to accompany it, in which Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said: "There was no doubt of bin Laden's responsibility for the 9/11 attacks even before the tape was discovered." Haas attempted to secure a reference to US government authentication of the video, to no avail.

Haas strongly suggests that we begin asking questions. "Why has the US media blindly read the government-provided 9/11 scripts, rather than investigate without passion, prejudice or bias, the events of September 11, 2001? Why has the US media blacklisted any guest that might speak of a government-sponsored 9/11 cover-up, rather than seeking out those people who have something to say about 9/11 that is contrary to the government's account? Who is controlling the media message, and how is it that the FBI has no 'hard evidence' connecting Osama bin Laden to the events of September 11, 2001, while the US media has played the bin Laden-9/11 connection story for [six] years now as if it has conclusive evidence that bin Laden is responsible for the collapse of the twin towers, the Pentagon attack, and the demise of United Flight 93?"

(Source: Ed Haas, "FBI says, 'No Hard Evidence Connecting Bin Laden to 9/11'", *The Muckraker Report*, June 6, 2006, <http://www.teamliberty.net/id267.html>)

17. Water Contaminated by Military and Corporations

Reliably pure water is growing scarce, even in the United States, where corporations, municipalities and the military pollute waters—often with little or no accountability. "Troubled Waters: An Analysis of Clean Water Act Compliance", released in March 2006 by US PIRG, the national lobby office for state Public Interest Research Groups, shows that between July 2003 and

December 2004 over 62 per cent of industrial and municipal facilities discharged pollution into US waterways at rates above limits established by the Clean Water Act. The average facility discharged pollutants in excess of its permitted limit by over 275 per cent—nearly four times the legal limit. Nationally, 436 major facilities exceeded their limits at least half of the time during the study's timeframe. Thirty-five facilities exceeded their permits during every reporting period. Seven states allowed more than 100 violations of at least 500 per cent.

Today, more than 40 per cent of US waterways are unsafe for swimming and fishing, and, as shown by the PIRG study, industrial pollution of the nation's waters persists. One reason for these ongoing failures is the Bush administration's consistent efforts to shortchange the Environmental Protection Agency's budget and to gut the 1972 Clean Water Act.

However, opposition to environmental protection for clean waterways stems from not only the Bush administration but also the US military, whose pollution poisons the very citizens it is supposed to protect in the name of national security. Weapons production by the US military and its private contractors generates more hazardous waste annually than the five largest international chemical companies combined, accounting for one-third of the nation's toxic waste. Furthermore, the US military is among the most frequent violators of environmental laws.

The Department of Defense (DoD) has sought and received exemptions from crucial public health and environmental laws. Dramatic increases in the amounts of trichloroethylene (TCE) in public aquifers have been one fatal consequence of these exemptions. TCE, a known carcinogen, is the most widespread industrial contaminant in US drinking water and is especially common around military facilities. The Pentagon is responsible for TCE contamination at over 1,400 properties.

In 2001, the EPA sought to force the government to require more thorough clean-ups at military sites by lowering

the acceptable limits on TCE from five parts per billion to one part per billion.

In response, the DoD joined the Department of Energy and NASA in blocking the EPA's proposed action. The Bush administration charged the EPA with inflating TCE's risks and called on the National Academy of Sciences to evaluate the EPA's claims. The Academy's 2003 report confirmed the EPA's assessment, linking TCE to kidney cancer, impaired neurological function, reproductive and developmental damage, autoimmune disease and other human ailments. The Bush administration and the DoD have ignored these inconvenient findings. As a result, citizens who pay for the military budget with their tax dollars are also paying with their health and sometimes their lives.

(Sources: Sunny Lewis, "Factories, Cities Across USA Exceed Water Pollution Limits", *Environment News Service*, March 24, 2006, <http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/mar2006/2006-03-24-05.asp>; Sunaura Taylor and Astor Taylor, "Military Waste in Our Drinking Water", *AlterNet*, August 4, 2006, <http://www.alternet.org/envirohealth/39723/>)

"If the US government does not have enough hard evidence connecting bin Laden to 9/11, how is it possible that it had enough evidence to invade Afghanistan to 'smoke him out of his cave'?"

18. Mexico's Stolen Election

Overwhelming evidence reveals massive fraud in the 2006 Mexican presidential election between "president-elect" Felipe Calderón of the conservative PAN party and Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the more liberal PRD. In an election riddled with "arithmetic mistakes", a partial recount uncovered evidence of abundant stuffing and stealing of ballots that favoured the PAN victory.

Meanwhile, US interests were significantly invested in the outcome of Mexico's election. Though neither candidate had any choice but to cooperate with the US agenda, important differences existed around energy policy, specifically with regard to foreign privatisation of Mexican oil and gas reserves. Calderón promised a more thorough and streamlined exploitation of Mexico's oil, demanding that Mexico remove barriers to private/foreign investment (which are currently written into the Mexican Constitution). Obrador insisted on maintaining national ownership and control of the energy sector in order to build economic and social stability in Mexico.

In June 2005, Mexico signed an accord—the Alliance for the Security and Prosperity of North America (ASPAN)—with Canada and the USA. The point was made that this accord would be binding on whoever became president of Mexico in the upcoming elections. Included in ASPAN is a guarantee to fill the energy needs of the US market as well as agreements to forge "a common theory of security", allowing US Homeland Security measures to be implemented in Mexico.

When Obrador appeared to be the front-runner in the election, PAN allied with forces in the US to launch a feverish campaign against him. Though US laws prevent American influence in other countries' elections, anti-Obrador ads airing on Mexican TV were designed by US firms and illegally financed by business councils that included such transnationals as Wal-Mart and Halliburton. A media campaign fomented fear that Obrador, with ties to Chavez and Castro, posed a dangerous socialist threat to Mexico.

Outgoing president Vicente Fox violated campaign law by making dozens of anti-Obrador speeches during the campaign, as PAN illegally saturated airwaves with swift-boat-style attack ads against Obrador. Under Mexican law, ruling party interference is a serious crime and ground for annulling an election.

While Obrador's campaigners and hundreds of independent election observers documented several hundred cases of election fraud in making their case for a recount, most Mexican TV stations failed to report the irregularities that surfaced. Days after the election, the *New York Times* irresponsibly declared Calderón the winner, and Bush called to congratulate Calderón personally on his "win", even though no victor had been declared under Mexican law.

Mexico has been denied the democratic election of a president who might have joined Latin America in standing up to aggressive US neoliberal policies.

(Sources: Chuck Collins and Joshua Holland, "Evidence of Election Fraud Grows in México", AlterNet, August 2, 2006, <http://www.alternet.org/story/39763>; "Mexico: The Political Volcano Rumbles", *Revolution*, September 10, 2006, <http://revcom.us/a/060/mexico-volcano-en.html>)

19. People's Movement Challenges Neoliberal Agenda

The US free trade model is meeting increasingly successful resistance as people's movements build powerful alternatives to neoliberal exploitation. This is particularly evident in Latin America, where massive opposition to US economic domination has demanded that populist leaders and parties take control of national governments in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina, Brazil, Nicaragua and Uruguay.

On April 30, 2007, Hugo Chavez announced that, having paid off debts to the World Bank and the IMF, Venezuela would cut ties with both institutions.

In April 2006, Bolivia's Evo Morales announced his rejection of the IMF and any future FTA with the US. Tens of millions of dollars in revenue from royalties paid by foreign gas companies have enabled Bolivia to pay off its IMF debt and begin to build social programs and national reserves.

In December 2006, Rafael Correa, who won the presidential election in Ecuador on an anti-privatisation, anti-US military base platform, announced plans to restructure Ecuador's foreign debt in order to increase spending on crucial social programs. Ecuador has since paid its debt to the IMF and announced plans to sever ties to the institution.

Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega has also announced negotiations toward an IMF exit.

Argentina's economy, in a remarkable expansion which was never supposed to have happened according to IMF predictions, has grown by 47 per cent in the past few years. Argentina decided to make its break with the IMF in January 2006 by paying off its remaining \$9.9 billion debt.

As of December 2005, Brazil was free to make its own decisions, free from IMF interference, after paying

off its debt two years ahead of schedule.

While it is an expanding reality that many strong and growing people's movements have not been so fortunate as to have representative governments, more and more elected leaders in Latin America are providing models of true democratic leadership that is of, for and by the people.

(Sources: Jorge Rueda, "Venezuela Pulling Out of IMF, World Bank," AP, May 1, 2007; Jessica Walker Beaumont, "Is the US Free Trade Model Losing Steam?", *Trade Matters*, American Friends Service Committee, May 3, 2006, <http://www.afsc.org/trade-matters/trade-agreements/LosingSteam.htm>; Mark Weisbrot, "Economic Policy Changes With New Latin American Leaders", *International Herald Tribune*, December 28, 2006, http://www.cepr.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=773&Itemid=45)

20. Terror Act Against Animal Activists

The term "terrorism" has been dangerously expanded to include acts that interfere, or promote interference, with the operations of animal enterprises. The Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (AETA), signed into law on November 27, 2006, broadens punishment present under the Animal Enterprise Protection Act (AEPA) of 1992. One hundred and sixty groups, including the National Lawyers' Guild, the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, oppose this Act on grounds that its terminology is dangerously vague and poses a

Mexico has been denied the democratic election of a president who might have joined Latin America in standing up to aggressive US neoliberal policies.

major conflict to the US Constitution. The broad definition of an "animal enterprise" may encompass most US businesses: "any enterprise that uses or sells animals or animal products". The phrase "loss of any real or personal property" is elastic enough to include loss of projected profit. Protections against "interference" extend to any "person or entity having a connection to, relationship with, or transactions with an animal enterprise".

A letter from the American Civil Liberties Union to Congress, dated March 6, 2006, explains their opposition to AETA based on the concern that First Amendment activities such as demonstrations, leafleting, undercover investigations and boycotts may be punishable as acts of terror under the overly vague and open-ended law.

Author Will Potter argues that the harsher amendments that AETA brings to its predecessor, AEPA, are hardly necessary, as AEPA was successfully used to disproportionately prosecute the SHAC 7 animal rights activists organised to expose the illegal and inhumane operations of Huntingdon Life Sciences—for "animal enterprise terrorism".

David Hoch and Odette Wilkens of Equal Justice Alliance ask: "How did this bill [AETA] pass the House?"

It was placed by the House Judiciary Committee on the suspension calendar, under which process bills that are non-controversial can be passed by voice vote. The vote on the bill was then held hours earlier than scheduled, with what appears to have been only six (out of 435) congresspersons present. Five voted for the bill, and Dennis Kucinich voted against it, noting: "My concern about this bill is that it does nothing to address the real issue of animal protection but, instead, targets those advocating animal rights."

(Sources: Will Potter, "US House Passes Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act With Little Discussion or Dissent", Green is the New Red, November 14, 2006, <http://www.greenisthenewred.com/blog/2006/11/13/aeta-passes-house-recap/>; David Hoch and Odette Wilkens, "The AETA is Invidiously Detrimental to the Animal Rights Movement (and Unconstitutional as Well)", *Vermont Journal of Environmental Law*, March 9, 2007, <http://www.vjel.org/editorials/2007S/Hoch.Wilkens.Editorial.htm>)

21. US Seeks WTO Immunity for Illegal Farm Payments

On July 24, 2006, after nearly five years of global trade negotiations, talks at the meetings of the World Trade Organization collapsed—perhaps permanently, say some economic analysts. In January 2007, trade ministers from the United States, the European Union, Brazil, India, Japan and Australia said they remained hopelessly stalemated, mostly on the contentious issue of farm trade.

What went uncovered in mainstream news sources was any analysis of the content of the negotiations: what exactly the countries involved were offering, and what they expected in return.

Of utmost importance to the Bush administration was that the US receive immunity from lawsuits by poor countries before

Bush's special "fast track" trade negotiating powers expired at the end of June 2007. In a last-minute proposal, the US insisted that all trade agreements include a special "Peace Clause" that would make its use of illegal farm subsidies immune from prosecution by the countries affected. Between 1994 and 2003, such a Peace Clause denied developing nations any legal recourse in the face of the "dumping" of cheap foreign products that had devastated their agricultural communities.

Oxfam notes that proposals included in the new Peace Clause would actually allow the US to increase its farm support from under \$20 billion to almost \$23 billion. The EU proposal would allow an increase in farm subsidies from \$23 billion to \$33 billion. Poor countries, with no surplus to supplement their farmers' income shortfalls, would have nothing to respond with—no global support, no economic power and no legal appeals.

(Sources: Oxfam International, "US Seeks 'Get-Out Clause' for Illegal Farm Payments", June 29, 2006, http://www.oxfam.org/en/news/pressreleases2006/pr060629_wto_geneva; Paul Blustein, "Trade Talks Fail After Stalemate Over Farm Issues", *Washington Post*, July 25, 2006)

...First Amendment activities such as demonstrations, leafleting, undercover investigations and boycotts may be punishable as acts of terror under the overly vague and open-ended law.

22. North Invades Mexico

Author Mike Davis points out that few people—at least outside Mexico—have bothered to notice that while all the nannies, cooks, maids and gardeners have been heading north to tend the luxury lifestyles of irate Republicans, the Gringo masses have been rushing south to enjoy glorious budget retirements and affordable second homes in Mexico.

The number of North Americans living in Mexico has soared from 200,000 to one million (one-quarter of all US expatriates) in the past decade. The land rush is sending up property values to the detriment of locals, whose children are consequently driven into slums or forced to emigrate north, only to face increasing "invasion" charges.

The Gringo footprint is largest (and brings the most significant geopolitical consequences) in Baja California. One of the irresistible attractions of Baja is that it has preserved a primordial wildness that has disappeared elsewhere in the West. Local residents, including a very eloquent indigenous environmental movement, cherish this incomparable landscape, as they do the survival of an

egalitarian ethos in the peninsula's small towns and fishing villages. However, thanks to the silent invasion of the baby-boomers from the north, much of the natural history and frontier culture of Baja could be swept away in the next generation.

(Source: Mike Davis, "Border Invaders: The Perfect Swarm Heads South", *TomDispatch.com*, September 19, 2006, <http://www.tomdispatch.com/index.mhtml?pid=122537>)

23. Feinstein's Conflict of Interest in Iraq

Dianne Feinstein—the ninth wealthiest member of US Congress—has been beset by monumental ethical conflicts of interest. As a member of the Military Construction Appropriations Subcommittee (MILCON) from 2001 to the end

of 2005, Senator Feinstein voted for appropriations worth billions of dollars to her husband's firms.

From 1997 through the end of 2005, Feinstein's husband Richard C. Blum was a majority shareholder in both URS Corp. and Perini Corp. She lobbied Pentagon officials in public hearings to support defence projects that she favoured, some of which already were, or subsequently became, URS or Perini contracts. From 2001 to 2005, URS earned \$792 million from military construction and environmental clean-up projects approved by MILCON; Perini earned \$759 million from such projects.

In 2003 hearings, MILCON approved various construction projects at sites where Perini and/or URS are contracted to perform engineering and military construction work. URS's military construction work in 2000 earned it a mere \$24 million. The next year, when Feinstein took over as MILCON chair, military construction earned URS \$185 million.

Beginning in 1997, Michael R. Klein, a top legal adviser to Feinstein and a long-time business partner of Blum, routinely informed Feinstein about specific federal projects coming before her in which Perini had a stake.

(Source: Peter Byrne, "Senator Feinstein's Iraq Conflict", *North Bay Bohemian*, January 24, 2007, <http://www.bohemian.com/metro/01.24.07/dianne-feinstein-0704.html>)

24. Media Misquotes Threat from Iran's President

Across the world a media story has spread that Iran's President Ahmadinejad has threatened to destroy Israel, by saying that "Israel must be wiped off the map". Contrary to general belief, this statement was actually a misinterpretation. However, it was the Islamic Republic News Service in Iran that first mistranslated the quote. Iran's Foreign Minister attempted to clarify the statement, but the quote ended up having a life of its own.

Amid heated wrangling over Iran's nuclear program and the threat of pre-emptive strikes by the US, the quote has been continually used to reinforce the idea that Iran is being run by extremists seeking the total destruction of Israel.

So what did Ahmadinejad actually say? To quote his exact words in Farsi: *Imam ghoft een rezhim-e ishghalgar-e qods bayad az safheh-ye ruzgar mahv shavad. Rezhim-e* is the word "regime", pronounced just like the English word with an extra "eh" sound at the end. Ahmadinejad did not refer to Israel the country, the landmass, but the Israeli regime. Ahmadinejad did not even refer to Israel by name, but used the specific phrase *rezhim-e ishghalgar-e qods* ("regime occupying Jerusalem").

A similar statement by Ahmadinejad in December 2006—"As the Soviet Union disappeared, the Zionist regime will also vanish and humanity will be liberated"—has also been misinterpreted.

In May 2006, President Ahmadinejad published an open letter to President Bush, clearly asking for peace and the mutual respect of human rights. He warns that the Western media, through contrived and deceptive information, have intensified the climate of fear that leads to attacks on innocent peoples. The letter was not reported in the US news media.

(Sources: Arash Norouzi, "Wiped Off The Map—The Rumor of the Century", Global Research, January 20, 2007,

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=viewArticle&code=NOR20070120&articleId=4527>; Information Clearing House, "Full Text: The President of Iran's Letter to President Bush", May 9, 2006, translated by *Le Monde*, <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article12984.htm>)

25. Who Will Profit from Native Energy?

Energy on Native American land is becoming big business. According to the Indigenous Environmental Network, 35 per cent of the fossil fuel resources in the US are within Indian country. The Department of the Interior estimates that Indian lands hold undiscovered reserves of almost 54 billion tons of coal, 38 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 5.4 billion barrels of oil. Tribal lands also contain enormous amounts of alternative energy.

According to Theresa Rosier, Counselor to the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, "increased energy development in Indian and Alaska Native communities could help the Nation have more reliable homegrown energy supplies". This, she says, is "consistent with the President's National Energy Policy to secure America's energy future".

The idea that "America's energy future" should be linked to having "more reliable homegrown energy supplies" can be found in native energy-specific legislation that has already passed into law. What this line of thinking fails to consider is that Native America is not the same as US America. The domestic "supplies"

in question belong to sovereign nations, not to the United States or its energy sector.

So far, government plans to deregulate and step up the development of domestic (native) energy resources is being spun as a way to produce clean, efficient energy while helping Native Americans gain greater economic and tribal sovereignty. Critics charge, however, that large energy companies are simply looking to establish lucrative partnerships with tribal corporations, which are largely free of regulation and federal oversight.

America's native peoples may attain a modicum of energy independence and tribal sovereignty through the development of wind, solar and other renewable energy infrastructure on their lands. But, according to Brian Awehali, it won't come from getting into bed with, and becoming indebted to, the very industry currently driving the planet to its doom.

(Source: Brian Awehali, "Native Energy Futures", *LiP Magazine*, June 5, 2006, http://www.lipmagazine.org/articles/featawehali_nativefutures.htm)

About Project Censored:

Project Censored is a national research effort launched in 1976 by Dr Carl Jensen, Professor Emeritus of Communications Studies at Sonoma State University, California, USA. Upon Dr Jensen's retirement in 1996, leadership of the project was passed to Associate Professor of Sociology and media research specialist Dr Peter Phillips.

The aims of Project Censored are to inform the public, advocate for independent journalism and strive to spark debate on current issues involving media monopoly. The yearbook compilation *Censored 2008* is available from the Project Censored website, <http://www.projectcensored.org>.

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