Clinton’s Worst Crimes

By David L. Harten

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President Clinton was impeached for the wrong crimes. Unlike most Republicans, I never thought Clinton should have been impeached for his affair with Monica Lewinsky. Yes, it was immoral, but as my wife likes to say, Americans elected him to be President, not Pope.

At the beginning of the impeachment drive, I agreed with those who argued, "Nobody died because of Clinton’s extramarital affair." Surely, I thought, other Presidents had done much worse actions that had cost people’s lives. However, Clinton’s later acts to distract Americans from his extramarital affair were truly criminal and impeachable, causing thousands, of deaths. I agree with the essay "The Blood on Bill Clinton's Hands," except for one major shortcoming: OSC left out the most serious, and most blatant, of Clinton's war crimes.

The people of Serbia, Kosovo, the Sudan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan are not the only or most obvious victims of Clinton’s affair with Monica Lewinsky. The day before the House impeachment vote, Clinton bombed Iraq, delaying the impeachment vote. He continued the bombing throughout all the days of the impeachment vote. Only an hour or two after the House impeachment vote ended, Clinton ended the bombing, saying, "We have achieved our objectives." Of course, because the objective was to delay and distract from the impeachment vote! In all other respects, the bombing hurt U.S. and international interests.

Clinton gave several excuses for bombing Iraq on the eve of the impeachment vote, especially the (bogus, but unquestioned) claim that Iraq had stopped cooperating with UNSCOM inspectors. In reality, Iraq's cooperation with UNSCOM inspectors had actually been increasing, despite U.S. attempts to provoke a confrontation. However, knowing the impeachment schedule, Clinton had directed UNSCOM chief Richard Butler to write a report that Iraq was not cooperating. Even Scott Ritter, the former chief UNSCOM weapons inspector who quit because he thought the weapons inspectors were not tough enough, said that the White House had been on the phone with UNSCOM "shaping" the report to make sure it would justify bombing Iraq during the impeachment trial.

Clinton actually used the Muslim holy month of Ramadan as an excuse for the timing of the bombing. This may have fooled the American media, but didn’t fool Muslims, as Clinton continued the bombing even after Ramadan had started (but halted the bombing as soon as the impeachment vote ended).

Sure, Clinton said he had unanimous agreement from his national security advisers to bomb Iraq. So what? No matter what day he asked his national security advisers, they would always agree to bomb Iraq, so why ask on that particular day, a day before the impeachment vote?

Fact: the UNSCOM inspectors were not kicked out of Iraq in December 1998 by Saddam -- President Clinton had UNSCOM chief Richard Butler pull out the UN inspectors so he could bomb. United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan was understandably angry that Clinton ordered out not just the U.S. inspectors, but all United Nations inspectors (which he had no authority to do).

Fact: ever since Bill Clinton ordered the UNSCOM inspectors out of Iraq so he could bomb (the day before the impeachment vote), there have been no UN weapons inspectors in Iraq. So when Clinton said (as soon as the impeachment vote ended), "We have achieved our objectives," was one of those objectives to permanently remove weapons inspectors from Iraq?

Fact: days before the UNSCOM report came out, Clinton was in Israel, already telling Prime Minister Netanyahu that he was expecting a negative UNSCOM report, and that he would soon be bombing Iraq. Clinton knew the contents ahead of time because he was "shaping" that report.

Fact: because of Clinton's December 1998 bombing, Iraq began challenging the U.S. and British "no-fly zones," which they had not been doing before. The risk to U.S. pilots is negligible (no U.S. plane has ever been hit), but it has given the U.S. and Britain an excuse for nearly daily bombing of Iraq (not just radar sites, but cities, towns, shepherd's camps, etc.). Since December 1998, this illegal bombing has killed about two hundred Iraqis, including shepherds with their flocks, families in their houses, and small children, and injured many more. It helps to put faces on the victims. I saw a photo of a cute, smiling little girl named Isra, from the Abu-Khasib neighborhood of Basra, who lost her right arm when a U.S. IGM-130 missile hit her neighborhood at 10:10 AM, January 25, 1999 (for a picture of her, see http://www.vitw.org/airwar.html). This ongoing bombing would not be happening except for Clinton's attempt to distract from the impeachment vote.

Maybe Americans don't care about the hundreds of Iraqis Clinton killed during the impeachment trial bombings of Iraq, and the scores of Iraqi civilians (and sheep) killed during the almost daily bombings of Iraq in the two years since then. Most Americans, incredibly enough, don't even know we're still at war, that we've been bombing Iraq every other day for the last two years!

Okay, for the sake of argument, say we can forgive Clinton for killing a few hundred or thousand Iraqis with bombs.

Bombs are merciful compared to what Clinton has done to the innocent children of Iraq, the most vulnerable of all, by maintaining ten years of the harshest sanctions in the history of mankind, begun on August 6, 1990, and kept in place at the insistence of the United States. On May 12, 1996, television's "Sixty Minutes" interviewed Madeleine Albright (then U.S. ambassador to the UN, now Secretary of State). Leslie Stahl asked Albright, "We have heard half a million children have died [from economic sanctions in Iraq]. That's more children than died in Hiroshima. Is the price worth it?"

Albright replied, "I think this is a very hard choice. But the price, we think, is worth it."

I believe there is a special place in hell reserved for Madeleine Albright.

Yes, even four and a half years ago, 500,000 Iraqi children had already died as a direct result of economic sanctions. Over one million Iraqi civilians have died from the sanctions, mostly children under age five. Those are not Iraqi figures -- those figures come from Unicef, the World Health Organization, the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the UN’s Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and other international sources. The "oil-for-food" program is so ineffectual that two consecutive UN directors of that program (Denis Haliday and Hans Von Sponeck) resigned, out of protest that they were presiding over a humanitarian disaster which can only be called genocide. They were UN Assistant Secretaries General, the highest ranking UN personnel ever to resign for reasons of conscience. Now Denis Haliday and Hans Von Sponeck are touring America and other countries, pleading for an end to the sanctions on Iraq.

Embargoes during peacetime are tough enough, but after a devastating war, they are disastrous. During the Gulf War, U.S. forces deliberately targeted Iraqi water treatment plants, dams, and electric generating facilities (in violation of the Geneva Convention), later admitting they did it in order to cause disease (which was biological warfare by the United States). Iraq has not been allowed to rebuild its water treatment plants since then. Chlorine, and water chlorinators, are prohibited under sanctions. Disease is at epidemic levels, especially among babies and children under five. Nobel Peace prize winners have visited Iraq and described the sanctions as genocide. Iraqi children are dying from starvation, malnutrition, tainted water, lack of basic medicines, and diseases that were once rare but now epidemic.

Iraqis are also suffering horrible birth defects and cancers caused by the 350 tons of depleted uranium (DU) fired into Iraq by U.S. forces during the 1991 Gulf War. DU, used for armor-piercing shells, becomes on impact an dust that drifts on the desert winds until inhaled. DU is not only toxic, but has a radioactive half-life in the billions of years.

U.S. sanctions law is so tough that even shipping food or medicine to Iraq is punishable by a one million dollar fine and 12 years in prison. I have personally tried to send baby formula, but the U.S. post office refuses, due to
sanctions. Many items are specifically banned (pencils, books including medical textbooks, chlorine, etc.), while all other items are prohibited without a U.S. Treasury Department license that is almost impossible to obtain.

Fifty-five years ago, people asked, "Where were the good Germans? Why didn't they act to prevent the Holocaust?" History will judge America the same way over the current genocide against Iraqi civilians, the genocide by sanctions. My conscience cannot let me keep silent about this. People are people, and children are children. Even if one hates Muslims (which is hardly a Christian attitude), one million Christians also live in Iraq.

Most major religious groups have condemned the sanctions, including Baptists, Catholics, Churches of Christ, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Mennonites, Methodists, Presbyterians, Quakers, Unitarians, the National Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, etc. Leaders of 24 Christian denominations, including those mentioned above, signed a September 27, 1999 letter to President Clinton urging him to end the economic sanctions on Iraq.* Conspicuously absent from the list, unfortunately, is the church that OSC and I belong to, the Mormons (my branch president told me the issue is too political -- as if genocide isn't always political).

Contrary to Clinton Administration propaganda, the small amount of food and medicines that are allowed into Iraq under the "oil-for-food" program (UN Res. 986) are distributed extremely efficiently by the Iraqi government. The U.S. constantly places long holds on shipments of food and medicine, or refusing to allow shipment of essential items altogether. Food and medicines spoil because of lack of refrigeration, or rot in warehouses because the forklifts and trucks to transport them are banned by sanctions. An American who visited an Iraqi hospital that lacked basic medicines and equipment due to sanctions said, "I know what this place is now. It's a death row for children." The doctors try their best, but there is little they can do without medicine, equipment, electricity, or even medical textbooks.

Those who agree with sanctions on Iraq act as if only one person lives there, Saddam Hussein. Yes, Saddam is a cruel dictator who does not allow freedom of speech and has executed hundreds of his political opponents, but that number pales compared to the million or more the Clinton administration has killed through sanctions. Admittedly, Saddam is a brutal and cruel dictator (although he was just as brutal and cruel when the U.S. was arming him and supporting him, under Reagan and Bush, while he gassed his people with U.S. support). But if he is as brutal a dictator as everyone agrees, does it make any sense to starve his people to try to influence him? If (as the Clinton Administration says) Saddam does not care about his people, how will our starving them influence him?

When I spoke about Iraq in my church, tears came to my eyes telling of the father who had to hold his young daughter while her leg was sawed off without anesthesia, because of sanctions. Thinking of my own young son, I also cried describing the mother who, unable to sufficiently breastfeed her baby due to her own malnourishment (the meager food ration under sanctions has no fruits, vegetables, meat, or dairy), gave him sugar water, but the water was polluted. The baby developed diarrhea, and for lack of a five dollar medicine, he died. I know my own young son and unborn baby could never survive in Iraq under UN sanctions, which have been kept in place for over ten years at the insistence of the U.S. We are killing an entire generation, body and soul, destroying a civilization.

Saddam is not the only person who lives in Iraq, any more than Clinton is the only person in America! Over one million innocent Iraqis, mostly children under five, have died miserable deaths simply because Clinton and Albright refuse to admit that sanctions are a mistake, especially sanctions applied after a country's infrastructure has been destroyed through the most destructive bombing in history.

"What about weapons of mass destruction?" some may ask. Ex-weapons inspector Scott Ritter wrote in the Boston Globe (3/9/00) that, "...from a qualitative standpoint, Iraq has in fact been disarmed... The chemical, biological, nuclear and long-range ballistic missile programs that were a real threat in 1991 had, by 1998, been destroyed or rendered harmless." The true weapons of mass destruction are the sanctions themselves. It is ironic that sanctions began on August 6, 1990, the 45th anniversary of the Hiroshima atomic bombing, because it would be more humane for the U.S. to drop a Hiroshima-sized atomic bomb on Iraq every year than to continue the sanctions. In fact, as an article in the May/June 1999 issue of Foreign Affairs shows, the sanctions against Iraq...
have killed more people than all "weapons of mass destruction" in history, combined! The same UN resolution used to justify sanctions on Iraq also declared the Middle East a nuclear-free zone. Israel is in blatant violation of that same resolution, yet we do not starve the Israeli people to coerce their leader (nor should we).

There is no doubt that sanctions actually strengthen Saddam Hussein politically. Sanctions strengthen Saddam's grip on Iraq and weaken all opposition, as the struggle to survive, to keep one's children alive, supercedes all thought of rebellion. Sanctions also cause anti-Americanism, as the Arab world knows what we are doing to Iraq, killing over a million innocent people to get revenge on their leader.

The United States used international law to justify the 1991 Gulf War. However, the U.S. and British "no-fly zones" and the continuing bombing of Iraq violate international law. The sanctions themselves violate international law as enshrined in the Genocide Convention (Article II, "...deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring its physical destruction, in whole or in part"), the Geneva Conventions (Geneva Protocol 1, Article 54 outlaws "starvation of civilians as a method of warfare"), the World Declaration on Nutrition ("food must not be used as a tool for political pressure"), and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Unfortunately, the incoming Bush administration plans to continue the Clinton administration’s genocidal Iraq policy. Both George W. Bush and his Secretary of State, Colin Powell, have said they think the sanctions should actually be tightened.

I knew I had to speak out against sanctions when I read about Bert Sacks, an American Jew. Sacks was returning from a trip to deliver medicine to Iraqis (in violation of U.S. law), when he took a side trip to visit Auschwitz, a place of special importance to him as a Jew. More than one million Jews died at Auschwitz, comparable to the number of Iraqi civilians killed by sanctions. Sacks calls the sanctions an Auschwitz in progress. Like Sacks, I do not want to emulate the "good Germans," who stayed silent during the Holocaust.

In the name of Jesus Christ, who died for all of us, we must not keep silent about the innocent children suffering in Iraq. Use your voices to save some of the children; become "voices in the wilderness," as the Chicago-based anti-sanctions group is named. In the name of God, speak out, everyone who reads these words. To remain silent in the face of genocide committed by one's own government is tantamount to being complicit, a collaborator. In the U.S., unlike Nazi Germany, we can speak out against our government without fear of death. It is our duty to do so, for if we don't, God have mercy on our souls. We cannot wait, for every day, 150 to 200 more children die from sanctions in Iraq.

Some web sites to visit for more information:

http://saveageneration.org/thecrisis/

http://www.afsc.org/conscience/Default.htm

http://www.vitw.org

*The September 27, 1999 letter to President Clinton urging an end to the Iraqi embargo was signed by the following religious leaders:

The Right Reverend Craig B. Anderson, President, NCCCUSA

The Reverend George H. Anderson, Presiding Bishop, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Mathews Mar Barnabas, Metropolitan of the American Diocese of the Malankara Orthodox Church (India)

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate, Diocese of the Armenian Church of America

John A. Buehrens, President, Unitarian Universalist Association
Footnote: In answer to a request from Ornery, the author has provided the following additional information:

You said you wanted proof of the ongoing bombing, so that’s what I’ve concentrated on here, even though the bombing of Iraq since 1998 has only killed a few hundred people (Iraq claims 311 civilians killed and 927 wounded by these air attacks, according to Reuters 12/26/00), while sanctions have killed over a million since 1990, mostly children under age five. I already had mentioned some sources on sanctions in my essay, such as the 60 Minutes interview with Madeleine Albright on 5/12/96, the Foreign Affairs article May/June 1999 "Sanctions of Mass Destruction," and a 3/9/00 Boston Globe article.

As for depleted uranium (DU), I said its half life is in the billions of years, but to be more exact, it has a half-life of 4.5 billion years (see Christian Science Monitor 1/11/01 "Bullet Debate: Answers in Iraq?" and Christian Science Monitor 4/29/99 special report, "The Trail of a Bullet"). When I was a US Army Armor officer, I had a classified briefing in 1985 on tank munitions including DU, but today’s unclassified reports have disclosed DU’s dangers, so there is no need to reveal my classified briefing.

I felt like I was being asked to prove that cigarette smoking causes cancer, because if the media did their job, what the US is doing to Iraq should be common knowledge. I’ve been involved with Iraq issues since the mid
1990s, so it always amazes me how little other Americans know about Iraq. I have hundreds of pages of material, and there is more in the news every week (but not on the front page). To quote Tom Jackson of Voices in the Wilderness, "Anyone who has been watching can tell you that the bombings happen at least a couple of times per week."

Unfortunately, TV news only seems to cover one international story a year. Last year if it didn’t involve Elian Gonzalez, it didn’t make the news, and in 1999, the story was Kosovo. "Perhaps there will also be a day when journalists realize their deafening silence was a form of complicity". Most US newspapers feel that if they do one Iraq story a year, they’ve covered the issue (an exception is the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, which last week, January 17, 2001, ran seven articles about Iraq, ).

You wrote, "The main [claim] that I think will concern a lot of people is the claim that we are bombing Iraq every other day. That seems very impossible not to be reported in any media." Well, it is reported, but not prominently. Newspaper articles frequently call the ongoing bombing of Iraq "The forgotten war."

As of this Tuesday 1/23/01, the US has already bombed Iraq at least twice in the last four days (Saturday 1/20/01 in the South, killing six civilians, and Monday 1/22/01 in both the North and South). Both attacks were reported by the AP and Reuters. Saturday’s was also reported by the BBC, and by the New York Times on 1/22/01. Unfortunately smaller papers don’t report these "routine" bombings.

This week’s January 21, 2001 BBC News online article, "It was the highest death toll in several months of raids," reads in part: "People in southern Iraq lashed out against the United States and Britain as they buried six people killed in an Allied air strike the day before. It is the highest death toll in several months of patrols through air exclusion zones set up by the US and Britain to protect Iraqi opposition groups from possible government attacks... Iraq does not recognize the exclusion zones and says Western air strikes have killed more than 300 civilians in two years... Witnesses said the raids struck a cattle-feed depot run by the agriculture ministry 120 km south of Samawa, near the Iraqi-Saudi border. They said six of the employees at the warehouse were killed and three slightly injured... A US statement said Allied planes had attacked Iraq's radar systems and anti-aircraft artillery but made no mention of civilian casualties...The air exclusion zones were set up to protect Shi'a in the south and Kurds in the north from possible government attacks, but they are not backed by a UN resolution or recognized by Iraq. Western warplanes have frequently bombed targets since Baghdad started resisting the patrols two years ago. Recently a British newspaper reported that London was rethinking its policy because of the high number of civilian casualties -- a claim the Foreign Office denied. The US and Britain accuse Iraq of using civilian areas as a cover for its anti-aircraft guns. Reports from the area 24 hours after the attack said no military units were visible."

This week’s January 22, 2001 New York Times article, "Iraq Rebuilt Weapons Factories, Officials Say" reads in part: "WASHINGTON, Jan. 21 ...American and British planes continue to patrol the ‘no-flight’ zones over northern and southern Iraq. Such patrols are routinely fired upon; indeed, Iraq launched a surface-to-air missile at one only hours before Mr. Bush took office on Saturday, prompting American jets to respond by striking antiaircraft batteries and a radar site. Such strikes help ratchet up Iraqi anger at the United States; today, the Iraqis said the American strikes killed six civilians in Samawa, an assertion that American military officials did not immediately dispute, while noting that they had not intended to strike civilian targets..." NY Times.

Since December 1998, US and British jets have flown more than as many combat missions as NATO pilots did during the 78 days of bombing Yugoslavia, flying 280,000 sorties (Pentagon sources cited in the Washington Post, June 16, 2000) and dropping over 1,650 bombs on Iraq (New York Times, Oct. 7, 1999). Without US casualties, news media don’t think it worth reporting, and over ten years of enforcing the "no-fly zones," no US or UK plane has ever been hit (yet, hundreds of times they’ve felt it necessary to drop bombs). The air attacks have killed 300 Iraqis including over 200 civilians. Hundreds of livestock have also died from the attacks, such as the May 17, 2000 attack on a shepherd’s camp that killed several hundred sheep as well as 14 civilians including Omran Harbi Jawair, 13. In memory of this boy, the Remembering Omran Bus Tour has been crossing the United States and Canada over the last couple months (see FOR’s weekly Iraq Action Digest).
Bombs of Iraq make wire service reports and some newspapers, but buried near the last page, as they’ve become routine, and as an NY Times editor told me about the bombing of Iraq in 1999, once it’s routine, it’s no longer news. To explain why, here’s a quote from last week’s 1/17/01 Seattle Post-Intelligencer article titled "U.S. planes still patrol and bullets still fly. It seldom makes the news, but U.S. isn't done keeping watch in the Gulf," which says, "For three months last summer, while Tack's squadron VAQ-134 flew missions over northern Iraq from an Air Force base in Turkey, shooting incidents erupted virtually every day. Tack's own father was unaware of the active shooting. After a decade, if no [American] one's hit, it's not news."

The New York Times, 8/13/99 article "U.S. Planes Have Been Striking Iraq All Year" said, "While the nation's attention has focused on Kosovo, American warplanes have quietly, methodically and with virtually no public discussion been attacking Iraq. Over the past eight months, American and British pilots have fired more than 1,100 missiles against 359 targets. That is more than triple the targets attacked in four furious days of strikes in December that followed Iraq's expulsion of UN weapons inspectors, an assault that provoked an international outrage... By another measure, the pilots have flown some two-thirds as many missions as NATO pilots flew over Yugoslavia in 78 days of around-the-clock war there... And there appears to be no end in sight to the war... Every few days, in almost numbing routine, they have struck missile sites, radar stations and radio towers across both the northern and southern zones. Since late July [1999], there has been a new flurry of strikes in response to newly vigorous Iraqi challenges."

That 8/13/99 New York Times article also supports my statement that all this violence was caused by Clinton’s December 1998 impeachment trial bombing of Iraq: "Iraq has never recognized the zones, but rarely challenged allied patrols of them. After December's raids, however, Saddam declared the zones a violation of Iraq's sovereignty, and his troops have made good on threats to challenge them... American and British warplanes respond when challenged... The Pentagon says the air strikes are merely defensive responses to the provocations, meant to protect the pilots. But the targets American and British pilots strike are often not the ones that directly threaten them..."  NY Times.

On June 16, 2000, the Washington Post ran an excellent and unprecedented front-page story, "Under Iraq Skies, a Canvas of Death."

"TOQ AL-GHAZALAT, Iraq --Suddenly out of a clear blue sky, the forgotten war being waged by the United States and Britain over Iraq visited its lethal routine on the shepherds and farmers of Toq al-Ghazalat about 10:30 a.m. on May 17. Omran Harbi Jawair, 13, was squatting on his haunches at the time, watching the family sheep as they nosed the hard, flat ground in search of grass.... Omran, who liked to kick a soccer ball around this dusty village, had just finished fifth grade at the little school a 15-minute walk from his mud-brick home. A shepherd boy's summer vacation lay ahead.

"That is when the missile landed.

"Without warning, according to several youths standing nearby, the device came crashing down in an open field 200 yards from the dozen houses of Toq al-Ghazalat. A deafening explosion cracked across the silent land. Shrapnel flew in every direction. Four shepherds were wounded. And Omran, the others recalled, lay dead in the dirt, most of his head torn off, the white of his robe stained red.

"He was only 13 years old, but he was a good boy," sobbed Omran's father, Harbi Jawair, 61.

"What happened four weeks ago at Toq al-Ghazalat, 35 miles southwest of Najaf in southern Iraq, has become a recurring event in the Iraqi countryside. A week of conversations with wounded Iraqis and the families of those killed, around Najaf and in northern Iraq around Mosul, showed that civilian deaths and injuries are a regular part of the little-discussed U.S. and British air operation over Iraq.

"Lt. Gen. Yassin Jassem, spokesman for Iraq's air defense command, said about 300 Iraqis have been killed and more than 800 wounded by U.S. and British retaliatory attacks in the 18 months since President Saddam Hussein ordered his antiaircraft batteries to fire on allied warplanes enforcing ‘no-fly’ zones in northern and southern Iraq. Of those killed, Jassem said in an interview, "well more" than 200 were civilians like Omran Harbi Juwair.
caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. "The Iraqi death toll has been substantiated in part by a UN survey that examined some incidents independently and accepted Iraqi reports on others. While not conclusive on the overall toll, interviews and observations during lengthy drives through the regions where airstrikes have often been reported backed up the government's contention that civilian casualties have become routine.

"...The Pentagon says more than 280,000 sorties have been flown in the near decade since the no-fly zones were imposed, without a single loss of aircraft to hostile fire..."

"...air attacks have occurred as well in vast, open fields or grazing grounds--such as in the strike at Toq al-Ghazalat--with no signs of any military target present or having been present near the sheep and the boys who tend them in scenes reminiscent of the Bible.

"The mounting toll--averaging one civilian death every other day by Iraq's count--has prompted France to freeze participation in enforcing the no-fly zones... civilian casualties began to mount after Operation Desert Fox in December 1998--a 70-hour U.S. bombing campaign against targets across Iraq... Iraqi air defenses received orders after that campaign to fire on U.S. and British patrols, drawing retaliatory airstrikes... After Iraq's decision to challenge patrols regularly, U.S. forces were authorized to attack any Iraqi air defense target--even unconnected to a specific attack, or at a time well after any challenge--in retaliation for antiaircraft fire, radar illumination or missile launch...

"'I was thrown to the ground and covered with dirt,' recalled Ziad Ibrahim Taha, a 50-year-old shepherd. 'Then another blast. It lifted me right up into the air.'

"Taha was with scores of people on a broad, flat expanse of open land 45 miles west of Mosul just before 10 a.m. on May 12 of last year. As he and others in the nearby village of Abu Auani recalled it, two, perhaps three warplanes made repeated passes over the congregated villagers, firing missiles and raking the area with machine guns.

"According to Iraqi authorities, 14 people were killed on the spot and five more died later from their injuries. Forty-six people were wounded and several hundred sheep were killed. Taha's right leg was injured... Two of his sons, Mohammed, 24, and Ahmed, 20, were killed, leaving him with one remaining son...

"Taha and others in Abu Auani said a group of youths were tending 400 head of sheep that morning and had taken refuge from the searing sun in a goatskin tent pitched on the grazing range less than a mile from the village of 500 residents. Older people remained at home, tending to their affairs. Then, Taha said, he heard the tremendous crash of an exploding missile coming from the direction of the grazing range. Alarmed, he and many others from the village ran to the site. Inhabitants of several other nearby villages also ran to look.

"What they found, Taha said, was carnage. Many sheep lay dead or dying. Several of the young shepherds were killed or wounded. As the wounded boys were carried away and owners began to slaughter their injured sheep and round up those that had fled, the number of rescuers and onlookers grew.

"When all the people were there together, another plane came, and another missile came down," he recalled.

"Nine missiles were fired in all, as best as he can remember, over an area of about 200 square yards. He said aircraft firing machine guns crossed the zone twice.

"Hama Mahmoud Ahmed, 20...'I was running away carrying a wounded boy on my shoulder,' he said. 'But the boy got cut through his stomach. Another boy I saw nearby got his head cut off.'..."

"The attack at Abu Auani was one of the few in which the U.S. military has acknowledged an error. A communique from Incirlik Air Base that day said... ‘One of the targets, believed to have been a surface-to-air missile site, now appears to have been a nomadic camp with a number of livestock in the area.’..."
"The airstrikes leave behind a lethal litter that could claim civilian casualties for years… Saoud Nouri Jassem, 12, Khalis Abdullah Jassem, 15, and Ahmed Omar Abdullah, 15, were killed. Fadhli Abdullah Jassem, 10, and Muzhir Abdullah Jassem, 9, were hospitalized and still carry their wounds. At the edge of the village, they picked up an unexploded piece of munition."

--Washington Post, June 16, 2000

On February 3, 1999, the New York Times ran a story, "U.S. Presses Air Attacks on Iraq in a Low-Level War of Attrition" which said, "The almost daily American air strikes on Iraq have turned into the equivalent of a low-level war, hitting a wide range of military targets, some of which pose little immediate threat to American or British pilots patrolling much of Iraq's territory… Last week, National Security Adviser Sandy Berger disclosed that President Clinton had given American pilots wider authority to retaliate when threatened by Iraqi forces, allowing them to strike at any defense system, not just those that actually target the American aircraft… So far, neither the United States nor Britain has lost any pilots or aircraft in the skirmishes. Their tactics are designed, in part, to limit the possibility as much as possible, by attacking with long-range missiles… Last week, at least one American missile missed its intended target and struck a residential area in southern Iraq, the Pentagon acknowledged. Iraq claimed that 11 civilians died in the strike.

Mainstream media information may be hard to find in the U.S. However, there is loads of information from religious groups, the human rights community, and the peace community, e.g. Amnesty International, the Fellowship Of Reconciliation (FOR, America’s largest and oldest interfaith peace group), the American Friends Service Committee, the Friends Committee on National Legislation, Friends Journal, Veterans for Peace, the International Action Center, Voices in the Wilderness, Peace Action, just to name a few. European and other international media regularly cover Iraq (World Press Review carries some of them), but American journalists only cover Elian.

Every week there are rallies against the sanctions going on across the U.S. (as reported in FOR’s weekly Iraq Action Digest), and several cities have WEEKLY vigils on Iraq sanctions/bombing. In the past two months there have been scores of vigils and rallies around the 10th anniversary of the Gulf War, as well as the Remembering Omran bus tour stopping at cities throughout the U.S. and Canada.

In addition to the attached, I have hundreds of pages of information on Iraq sanctions on paper, as well as videos and books. I also have hundreds of pages of Iraq sanctions information in electronic formats, because since 1998 I have been getting a weekly "Iraq Action Digest" email (often 10 pages long) from the Fellowship Of Reconciliation (FOR), America’s largest and oldest interfaith peace group. I lost all but the past year’s worth of FOR’s emails when I changed jobs, but that’s still hundreds of pages.

The U.S. Pentagon regularly lists attacks on their web sites. I found some web sites from the U.S. European Command, which haven’t been updated recently, but still list 67 different bombings of Iraq within 13 months.

My personal experience includes:
The Gulf War started 1/16/91 on my birthday, and my wedding date August 6, besides being my brother’s birthday, is unfortunately the anniversaries of Iraq sanctions in 1990 and the 1945 Hiroshima bombing. So on our wedding anniversary, I brought my family to Washington DC in pouring rain for the August 6, 2000 march and rally to protest ten years of sanctions. Earlier, I had helped the Voices in the Wilderness "peace walkers" cross the Staten Island bridges. I’ve gone to symposiums at Princeton and biweekly meetings of an Iraq sanctions group in Princeton. At the symposiums, I heard speeches by Denis Haliday and Hans Von Sponeck (two consecutive UN assistant secretaries general in charge of the "oil-for-food" program who resigned in protest over the sanctions), as well as former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark and others. I’ve talked with Americans, British, Canadians, and others who have visited Iraq and seen the wholesale destruction from sanctions. It has been my sad experience to watch videos of Iraq sanction victims and bombing victims. I have tried to ship baby formula to Iraq in violation of U.S. law, and know the prison term I could face for doing so. I gave a speech in sacrament meeting on Iraq sanctions, and was invited to speak about sanctions to the Vietnam Veterans of America as well.

Other Links

The Washington Post picked up on the AP story of the 1/22/01 bombings.

The 6/16/00 Washington Post story "Under Iraqi skies, a canvas of death" is still available at the Common Dreams website

The 1/17/01 Seattle Post-Intelligencer special report on Iraq (7 stories)

The 1/17/01 Seattle P-I story, "Sanctions hurt children more than Saddam"

The 1/17/01 Seattle P-I story "U.S. Planes Still Patrol and Bullets Still Fly"

The 8/5/00 Seattle P-I story, "Sanctions take grim toll on Iraqi children"

Some articles not attached here with information about the last couple of bombings: Britain Shows Flexibility on Iraq Arms Inspections
Iraq Says US, British Jets Attack Its South, North
http://iraqaction.org/nofly.html ("No-Fly Zones In Iraq" web site listing dozens of attacks)

A few more web sites with more information about Iraq:
http://www.afsc.org/conscience/Default.htm (American Friends Service Committee)
http://www.geocities.com/iraqinfo (Iraq Resource Information Site)
http://www.vitw.org (Voices in the Wilderness)
http://www.vitw.org/airwar.html (Voices in the Wilderness)
http://www.forusa.org (Fellowship of Reconciliation)
http://saveageneration.org/thecrisis/
http://www.eucom.mil (U.S. European Command, a Pentagon web site)
http://leb.net/IAC/ (Iraq Action Coalition)

David L. Harten

http://www.ornery.org/essays/2001-01-26-1.html

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