

Get In Line: Investigate U.S. Atrocities First

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Chinese deliberately; NATO hit embassy on purpose,” *Guardian* Oct. 16, 1999)

On April 23, 1999, the U.S. rocketed the central state broadcasting offices in Belgrade, destroying the building, killing 16 civilian employees, and wounding 16. Human rights groups around the world said the attack was a war crime.[1]

The United States used cluster bombs widely in its wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the former Yugoslavia, according to reports by Human Rights Watch, *The Lancet*, and the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.[2] In one case, U.S.-led NATO forces attacked the main hospital complex in Nis, Serbia with cluster bombs May 7, 1999, killing three outside the hospital, three on the operating table, and nine at an adjoining market. (“Serbs Say 15 are Killed at Hospital and Market,” *New York Times*, May 8, 1999)

Even the pro-war editorial board of the *New York Times*, while boasting “This page has been supportive of the war in Afghanistan since it began,” acknowledged on Feb. 4, 2019, that, “Tens of thousands of Afghan civilians have been killed, maimed and traumatized. Millions of people are internally displaced or are refugees in Iran and Pakistan.”

“These things happen in war,” Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said casually referring to the now infamous “methodical” execution-style massacre of 24 men, women, and children in Haditha, Iraq, Nov. 19, 2006. Yes, the murder of innocents occurs in war, inevitably, every time, without exception, which is why anti-war activists are so keen to prevent it, condemn it, and to end it once it’s been started.

As the late Yale psychiatrist and author Robert Lifton has shown, all wars are “atrocious producing situations,” and the series of headlines that follows, edited for space, illustrates arguably criminal U.S. military conduct in recent wars and can provide prosecutors in The Hague a basis for launching investigations.

Headlines sketch U.S. war crime spree

“How the U.S. Hid an Airstrike That Killed Dozens of Civilians in Syria,” *New York Times*, Nov. 13, 2021

“Lethal U.S. Airstrike on Afghan Drug Labs is Disputed: Bombs Killed Civilian Workers, not Taliban, a UN Report Says,” *New York Times*, Oct. 10, 2019

“U.S. Drone Kills 30 Civilians, Afghans Say; Target Was ISIS,” *New York Times*, Sep. 20, 2019, p. A6

“U.S. Airstrikes and Raids Killed 120 Civilians in 2018, Pentagon Says,” *New York Times*, May 3, 2019

“U.S. and Afghan Forces Killed More Civilians in Early 2019 than Taliban did, U.N. Finds,” *New York Times*, Apr. 25, 2019

“Claiming Atrocities by Leader, SEALs Were Told to ‘Let It Go,’” *New York Times*, Apr. 24, 2019, p. A1

“For Afghan Civilians, 2018 Was the Deadliest in a Decade” (“Among the dead last year were 927 children”), *New York Times*, Feb. 25, 2019

“U.S. Airstrikes Said to Kill at Least 10 Afghan Civilians,” *New York Times*, Feb. 11, 2019

“U.S. Airstrikes and Raids Killed 120 Civilians in 2018,” Pentagon Says, *New York Times*, May 3, 2019

“American Airstrikes Kill Civilians, Including Children, Afghans Charge,” *New York Times*, Jan. 26, 2019

“Civilians Killed in U.S.-Afghan Operation,” *New York Times*, Nov. 29, 2018

“Decorated Navy SEAL Is Accused of War Crimes in Iraq,” *New York Times*, Nov. 15, 2018

“Report: 3,301 Civilians Killed in U.S.-led Strikes in Syria Since 2014,” *Duluth NewsTribune*, Sep. 24, 2018

“Study: U.S. Killed 500 Civilians,” (“Pentagon may be grossly undercounting”), *Minneapolis StarTribune*, June 3, 2018

“More Afghan Civilians are Victims of Targeted Attacks, U.N. Says,” *New York Times*, Feb. 16, 2018

“Afghan Pedophiles Get Pass from U.S. Military, Report Says,” *New York Times*, January 24, 2018

“American Airstrikes in Afghanistan Stir Debate Over Who Was Killed,” *New York Times*, Nov. 11, 2017

“U.S. Airstrikes Kill at Least 13 Civilians,” *Minneapolis StarTribune*, Nov. 5, 2017

“Airstrike Kills at Least 25 at Street Market in Yemen,” *New York Times*, Nov. 2, 2017

“Civilian Deaths From U.S.-led Strikes on ISIS Surge Under Trump Administration” (“over 3,800”), *Guardian*, June 6, 2017

“3 Children Among Dead in a Raid in Somalia,” *New York Times*, Aug. 26, 2017



A still from a video of smiling U.S. Marines urinating on dead Taliban fighters, from Jan. 16, 2013. Staff Sgt. Edward Deptola admitted multiple charges at a court martial, including desecrating remains. Reuters photo.

“Afghans Say U.S. Strike Hit Civilians,” *New York Times*, Aug. 12, 2017

“Civilian Deaths a Windfall for Militants’ Propaganda,” AP/Minneapolis *StarTribune*, Apr. 2, 2017

“U.S. Strike Reportedly Killed 30 Syrians,” *New York Times & Minneapolis StarTribune*, March 23, 2017

“U.S. Military Says Fight with Taliban Killed 33 Civilians,” *Minneapolis StarTribune*, Jan. 13, 2017

“U.S.-led Strikes in Iraq, Syria Have Killed at Least 188 Civilians, Military Says,” *Duluth NewsTribune*, Jan. 3, 2017

“U.S. Admits its Airstrikes Likely Killed Afghan Civilians,” *Minneapolis StarTribune*, Nov. 6, 2016

“U.S. Drones Hit Civilians, UN Says,” *New York Times*, Sep. 30, 2016

“Residents Say U.S. Strike Killed Civilians,” *Wall Street Journal*, Sep. 29, 2016

“Pentagon: Errors Led to Hospital Strike,” (“which killed 42 people”), *Minneapolis StarTribune*, May 1, 2016

“Airstrike on Afghan Hospital Stirs Fury,” *Minneapolis StarTribune*; & “19 Die in Apparent U.S. Airstrike on Afghan Hospital,” *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 4, 2015

“U.S. Practiced Torture After 9/11, Nonpartisan Review Concludes,” *New York Times*, Apr. 16, 2013

“U.S. Marine Pleads Guilty to Urinating on Corpse of Taliban Fighter in Afghanistan,” *Guardian*, Jan. 16, 2013

“U.S. Troops Posed with Body Parts of Afghan Bombers,” *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 18, 2012

“Drones at Issue... Raids Disrupt Militants, but Civilian Deaths Stir Outrage,” *New York Times*, Mar. 18, 2012

“G.I. Kills 16 Afghans, Including 9 Children in Attacks on Homes,” *New York Times*, Mar. 12, 2012

“Commission Alleges U.S. Detainee Abuse,” *Minneapolis StarTribune*, Jan. 8, 2012

“American Soldier Is Convicted of Killing Afghan Civilians for Sport,” *New York Times*, Nov. 11, 2011

“G.I. Killed Afghan Journalist, NATO Says,” *New York Times*, Sep. 9, 2011

“Cable Implicates Americans in Deaths of Iraqi Civilians,” *New York Times*, Sep. 2, 2011

“Civilians Die in a Raid by Americans and Iraqis,” *New York Times*, Aug. 7, 2011

“Libya Effort Is Called Violation of War Act,” *New York Times*, May 26, 2011

“Raid on Wrong House Kills Afghan Girl, 12,” *New York Times*, May 12, 2011

“Photos of Atrocities Seen as Threat to Afghan Relations,” *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 22, 2011

“Missiles Kill 26 in Pakistan” (“most of them civilians”), *New York Times*, March 18, 2011

“Afghans Say Attack Killed 52 Civilians; NATO Differs,” *New York Times*, July 27, 2010

“Afghans Die in Bombing, as Toll Rises for Civilians,” *New York Times*, May 3, 2010

“Marines Used ‘Excessive Force’ in Afghan Civilian Deaths,” *New York Times*, Apr. 14, 2007

“Sergeant Tells of Plot to Kill Iraqi Detainees,” *New York Times*, July 28, 2006, p. A8

“U.S.-led Raid Kills Nine at House,” *Omaha World Herald*, June 13, 2006

“The Bombing Killed at Least 35 Civilians...” when U.S. warplanes struck the village of Tolokan, Afghanistan, *New York Times*, June 11, 2006

“Murtha Says Probe Has Found Marines Killed Innocent Civilians,” *Omaha World Herald*, May 19, 2006

On Sep. 16, 2004, a BBC correspondent questioned U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan about the unprovoked U.S. bombardment and invasion of Iraq asking, “It was illegal?” Annan answered, “Yes. I have indicated it is not in conformity with the U.N. Charter. From our point of view and from the Charter point of view, it was illegal.” Likewise, Saudi Arabia’s King Abdullah said March 28, 2007, “In the beloved Iraq, the bloodshed is continuing under an illegal foreign occupation....”

The 1946 Nuremberg Judgment comes to mind, especially as it was drafted by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson and enforced by U.S.-led allies: “The charges in the indictment that the defendants planned and waged aggressive wars are charges of the utmost gravity. War is essentially an evil thing. Its consequences are not confined to the belligerent states alone, but affect the whole world.”

[1] Amnesty International, “NATO/Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: ‘Collateral damage’ or Unlawful Killings? Violations of the Laws of War by NATO During Operation Allied Force,” June 6, 2000, p. 44.

[2] Human Rights Watch, “U.S. Using Cluster Munitions in Iraq,” Apr. 1, 2003; *The Lancet*, “Pressure Groups Condemn U.S. Use of Cluster Bombs in Afghanistan”, Nov. 3, 2001; UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, “Final Report to the Prosecutor by the Committee Established to Review the NATO Bombing Campaign Against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia,” (undated), paragraph 27.