



# PAIN IN THE GULAGS

**"The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world." - George Bush, 2nd Inaugural Speech.**

Dubya's Inaugural Speech was chocka with references to freedom and full to bursting with rhetoric and fine notions. His speechwriters must have picked up some overtime on that one. When he'd stumbled through the last prompt, Dubya waddled happily home and went back to Gulag building.

There are now some 2.2 million prisoners in the land of the free, nearly twice as many as in 1990. That gives the US the biggest prison population in the world and one of the highest proportions of the population in jail, alongside top tourist destinations like North Korea. Young black men are 10 times more likely to be in prison than white men. Forced labour and violence are commonplace. But even these prisoners are luckier than some; they know the crime they are accused of and the length of their sentence - unlike the detainees in the US's network of secret prisons.

Guantanamo Bay is only the most visible (and therefore the most accountable) part of an expanding global underworld holding thousands without trial in massive prison camps across Iraq and Afghanistan, on board warships in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean and in virtually every nasty regime in the Middle East.

Guantanamo Bay, or 'Gitmo' to its friends, only holds around 540 men (and kids) which makes it relatively small. The US has set up many military prisons in Afghanistan where detainees are held in secret. Many prisoners there were captured in other countries and then flown to Afghanistan. Khaled Al-Masri, a German car salesman, claims he was kidnapped in Macedonia while on holiday, beaten, stripped, bound and flown to a jail in Afghanistan, run by Afghans but controlled by Americans. There is no way he can prove his story because he was a secret prisoner, but there are more and more stories like his coming out. And for every secret prisoner that comes out with a story to tell, there must be many more that don't tell or simply never come out at all.

The biggest American-run facilities are at the Bagram airbase, north of Kabul in Afghanistan, and in Iraq, where tens of thousands of detainees are held.

Cherif Bassiouni, the UN's top human rights investigator in Afghanistan released a report recently speaking out against the US policy of holding huge numbers of prisoners without trial and refusing to allow anyone to visit them or monitor their situation (ie check if they are being tortured). He

estimated that around 1,000 Afghans had been detained, and accused US troops of breaking into homes, arresting residents and abusing them. Within days he had been fired as a result of heavy US pressure.

## The Whole Cart's Rotten

The US has consistently refused to allow scrutiny of their prison practices; when the truth seeps out there is first denial, then white-wash. Recently the US army investigated itself (!) over the Abu Ghraib scandal, clearing four out of five top officers. Army statements when the scandal first broke blamed "a few bad apples". Charles Graner, the grinning torturing goon from the famous photos, worked as a jailer in the US before going to Iraq. It seems likely he picked up his torture tips from other sadistic rednecks. The New York Times reported that the humiliations depicted in the Abu Ghraib pictures are regularly practiced back home in domestic US prisons. The reporter, Fox Butterfield, dug up examples of hooding, stripping naked and forced sex inflicted by guards in jails in Arizona, Utah, Virginia and Texas.

The bad apple theory falls down due to the emerging evidence of a widespread pattern of abuse encouraged and coordinated from the top of the command structure. There is even a codename for the operation in Iraq to extract information with torture: *Copper Green*. Donald Rumsfeld was the architect of this project and there is an increasing mass of evidence from officials involved with it. Defending the cover-up of Copper Green in Iraq, a government consultant said, "Remember, we went to Iraq to democratize the Middle East. The last thing you want to do is let the Arab world know how you treat Arab males in prison."

At the same time as trying to suppress

## CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

### For Displaying Aggressive Art!

Los Angeles Police have turned into artistic censors and decided to close down an art show, deeming it to be "aggressive and offensive". The art show was entitled 'Mark of the Beast' and featured subverted corporate logos; the Levis logo was changed to read *Evils*, Pepsi was changed to *Piss* and Nike's catchphrase Just Do It became *Just Don't*. The aggressive material can be seen at: [www.transportgallery.com/transport/photosApr05.cfm](http://www.transportgallery.com/transport/photosApr05.cfm)

the scandal of prisons in Iraq, the US has been trying to keep a lid on the legal challenges to Guantanamo Bay. In July 2004 the US Supreme Court ruled that a federal court in Washington could hear a case to decide if the detentions in Cuba were unconstitutional or against US law. The military kangaroo courts that were meant to dispense 'justice' to the detainees were described by the US National Association of Criminal Defence Lawyers as unethical. Their head recommended all his members boycott the show trials as they would not be able to defend their clients properly, and failure to do so might result in them being put to death. How irritating for the government to face such scrutiny at home: what the US learnt with Guantanamo and Abu Graibh is that secrecy is the key to getting away with murder.

## Who ya gonna call?

It came out last year that Donald Rumsfeld, the US defence secretary, had approved the secret keeping of "ghost detainees" in Iraq. They were kept off the registers that were shown to the Red Cross and therefore lost the chance of being visited or having other rights.

According to some US and UK military officials there are more than 10,000 "ghost detainees" being held. The difference between them and the Guantanamo detainees is that nobody knows where they are or what is happening to them - which means that the US has the freedom to do anything to them. Maybe that's what George meant in the speech.

Now more prisoners are candidates for more complete invisibility by being sent for detention in secret locations abroad. The Pentagon announced that half of the 540 or so inmates at Guantanamo will be transferred to prisons in... (Continued over)

### \*HAVE I GOT SchNEWS FOR YOU\* all this weekend...

**READING** - Friday 13<sup>th</sup> @ The RISC, 35-39 London St 6pm contact <http://www.readingantig8.co.nr> for more info.  
**LEEDS** (With T.R.A.P.E.S.E) - Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> @ The Common Place Social Centre, 23-25 Wharf St (as part of Leeds Day of Dissent) 7.30pm Contact [www.dissent.org.uk](http://www.dissent.org.uk) for full list of events.

**SHEFFIELD** (With T.R.A.P.E.S.E) Sunday 15<sup>th</sup>. @ The Cricketers Arms Pub. (as part of Anti-G8 Awareness day) 7.30pm Contact Sheffield Indymedia for full timetable of events.

**DUNDEE** - TBC (ring the SchNEWS office for more info).

### Countries the US transfers prisoners to for routine torture:

Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Jordan, Egypt, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and the British island of Diego Garcia in the southern Indian Ocean.

## Nevermind The Gulags

(Continued from front)

Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia, and on March 7 they confirmed that 211 prisoners had left the prison.

A senior US official told the New York Times that three-quarters of the 550 prisoners who were held at Guantánamo Bay no longer have any intelligence of value. But they will not be released out of concern that they pose a continuing threat to the US. "You're basically keeping them off the battlefield, and, unfortunately in the war on terrorism, the battlefield is everywhere."

We'll leave the last word to DUBYA. More wise words from his Second Inaugural Speech;

"We have confidence because freedom is the permanent hope of mankind, the hunger in dark places, the longing of the soul. We are ready for the greatest achievements in the history of freedom."

\* SchNEWS VocabWatch: gulag (noun): 1. A network of forced labour camps in the former Soviet Union; 2. A forced labour camp or prison, especially for political dissidents; 3. A place or situation of great suffering and hardship.

\* A new book 'Inside the Wire' blows the whistle on the hell-hole that is Guantánamo Bay. Erik Saar is an Arabic speaking American soldier, was a translator in interrogation sessions for six months. His tale describes his gradual disillusionment, from arriving as a soldier keen to do his duty to eventually leaving believing the regime to be a breach of human rights and a disaster for the war on terror.

## Inside SchNEWS

On 17<sup>th</sup> May, peace campaigner Lindis Percy is in court to find out whether the judge will grant an Anti Social Behaviour Order on her to stop her demonstrating outside Menwith Hill spy base (SchNEWS 494). Support needed from 10am, Harrogate Magistrates' Court. 01943 466405 www.caab.org.uk

On the same day, a judge will also give the final verdict on the extradition of Babar Ahmad. Babar was originally arrested under anti-terrorism laws, but despite six days of intensive investigation he was released without charge (SchNEWS 474). The USA is seeking extradition and under the Extradition Treaty 2003 it does not need to provide any evidence to the Court to back up its allegations. Demo in support of Babar Ahmad, 10am, outside Bow Street Magistrates Court. 07915 063564 www.freebabarahmad.com

## SchNEWS in brief

Check out the excellent spoof newspaper **Hate Mail** <http://www.toryscum.com/images/04-05/hate-mail.pdf> \*\* **Indymedia Birthday and Benefit Party** at RampArt this Sunday (15). A post-convergence benefit gig to celebrate UK Indymedia birthday and raise funds for alt media coverage of anti G8 mobilizations. With live bands Headjam and The Kut and more! Plus roots dj til late. RampArts, off commercial road, London E1 2LA \*\* **Freedom March** against eviction and planned destruction of the UK's largest Traveller settlement at Dale Farm, Cray's Hill, Essex. Noon this Saturday (14)- the day after some 80 families are supposed to vacate the site. Travelers hope this last appeal will persuade council leader Malcolm Buckley to call off what would be an inevitably violent attack on the settlement. 01206 523528 ustiben.5@ntlworld.com \*\* **Anti-G8 Benefit Gig** next Tuesday (17) with Freq Nasty, Fun-da-Mental and Smart. Free -£1 a pint Goldsmiths College Student Union, New Cross \*\* Lots of events happening at Brighton's Cowley Club during the Brighton Festival. On Monday (16) the Radical film festival continues with **'We Interrupt This**

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## Arise SERCO

Not so great news: work has recently started on a new atomic weapons facility at Aldermaston in Berkshire. Better news: a protest group called "Block the Builders" are leading a peaceful blockade of the entrance to the construction site and have managed to prevent work continuing. With it recently being revealed that Tony Blair has already decided to replace Trident with a new generation of nuclear 'deterrent', and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) conference going nowhere in New York, a Block the Builders statement said, "We believe that these new developments will equip the UK to test, design and build new weapons which will violate the UK's commitments under Article VI of the NPT." Or as Aldermaston Women's Peace Campaign put it, "What we're seeing every day at Aldermaston do not look like measures towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, but the first stages of building the next generation of nuclear weapons."

The lucky corporate contractors on the project are a conglomerate with the catchy name of AWE Management Limited. This is in reality an unholy alliance between BFNL (government owned British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.), US weapons giant Lockheed Trident and, er, UK public services company SERCO. Canny protestors who object to the new factory of death have realised that trying to make their feelings known to the former two organisations is like asking the devil if he could be a little less naughty, but SERCO on the other hand undertakes a number of contracts for Kent County Council, including waste management and parks management, as well as running the Docklands Light Railway in London. Block the Builders believe that public action (such as the blockading of the landfill and waste disposal depot) could have a significant impact - especially considering SERCO is currently due for a government audit and keen to maintain its low-profile public relations.

To get involved in the blockade 07887 802879 [www.blockthebuilders.org.uk](http://www.blockthebuilders.org.uk)

\* Nukewatch, volunteers who independently track movements of nuclear materials, have reported on recent nighttime conveys of warheads (breaking the long held practice of transporting in daylight for safety reasons). As Peter Burt of Reading Nukewatch said, "The nuclear convoys... pass through towns and villages all along the route, and local authorities and emergency services are not informed. We believe the Ministry of Defence is taking unacceptable risks... and places the security of its weapons before the safety of the public... We have a right to know if these convoys are passing along the end of our streets. If you see a convoy please tell Nukewatch on 02380 554434 and the local press."

## Carroll Singing

The investigative journalist Greg Palast recently got his hands on secret Pentagon documents calling for the "privatisation of all Iraqi assets, especially the oil industries". No new story there, except for the fact that Palast also found out that the privatisation was being opposed by big oil companies who were afraid of losing their record level of profits.

Just days after the presidential election in 2000, Pentagon officials met to decide who should replace Saddam and how the oil should be divided up. They called Philip Carroll, former Chief Executive of Shell, to discuss the give-away of Iraqi oil. Whilst admitting that only someone "without a brain" wouldn't support privatisation, his chums in the big oil companies were more worried about their profits. The Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) had been increasing the price of oil for some time: the Bush plan was to shift control of the oil to his pals in private companies who would then respond to the demands of US drivers by cutting the price of oil. Trouble was that the major US petrol companies had just posted record profits so there was no reason for them to cut the price of oil. Palast then found that the state department and Pentagon bashed out a compromise: a state-owned oil company under which the state maintains official title to the reserves but operation and control are given to foreign oil companies. What's Palast got for this scoop? An award? Er, no - two lawsuits from oil companies which threaten to close down his website. So if you've got any spare cash, Greg's asking that you buy some of his stuff so he can save up the money to fight the case.

[www.gregpalast.com](http://www.gregpalast.com)

## R.I.P.

Nicolás David Neira Alvares, a 15 year old who was marching in the anarchist block on Mayday in Bogota, Colombia, died at the weekend following injuries sustained from a police attack. On the march police attacked the demonstration with tear gas and rubber bullets. 8 police singled out Nicolas and beat him till he was unconscious - a week later he died from his injuries. Apparently the trauma was so extensive that doctors were unable to operate to save him.

## ...and finally...

As scientists and naturalists take their high tech toys further into the more remote and inhospitable corners of the Earth, they continue to find and identify new species in surprisingly high numbers. In an average year 15-20,000 new animals are recorded, 2000 new plants and a few hundred fish (not to mention the most numerous creatures on the planet, insects).

Well, never let it be said that in this era of global capitalism corporations don't take an advertising opportunity when they see one. A recent addition to the known world is a variety of titi monkey discovered in the dense tropical rainforests of South America. From now on the lucky monkey will be called *Callicebus aureipalatii*, meaning 'Golden Palace' titi - so named after an online charity auction was won by online gambling site 'GoldenPalace.com'.

SchNEWS wonders whether beer companies will be stepping forward to lend their names to newly identified strains of yeast living in the guts of beetles, or perhaps Tescos will bid for a recently unearthed type of blood-sucking "vampire" fish in the Amazon...

With the current number of recorded species at about 1.75m, and the UN Global Biodiversity Assessment proposing a working estimate of 13.6m species in total, this is one market with a seemingly limitless potential for expansion - except the race is on to find and save all these unknown species from extinction caused largely by the self-same corporate system. It's an unfunny old world.

## Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers not to accept a lift from a man with dark glasses and an american accent... Honest!