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Zarqawi and the Drug War

by Jacob G. Hornberger

After several consecutive months of bad news for U.S. officials — the Marine massacre at Haditha, the disclosure of secret CIA renditions and torture camps in former Soviet-bloc countries, the weekly deaths of American troops, and the daily kidnappings, beheadings, and suicide bombs in Baghdad — U.S. officials and pro-occupation supporters received a big morale booster with the killing of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, or as Australian Prime Minister John Howard put it, “a huge boost for anti-terrorist forces in Iraq.”

But isn't this the same type of periodic morale booster that we've seen in the war on drugs for the past 30 years? How many times have we seen federal officials and the news networks over the years hyping the arrest or killing of some big drug lord?

Do you recall the capture of Manuel Noriega, the leader of Panama? U.S. officials, as well as the mainstream news media, were totally hyped up during the military invasion of Panama to capture someone accused of being one of the primary drug dealers in the world — someone who, by the way, had been on the payroll of the CIA. The news briefings and press coverage of the Panamanian invasion and capture of Noriega came close to matching that of the Zarqawi killing. In fact, amidst all the hoopla, one could have even been forgiven for concluding that Noriega's capture finally meant that the decades-long war on drugs would be finally over.

Alas, it was not to be. There were always more drug dealers and drug lords to go after. There was also the perpetual need for ever-increasing federal budgets to finance the continuation of the drug war.

Do you recall the famous Medellin Cartel, which operated out of Colombia in the 1970s and 1980s, and its leaders Pablo Escobar and Carlos Lehder. For years, the feds focused the public's attention on them, much as they do now with particular terrorists, suggesting that busting them would bring a “major blow” to the illegal drug trade.

Ultimately Escobar was killed, Lehder was incarcerated, and the Medellin Cartel was destroyed. What happened? The feds simply moved on to new drug-war targets on which they focused the public's attention. Even today — after more than 30 years of drug warfare — hardly a

week goes by without some law-enforcement agency, either at the national, state, or local level, striking a “major blow” in the long-running drug war by making another big drug bust, an event that is then inevitably hyped by the local or national news media.

No matter how many drug busts are made or drug lords arrested or killed, the drug war continues onward with no sign of it ever ending.

The reason is simple: It is the federal government’s drug war itself that gives rise to the drug dealers and drug lords that it then gets all hyped up about busting. Without the drug war, there would be no drug lords to bust because they’d all be out of business, much as booze lords went out of business with the end of Prohibition.

It’s no different with the government’s war on terrorism, where the killing of one terrorist simply produces more terrorists, which means that the war on terrorism, like the war on drugs, continues onward with no sign of its ever ending.

The reason is simple: It is the federal government’s own interventionist foreign policy, including the death and destruction that arise from such policies as [sanctions](#), invasions, and occupations, that give rise to the deep anger and hatred that then produces the terrorist [blowback](#).

By dismantling America’s [overseas military empire](#), and restoring the noninterventionist foreign policy of a constitutional republic, the threat of terrorism against the United States would disappear.

Thus, the American people have a choice to make, with respect not only to the war on drugs but also to the war on terrorism. If they choose to continue such wars, they simply need to recognize that the result will be an endless supply of drug lords and terrorists and, therefore, perpetual war. And as we continue to learn, there are enormous financial costs that come with such wars, to say nothing of ever-growing infringements on civil liberties,

If, on the other hand, Americans want to eliminate the supply of drug lords and the supply of terrorists and restore a stable, prosperous, and free society to our land, there is but one way to accomplish that: by ending the war on drugs as well as the U.S. government’s interventionist foreign policy.

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