

The 9/11 Truth Movement as something we should not talk about

Contributed by John Siman
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John's ongoing peak oil odyssey

“To the question of what causes historic events, another answer presents itself, namely, that the course of human events ... depends on the coincidence of the wills of all who take part in them, and so even a Napoleon’s influence on their course is purely external and mainly fictitious.”

-- Leo Tolstoy, War and Peace

Any American who is willing to study the implications of Global Peak Oil can readily come to understand the cold logical necessity behind our continuing military presence in Iraq: If we want to keep our commuters consuming and our consumers commuting (and almost all of us do), if we want to keep our interstates humming and our suburbs sprawling, if we want to keep our big box shopping outlets stocked with hyper-cheap globalized goodies, then we have to keep the oil flowing.

And from where does it keep flowing? Primarily from the countries around the Persian Gulf, which have Iraq at their center. Iraq has the second largest reserves in the world. Saudi Arabia, Iraq’s Persian Gulf neighbor to the south, has the largest. Kuwait, Iraq’s tiny Persian Gulf neighbor to the southeast, has the third largest. Iran, Iraq’s Persian Gulf neighbor to the east, is past its peak but still has a hell of a lot more oil left than we do -- we who passed our extraction peak during the first Nixon administration. So the logic is quite simple: Unless we choose to live in pacifistic communities like latter-day Quakers and Shakers -- or in backwards-looking farm families like latter-day Amish and Mennonites -- or in woodsy bookish solitude like Thoreau (and almost none of us do), then we have to assure our continuing access to the remaining global supplies of oil. Most of which are in the Persian Gulf region, in and around Iraq. It’s that simple.

And it’s that explicit. For over a quarter of a century, and for Democrats and Republicans alike, assuring our access to this oil has been our official national policy. Let’s remind ourselves of reality by quickly reviewing these years – beginning with a capsule summary of the presidency of Jimmy Carter.

Carter’s first big presidential speech, broadcast to the nation April 18, 1977, was about nothing other than Peak Oil -- and therefore the necessary regimen of a new energy policy for America which would be “the moral equivalent of war.” We can praise him for his prescience. But Carter’s last big speech, the State of the Union message which he delivered in January of 1980, was about the necessity of protecting the status quo – and the status quo required then, as it does oh so much more now, our daily importation of millions of barrels of oil, and, therefore, our national readiness for actual war, regardless of its moral equivalents:

“Let our position be absolutely clear:

An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”

Though Carter was speaking just a few months after the Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan (and as the Ayatollah Khomeini was establishing an

Islamicist state in Afghanistan's neighbor to the west, the newly Shah-free Iran), it takes no great political imagination to apply the Carter Doctrine to other enemies, including, of course, to Saddam Hussein. With or without the Soviet Union in the picture, oil remains the prize. Thus Michael Klare, the author of *Blood and Oil* and of *Resource Wars*, observes:

"George W. Bush's Iraq War, while duplicitous in many respects, is actually the culmination of twenty-five years of U.S. policy to ensure continued domination of the Persian Gulf and its prolific oil fields. In fact, it was a natural expression of the Carter Doctrine.... Seen in this light, Bush Jr. was merely applying the doctrine when he invaded Iraq in 2003. He's not the first. President Reagan cited it to justify U.S. intervention in the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988.... President Bush Sr. invoked it to authorize military action against Iraq in 1991, during the first Gulf War. And Bill Clinton, though not explicitly citing the doctrine, adhered to its tenets" ("The Carter Doctrine Goes Global" in *The Progressive*, Dec. 2004).

Klare goes on to state what should be the obvious: "[T]he use of force to ensure U.S. access to Persian Gulf oil is not a Bush II policy or a Republican policy, but a bipartisan, American policy."

It should therefore not be a mystery why John Kerry voted in favor of allowing Bush to invade Iraq without the inconvenience of the constitutional formality of a declaration of war; nor should it be a mystery why Hillary Clinton has supported this war; nor why Joe Lieberman so smarmily swapped saliva with the President on the floor of the Senate. The only mystery is why there has been any mystery about where the Democrats stand, where they have stood for a quarter century, where they have to stand if they want to win the occasional election. It's where we the people want them to stand.

Of course if the Democrats were in power right now, we would be spared some of the Bush administration's excruciatingly silly rhetoric about freedom and some of its shamelessly immoral casuistry involving the finer points of torture – better yet, we'd be spared the images of Cheney and Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz and their nerdy neo-conservative buddies engaging in a multi-year intercontinental circle jerk. Asthmatic fat boys, as Gore Vidal calls them.

But we'd still be willing to spill blood to keep the oil flowing. And yet as I travel now among the supposedly peace-loving and progressive Americans of the Left Coast, again and again I meet people who want to place all the blame for this war on Bush -- and who are so eager to scapegoat him and his administration that they eagerly immerse themselves in the most labyrinthine of conspiracy theories. Earlier this Indian summer, at a junior high school in Berkeley, I attended a 9/11 truth event. Some five hundred people each paid fifteen dollars (minimum) to hear David Ray Griffin (the author of *The New Pearl Harbor: Disturbing Questions about the Bush Administration and 9/11*) and four other very articulate and persuasive intellectuals present a series of lectures which showed, rather conclusively, that our war in Iraq has been sold to the American people on the basis of a multitude of lies, big lies and small lies, lies blatant and subtle. Lies, lies, and more lies. But I already knew this.

So what lies behind the lies? I wanted to ask. For the lecturers at the 9/11 truth event barely addressed this question; there was not much more than the occasional allusion to the neo-cons' dastardly plans for world domination. I was left intellectually unsatisfied (to say the least), but most everyone else in the crowd seemed energized -- so great was their fascination with speculation about rumors about studies about lies about the secret machinations of the powerful and the evil. In certain respects the 9/11 truth event was like a viewing of *The Da Vinci Code* for leftists.

What was truly remarkable about the truth event, however, was this: Never once, in the course of some three hours of talk, was the word oil uttered.

No one was going to be made to face the fact that without shitloads of cheap imported oil, we Americans, whether we consume vegan hipster delights or Happy Meals, whether we commute around in hybrids or in stretch Hummers, are in for some unwelcome downsizing. No one was going to be made to think, Uh oh, if we don't keep the oil flowing, I might not be able to keep my mortgage payments current. The 9/11 truth event occurred in a sort of intellectual vacuum.

But let's pause here and imagine that Griffin and the other lecturers had described oil as the material cause for our nation's policy in the Persian Gulf. Indeed, not long after the 9/11 truth event, writing from Melbourne, Australia, Adam Fenderson (co-editor of EnergyBulletin.net) called my attention to Ronan Doyle's well-produced film, "Oil, Smoke, and Mirrors" in which Doyle, presenting Richard Heinberg as his star speaker, argues explicitly that Bush and his administration, being all too aware of the implications of Global Peak Oil, effected 9/11 (and by extension the entire War on Terror) in order to provide us with a pretext for assuring our control, by military means, of the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf region.

The problem with this argument, however, is that it overdetermines the matter. For we do not need a pretext to kill for oil: it's our official policy. Discovering the extent to which we have been manipulated by our leaders is therefore superfluous to our understanding of the real truth, which is that we're all -- all of us oil-consuming Americans, that is -- in this together. Now Heinberg was, as you would expect, very sober and persuasive in making the case that 9/11 was an inside job foisted upon us, but as he concedes some fifteen minutes into the film, "... it's not something I can prove." So why waste time trying to unearth secrets when the truth in our faces is hideous enough?

But back to Berkeley. Later on that evening, by Strawberry Creek, behind the Permaculture Army house, I described the truth event to the anarchist gardener Hans from Kansas. He'd ridden his bicycle over from Oakland. "If you really hate Bush and need to get it out of your system," he said, shaking his black dreadlocks, "just cut to the chase. Come out and admit the real truth about 9/11 and about all conspiracies since the beginning of history. It's all about the New World Order and the omnipotent shadow government. Bush and Cheney and all of them have no human emotions or morality whatsoever because they are the shape-shifting members of a super-advanced race of man-lizards from another dimension who have secretly controlled regular human beings since the time of the pharaohs."

Hans opened another IPA and continued: "Acknowledge them for the evil f**ks that they are and then get on with your business. Don't waste any more time thinking about them than you absolutely have to. It only gives them more energy." This is not quite Tolstoi's point about Napoleon, but, in application, it's just about as serviceable.

I also got the opinion of Jim Kunstler (the author of, most recently, *The Long Emergency*): "I think Griffin's theories are hogwash. Hey, there are all kinds of Kennedy assassination theories that are also persuasive. Don't get sucked into that bullshit. It's a dead end and a waste of time. And ultimately it will make a fool out of you."

But let's give Hans from Kansas the last word: "The truly radical thing to do is get off the grid and grow your own food." That's just what he said.

And this is exactly Voltaire's point in the closing line of *Candide*: "Il faut cultiver notre jardin." We need to be tending our garden.

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"Oil, Smoke, and

Mirrors" film:

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=8677389869548020370&q=oil+smoke+mirrors>