

Letters from our readers

15 January 2007

The following is a selection of recent letters sent to the World Socialist Web Site.

On “David Hicks enters his sixth year of detention at Guantánamo Bay”

I am not a lawyer or a doctor or psychologist, but I have often wondered about the psychological impact of the detention on David Hicks. How can he receive a fair trial if his emotional state is at breaking point and he may be incoherent because of the treatment he is receiving? Can he be tried at all under these circumstances?

I also get increasingly incensed when pictures of David Hicks are published. They are several years old and I am sure do not represent the true condition of David Hicks as he is today. I believe that neither the Australian nor the US government wants the public to see David Hicks tried or even repatriated because we may come to see a young man who has been broken and destroyed by an appalling “justice” system and whose treatment can not be justified anymore.

I remember an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* where an official remarked that David Hicks would be “the next cab of the rank.” Comments like these are outright sickening and show the contempt authorities have for Hicks as a human being. Despite what he is supposed to have done, he is a human being. I start believing that Australian and US authorities want him dead by any means, so the public will never get to see what has become of him.

For some strange reason and in the event that David Hicks was released, the situation reminds me of Winston Smith in *1984* sitting in the Chestnut Tree drinking gin, after the “Inner-Party” had finished with him.

CT

Sydney, Australia

8 January 2007

On “In defiance of 2006 vote, Bush will escalate Iraq war”

The US has broken even. 3,000 American troops have died. Bush has killed as many as Bin Laden.

AJ

10 January 2007

On “In speech on Iraq escalation, Bush promises more bloodshed, wider war”

I suspect Israel will attack Iran very soon. The attack will

be to disable Iran’s nuclear facilities. Then the United States naval presence will engage the Iranians at sea, when Iran attempts to disrupt shipping or something like that. This engagement will be a pretext for the United States to invade or attack Iran, under the guise that Iran attacked the United States. The United States will declare war on Iran, and any state that supports it. However, neither Syria nor any other country has a capability to engage the United States’ military power. The additional ground troops will be deployed against Iran. Then what happens?

MS

Santa Rosa, California, US

11 January 2007

On “Iraqi regime to hand over oil reserves to US energy giants”

Anything can be done on paper. However, I do not believe the Iraqi resistance will accept this....

SN

Mineola, New York, US

11 January 2007

On “Brookings Institution preview of the Democratic Congress: Snapshot of an establishment in crisis”

Most of the conferences held in Washington these days never seem to invite the people who could make the event much more meaningful. Here are a few people listed—along with their connections to the Brookings Institute—that could have been at Wednesday’s press event: (1) William B. Quandt—Edward R. Stettinius, Jr. Professor of Government and Foreign Affairs, University of Virginia, and Nonresident Senior Fellow, Saban Center for Middle East Policy; (2) Shibley Telhami—Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, Department of Government & Politics, University of Maryland, and Nonresident Senior Fellow, Saban Center for Middle East Policy; (3) Kenneth Pollack—Director of Research, Saban Center for Middle East Policy; Strobe Talbott—President; (5) Michael O’Hanlon—Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy Studies; (6) Carlos Pascual—Vice President and Director, Foreign Policy Studies; (7) Martin S. Indyk—Director, Saban Center for Middle East Policy.

The list I refer to is found in the appendices of the Iraq Study Group report. In other words, Brookings has its

fingerprints all over that flawed document. And to the relatively few that have actually read the Baker/Hamilton Report, it definitely demonstrates just how far the Democrats have moved to the right as well as the increasingly incestuous relationships of the Washington think tanks. It's left for the reader of the report to tell whether the information and opinions expressed by the Study Group came from the Rand Corporation, the AEI, the CATO Institute, etc., or Brookings itself. In the end, it probably doesn't matter.

Still, there seems little doubt that Brookings is trying to distance itself from some or all of the Baker/Hamilton Report. One reason might be that the report is too *petrocentric*, and perhaps too ethnocentric as well. The only Arab contributing to the report is Dr. Shibley Telhami. As Sadat Chair Fellow (at the University of Maryland), much of his work has been related to Saudi oil and its continued flow westward. I'm guessing here, but Dr. Telhami apparently thinks that is the best way to achieve peace and development in the Middle East. Incidentally: There really is a Sadat Chair for Peace and Development. That's like having a Benito Mussolini Chair for Efficient Train Travel at MIT.

BR

5 January 2007

On "US military asks deceased officers to re-enlist"

In your article, you point to the French Legion, saying they accept foreigners with possible criminal records, no questions asked. That is very true. But these soldiers of the French Legion are regular soldiers of the French Army. If one of them dies in combat, he is considered in the military statistics of fallen soldiers of the French Army.

The option considered by the US Army is quite different. They would like to use foreigners too, but not enlist them in the regular US Army. They would like to have them fight as mercenaries so as not to have to count their possible deaths in the statistics of fallen soldiers of the US Army. These two are quite different.

The French way is socialistic, with the soldier receiving equal treatment with the French-born soldiers—retirement benefits, bonuses and all. Whereas the US way is capitalistic, with the soldier being a commodity externalized from the inner system. The US Army would like to do it like the big transnational corporations have been doing for the last two decades, externalizing its workforce so as not to be liable to all the social costs associated with it.

SE

10 January 2007

On "Medical research and big business: The case of Sir Richard Doll"

I have just read your article on Sir Richard Doll. I recently returned—on December 24—from my 25th visit to Vietnam. I

only wished Sir Richard could have been with me when I called at the office of Monsanto in Ho Chi Minh City and handed in a letter to the chairman.

I also visited the Tu Du Hospital and saw a number of young children seriously affected by Agent Orange. If only Sir Richard had been there to see the damage done to these children. Vietnam has over 3,000,000 people affected by the chemical produced by Monsanto and others, and for which he was paid to comment in favour of the companies rather than the truth.

LA

London, UK

10 January 2007

On "In favor of a police-state? Not quite...: Minority Report, directed by Steven Spielberg"

Thank you, David. Your apt devaluation of this bit of Hollywood pulp entertainment with its sinister, manipulative subtext was a relief. I would have liked, however, for an even more trenchant lambasting of the film's sickeningly sentimental propaganda. I can't help despising this film for its excesses: its overindulgence in the blockbuster, action thriller genre; its mindless (perhaps) endorsements of feel-good, conscience-preserving asocial values and myths; and the travesty it perpetrates upon the dark, truly imaginative vision of Dick's original text. The cheek of these people! I have to teach this film in a Literature course this year, and I will be hard-pressed to refrain from letting my indignation out on my students, who need to make their own judgments, after all.

WH

6 January 2007



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