

Blood on whose hands in Afghanistan?

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Accusations from Obama administration officials and the media that WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and his sources have “blood on their hands” for revealing information on US military operations and informants in Afghanistan are contemptible slanders. Responsibility for blood spilled in Afghanistan lies with the US government, which launched the war.

Such accusations are all the more repugnant as the Obama administration is openly preparing an escalation of US military bloodletting in Afghanistan. Yesterday, a *New York Times*’ front-page article was headlined “Targeted Killing is New US Focus in Afghanistan.” It praised Task Force 373, the covert death squad revealed by the documents published by WikiLeaks, noting that “commando raids” killed “more than 130 significant insurgents” in the last five weeks.

Washington’s latest plans are for mass killings to terrorize the Afghan population into surrender. At last Tuesday’s Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing, Senator Richard Lugar explained: “For the negotiating to be successful, we have to demonstrate strength. As bloody as this sounds, it’s critical that we kill a lot of Taliban.”

The fascistic mindset underlying such plans is no different than that of Hitler and his henchmen as they prepared wars and the repression of resistance forces in Europe.

In today’s degraded political environment, the media—which have systematically and deliberately concealed the crimes revealed by WikiLeaks—are lending themselves to the campaign against Assange. In a press conference last Thursday, Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Assange and his sources “might have on their hands the blood of some young soldier or that of an Afghan family.”

On Sunday, Christiane Amanpour asked her guest on ABC’s “This Week” program, Defense Secretary

Robert Gates, to comment on the claim that “this leak basically has blood on its hands.” Gates replied that on the question of “moral culpability” for exposing Afghan informers who collaborate with the US military, “the verdict is guilty on WikiLeaks.”

The *World Socialist Web Site* is unmoved by such pleas for solidarity with Washington’s informants and snitches. We dismiss with contempt attempts to excuse the US government’s barbarism in Afghanistan by citing violence by the Afghan people who are resisting neo-colonial occupation. There is no political or moral equivalence between the two.

As the great Marxist Leon Trotsky wrote in *Their Morals and Ours*: “A slave-owner who through cunning and violence shackles a slave in chains, and a slave who through cunning or violence breaks the chains—let not the contemptible eunuchs tell us that they are equals before a court of morality!”

Who is Mr. Gates to lecture anyone on “moral culpability?” The man overseeing the US military’s mass slaughter of Afghans today is a hardened bureaucrat of state terror. His 1996 insider’s account of US policy, appropriately titled *From the Shadows*, catalogs his role in the greatest crimes of US imperialism in the 1970s and 1980s.

A CIA analyst and aide to National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski during the 1970s, Gates was a top CIA official in the 1980s. He records how the CIA backed the UNITA militia in Angola, responsible for the death of tens of thousands of Angolans. Gates also tells how the CIA mined Nicaraguan ports to help the right-wing Contra rebels and authorized the drafting of a “Murder Manual,” giving instructions for political assassinations.

Gates was involved in Washington’s criminal Afghan policy from the beginning. Well before the Soviet invasion, the US began giving covert assistance to Islamist forces opposed to the Soviet-backed Afghan

government. The US goal, as a military officer put it in a March 1979 meeting that Gates recounts, was “sucking the Soviets into a Vietnamese quagmire.”

At that time, Gates writes, the US made covert agreements with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan to assemble an “extraordinary logistics pipeline from suppliers around the world.... The stage was set for the vast future expansion of outside help, all run by the CIA.” As is well known, this supply chain, “all run by the CIA,” was staffed by Osama bin Laden and his political associates. This was the origin of Al Qaeda, the organization that carried out the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

When the Kremlin invaded Afghanistan, the CIA financed and supported militias run by ultra-right Islamist warlords. Gates knew this could produce nothing but disaster for the Afghan people. He wrote: “No one should have had any illusions about these people coming together politically—before or after a Soviet defeat. Certainly no one at CIA had such fantasies.”

Afghanistan has been embroiled in civil war ever since. Though it goes unreported by the US media, which is utterly contemptuous of Afghan life, millions of Afghans have died as a result.

The press campaign against WikiLeaks testifies to the depravity of the US political environment. The media and the state cannot forgive Assange and his sources for courageously exposing the crimes of the entire political establishment. The wealth of documents they have revealed gives the International Criminal Court the materials needed to prosecute the Bush and Obama administrations for war crimes, and leading figures of the US media for their complicity.

Assange and his sources must be cleared of any and all charges related to the leaks, and indictments drawn up against the war criminals in Washington.

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