

Press Conference 2/14/05; Comments by
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Eyewitness accounts in Fallujah tell of the targeted destruction of hospitals and clinics during the US siege in November 2004. It appears that there may have been war crimes committed in Fallujah funded by American taxpayer dollars in violation of the international rules of war. Basic American respect for human life demands that a full investigation into possible war crimes in Fallujah be undertaken. Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility urges officials to focus resources on rebuilding destroyed public health infrastructure in Fallujah and Iraq overall.

As we consider the supplemental \$80 billion dollar budget to fund largely military operations overseas, it is prudent, proper, and socially responsible to ask—what are we going to be doing with this money? Where is it going and how will it be spent? Let us use recent military expenditures as our guide.

Fallujah, Iraq was once a city with a population similar in size to Anchorage, Alaska. Today the city lies in ruins. On Christmas Eve, the BBC reported that 60-70% of the buildings and homes inside the city were “completely crushed and damaged.” According to the Boston Globe, prior to the last siege on Fallujah that began on 11/7, 70%-90% of the people of Falluja had evacuated the city. This left, by the most conservative estimate, 25,000 civilians inside the city. The LA Times reported on 11/15 that water and electricity were completely cut off for the city. This was only to be the beginning of an escalating humanitarian crisis. According to the LA Times:

→The Fallujah General Hospital was shut down and occupied by US Forces. Doctors were handcuffed and patients forced out. Ambulances were damaged.

→In Fallujah’s city centre, a clinic was bombed on at least two separate occasions and completely destroyed. Two or more doctors and most of the patients inside were killed.

Independent and international media sources report far more chilling stories.

The destruction of health care facilities—do we really want to pay for that again? What would it feel like to be one of the soldiers who dropped those bombs? This too is a human cost we must account for.

Our past military dollars have also bought us the use internationally banned incendiary weapons. The San Diego Union-Tribune reported on 8/3/2003 that US Marines used Mark-77 firebombs in combat near Baghdad. These are a mixture of jet fuel and polystyrene-like gel that sticks to the skin as it burns. Each bomb weighs 510 lbs and contains 44lbs of polystyrene-like gel and 63 gallons of jet fuel. How many more bombs like these do we want to buy and pay to use in our upcoming military operations?

Our president has frequently mentioned his desire to create an ownership society. Pursuant to that, while we can easily claim ownership of our successes, we as a society, as Washingtonians and as Americans, must begin first and foremost to own up to our mistakes and take responsibility for our failures. We must turn and face the facts, even if they are difficult to look at. It is painful to hear reports that American taxpayer dollars funded the bombing of hospitals and clinics in Fallujah, that taxes paid by hard-working American people funded the use of internationally-banned napalm-like weapons in Iraq. Let us not let this go down in history as another sad saga of indiscriminate human destruction that we will teach to our children as we shake our heads in shock and disbelief. As we are reminded to think and feel with our hearts on this Valentine’s Day, let’s remember to budget some money and resources for rebuilding the destroyed and long-decaying public health infrastructure in Iraq. It’s the good and decent American thing to do.