

Terrorism is Killing or Instilling Fear – No Matter Who Does It

We watch proliferating terror and violence. . . Mourning and fear come too. What's the remedy? More of the same?!

Peacemakers on retreat were playing a game where the caller, standing in the middle of a circle of seated people says, "The Big Wind Blows on anyone who . ." All for whom it's true – including the caller – must find another seat. The person left standing is the next caller.

My friend said, "The Big Wind Blows on anyone who has ever been part of a Terrorist Organization." I was shocked. Why did he ask that? And was the room bugged? Would the FBI, who bugs peace groups, think that meant we're terrorists? Why would he ask that?

Since I wasn't the only confused-looking person, he said, "Well, I was part of a terrorist organization: the U.S. military."

The Buffalo News said in its December 4 headline story "Massacre again raises question of when to define it as terrorism,"

Federal law defines terrorism as dangerous acts intended to intimidate a civilian population, influence government policy or affect government conduct "by mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping."

Some examples are

- our weaponized drone program, where, per Intercept based on leaked U.S. internal documents, nearly 90% of those killed were not the intended targets (assassination,

- mass destruction and community intimidation included);
- night raids in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, which terrify surprised families and whole communities. War is state terrorism.
- “policing” murders, especially of black people. People of color, activists, and innocents know and are highly intimidated because even moving (Amadou Diallo); questioning (Sandra Bland); or failing immediate obedience (12-year-old Tamir Rice) – could result in one’s getting killed.

Terrorism is killing and/or instilling fear. Let’s kill the people who are killing people? Which causes more people to kill? How can that work? It doesn’t make sense. (Don’t hit your sister. *Whap!!*) Restraining and preventing aggression is necessary. Instilling fear and Islamophobia promote a police state.

The U.S. treatment of whistle blowers confirms governmental intimidation. Hero Edward Snowden caused policy improvements, yet he faces espionage charges. Drone pilots revealing program truths have had their bank accounts and credit cards frozen. Police have generally been protected from charges of murder, wrongful death, or brutality until quite recently. State violence is excused.

State terrorism is still terrorism, and like violence, Terrorism begets more Terrorism. In fact, besides our government’s above-described intimidation of civilian populations, the U.S. efforts to influence other governments’ policies and/or affect their conduct are well known worldwide. The Project for the New American Century espoused our challenging policies or conduct of other governments that are not aligned with our interests and prominence.

Do we need more or less violence? Hope we can agree we need less.

We need faith, courage, and resolute adherence to principle. Let's work cooperatively, fearlessly, to mainstream nonviolence, including petitioning our government. You can join organizations like the WNY Peace Center and allies on specific campaigns.

Victoria Ross, QCSW, LMSW, MALD, is the Executive Director of the WNY Peace Center, a consultant for the Interfaith Peace Network, and Holy Trinity Lutheran Church's delegate to the Network of Religious Communities (all cosponsors of the Solidarity Rally along with Muslim Public Affairs Council, and 40 other groups).

Does America Spend Enough on Defense?

In response to the Buffalo News' interesting August 2 feature "Does America Spend Enough on Defense?": We don't need *more* military spending – we need *less*. Our military aggression makes us a target.

John Quigley rightly points out that we should be building bridges at home, rather than bombing bridges abroad and maintaining about 1,000 military bases worldwide. He observes that the average annual defense budget has risen, not fallen, since George W. Bush left office.

In opposition, James Jay Carafano claims that cuts to military spending will leave the US weaker than before 9/11: without

continual increases in military spending, others will think we're weak and attack us. However, Al-Qaida's 9/11 attack was not caused by perceived weakness.

The USA spends \$15 Billion more on its military than the next nine countries put together, per the International Institute for Strategic Studies, or more than 34% of the military spending for the entire world, per the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2015.

What have we got to show for such spending?

- A drone program that kills 28 people for each one targeted, which person may be reported killed up to seven times (per *Reprieve's* 2014 study "You Never Die Twice") – prompting the question: who was actually killed?
- Ever-multiplying numbers of potential "terrorists," persons violently disposed toward U.S. citizens for the U.S.' terrorizing of whole communities (by soldiers' night raids on suspect family homes, and frequent drone surveillance with intermittent deadly attacks).
- Culpability for war crimes. Attacks are made without regard for humanitarian principles of international law governing armed conflicts (e.g., necessity and proportionality; protection for civilians, especially women and children; and prohibition against collective punishment).

The USA is also the major seller of arms worldwide, representing more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of all arms exports in 2011, per the NY Times. We sometimes arm both sides of a conflict, and not surprisingly are often attacked with weapons we provided, lately by Isis and Al-Qaida. (We are also #1 in guns per capita, with [per the UN Office of Drugs and Crime] an unbelievable 88.8 guns per 100 residents in 2012 – *excluding* arms held by the government!)

We are the only country that has used nuclear bombs (despite Japan's imminent surrender), and we maintain our nuclear arsenal at great financial and environmental cost rather than pursuing nuclear disarmament. The treaty with Iran is the first recent serious attempt toward nuclear nonproliferation. Hopefully Congress will support the treaty with Iran. The accord prevents Iran from obtaining nuclear capabilities, and includes robust reporting and verification. Iran will benefit by the end of sanctions – as will U.S. businesses eager to enter that market. Diplomacy rather than military efforts make this a real victory for the U.S.

Such peaceful and just conflict resolution benefits all, and is much more effective in reducing violence. Let's invest in life-sustaining efforts instead.

Victoria Ross, QCSW, LMSW, MALD, is Peaceful Conflict Resolution Consultant for the WNY Peace Center and the Interfaith Peace Network.