

US complicit in air strike that murdered dozens of children in Yemen

10 August 2018

Countless atrocities have been carried out by Washington and its local proxies over the 17 years since the launching of the “global war on terror,” a pretext invoked to justify wars of aggression aimed at solidifying the control of US imperialism over the oil-rich and strategically vital Middle East.

Entire countries, including Iraq, Libya and Syria, have been decimated, and entire cities, including Mosul and Raqqa, have been reduced to smoking rubble. The victims, the dead and maimed, number in the millions, while those driven from their homes include many tens of millions.

Still, there are specific acts of sheer brutality and contempt for human life that stand out and sum up the criminality of this entire enterprise. Such was the bombing carried out Thursday in Yemen by a Saudi warplane, a jet supplied by the US, which dropped American-made bombs and missiles and was guided to its target with the aid of US intelligence officers, and refueled in midair by American tanker aircraft.

The target selected was a crowded marketplace area in the center of the city of Dahyan in Yemen’s northern province of Saada.

Witnesses reported that the warplanes had been hovering over the town for over an hour, so those ordering the strike had to have a clear idea of what they would be hitting. Residents said they didn’t believe a crowded market would be targeted so they went about their business.

The Saudi warplane scored a direct hit on a bus loaded with school children traveling through the market from their summer camp to a mosque for an annual celebration marking the end of summer vacation.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported that its hospital had received the lifeless bodies of 29 children pulled from the smoldering wreckage of the bus. Most of these children were under the age of 10, some of them as young as eight.

According to Saada’s medical office, the air strikes killed 47 people, including people in the streets near the bus. At least 77 more were wounded, some of them grievously, with the death toll likely to rise.

Hassan Muwlef, executive director of the Red Crescent office in Saada, arrived on the scene an hour after the attack on Thursday morning. He described what he witnessed: “Body parts were scattered all over the area, and the sounds of moaning and crying were everywhere. The school bus was totally burned and destroyed.” He added that many of the children’s bodies were burned beyond recognition, and that the wounded were riddled with shrapnel.

Another witness reported that “Some pieces from their bodies were scattered 100 meters away from the bus.”

Inevitably, this savage crime against innocent children will be largely ignored by the US corporate media, a veteran accomplice in selling and justifying US wars and their “collateral damage.” As for the US government and its regional allies, they are not only defending the air strike, but blaming the carnage on the victims themselves.

The Saudi monarchy and its mercenary army put out a statement claiming that its act of mass murder was justifiable retaliation for a missile launched by Yemen’s Houthi rebels toward the southern Saudi city of Jizan. The missile was intercepted, with its debris killing one person, inside Yemen.

Since the Saudis and their allies launched their war against Yemen in 2015, they have bombed schools, hospitals and residential neighborhoods, along with power stations, water and sewage facilities and other vital infrastructure, killing most of the 16,000 Yemenis who have lost their lives to military violence. No missile launched from Yemen in those same three years has inflicted significant damage on Saudi Arabia.

Despite the ample evidence exposing him as a liar, the spokesman for the Saudi military, Colonel Turki al-Malki, issued a statement claiming that Thursday’s

attack on Saada was “a legitimate military operation ... and was carried out in accordance with international humanitarian law.”

He undoubtedly feels emboldened by the knowledge that “international humanitarian law” holds no sway over Washington and its allies, with war criminals occupying the White House from one administration to the next, under both Democrats and Republicans.

The day before the massacre in Saada, Army General Joseph Votel, chief of the US Central Command, assured reporters at a Pentagon press conference that the US-backed forces of Saudi Arabia and its allies are “conducting their operations in a manner largely that is not exacerbating the horrible humanitarian situation that has taken place in Yemen.”

Who does the general think he is kidding? The Saudi bombing campaign and US-backed naval blockade have brought millions of people in the already desperately impoverished country to the brink of starvation. Last year alone some 50,000 Yemeni children starved to death. The wonton destruction of Yemeni infrastructure as well as health care facilities is responsible for a cholera epidemic that has spread to over a million people, most of them children, while claiming over 2,300 lives.

Votel went on to pin the blame on the Houthis, citing their “emplacement of obstacles and other things in the city Hodeidah that are actually slowing down the movement of humanitarian aid to, desperately needed humanitarian aid to the people.”

The “obstacles” consist of the resistance of the Houthis and the population of the port city of Hodeidah to a brutal assault waged by the forces of the United Arab Emirates, backed by Saudi airpower and utilizing recruits from Al Qaeda as shock troops. Last Thursday, attacks on a hospital and a fish market in Hodeidah killed at least 55 civilians and wounded 170, according to the ICRC.

The United Nations has warned that as many as 250,000 people could die as a result of the US-backed siege of Hodeidah, Yemen’s most crowded city, and that, if the military operation blocks the flow of food and medicine to the Yemeni population, the toll could rise into the millions.

At the same Pentagon press conference, Votel suggested that the resistance of the Houthis and the bulk of the Yemeni population to Saudi Arabia’s attempt to reinstall the puppet regime of President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi is being directed by Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani, the leader of Iran’s Quds Force of Iranian Revolutionary Guards.

Challenged by a reporter on whether Soleimani had actually been seen in Yemen, Votel responded, “Well, I think what I’m implying here is that the Quds Force itself is the principal actor out here who is orchestrating all of this... He bears responsibility for this.”

What the American general is “implying” is sheer nonsense, and he knows it. No evidence whatsoever has been presented of any Iranian presence whatsoever in Yemen, or of any significant military support from Tehran to the Houthis. Washington and Saudi Arabia, however, view the control of Yemen by anything other than a puppet regime under their tight control as a threat to their dominance of the region.

The general’s lies tell much more about the motives for Washington’s criminal intervention in Yemen than they do about what is actually happening in the country itself. US imperialism is slaughtering and starving Yemenis as part of its preparations for a new and far more dangerous war against Iran.

The imminent prospect of such a catastrophic conflict, which is being brought ever closer with Washington’s imposition of anti-Iranian sanctions tantamount to war, as well as its encouragement of Israel’s repeated air strikes against Iranian forces inside Syria, must be recognized by workers in the United States, the Middle East and internationally.

The threat of a region-wide and even global war poses as the most urgent political task of the day the building of a mass antiwar movement based on the working class and directed against the capitalist system.

Bill Van Auken

To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>