

~ THE TOP FIVE LIES ABOUT THIS WAR ~

How many people do you know who claim to be skeptical, who pride themselves on their distrust for authority, who like to pretend that they're wise to the ways of the world -- and then, every time there's a war, they swallow the lies of the government with all the gullibility of a three-year-old child in the lap of a department store Santa Claus? *Don't fall into that trap yourself!* Learn to identify and refute official misinformation when you see it. Let's count down some of the common misconceptions about this war:

Lie #5: "We're not at war with the Afghan people -- look, we're bringing them food!"

Reality: Afghanistan is in the midst of a severe drought which threatens literally millions of people with starvation. Even before the threat of US bombing, the World Food Program (WFP) said that nearly 6 million people were in need of immediate food assistance. When the threat of war caused massive movements of refugees and internally displaced people, the WFP raised that number to 7.5 million. UN agencies were keeping huge numbers of people alive, but the war danger -- as well as the US demand that Pakistan seal its border with Afghanistan -- caused the WFP to suspend deliveries of wheat flour to the country. We have no idea how many people have already died as a result. Meanwhile, the US dropped 37,000 individually-wrapped packages of food from the sky. You do the math. That's enough to feed about 37,000 people for one day, in a country where seven and a half million are in danger of starvation. Additionally, the spokesman for an international charity active in Afghanistan told the London Independent that "Random food drops are the worst possible way of delivering food aid. They cause more problems than they solve." Not the least of which is the fact that Afghanistan has the highest number of unexploded land mines in the world. There are already 10 or 15 mine incidents every day, and with people scrambling into mine-ridden areas to pick up random packages of food dropped from US planes, that number is only going to go up.

Lie #4: "Oil? Who said anything about oil?"

Reality: The Caspian Sea region has potentially the world's largest oil reserves, likely making Central Asia the next Middle East. The problem is piping it out. Afghanistan occupies a strategic position between the Caspian and the markets of the Indian subcontinent and east Asia. It's prime territory for building pipelines, which is why the oil company Unocal -- as well as the US government -- welcomed the Taliban's rise to power in 1996 as a promising source of "stability." That turned out to be a pipe dream (so to speak), but people like our Commander-in-Chief and the oil men around him have never given up on the tremendous profit possibilities that Central Asia offers. And if you don't think such considerations are crossing their minds at this time of crisis, may we suggest a refresher course in *The Facts of Life*?

Lie #3: "The US is trying to liberate the people of Afghanistan from Taliban tyranny."

Reality: The US, Russia, and Iran have been aiding a rough coalition of armed groups called the Northern Alliance. The Northern Alliance's fighters are drawn mainly from ethnic minority groups in Afghanistan who have been persecuted by the Taliban. But their record is also a bloody one. Groups like

the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), which have been fighting against fundamentalism and for democracy in Afghanistan for years, have publicly stated that the fundamentalist gangsters of the Northern Alliance are not an acceptable alternative to the fundamentalist gangsters of the Taliban. No wonder: Human Rights Watch implicates the Northern Alliance in "indiscriminate aerial bombardment and shelling, direct attacks on civilians, summary executions, rape, persecution on the basis of religion or ethnicity, the recruitment and use of children as soldiers, and the use of antipersonnel landmines." By now everyone knows that Osama bin Laden was among the mujahidin recruited by the CIA to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan. Meet the next generation.

Lie #2: "America is coming together."

Reality: Tens of thousands of people have been laid off in the airline industry alone. The government quickly responded to the airline industry crisis with a multi-billion-dollar bailout package for the companies in order to keep afloat the profits of shareholders and the salaries of CEOs, but when it came to aiding the thousands of workers laid off, Congressman Dick Armey said that that would be contrary to "the American spirit." Maybe it is. Maybe it's the "American spirit" to make common working people pay for a crisis and to bear the burdens of an expensive war. But it certainly doesn't have anything to do with "togetherness."

And the biggest lie of them all . . .

Lie #1: "It's possible to win a 'war against terrorism.'"

Reality: Terrorism is a tactic, not a political or social force in and of itself. Anyone can use it, and the idea that you can wage a "war" against it is as dishonest as the idea behind the "War on Drugs." The use of force as a political weapon, indiscriminate aerial bombardment, and the arming of gangsterish groups of religious fanatics all count as "terrorism" by any reasonable definition of the word, and the United States has long employed all of them -- and more. This war is really about sordid material interests and power (see especially Lies numbers 2 and 4, above), and in defense of these interests the US is prepared to shift the label "terrorist" as it sees fit, to apply to all manner of dissident political movements and not just marginal bands of fanatics like bin Laden's al-Qa'ida. Conversely, it's willing to call its own terrorists "freedom fighters" (see Lie number 3 above). Maybe some of them will get transformed into "terrorists" again in a few years. It's a sick game and a charade, and the government is manipulating the very real grief and anger of the people of the United States after the September 11 atrocities to get us all to fall for it gain. Don't believe them for a second.