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Australia: Inconsistency, When the Truth is Told

By: Arnaldo Musa / Special for CubaSi

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Twice, Canberra authorities have intervened with the president of the United States, Joe Biden, to desist from extraditing the Australian journalist, Julián Assange, imprisoned in Great Britain, in order to try him and virtually sentenced him to life imprisonment for having made known the crimes committed by the North American armed forces during their wars of aggression, mainly in Iraq and Afghanistan.

But when a former Australian lawyer revealed the crimes of Australian troops in the service of the United States in Afghanistan, the authorities of the island-continent threatened to sentence him to life in prison, if he did not accept a six-year sentence, for telling the truth.

This information was made known by Microsoft News as something that was treated “benignly” by the so-called justice towards David McBride, 60, who was convicted of three charges, including theft and sharing classified documentation with the press.

Human rights activists rightly said they preferred to condemn McBride rather than war criminals, reflecting the lack of protection for truth-tellers in Australia.

McBride, according to the AP, addressed his supporters while walking his dog outside the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory before hearing the sentence:

“I’ve never been so proud to be Australian as I am today. “I may have broken some laws, but I have not broken my oath to the Australian people and the soldiers who keep us safe.”

This question about the crimes committed by Australian troops who take part in each of the aggressions undertaken by the United States is nothing new.

Many of us remember that since the aggression against Korea, Australian soldiers, specifically those who were recruited from the aboriginal population, decapitated their prisoners, reduced the heads and displayed them on

pikes as trophies, which in many cases they even sold.

In the 20-year war against Afghanistan, before withdrawing in defeat, the United States mainly counted on the participation of the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia, a country that was the protagonist of crimes that were widely reported by the publication Dissident Voice.

## **SAVAGERY**

The Inspector General's investigation into the Australian Defense Forces in Afghanistan (ADF), published in late 2020, serves as a barometer of the level of savagery that has permeated imperialist countries in their endless reign of terror against the global South.

The document is the result of a four-year investigation, initiated by the military in 2016 and directed by retired Major General Paul Berretín. His work spans from 2005 to 2016.

With the report, 39 homicides have been confirmed in 23 separate incidents and 25 soldiers - some of whom continue to serve in the ADF - have been implicated following the statements of 350 witnesses. 36 matters affecting 19 people have been referred to the Federal Police. The Second Squadron of the Special Air Services Regiment (SASR) was disbanded and some soldiers were stripped of medals and decorations received since 2006.

The investigation details several barbaric protocols followed by the ADF in Afghanistan. The initiation rite for rookie soldiers known as 'baptism of blood' is mentioned, that is, killing their first victim by shooting a prisoner.

"This is carried out once the target's military compound has been controlled and the victims have been identified as 'wanted persons'." 'Evidence' – transmitters or weapons – are then placed on the body. Subsequently, a 'cover article' is written "in order to report on operations to divert an investigation." Also listed are incidents in which soldiers "inflicted intense pain" on Afghan detainees and "caused them injuries," indicating the use of torture.

In 2015, the military's top command tasked Dr. Samantha Crompvoets with providing a "snapshot" of ADF operations and investigating allegations of war crimes. According to Berretín's report, Crompvoets "said she was under the impression that there were a 'large number of illegal killings' that had been 'engineered for the end'," meaning Afghans were first killed and subsequently placed on the Joint Prioritized Effects List.

The JPEL for its acronym, that is, List of the Coalition Forces in Afghanistan of Prioritized Effects to Kill or Capture, on the basis that they were allegedly fighters and high-level officers of the Taliban or Al-Qaeda.

In one case, Crompvoets observes SASR soldiers driving down a road and seeing two 14-year-old boys. The soldiers quickly concluded that they had encountered Taliban sympathizers. The children were detained and captured. They cut their throats. They put their bodies in body bags and threw them into a river. These acts were not rare; Special Forces soldiers committed these types of murders as a means of "being known." For example, in 2012, an elderly Afghan man, Haga Sadr, was beaten to death by a SARS soldier during a raid on his village, Sarkhoum.

Apart from the investigation, other sources have also revealed the absolutely abhorrent homicidal contumacy of SARS. An image published by The Guardian on December 1, 2020, showed a SARS soldier drinking beer on the prosthetic leg of a dead Afghan. The photo was taken at the "Flat Ladis Armas", an unofficial bar established by SARS at its base in Tarín Kit, the capital of Uruzgan province.

In another photo, the prosthesis is tied to a soldier's backpack, and in a third, two soldiers pose with it. The prosthetic leg was reportedly taken from a "suspected Taliban fighter" after he was killed during a SARS assault in April 2009 in Uruzgan.

## **AND THE MEDIA?**

In typically docile fashion, the neoliberal media has held firmly to the ruling class's imperialist viewpoint and normalized the heinous war crimes as an anomaly in an otherwise honorable history of upright behavior by Australian troops in the illegal occupation of a Central Asian country.

These outrages events were part of a larger war crime: the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan since 2001 led

by the United States.

The war saturated the lives of ordinary Afghans with endless violence and unbearable sadness. After 20 years of imperialist military operations, the massacres continued until the withdrawal of the occupiers, whose leaders encouraged terrorist groups to continue making life impossible for a people that they could never subdue and before whom they had to retreat.

**Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff**

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