

Putin's Alleged "Kill Lists": Evil, but Not Unusual

In the fog of war, it's difficult to tell which claims are true and which aren't. What are Vladimir Putin's forces up to in Ukraine? Apart from some high points (real or media-manufactured), it's often hard to tell.

Even when we think that the US government's claims are true, they're difficult to credit as uniquely damning, because they almost always refer to behaviors the US government has no problem with when it's the one engaging in them.

"[W]e have credible information," Bathsheba Nell Crocker, US Representative to the Office of the United Nations, wrote in a letter to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet in February, "that indicates Russian forces are creating lists of identified Ukrainians to be killed or sent to camps following a military occupation."

That sounds pretty bad. In fact, if true, it IS pretty bad. It's also something the US military and intelligence establishments have done for decades ... so much so that these days it doesn't even really try to hide it.

As the Future of Freedom Foundation's Jacob Hornberger points out, the CIA made use of "kill lists" at least as early as 1954 in Guatemala. They were secretive about it — they won't even reveal the names on those lists to this day — but there's little doubt such "kill lists" were provided by the CIA to paramilitary death squads throughout Central America at least into the 1980s.

Since 9/11, the US government hasn't even bothered to keep its "kill lists" especially secret. They don't always share the names, but "targeted killings" are an openly admitted element of US warfare, even if US Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) gets slammed for saying the quiet part a little too loudly ("Is there a Brutus in Russia? Is there a more successful Colonel Stauffenberg in the Russian military? The only way this ends is for somebody in Russia to take this guy out").

In 2003, the US Defense Intelligence Agency even had playing cards printed and distributed to openly and proudly publicize its Iraq "kill list." Saddam Hussein (a head of state and thus as a matter of policy supposedly not subject to assassination like mere mortals) was the ace of spades. As of today, 48 of the 52 people on the "kill list" have been killed or captured.

The question isn't whether Vladimir Putin should be ordering the murder or capture of Volodymyr Zelenskyy and other uses of "kill lists" to "de-Nazify" of Ukraine. Clearly he shouldn't.

But from “kill lists” to cluster munitions and thermobaric bombs to outright invasions of other countries, the US regime should start meeting the same standards it’s demanding Vladimir Putin’s regime be held to. That seems like a low bar and easily gotten over.