

World Focus – October 8, 2017

Matthew Hoh

Friends, as members of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, we say congratulations to our friends and colleagues around the world who are part of an international campaign to abolish nuclear weapons, ICANN. The Nobel Committee awarded ICANN the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize for its work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, and for its groundbreaking efforts to achieve a treaty based on the prohibition of such weapons. ICANN is made up of some 400 groups in more than 100 countries. The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation has been an ICANN member since the beginning decades ago. This year we're proud to work with ICANN and many dedicated non-nuclear countries to bring into existence the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Nobel Peace Prize recognizes many decades of campaigning by activists around the world. We still have a lot of work to do to achieve a nuclear weapons-free world, and hope that this prestigious honor will encourage all of us to work even harder alongside others with this goal. So, today, we can take a moment to celebrate this prize, which is directed against mass-insanity and suicide which we pay for with our taxes. Rather than paying for medical care, we pay for suicide, biocide, ending the life on the planet of the human race and a lot of other life as well. It's time for us to end this charade.

Today I'm very fortunate to have a third visit from Matthew Hoh because he has so very much to say. We're proud of the great awakening that's taking place internationally. Matthew Hoh is a Senior Fellow at the Center for International Policy and is the former Director of the Afghanistan Study Group, a network of foreign and public policy experts and professionals advocating for a change in US strategy in Afghanistan. A former State Department official, Matthew resigned in protest from his post in Afghanistan over US strategic policy and goals in Afghanistan in September 2009. Prior to his assignment in Afghanistan, Matthew served in Iraq; first in 2004-5 in Salah ad Din Province with a State Department reconstruction and governance team and then in 2006-7 in Anbar Province as a Marine Corps company commander. When not deployed, Matthew worked on Afghanistan and Iraq policy and operations issues at the Pentagon and State Department from 2002-8. Matthew's writings have appeared in the Atlanta Journal Constitution, Defense News, the Guardian, the Huffington Post, USA Today, the Wall Street Journal and the Washington Post. The Council on Foreign Relations has cited Matthew's resignation letter from his post in Afghanistan as an Essential Document. In 2010, Matthew was named the

Ridenhour Prize Recipient for Truth Telling. Matthew is a member of the Board of Directors for Council for a Livable World and is an Advisory Board Member for Expose Facts ([exposefacts.org](http://exposefacts.org)). He writes on issues of war, peace and post-traumatic stress disorder recovery at [matthewhoh.com](http://matthewhoh.com). Welcome to Word Focus, Matthew Hoh.

**Matthew:** Hi Blase, thank you for having me on again.

**Blase:** There's just so much happening at this time. We go over and we see the lives of all these wonderful 59 people on the TV every day and think about how they were mercilessly murdered and we think each one of them had so much of a life in front of them, and we can't help but empathize with this horror that's going on because our relationship to guns and the distribution of guns like popcorn and the power of lobbies like the National Rifle Association. My God, cars are a deadly instrument that kill about 30,000 people every year in the United States. You have to have a license to drive a car. I do believe that every weapon should be licensed, as automobiles are licensed. We can't help but be thinking about these people. We don't want it to happen again, but it happens every month in our country. More than once a month. Far more than that. Then my problem, really, Matt, has been that if we look at this and then we also compare and contrast with the war that started in 1990 in Baghdad and has really not ended for 27 going on 28 years - you think about what one person can do with killing 59 people so rapidly, and here we have tens of thousands of people over there using the same kind of weapon, 10s of thousands times the number of shooters and then add to that bombing from the air, and you can begin to see what perpetual war is doing. I kept hearing the voice of Brian Wilson coming through all of this, saying "we are not worth more, they are not worth less." Where did we ever get the idea that someone in the US has more of a right to live than someone else anywhere in the world? This is bothering me today, and I wonder how you might reflect on that.

**Matthew:** Oh, I am in a similar place. It's not hyperbole to suggest that the people in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc, they experience a Las Vegas every day, and often 2 or 3 or 5 Las Vegas events every day. I think it's important to always remember these wars - our interventions, our involvement in wars - and so much traces back to Vietnam. It's important that Ken Burns documentary of Vietnam is on right now, because Vietnam is being discussed. But good conversation is being lost because the focus seems to be whether or not the Vietnam War could have been won or these others types of abstract and dubious conversations. During Vietnam, in that period of time, the United States saw its murder and

manslaughter rate double. There is a connection between what we do abroad and what we do here at home. In doing research on this, you see that it is not just endemic to our generation. It has occurred throughout human history. There's a reason why when Caesar crosses the Rubicon, before bringing his army back (a note on crossing the Rubicon - Julius Caesar and his army were not allowed to cross the Rubicon River; the expression "crossing the Rubicon" has meant that you're taking a step that you can't turn away from, you're crossing a sacred boundary, so to speak) into Rome - well, there are many ways to look at it, and one of them is that these were men of violence, and they did not want that in Rome. After our Civil War, we know about the prison population that exploded in the south as slavery turned into mass incarceration. However, the prison population after the Civil War also exploded in the north, and the estimates are that two thirds of the prisoners in prisons outside of the south after the Civil War were civil war veterans. There are newspaper reports talking about the scourge of violence from the men who returned home. Once you take violence into yourself, it affects you and that is what you become. Mother Jones had a really great graphic this week, and what they've done is they've plotted on a graph and the two axes on the graph are gun ownership and level of violence by guns, and you see that the correlation between owning guns and being in a state where there are high levels of gun ownership and how many gun deaths there are is exact. States with tighter gun controls and less gun ownership have much less gun violence. If you own a gun, you are much more likely to be involved in a gun-related death. It doesn't make you more safe; it puts your life at greater risk. And that is because you're embracing this culture of violence, and that's who you're becoming. As much as I try to be a man of peace, or whatever you want to call it, I still have the experience of killing in me, and I was trained to kill and took part in a mass campaign of killing and murder in Iraq and Afghanistan, and it is something that will never leave me. I was greatly angered the other day, and I was taken aback at how that anger turned in my head into the desire for violence, to enact violence against somebody. And that's after years of therapy - but it still exists in me.

This is a conversation that we have to have - how a nation that is a violence-based solution nation both abroad, where we are killing scores of people every day, or other nations where our clients and allies are killing scores of people on our behalf, over however many decades - that's a lot of killing. And let's not forget that for many decades the wars overseas involved armies of poor people fighting with American made weapons. And then here, domestically, our rates of violence are so much higher than our peers overseas in Europe or Japan, say. What we do abroad is what we do here at home, and we are a violence-based solution country, which is why we end up with Las Vegas and mass killings every month,

or another metric, what the FBI and Department of Justice use, a mass shooting is four people shot. That's their standard, and that happens every single day in the US. You cannot separate our history, and what we're doing to others abroad, from what we are doing to each other here at home.

**Blase:** I'm glad you mention Vietnam, because we're seeing a repeat of every word we heard during Vietnam, and we have the long scientific statement that to keep repeating an experiment over and over and over again and expecting different results, is a clear sign of insanity. We hear the same thing. Generals asking for more troops in Afghanistan where we are just another warlord. They've had warlords there for a long time. We keep repeating and repeating. Of course, we stopped doing the body counting - very interesting - way back when General Frank said, "We don't do body counts." Maybe it's because they're ashamed, as they finally were in Vietnam, when the numbers got to one million and then two million and then three million. And then there was Laos, hit by more bombs than any other place in the world has ever been hit by. The work of Fred Branfman and others clarified what happened in Laos, and it is literally unbelievable. We destroyed that little country with endless bombing. People living in caves to hide, dying by the hundreds of thousands. So this has become an addiction that is terribly serious. And alternative media like KPFK is playing a crucial role by revealing this addiction, which of course is the first step toward dealing with the problem.

**Matthew:** Yes, and your counterparts in corporate media, whether radio or TV, they rely on advertising; that's how they pay their bills. So people like me, people like you and KPFK, we exist in the real world, and have bills to pay. Electricity. Rent. And I used to be in the corporate media all the time a few years ago. On MSNBC, almost every week, sometimes twice a week. Well, MSNBC no longer has people like me on their programs. People at the network know this, they've seen the departure of progressive hosts, you know, people who were willing to speak out against things that the corporation that own NBC was not in favor of. Cenk Uygur, Dylan Ratigan, Ed Schultz, were all either fired or - in Dylan Ratigan's case - left MSNBC. Dylan's a friend of mine. He turned down over a million dollars a year because he didn't want to work for that network any longer because he knew that he would no longer be permitted to speak the truths that he knew about American politics, corporations, war, etc. So the only place for so many of us who are working on these issues is on the independent radio stations or public stations. This is the only place where you can get on and are able to speak about the research and the work that you're doing to help illuminate and inform and educate others. It's so important that places like KPFK receive this kind of support.

**Blase:** You know, when you go to any elementary or high school and mention the Founding Fathers, the children will practically all say, yes, but they were slave-owners, and they didn't put anything in the constitution to stop slavery. Well, what are our grandchildren going to say when we are spoken of? Many will say, yeah, they were nice people but they didn't stop perpetual war, they didn't stop the constant killing, they felt they could get away with killing people of color - so we're going to be soundly criticized if our children and great-grandchildren get a good education and know what happened during this period. What actually happened, not triumphalism. This amazing purveyor of violence that Dr. King spoke of, calling us the greatest purveyors of violence on earth today. This was back in 67, and it's gotten worse. We have our work cut out for us.

We're very proud of the psychiatrists who came out and said they have a duty to report anyone who is a danger to themselves or others. They were talking about the president! We have a duty to report the danger. And then the lawyers got into it through the great work of Marjorie Cohn, and how she made it clear that Donald Trump was violating the UN Charter when he threatened to "totally destroy" North Korea. It indicates an intent to commit genocide, crimes against humanity, the war crime of collective punishment, in violation of international law. "By threatening to attack North Korea, Trump is endangering the lives of countless people. In the past, he has indicated his willingness to use nuclear weapons and Kim Jong-un has threatened to retaliate. The rapidly escalating rhetoric and provocative maneuvers on both sides has taken us to the brink of war." Now that's Marjorie Cohn, who heads up the Lawyer's Guild. She's a professor of law. She's just bringing out that our president is committing international crimes standing there at the UN - and this is not acceptable. We have the psychological community saying they have a duty to report people who are a danger. We have the legal community calling the president out for obvious crimes. I think we just should get on with going through the processes of removing someone from office who is in this state; we have the 25th Amendment, and the ability also for impeachment, there are avenues, and law enforcement can arrest someone for probable cause they they have committed a crime. All of this, as we sit right now, trying to live in a country that is out of control and where the press doesn't tell us about...Raqqqa or Mosel...when you hear those names, what do you think of, Matthew?

**Matthew:** I think of slaughter. I think of thousands and thousands of people we will never know about who have been killed by our bombs, and who are lying smothered under concrete buildings. People have not seen the photos of Mosul after the Iraqi army took Mosul a couple of months ago. Please look

it up. It is a devastated city. The estimates are at least 40,000 dead, but most people who were involved in this, including people who do this kind of work for a living in terms of casualty estimation will say that, look, your initial estimate is usually half of what it ends up being. So potentially 80,000 lying dead under the rubble of Mosul. Raqqa in Syria is just being hit by wave upon wave of American and western bombers every day. Over ten hospitals have either been destroyed or are in the process of being destroyed by our bombs. We will never know how many people are actually dead, and there is almost no discussion about this. If you were to go and do a search of terms on MSNBC or CNN for the last few months, the word Raqqa and Mosul will come up, but there will be no discussion of what is actually happening there. You'll just be told that's where the Islamic State is, they are bad, they are evil, and now we start to get - and this ties into your books, Blase - how did we get to this religiosity that inspires and authorizes and then validates our killing?

**Blase:** You know, years ago, the Crusaders destroyed Mosul. And then a few years after that, they moved up to Aleppo, which they wanted to make a Christian Crusader city, and Saladin came along and destroyed the Christian city of Aleppo! I mean this is a millennium of religiosity to it in the so-called Crusades, which had nothing to do with true spirituality. It was an imperial attack in the name of religion on very innocent people, killing men, women and children, non-combatants, and that's a thousand years ago! Mosul was destroyed. Now the Great Crusaders are back again and it's a disaster today. To say nothing of the situation in Yemen, which is the world's worst humanitarian catastrophe that we've experienced. This Saudi led war in Yemen, killing thousands, forcing millions to flee their homes, causing the worst cholera outbreak in the world and leaving 7 million people at risk of starvation. These are American-made bombs dropped by American-made planes and refueled by American military forces. We have helped the Saudis destroy crops, cut off access to ports, wreak havoc on the people of Yemen. We have to shut it down.

So this is the situation we find ourselves in. Seldom mentioned in the news. Pundits go back and forth, often discussing totally irrelevant things, but avoiding the bombing that's going on, and the tremendous increase in bombing that arrived with Trump, does anybody know about that? Does anybody talk about that? We're just going down a path to hell here, and I hope we can repent before we destroy ourselves. Our students are trying to get an education and wind up with all the debts. Going to college used to be free. The University of California, for example. They were free when I was going to school. Maybe 50 dollars for a student fee and that was it. That's all gone. You're put into debtors' prison practically, and

you have get some lousy job to repay what you owe because of the money's that's being spend to kill children in Yemen. And we're sitting here in the midst of it.

People are doing many positive things to change this situation. What is being done at Wake Forest, Matthew?

**Matthew:** North Carolina, where I live, is home to the Reverend William Barber and the Moral Mondays Movement. We have had in North Carolina, in terms of civil resistance and action, of people understanding that nothing is going to change unless we make it change, and I think it's very important that people realize we cannot depend on our leaders, whether democrat or republican, civilian or military or police, they are, as you say Blase, wedded to the system. I think it is so instructive for everyone to go and look at again - the other day when Trump said "this is the calm before the storm," and then the next day reiterated it and gave a wink and a grin, he's joking about what he said at the United Nations when he threatened to commit genocide against the Korean people, about wiping a nation off the map of the world. And the decertification of Iran and the nuclear agreement that may be coming just because he wants to do it. What would that lead to? Let alone all the wars already raging. For him to joke about this...

**Blase:** Yes, joking about it at the US, in the media, tweeting. You don't joke about genocide. He should be restrained, as the psychologists suggest.

We're so glad to have you on. So many people who have served realized the futility of the war system. It's defunct.

**Matthew:** Yes, and it's generally people who directly experienced war. Looking at President Trump, when he made those comments about war last week and joking about starting a new war with all his senior military people, all of those senior generals, and nobody said anything, not one of them has said anything since about President Trump joking about starting a new war. So if people think that change is going to come from the top, that our military or political leaders are gonna do the right thing - it's just not going to happen. That's why KPFK is so important, because if we are going to change we need media resources, ways to speak and educate and organize. Trump goes to Saudi Arabia and sells them 300 billion dollars' worth of weapons, and then, on that same day, his advisors in the White House say we

are going to cut Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, by 700 billion dollars. You have to understand that that is not a coincidence; these things are all connected. We have to work and organize as a people, because those on top - again, look at those military leaders who were all smiling and grinning when Trump joked about starting another war - nothing is going to change unless we make it change.

**Blase:** I'm afraid we're out of time, Matthew. Thank you so much for being with us today on World Focus.

**Matthew:** Thank you, Blase.



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