

# General William T. Sherman--Yankee War Criminal

by Tex in Tex February 02, 2008

United States nineteenth century general most well-known for his leadership of the Federal "Western" army in 1864-1865 during the American Civil War. He also fought against Indians in the American West after the war.

General Sherman is the originator of the modern concept of "total war." In moving through Georgia and then into the Carolinas, **Sherman devised a strategy of deliberately targeting civilians for attack. He also targeted the homes and personal property of the**



**civilians of the South who posed no military threat to Union forces.** Such targeting of civilians for attack had been considered immoral at the time. The goal of such a strategy was purely utilitarian. It did not matter who morally deserved attack on this view, but instead the only question became the total number of lives saved versus lives lost as well as aggregate gains and losses in supplies and property.

During the siege of Atlanta in the summer of 1864, Sherman decided to order the bombardment of distinctly civilian areas of Atlanta with the express purpose of terrorizing the civilian population into pressuring the Confederate military and political leadership to surrender. **Civilians, including slaves, were killed as intended by General Sherman and his**

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**subordinates.** Confederate General John Bell Hood protested the targeted killings of non-combatants as uncivilized and inhuman. Sherman ignored the appeals by Hood to target only Confederate military positions and personnel. His infamous comment in response to such appeals was "War is Hell."

After the fall of Atlanta to Federal forces in early September 1864, the city was occupied for two months. General Sherman ordered the civilian population evacuated by force. After the evacuation of the city by civilians, General Sherman ordered the city to be burned to the ground. **The civilians who were forced to leave Atlanta had to live in the woods for months with no provisions or shelter.** He then proceeded through Georgia on his way to Savannah burning and destroying towns, farms, and plantations. His men looted the private property and destroyed civilians' homes leaving them destitute and without provision. After the capture of Savannah, which he spared, he continued into South Carolina where his tactics of "total war" accelerated in their savage ruthlessness culminating in the Federal army burning Columbia, South Carolina to the ground.

Such vicious tactics established the mind-set and military precedent for using civilians as pawns in a military conflict. **Such tactics had previously been deemed morally unacceptable. The deliberate targeting of civilians for attack was taken up in World War II ending in the deaths of millions.** The bombing of European cities by both sides of the war and Japanese cities by the U.S. as well as attacks on civilians in China, the Philippines, and Korea by Japan were consistent with and encouraged by Sherman's precedent. The logic of saving lives in the long-run by these tactics seems to have been refuted by history.

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Modern terrorism also follows the same basic strategy of targeting helpless non-combatants for attack in order to terrorize the remaining citizens into capitulation.

The contemporary American practice of only targeting military personnel for deliberate attack reverses the policy of the American government instituted by General Sherman in Atlanta in 1864. **The policy of killing sufficient numbers of civilians and destroying their homes to force surrender has been recognized as the mark of only the most barbarous kind of terrorist, such as those who perpetrated the September 11 attacks.**

General William T. Sherman meeting Yasser Arafat in Hell: "Good job killing those innocent people...You got what you wanted from the killings...I did the same in Atlanta in 1864."