

# Afghan Civilians killed by U.S/NATO Actions since 2006

The Matrix of Death: (Im)Precision of U.S Bombing and the (Under)Valuation of an Afghan Life

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

In-depth Report: [AFGHANISTAN](#)

Only one dollar is officially spent in “reconstruction” for every ten dollars spent on achieving U.S. geo-political aims.

US/NATO bombs kill about ten times more Afghan civilians with a ton of our “precision” bombs than we killed Serbs in 1999. More than 80% of Afghan civilian deaths today caused by the US/NATO are due to close air support attacks. They (Afghans) are only worth one-tenth of an Alaskan sea otter rather than forty camels. We spend ten dollars on the military in Afghanistan to pursue our geo-strategic aims and less than \$1 on reconstructing the everyday lives of Afghans devastated by thirty years of war.

## Executive summary

The overarching theme of this dossier is to carefully document the very low value put on the lives of common Afghans by U.S. military and political elites (along with their many handmaidens in the corporate media). Highlights include:

1. Exposing three common subterfuges used to rationalize the killing of Afghan civilians;
2. Pointing out that Afghan civilians killed by U.S/NATO forces’ direct action since January 1, 2006 now outnumber those who perished in the original U.S. bombing and invasion during the first three months (2001) of the U.S. Afghan war. The overall human toll is far greater than just those killed by direct U.S/NATO actions as it includes all those who died later from injuries, the internally displaced who died in camps, etc.;
3. Documenting that close air support (CAS) bombing is more deadly to Afghan civilians than was the strategic bombing of Laos and Cambodia;
4. Revealing that CAS air strikes now account for about 80% of all Afghan civilians who perish at the hands of the U.S. and NATO;
5. Emphasizing that by relying upon aerial close air support (CAS) attacks, US/NATO forces spare their pilots and ground troops but kill lots of innocent Afghan civilians. Air strikes are 4-10 times as deadly for Afghan civilians as are ground attacks.
6. Revealing that Human Rights Watch “counts” at best only 50% of the Afghan civilians killed by U.S/NATO actions, whereas the figure for the Associated Press is a mere 33%; moreover neither present verifiable/reproducible disaggregated

data thereby violating a basic tenet of social science;

7. Presenting a unique analysis of compensation/condolence payments made by the United States in eight countries. The United States spent ten times more on saving an Alaskan sea otter after the Exxon Valdez oil spill than in condolence payments to Afghan families for a family member killed by U.S. occupation forces.

These seven points form part of an interconnected whole - the undervaluation of Afghan lives - supported by many other indicators, e.g. only one dollar is officially spent in "reconstruction" for every ten dollars spent on achieving U.S. geo-political aims.



A U.S. Air Force B1-B Lancer bomber after refueling over Afghanistan (<http://www.af.mil/photos/index.asp?galleryID=13>).



The real face of the U.S.'s Afghan air war: children burnt by U.S. bombs at Lashkargah's Emergency hospital in October 2006 (from Maso Notarianni at <http://www.rawa.org/temp/runews/rawanews.php?id=18>). My original dossier on civilian victims of U.S. aerial bombing was released on December 10, 2001, see [http://www.cursor.org/stories/civilian\\_deaths.htm](http://www.cursor.org/stories/civilian_deaths.htm)

[Photo Gallery of US victims in Afghanistan](#)  
[The Afghan Victim Memorial Project by Prof. Marc](#)

Sor Obama has staked out a political position by claiming that he will increase U.S. troop strength in Afghanistan by at least one-third, will permit U.S./NATO forces to engage in hot pursuit into Pakistan's tribal areas and increase U.S. bombing and Special Operations Forces raids into Pakistan. Caesar-like he proclaims that Afghanistan is a "war on terror" we must and can win. He appears to be completely ignorant that Pashtun nationalism (Taliban) and Al Qaeda jihad are two very different things. (1) In effect, Obama proposes to continue and escalate military policies of the Bush administration if he can draw down U.S. occupation forces in Iraq. I have argued that these actions are doomed to fail on their own terms, will cement a deadly alliance between Taliban and radical Islamists, and will further destabilize a nuclear Pakistan. (2) And whom did Mr. Obama visit on his very first day in Afghanistan in July 2008? He met none other than Gul Agha Sherzai, favorite of George Bush's General Dan 'Bomber' McNeill and notorious ex-governor/warlord of Kandahar infamous for his cruelty, trafficking in drugs, corruption, and pederasty with young boys. (3) On the following day, he spent time with U.S. occupation forces and the "mayor of Kabul" who was in his Kabul fortress (and not off mourning somewhere or on an international junket raising monies). Mr. Obama fails to admit that recent U.S./NATO aerial bombing has been extremely deadly to Afghan civilians, which when combined with the negligible value attached to an Afghan life reveals that U.S. politicians and the military hold little interest in Afghanistan proper other than in a geo-political sense. (4) No matter that in Kabul even foreigners speak about being "inside a living hell." (5) Veteran reporter Kathy Gannon notes that Afghans are fed up with the U.S. and Karzai. (6) U.S. priorities are further revealed by the more than ten-to-one ratio of military to reconstruction aid since 2002. The Senlis Council in its report contrasted military spending vs. development spending in Afghanistan during 2002-2006 (Figure 1). Another source, a report released by ACBAR, an alliance of international aid agencies working in Afghanistan, echoes,

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While the U.S. military is currently spending \$100 million a day in Afghanistan, aid spent by all donors since 2001 is on average less than a tenth of that – just \$7 million a day. (11)

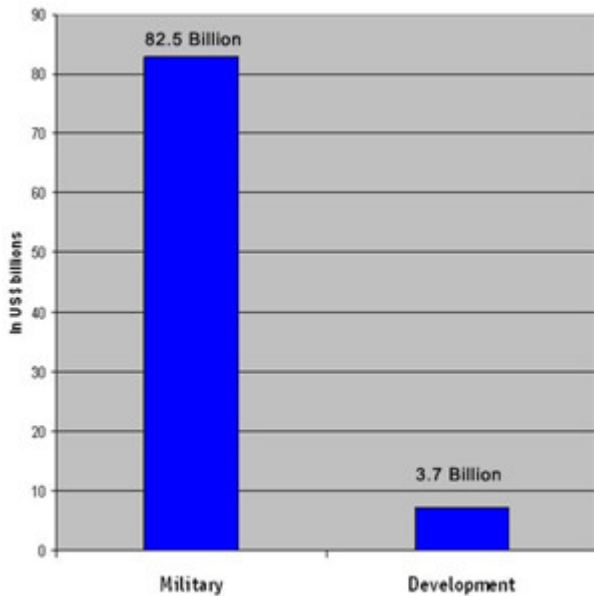


Figure 1. Military vs. Development Aid

(Source:

[http://www.senliscouncil.net/modules/publications/Afghanistan\\_Five\\_Years\\_Later/chapter\\_05](http://www.senliscouncil.net/modules/publications/Afghanistan_Five_Years_Later/chapter_05)  
)

In other words, what actually takes place in the realms of the economic and the social on-the-ground in Afghanistan is at best of marginal concern; furthermore many point to the ineffectiveness of aid. (12) I shall argue herein such marginal stress upon improving the everyday life of common Afghans is paralleled by a callous disregard for Afghan civilians in the carrying out of military operations (especially close air support strikes) and a paltry compensation (when offered at all) for innocent Afghans killed by U.S or NATO actions.

### **The Subterfuges Employed by the U.S/NATO to Excuse Killing Innocent Afghan Civilians**

When we assemble the different pieces of the media jigsaw puzzle, clear patterns emerge. Western victims are presented as real, important people with names, families, hopes and dreams. Iraqi and Afghan victims of British and American violence are anonymous, nameless. They are depicted as distant shadowy figures without personalities, feelings or families. The result is that Westerners are consistently humanized, **while non-Westerners are portrayed as lesser versions of humanity** (from “Militants and Mistakes,” Media Lens (July 22, 2008)). While Afghans killed by US/NATO forces are completely invisible as human beings in the U.S. mainstream media, contrast the efforts undertaken by the same media to give humanity to U.S. troops killed in Afghanistan, as for example in the Washington Post at <http://projects.washingtonpost.com/fallen/>

A major aim of this report is to provide real figures on Afghan civilians killed by U.S/NATO actions since 2006, thereby undermining the common claim that such numbers cannot be gotten. We often hear glib statement about the “fog of war” or “war is hell” or “we don’t do body counts.” My numbers are admittedly under-estimates for reasons discussed herein (an incomplete universe of recorded deaths, a propensity of the Pentagon and its Afghan client to label as militants what were civilians, the injured who later die from wounds, censorship

by omission, etc). Not counting or estimating plays into the hands of those who market the U.S. war in Afghanistan as a “clean” war, a “precision” war and the like. The latter is routinely trotted out by the apologists of aerial bombing; “It’s sort of the immaculate conception to warfare,” was how Professor of Strategy, Col. (ret. U.S Marine) Mackubin Owens at the U.S. Naval War College (Newport, R.I.) described the U.S military campaign in Afghanistan in November 2001.

The acknowledging and counting of civilian deaths in modern wars has long been a highly politicized matter. One need only recall that it took close to sixty years for the civilian carnage caused in Germany by Allied bombing (1940-1945) to be openly written about. (13) It took over fifty years for the slaughter of innocent Korean civilians in the Korean War by U.S. warplanes to make the pages of mainstream American media. (14) More recently, an acrimonious debate has raged over the scale of Iraqi civilian deaths since the U.S. invasion of March 2003, for example pitting Iraq Body Count against the believers of estimates reported in the Lancet studies (as at the Media Lens website). (15)

The liberal British scholar of peace studies, Paul Rogers, wrote in a recent article about Afghanistan

...the impulses of sympathy with these radical forces (Taliban militias, Al Qaeda forces) are fuelled by the detailed reporting by al-Jazeera and other media outlets of the many civilian victims of western air-strikes and other calamities in Afghanistan. This ensures that Muslims across the rest of the world are becoming as aware of what is happening in Afghanistan as they have been regarding Iraq since 2003. (16)

A reader in the post-9/11 world might conclude that since reporting of “the many civilian victims of western air strikes” fuels the Muslim resistance, the next step is to ignore, disparage or silence such detailed reporting (which is of course precisely what the U.S. Government has been doing). Sadly, we have come to live in a post-9/11 culture where silencing the messenger is acceptable. One recalls the U.S. bombing of the Al Jazeera office in Kabul on November 12, 2001. For the Pentagon and its many media boosters, there are good bodies (civilians killed by “our enemy”) and bad bodies (civilians killed by “our” militaries), respectively in the western mainstream labeled accidental collateral damage and (Afghan civilians transformed by the click on a keyboard into) “militants” or “insurgents.” During the Yugoslav conflict, Human Rights Watch highlighted civilians killed by Serbs while neglecting civilians killed by non-Serbs. (17) Today in Afghanistan, the U.S. mainstream media led by the Associated Press describes in detail the civilian victims of “Taliban” suicide attacks often even providing photographs while remaining far more circumspect about the victims of US/NATO air strikes and never printing photographs. (18) Counting dead civilians remains a highly politicized exercise.

Two main subterfuges have been used by the U.S and NATO militaries, the compliant corporate media and organizations like Human Rights Watch to excuse the killing and wounding of innocent Afghan civilians. The first is to express self-righteous anger over “them” killing civilians intentionally whereas “we” never intentionally target civilians. The second is to assert that the dastardly Taliban and their Muslim or Arab associates employ civilians as human shields.

A third means examined elsewhere (19) has been to simply suppress whenever possible written reports and especially photos of the victims of U.S/NATO military actions (“bad” bodies) in Afghanistan, all the while amply publishing stories and photos of Afghan civilians

killed by IED's or suicide bombers ("good" bodies). Photos of civilians whose death was caused by U.S. or NATO bombs are virtually non-existent. (20) One might call this censorship by omission. (21) News-magazine photo coverage of the "war on terrorism" in Afghanistan most often supports U.S. government narrative and versions of events. (22) The policy of embedding reporters with U.S. or NATO occupation forces is an obvious attempt at removing independent reporting which, sadly, most often succeeds.



Figure 2. An Afghan woman holds a photo of her family members who were killed on August 22, 2008, in a U.S. air raid called-in by U.S. Special Forces. The U.S. military for weeks denied civilians had been killed (photo by Mohammad Shoalb of Reuters)

U.S human rights lawyers charged on July 20, 2008, that US military prisons are "legal black holes" and that force is employed to "shut people up" about activities in Iraq and Afghanistan. "Many people in Afghanistan and in Iraq who have been targeted for detention are local journalists covering the conflict in their own country," said another prominent US human rights lawyer, Barbara J. Olshansky.

"When the United States detains reporters, photographers, camera operators and holds them for long period without charge for any offence and without trials and without any evidence, we know that part of the goal is to just shut people up," she said. (23)

The mainstream U.S. corporate media led by Fox News largely has sought to present the Afghan invasion as a simple war of good versus evil. (24) Texts or images which might have raised questions have been censored. Fox News has gone far beyond-the-call-of-duty in parroting U.S. military interpretations (25) but others in the U.S. corporate media have followed suit, e.g., Laura King of the Associated Press has been a notorious under-counter of Afghan civilian deaths. (26)

A new twist in Pentagon/NATO news management has recently been introduced. As of August 2008, the U.S. Air Force no longer releases daily reports about missions over

Afghanistan. On the British side, Britain is funding a surge in spin doctors in Afghanistan to construct and present pro-NATO/US media reports. (27)

The intentionality argument is often couched in the language of justifiable collateral damage, regrettable but necessary. Since the killing was collateral, it cannot be intentional goes the story. The overarching problem is the criminal nature of the offensive war first waged by the United States and Britain upon an entire sovereign country after 9/11. The collective group of “Afghans” has de facto been targeted for seven years as lives and countryside have been laid to waste; anyone who opposes the U.S./NATO occupation is by definition an “enemy” and can be justifiably killed collaterally. As pointed out by others, “[we] can’t possibly judge the morality of collateral damage while leaving out the question of the war itself... it is the immorality and illegality of a war that makes collateral damage a crime.” (28)

Least-cost considerations (in terms of U.S. military deaths and U.S. dollars) by the US and NATO militaries have directly translated into thousands of Afghan civilian casualties. How? During the initial phases of the U.S. bombing campaign but still today, *U.S. warplanes dropped powerful bombs in civilian-rich areas with little concern for Afghan civilians*. In effect, I am turning Michael Walzer’s notion of ‘due care’ (29) upside down: that is, far from acknowledging a positive responsibility to protect innocent Afghans from the misery of war, *U.S. military strategists chose to impose levels of harm upon innocent Afghan civilians in order to reduce present and possible future dangers faced by U.S. forces*. As I wrote in late 2001,

The absolute need to avoid U.S. military casualties means fling high up in the sky, increasing the probability of killing civilians:

“.....better stand clear and fire away. Given this implicit decision, the slaughter of innocent people, as a statistical eventuality is not an accident but a priority — in which Afghan civilian casualties are substituted for American military casualties.” (30)

But, I believe the argument goes deeper and that race enters the calculation. The sacrificed Afghan civilians are not ‘white’ whereas the overwhelming number of U.S. pilots and elite ground troops are white. This ‘reality’ serves to amplify the positive benefit-cost ratio of certainly sacrificing darker Afghans today [and Indochinese, Panamanians and Iraqis] for the benefit of probably saving American soldier-citizens tomorrow. What I am saying is that when the “other” is non-white, the scale of violence used by the U.S. government to achieve its stated objectives at minimum cost knows no limits. A contrary case might be raised with Serbia which was also subjected to mass bombing in 1999. But, the Serbs were in the view of U.S. policymakers and the corporate media tainted [‘darkened’] by their prior ‘Communist’ experience. No instance exists [except during World War II] where a foreign Caucasian state became the war target of the U.S. government. (31) The closest example might be that of the war waged by Britain upon Northern Ireland and, there, the British troops applied focused violence upon its Caucasian ‘enemy.’ When the “other” is a non-white foreigner, the state violence employed becomes amplified. (32)

Today, the aerial bombing in Afghanistan is more related to close air support called-in by ground forces as a means to defeat the enemy without having to fight him on the ground and likely suffer casualties. *Both high-level bombing and midnight attack ground attacks served to shift the burden of casualties upon Afghan civilians*. The doctrine that ‘war is hell’ seeks to transfer any responsibility for the cruelty of war to the enemy. (33) The U.S./NATO

war managers and their handmaidens in the defense and corporate media establishments dredge out the tired old “intent” argument. As Edward Herman noted,

...it is claimed by the war managers that these deaths and injuries are not deliberate, but are only “collateral” to another end, they are treated by the mainstream media, NGOs, new humanitarians, and others as a lesser evil than cases where civilians are openly targeted. But this differential treatment is a fraud, even if we accept the sometimes disputable claim of inadvertence (occasionally even acknowledged by officials to be false, as described below). Even if not the explicit target, if collateral civilian deaths are highly probable and statistically predictable they are clearly acceptable and intentional. If in 500 raids on Afghan villages alleged to harbor al Qaeda cadres it is likely that civilians will die in 450 of them, those deaths are an integral component of the plan and the clear responsibility of the planners and executioners. As law professor Michael Tonry has said, “In the criminal law, purpose and knowledge are equally culpable states of mind.” [\(34\)](#)

What also needs to be made very clear is that Afghan civilian casualties are not accidents or mistakes. They result from careful calculation by U.S. commanders and military attorneys who decide upon the benefits of an air strike versus the costs in innocent civilian lives lost. These are calculated predicted deaths. [\(35\)](#)

Aerial bombing in the name of liberating Afghans will continue with little regard for Afghan civilians who for the Western politico-military elites remain simply invisible in the empty space which is an “increasingly aerially occupied Afghanistan.” [\(36\)](#) The compliant mainstream media perpetuates the myth by serving as stenographer of the Pentagon’s virtual reality. Patrick Coburn of The Independent got it dead-on,

The reaction of the Pentagon to the killing of large numbers of civilians in Afghanistan, Iraq and now Pakistan has traditionally been first to deny that it ever happened. The denial is based on the old public relations principle that “first you say something is no news and didn’t happen. When it is proved some time later, that it did happen, you yawn and say it is old news.” [\(37\)](#)

When details of Afghan civilian deaths finally leak through the US/NATO news management efforts, a Lt. Colonel at the Bagram Air Base offers “sincere regrets” or the promise of an investigation and by tomorrow all is forgotten. They are, after all, just Afghans “we” killed. Theirs are bad bodies, not good bodies like those on “our” side that were killed.

A myth has circulated since the beginning of the U.S. bombing campaign in Afghanistan in October 2001. The myth is endlessly repeated by the U.S. occupation forces, corporate media, the Pentagon, defense intellectual pundits, Human Rights Watch, the Cruise Missile Left, the humanitarian interventionists, and even some in the United Nations: Afghan insurgents hide amongst civilians whom they use as human shields. [\(38\)](#) To begin with, the assertion is never empirically documented but just merely stated as a self-evident truth. Secondly, the implication is that an insurgent or Taliban fighter, resisting the U.S./NATO invasion should stand alone on a mountain ridge, his AK-47 raised to the sky, and engage in a “fair” act of war with an Apache attack helicopter or A-10 Warthog and see who prevails. Should resistance fighters stand out in an open field or on a mountain ridge? Thirdly, what is conveniently omitted is that the insurgents often live in the area, have friends and families in the communities, and that such a local support base is precisely what gives a guerrilla insurgency (along with knowledge of the local terrain) its classic advantage. [\(39\)](#) Such local connection means that the insurgents will (unlike the US/NATO occupation forces) go to



great lengths to not put local people in danger. Purveyors of the line about the “Taliban’s execrable tactic of using civilians as human shields” (40) are either themselves unaware of classic guerrilla strategy or, more likely, seek to manipulate the general public’s ignorance about the same. Using the language of guerrilla warfare, can a “fish” swim outside of the “sea”? One recalls the U.S. military’s campaign in Vietnam to drain the sea by creating strategic hamlets (translate, concentration camps), seeking to deny the Vietnamese resistance access to sympathetic villagers.

Rather than the “hiding among civilians” story, what is happening is that civilians figure prominently in the vast numbers of “militants” or “insurgents” reported killed in US/NATO bombing, as I have documented countless times in the Afghan Victim Memorial Project. The latest egregious example involves the slaughter of over 90 Afghan civilians in Azizabad where for weeks the U.S. military asserted that 30 “Taliban” had been killed and no civilians. In other words, civilians killed by US/NATO action are being falsely labeled by the US/NATO as “eliminated militants,” which suggests that my overall count of civilians killed is a gross underestimate. In addition, no doubt many cases where civilians have been killed by US/NATO action simply are not reported (censorship by omission). But no matter, for as Robert Higgs underscores is

...the complete insouciance with which the American public greets reports of deaths by drones. I do not exaggerate if I say that the general reaction is “ho-hum.” Well, the average American says, that disposes nicely of another “bad guy.” The gratuitous murder of the bad guy’s family members, neighbors, and other innocent persons in the vicinity appears to create no blip on the average American’s moral radar screen. Perhaps Americans do not consider Yemenis, Afghanis, and Pakistanis to be real human beings whose right to life we are obliged to respect? (41)

### **The Magnitude of Civilian Casualties in Afghanistan**

*“Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it” – George Santayana (1905)*

The U/S. and U.K. corporate media have been particularly guilty of censorship by omission – simply not reporting upon the “bad bodies” of those killed by US/NATO actions. (42) A little reported fact is that the number of Afghan civilians (43) killed by U/S. and NATO forces since 2005 exceeds the total recorded during the three months of intensive U.S. bombing, October 7- December 10, 2001. The following chart presents the numbers. These numbers underestimate the true human toll because they exclude the thousands who later die from injuries incurred in a U.S/NATO attack, those killed in incidents which went un-reported, those who die from lack of vital resources in refugee camps (44), etc.

Killed October 7 - December 10, 2001

2,256 - 2,949

2005

408 - 478

2006

653 - 769

2007

1,010 -- 1,297

Jan. 1 - August 31, 2008  
573 - 674

Sept. 1 -19, 2008  
55

Sub-total 2005 - 2008  
2,699 - 3,273

The nature of the air war in Afghanistan has changed substantially between 2001 and 2006-8. During the last three months of 2001, the U.S bombing was part of a traditional military campaign pitting two armies against each other. As such, the bombing involved large tonnages being dropped; whereas during 2006-8, the U.S and NATO bombing involved close air support (CAS) against a decentralized, highly fluid guerrilla resistance. During the former campaign some 14,000 tons of bombs were dropped or almost twelve times the tonnage dropped during the two-and-a-half years (2006 - mid 2008). Of course, the killing of innocent civilians by U.S. bombing has a long history spanning the twentieth century. For example, after 58 years recently released classified documents tell the story of how 93 napalm canisters were dropped on the little island of Wolmi, South Korea, in September 1950, incinerating over a hundred residents. [\(45\)](#)

Estimates or counts of civilian deaths caused by the U.S. bombing during 2001-mid 2002 reveal similar numbers. The count by Herold (2002) relies upon media and NGO reports as well as other written materials and the universe estimation by Benini and Moulton employing statistical analysis report 3,600-3,900 Afghan civilian deaths. The Benini & Moulton study calculates civilian deaths from bombing, landmines, unexploded ordnance strikes, from non-Western ground forces and should hence significantly exceed a count focused upon deaths directly caused by U.S. aerial bombing or ground attacks. [\(46\)](#) The Benini & Moulton study based upon canvassing 600 communities covers September 12, 2001 - June 20, 2002, whereas Herold covers October 7, 2001 - July 31, 2002. Field staff visited all 600 communities directly affected by fighting (both air strikes and ground combat). Benini & Moulton calculate 3,994 civilians died from air and artillery bombardments, shooting, and other violence. [\(47\)](#) In other words, the Herold count of 3,620 civilians killed by U.S. air and ground attacks is close to the population-based estimate of Benini & Moulton.

Whereas the numbers of civilian casualties resulting from the intense bombing of 2001 has been determined, it remains a far more difficult exercise to estimate the magnitude of civilians who perished from the CAS bombing of recent years. Two major problems exist: unlike in the earlier period, civilians have died at the hands of U.S. and NATO ground fire and aircraft strafing raids (especially by the AC-130 gunship, Apache attack helicopters, Predator drones and the A-10 CAS jet fighter); and secondly, data provided by U.S. and NATO does not exist making possible an incident-by-incident reconstruction of bombing versus strafing. What can, however, be derived are figures which represent orders of magnitudes under different assumptions (Table 4). Today, the U.S. operates over 90 percent of all strike aircraft in Afghanistan.

Such reconstruction reveals that U.S close air support bombing has been far more deadly for innocent Afghan civilians than the earlier more intense, traditional bombing campaign of 2001. The following Table 1 presents a unique summary of the aerial bombing (not strafing) in Afghanistan during 2006-mid 2008, employing data in the Afghan Victim Memorial Project

data base. (48) We know that aerial close air support bombing during 2007 and 2008 took on increasing importance, implying that the relative share of all civilians killed by bombing attacks has probably been rising. Already during 2005, the U.S. military began increasing air strikes to 157 from 86 during 2004. (49) The number of CAS strikes in Afghanistan in which munitions were dropped soared from 176 in 2005, to 1,770 in 2006, and 2,926 in 2007. (50) Elizabeth Rubin noted “that the sheer tonnage of metal raining down on Afghanistan was mind-boggling: a million pounds between January and September of 2007, compared with half a million in all of 2006.” (51) US Air Force B1-B’s renewed the bombing of Afghanistan on May 6, 2006. (52) U.S. General Dan “Bomber” McNeill performed up to expectations. (53) The total dropped for 2005 was a mere 60,000 pounds (or 27.2 metric tons). *During the first half of 2008, more tonnage was dropped than in all of 2007.* (54) The rise in CAS strikes paralleled almost perfectly the number of roadside bombings which numbered 1,931 in 2006 and 2,615 in 2007. (55) Tit for tat.

In effect, the US/NATO forces are relying upon air power in lieu of ground forces and in so doing causing high levels of civilian casualties which, in turn, push locals towards the resistance. (56) This is particularly important in Afghanistan where the culture of revenge has long stalked Americans there. (57) U.S./NATO aerial attacks turn friends into enemies. (58) This aspect was emphasized at a 2007 meeting at of the United States Institute of Peace. (59) Such is simply part of the age-old wisdom that aerial bombing does not induce surrender, quite to the contrary. Nothing has changed since the U.S. bombing of Takeo, Cambodia, in 1972, as described by a villager

...based on my experiences during the bombing in Takeo around 1972. The bombings were [spreading] further into towns and villages. My parents’ house was hit by the bombs, and we had to move to the opposite side of the country. We had known [that] almost the entire village that survived from the bombings had joined forces with the Khmer Rouge. (60)

The U.S. Army’s counterinsurgency manual FM 3-24 admits that aerial bombing “can cause collateral damage that turns people against the host-nation government and provides insurgents with a major propaganda victory.” Wing Commander Andrew Brookes of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London noted

Even a 400-pound bomb has ca wide area of blast and you are quite likely to kill some civilians. Kill a wife, children, mother, or uncle and people become so angry the terrorist cycle starts all over again. (61)

In addition, bombing destroys homes, orchards, livestock, etc. which fuels the ire of the bombed.

After the very high level of civilians killed by U.S. and NATO forces during 2007 – some 1,010-1,297 as I report in Table 1 – the rules of engagement were allegedly tightened in recognition that civilian casualties undermine support for the US/NATO occupation. (62) On the other hand, the advent of indisputably greater bombing precision by for example the use of ROVER (63) technology has encouraged dropping more bombs – in other words, the **overall killing of civilian depends upon the trade-off between greater precision of a bomb and the extent to which more bombs are being dropped, in other words it depends upon the risk elasticity of bombing tolerance.** Dead civilians are not mistakes. In my original Dossier, I argued that the primary cause of high levels of Afghan civilian casualties was due to U.S. bombing of civilian-rich areas. (64) A further complicating element is that precision strike weapons create a myth of infallibility, when the weapons are

at best only as good as the targeting data and absence of adverse disruptive influences. (65) This myth served to allegedly remove the public's general sense of barbarity associated with aerial bombing. Naturally a whole new language of war was crafted by the military-industrial-media complex to oil this transition: surgical, collateral, precision, etc. (66) Some enthusiasts even spoke of a "new kind of war" (67) with smaller bombs (68) though at least for civilians the deadliness of old wars continued.

Table 1. Dimensions of U.S. Aerial Bombing of Afghanistan, 2006 - mid 2008

2006  
2007  
2008

Number of bombs dropped

~1,000^^  
3,572\*\*\*  
1,853

Number CAS strikes in which munitions were dropped

1,770  
2,926  
2,368 (up through Aug.4)

Tonnage dropped (metric tons)

261\*\*^  
567\*\*^^  
630++

Civilians killed by U.S /NATO actions

653-769  
1,010-1,297  
273-335\*^

Bombs to kill one civilian

1,3-1.5  
3.5-2.8  
6.8-5.5

Civilians killed/10,000 tons

25,019-29,464  
17,777-22,840  
4,317-5,302

Civilians killed/10,000 tons at 67% ratio\*

16,763-19,741  
11,911-15,303  
2,892-3,552

Civilians killed/10,000 tons at 50% ratio\*\*

12,508-14,732  
8,889-11,420

2,159-2,651

\*assuming that 67% of civilians were killed by aerial bombing alone (remainder from strafing, ground fire)

\*\*assuming that 50% of civilians were killed by aerial bombing alone

\*\*\* In Iraq during 2007, only 1,447 bombs were dropped. Another source reported that by May 15, 2007, the number of weapons dropped on Afghanistan was 929 (<http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,138201,00.html>).

^number of close air support strikes in which munitions were dropped

^^ From Cloud (2006), op. cit. reported that by mid-November 2006, American aircraft had dropped 987 bombs and fired more than 146,000 cannon rounds and bullets in strafing runs. During the entire period 2001 through 2004, a total of 848 bombs and just over 119,000 bullets were used by aircraft according to U.S. Air Force data.

\*^My figures for 2008 are supported by the Afghan government, rights and aid groups which say that over 300 civilians have died this year from Western operations, mostly when air power is called in to get allied troops out of trouble (from Mark John, "Analysis: Western Forces Hooked on Air Power in Afghan War," Reuters (July 5, 2008 at 14:31 GMT) at <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L05811864.htm>

\*\*^ during 2006, the U.S. Air Force dropped 575,500 pounds of bombs (Benjamin, 2007, op. cit.), or 261 metric tons.

\*\*^^ During 2007, coalition forces dropped about a million pounds of bombs in Afghanistan, which would amount to 454 metric tons. This figure is erroneously reported as being for the entire 2007 when it covered only Jan-Sept.. I have hence adjusted the total to 1,25 mn pounds or 567 metric tons. Benjamin (2007) said that the U.S. Air Force alone dropped 527,860 pounds of bombs on Afghanistan during the first six months of 2007.

++ I have derived this number as follows. The most popular USAF bombs are the 500 and 200-pound GPS guided JDAMs and the 500-pound laser-guided bomb. Assuming each amounts to one-third of all bombs dropped (numbering 1,853 according to Rolfson (2008).

The lethality of war can be assessed using different criteria. For example, during 2008 to-date some 628-729 Afghan civilians were killed by U.S./NATO action. During the same period of time, 120 U.S. troops and 104 NATO soldiers died. For every occupation soldier killed, about three Afghan civilians are killed by the occupation forces (for 2006, the figure was 3-4). (69)

A way to measure the lethality of aerial bombing is to compare the numbers of bombs dropped to the number of civilians killed. Table 2 indicates that in terms of lethality to civilians, the Gulf War was lowest, followed by Kosovo, with the initial Afghan bombing campaigns being by far the deadliest for civilians notwithstanding the much greater use of "precision" weapon systems. (70) Indeed, in 2001 it took only 4-5 bombs dropped to kill one Afghan civilian; during the first half of 2008, the figure was 9-10 bombs, though by July 2008, an Afghan civilian was killed every 5-6 bombs dropped (Table 3).

Table 2. Lethality of Aerial Bombing in Different Air Campaigns as Measured by Number of

## Bombs to Necessary Kill One Civilian

### Bombing Campaign

(1) # bombs & missiles dropped

(2) # civilians killed

Bombs to kill one civilian, (1)/(2)=

Iraq 1991

250,000

2,278

110

Kosovo 1999

23,000

1,200

19

Afghanistan 2001

12,000\*\*

2,569-2,949

4.1-4.7

Afghanistan, first half of 2008

1,853

273-335\*

5.5-6.8

\*If we assume that two-thirds of the total number of civilians killed (273-335) during this period died from aerial attacks, the numbers would be 183-224. In Table 6 the number of civilians actually killed in air strikes is reported at 178-192.

\*\*figure from Global Security for October 7 - December 10, 2001 which reported 12,000 bombs and missiles dropped during October 7 - December 10; by March 2002, the figure was 21,000 and by mid-September 2002 it was 24,000.

When we focus just upon Afghanistan during the years 2006 until the present (Table 3), one finds that about every five bombs dropped one civilian died (though the number was much higher during 2007 when the resistance engaged the US/NATO in open battles the US/NATO war planes dropped over 3,500 bombs).

Table 3. Numbers of Bombs dropped to kill One Afghan Civilian, 2006-present

2006

2007

First half 2008

June 2008

July 2008

# bombs dropped

1,000

3,572

1,853  
646  
515

# civilian deaths

653-769  
1,008-1,295  
273-335  
49-69  
134-157

50% civilian deaths  
326-385

67% civilian deaths

675-868  
182-224  
33-46 actual  
90-105 actual

Bombs/civilians

2.6-3.1  
4.1-5.3  
8.3-10.2  
14-19.5  
4.9-5.7

Note: for 2006, I have assumed that 50% of civilian deaths were due to aerial bombing and firing missiles; during the later time periods when the air war intensified, I assume that two-thirds of civilian deaths were the result of bombs and missiles dropped from the air. For 2008, the two-thirds ratio is an underestimate.

What is striking is that *these past two-and-a-half years of close air support bombing have been more deadly for Afghan civilians than was the traditional bombing campaign of October 7, 2001 - December 10, 2001*, when 14,000 tons of bombs (and 12,000 bombs & missiles) were dropped by U.S war planes, which caused an estimated 2,569-2,949 civilian deaths. The figure then for civilians killed per 10,000 tons bombs dropped was 1,835 - 2,106. The figures for 2006-mid 2008 are 13,265-16,454 civilians killed per 10,000 tons dropped (derived from Table 1). *Lesser tonnage was dropped in recent years but that which fell from the skies was terribly deadly to Afghan civilians. Predictably, we find that CAS strikes account for the following shares of actual total Afghan civilian deaths during 2008:*

January - June 2008: 61%  
July 2008: 82%  
August 2008: 89%  
September 1-19: 89% [\(71\)](#)

As I have pointed out, the 2001 ratio (of civilians killed per 10,000 tons of bombs dropped) made the bombing of Afghanistan about as deadly for innocent civilians as the bombing of Laos and Cambodia, being the most lethal of all post-World War II bombing campaigns

notwithstanding that the precision of aerial bombing has increased greatly. (72)

A typical incident amongst the hundreds where US/NATO military bombing action resulted in the deaths of Afghan civilians chronicled in my Afghan Victim Memorial Project took place in the village of Jabar, Kapisa Province on March 6, 2007. U.S war planes dropped two 2,000-pound bombs killing nine civilians including three children aged between six months and five years. Here is how Col. Tom Collins, NATO spokesman described these nine deaths

We didn't know who was in that building, but we saw fighters move into that area who were legitimate targets. The building was struck and, as we all know, unfortunately civilians were killed.

Yes, unfortunately all nine members from four generations of a single Afghan family.



Figure 3. Afghan village women walk in the debris of one of the homes which was bombed by a NATO air strike on Jabar village in the Nijrab district of Kapisa province, north of Kabul, Afghanistan Monday, March 5, 2007. A NATO air strike destroyed a mud-brick home, killing nine people from four generations of an Afghan family during a clash between Western troops and militants, Afghan officials and relatives said Monday (Source: Musadeq Sadeq photo, A.P.)

A couple months later, as Ramzy Baroud wrote in His "Firepower Doesn't Always Win Wars":

The BBC's Alastair Leithead reported on May 31, "Afghans' Anger over US Bombing" merely details one of many such incidents in which scores of innocent civilians are killed; such reports are ever more rare since they are simply not newsworthy - the worth of a news story from Afghanistan is measured by whether Coalition forces incurred casualties or not. The recent killings in the village of Shindand in the Zerkoh Valley, Western Afghanistan was harrowing by any standards. 57 were reportedly killed by American bombardment; half of the dead were women and children, according to Leithead; the bombardment also destroyed 100 homes, humble dwellings that are unlikely to be rebuilt soon. "The bombardments were going on day and night. Those who tried to get out somewhere safe were being bombed. They didn't care if it was women, children or old men," said one of the survivors. But who would believe Mohammad Zarif Achakzai, who fled his mud house with his family under the relentless bombardment? Brig Gen Joseph Votel has simply dismissed the reports of civilian casualties. "We have no reports that confirm to us that non-combatants were injured or killed out in Shindand," he said. And that is that. (73)



The luckier ones are only wounded by the CAS bombing.



Figure 4. Agah Lalai, 25, wounded during the night of May 8, 2007 in an air strike called-in by U.S. Special Forces upon his village of Gurmaw, north of Sangin in the Helmand River Valley, lies in a hospital in Kandahar swathed in bandages (Photo by Anthony Lloyd).

Anthony Lloyd of The Times, reported from Kandahar on May 24, 2007 about the near obliteration of Gurmaw on the night of May 8, 2007,

Mr Lalai's village, a settlement in the Sarwan Qala valley north of Sangin, which is patrolled by British troops, was bombed by aircraft on the night of May 8 after fighting between the Taliban and foreign soldiers. Crawling wounded from the wreckage of his home, Mr Lalai discovered that his grandfather, grandmother, wife, father, three brothers and four sisters had died in the bombing. The youngest victim was 8, the oldest 80. Only Mr Lalai's mother and two sons, aged 5 and 3, survived. Both boys were wounded. Yet the forces that wiped out his family were not British, nor those of any other Nato unit. The airstrikes were called in by American Special Forces operating with their own rules of engagement on a mission totally devolved from Nato command in Afghanistan. At least 21 Afghan civilians died in the bombing of Gurmaw. [\(74\)](#)

Carlotta Gall reported that the toll according to local residents was much higher involving 56-80 civilians in three houses. [\(75\)](#)

When Lal Zareen, the groom's father, reached the scene of the U.S. terror bombing of a wedding procession (the traditional Afghan "wara" made up of mostly women and children) near the village of Khetai on July 6, 2008, he recounted

I saw pieces of bodies scattered around. I couldn't even make out which part was which. It was just flesh everywhere. [\(76\)](#)

Fifty-two members of the double wedding party were dead, including the two brides, both aged 18. [\(77\)](#)



47 civilians were killed when US-led coalition forces bombarded a wedding party in the eastern Nangarhar province on July 6, 2008.

See interviews in video by Alastair Leithead at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7504574.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7504574.stm)

And what has been the reaction by the U.S. military to such Afghan civilian casualties? The United Nations? By the Associated Press? By Human Rights Watch? By so-called defense intellectuals like William M. Arkin? When the U.N. announced in late June 2008 that the number of civilians killed in fighting during the first half of 2008 amounted to 698 – 255 killed by foreign or Afghan troops and 422 by “militants” (with the cause of death of 21 undetermined), the U.S. military’s spokesperson in Kabul stated “those numbers were far, far higher than we would recognize.” (78) The U.S/NATO responses involve first denial and then shifting the blame by using the human shields argument. More recently, the U.S. military complains about the Taliban’s mastery in manipulating media. (79) The Afghan resistance is alleged to fabricate stories about US/NATO bombing attacks which it feeds to either sympathetic or naïve journalists. These stories then are stated to drive a wedge between foreign forces and the Afghan regime, leading to “more investigations and crippling operational restraints.” As I have written about elsewhere, it is the U.S. military which has developed a program to manipulate gullible western media and publics. (80) The issue is much less that of the sophistication of the Taliban in regards to media, but rather the blatant lying by the Pentagon and NATO spokespersons. Moreover, to presume that independent Afghan media and/or wire service stringers will automatically publish Taliban accounts is insulting. The reporting of the independent Pajhwok Afghan News is widely praised. Zubair Babakarkhail of Pajhwok Afghan News has said that he does not feel that the information provided by the military is any more credible, “The Taliban makes claims, and the other side also makes claims. We don’t believe either of them.” (81)

In 2007, a pro-military website, Strategy Page, proclaimed that the ~1,700 bombs dropped by the U.S Air Force during 2006 had killed “some 3,000 Taliban fighters” and because of smart missiles and bombs fewer than a hundred Afghan civilians had perished. (82) In truth, 303-360 Afghan civilians had perished in 2006 at the hands of the U.S and NATO (Table 1).

Neither the United Nations nor the Associated Press (A.P.) ever presents disaggregated data. We are asked to believe summary figures based upon faith. Such analysis violates a basic tenet of serious research, naming being able to reproduce the research results. The U.N. and A.P. numbers cannot and should not be treated seriously. My research available at the Afghan Victim Memorial Project website indicates that during the first eight months of

2008, 573-674 Afghan civilians were *killed just by U.S. and NATO actions*.

The response of defense intellectual and consultant to the U.S. Air Force, William M. Arkin, is even less satisfactory. (83) Arkin and his cohorts had the gall to assert that civilian casualties during the first three months of the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan totaled 100-350. (84) On October 21, 2001, William M. Arkin, frequent contributor on military affairs to major U.S. daily newspapers and faculty member at a U.S. military university, re-assured the American public that the U.S. bombing campaign of Afghanistan would generate few civilian casualties because of it being “as ‘targeted’ as anyone can reasonably expect.” (85) Arkin went on,

...U.S. analysts evaluate location and the blast radius of the intended weapon before the target can be approved. In other words, avoidance of civilian casualties has become institutionalized even to the point of rejecting important targets if there is a high probability of civilian harm. And this is not the Clinton administration.

The scene in the towns and fields of Afghanistan belied the good professor pundit. Between 35 - 55 innocent Afghans succumbed to U.S. bombs and missiles on that Sunday. The victims spanned five provinces in five U.S. bombing attacks:

- 9-18 died in the bombing of the Parod Gajaded neighborhood of Khair Khana in Kabul;
- a seven year-old girl died in the Macroyan housing project in Kabul;
- 21-32 civilians died in the bombing of a neighborhood in Tarin Kot and as they tried to flee on a farm tractor in a widely reported attack;
- 3 died in Kandahar city when a U.S. jet targeted six Taliban tanks hidden under a tree and missed, upending trees and killing three persons on the nearby road;
- Sardar Mohammed, 20, died from a fractured skull in the village of Shakar Dara, located in the Kohesafie district, 40 kms. north of Kabul.

Arkin informs us that he spent time in early 2007 as a National Security and Human Rights Fellow at the Carr Institute for Human Rights at Harvard University studying whether “there (is) a shred of evidence that airpower is either responsible for civilian deaths or is deadlier than ground operation?” And what did Arkin discover while researching at Harvard? First, that civilian deaths are “collateral” to a legitimate military mission insofar as the said military unit “takes all necessary precautions to avoid civilian harm and has ‘no intention’ in killing civilians, the deaths are an unfortunate part of war – especially this war, because the enemy hides behind and preys upon the civilian element.” He falls back upon the same old intentionality and human shields arguments. Secondly, Arkin adds that the alleged visibility of air power with its bombs dropped can be counted and hence results in distinct reporting about civilian deaths, leading many to falsely conclude that air power is more deadly for civilians than ground combat. In fact, Arkin gets it exactly backwards as I will later demonstrate. Simon Jenkins pointed out that massacres committed by infantrymen are subject to courts martial. He wrote, “If soldiers enter a house by the front door and kill civilians inside, then they are hauled before world opinion and condemned. If a dropped bomb enters the same house through the roof and has the same effect, it is dismissed as collateral damage.” (86) Lastly, presumably after some months at Harvard, Arkin concluded “we do not have enough reliable data even to gauge the level of civilian deaths (at U.S. hands, moreover), let alone the “responsible party within the U.S. military.” In other words, the Harvard Fellow dismisses outright numbers and accounts compiled by the United Nations in Kabul, the Associated Press and myself.

For its part, Human Rights Watch (HRW) occasionally issues summary figures on Afghan civilian deaths. For example, in a report devoted primarily to the human costs of “insurgent attacks,” HRW’s Mark Garlasco asserted in passing that during 2006, 929 Afghan civilians had died – 116 in air bombardments, 114 from foreign and Afghan ground forces and 699 at the hands of the Taliban. (87) In a later communication, HRW reiterated that during 2006, “insurgents” had killed 699 civilians and foreign forces 300. (88) In other words, HRW admits US and Afghan forces killed 230-300 civilians. The entries in my Afghan Victim Memorial Project data base for 2006 list 653-769 civilians who perished just at the hands of the U.S. and NATO alone. Human Rights Watch has an established record of complicity in America’s Afghan war. (89) As regards 2007, Garlasco stated that 434 Afghan civilians died at the hands of NATO or the U.S. (90), while my data indicates the number is 1,008-1,295. *HRW is continuing its long-standing tradition of presenting one-third of the truth as the whole truth*, going back to the Kosovo bombing campaign where Arkin in the employ then of HRW proclaimed some 500 civilians had been killed by the NATO bombing whereas other independent sources cited figures of 1,200-1,500. (91) HRW apparently believes that air strikes had killed 119 civilians (to which another 54 died from fighting on the ground) during 2008 until July 1st, again precisely one-third of the truth. (92) Garlasco asserts (no disaggregated data provided) that since 2006, 837 innocent Afghans were killed by NATO/US-led operations (of which 556 by US air strikes) when my data (Table 3) documents the figures are 1,934-2,399. Moreover, HRW is at pains to regurgitate the old intentionality canard, underscoring that “there is no evidence suggesting that coalition or NATO forces have *intentionally* directed attacks against civilians.” At the very time when U.S. CAS strikes in Afghanistan during July 1- 18, 2008 had killed an estimated 111-131 civilians, Marc Garlasco had the temerity to announce, “in their *deliberate targeting*, the air force has all but eliminated civilian casualties in Afghanistan,” though admitting in immediate targeting precautionary rules are less adhered to. (93)

The Associated Press fairly regularly has published summary data on Afghan civilian casualties, though never reveals disaggregated figures which might allow fact-checking. We are simply asked to believe. As I have argued time-and-again, for the A.P. truth about civilian casualties comes only through an American lens. (94) The A.P. uses figures provided primarily by U.S., NATO and Afghan sources, thereby displaying a bias as severe as were one to rely upon only Taliban data. The A.P. published figures for the first ten months of 2007: US/NATO and Afghan militaries killed 337 Afghan civilians whereas the “militants” killed 346. These numbers are about one-third of the true count for 2007. (95) Curiously, once again a pattern is here at play: in 2002, the AP’s Laura King announced that the U.S. bombing campaign during 2001 had led to the deaths of some 600-700 innocent Afghan civilians; my report indicated the figure was closer to 3,100 (96) (revised downwards now to 2,569-2,949). (97) In 2006, the A.P. reporter Jason Straziuso, a good friend and faithful stenographer of the U.S. military version of events, updated the A.P. count saying that since February 2002 until May 2006, the A.P. count “based upon figures from Afghan officials, the coalition and witnesses shows at least 180 civilians have died during coalition military action.” Yes, at least 180! Accounts in my data bases indicate that during December 11, 2001 – December 31, 2005, Afghan civilian deaths at the hands of US/NATO forces were 1,349-1,589. On August 8, 2008, Straziuso proclaimed that during January through July according to A.P. figures compiled from coalition and Afghan officials 128 Afghan civilians had been killed by U.S. or NATO forces. (98) He claims half the figure put out by the United Nations. Karen DeYoung of the Washington Post, who uncritically cites HRW figures, put the figure killed by air strikes alone at more than 200 for the first eight months of 2008. (99) My data for the same period show 444-475.

The United Nations released aggregate figures for the first six months of 2007 and 2008 (Table 4), as well as for eight months of 2008. The latter numbers are very close to my own for the first 8 months of 2008. U.N. figures are:

Civilians killed by international and Afghan forces..... 577 (2007: 477)  
Civilians killed just by air strikes..... ~ 400 (2007: n.a.)  
Civilians killed by Taliban and associates.....~ 800 (2007: 462)  
Civilians who died unaccounted for.....68 [\(100\)](#) (2007: 101)

My totals reconstructed from disaggregated on the Afghan Victim Memorial Project website data shows that for the first eight months are: killed by US/NATO action @ 573-674 (mid point at 624) and by air strikes alone @ 444-475 (mid point at 460) (Table 5). The U.N. did not say how its human rights monitors collected statistics on civilian deaths, or discuss its sources of information or their reliability.

The following Table 4 summarizes available aggregate statistics on Afghan civilian deaths for the period 2006 - mid 2008. [\(101\)](#)

Table 4. Afghan Civilians Killed during 2006 - \_\_\_\_\_, 2008

Source:

2006

2007

Until \_\_\_\_\_2008

Human Rights Watch

116 by aerial bombing114 by ground combat699 by Taliban

434 by US/NATO (321 from air strikes)950 by TalibanTotal @ 1,633

119 by air strikes until July 1, 2008; 54 in other US/NATO attacks; 367 by "Taliban"

United Nations

First 6 months:

314 by "allies"

279 by "militants".

For entire year, US/NATO and Afghan forces killed 477 Afghan civilians

First 6 mos.: 255 by "allies"422 by "militants"21 undeterminedTotal = 698; For 8 mos, 577 killed by US/NATO and Afghan forces

Associated Press

Data for Jan.-Oct.31st:337 by "allies"346 by "militants"

Data for Jan.1-Aug. 26th: 536 by "militants", 158 by US/NATO, 11 in crossfire

Karen DeYoung of the Washington Post

116 by air strikes only

321 by air strikes only

200 by air strikes through 8 mos of 2008

Marc W. Herold's Afghan Victim Memorial Project

653-769 killed only by US/NATO actions

1,010-1,297 killed only by US/NATO actions

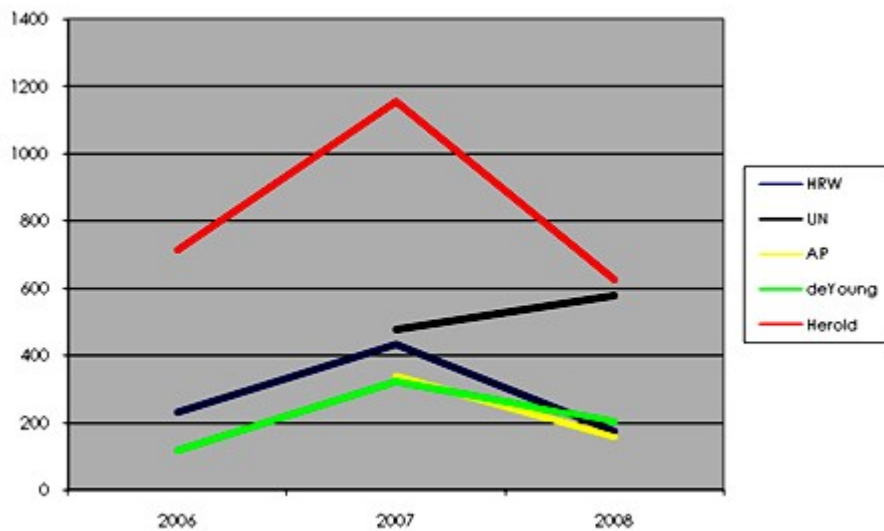
Date for Jan. 1 – Aug. 4th: 411-496 killed only by US/NATO actions

### Other reports

Oxfam (1/2008: 16) reports 500-600 killed by foreign and Afghan forces. Reuters (June 11, 2008) reported that more than 520 civilians were killed during 2007 by foreign forces alone according to Afghan rights groups.

The UN Human Rights rapporteur says foreign and Afghan forces have killed “at least 200 civilians” during Jan-April. In early August, ACBAR reported that 1,000 civilians had been killed during 2008 to-date (260 in July alone).

The following presents a graphical image of the various counts of Afghan civilian casualties mentioned in Table 4. Three counts are comparable: those of Human Rights Watch (HRW), the Associated Press (A.P.) and Herold. The United Nations data is only for the first half year of 2007 and 2008. Karen De Young only lists civilians killed in US/NATO air strikes as mentioned by HRW. What clearly emerges is that HRW and the AP put out gross underestimates, presumably a result of censorship by omission.



On September 8, 2008, Human Rights Watch released a report on air strikes and civilian deaths in Afghanistan. [\(102\)](#) It presented data, decried the costs of civilian casualties in terms of undermining “international efforts to provide basic security to the people of Afghanistan” and warned ominously that such deadly air strikes act as a recruiting tool for the Taliban. In addition, HRW correctly pointed out that a disproportionate number of the civilian deaths from air strikes called-in by the nearly 20,000 U.S. occupation troops who operate independently of NATO and who have far less stringent rules of engagement. Throughout the report, HRW either directly states or indirectly implies that the Taliban use civilians as human shields with deadly consequences. HRW says its figures are based upon “military records, hospital admissions and on-the-ground testimonies.” Indeed, the Economist states that American military figures show civilian deaths in airstrikes rose from 116 in 2006 to 321 in 2007, precisely the figures cited by Human Rights Watch. [\(103\)](#) Military records, we know, whether U.S. or Afghan, are notoriously unreliable. Secondly, hospital entry data is largely irrelevant as Afghans bury their dead soon after the death. It behooves HRW to tell us about the scope of its “on-the-ground testimonies”; they might take the Benini-Moulton (2003) study as a model.

The HRW summary figures for 2006 – 2008 (first seven months) are presented in Table 5

below. What is immediately striking is the relatively low ratio of total reported civilian deaths caused by air strike: 50% in 2006, 47% in 2007 and 69% in 2008. By way of contrast, data from Herold's Afghan Victim Memorial Project as well as commentary from most sources during this period of time point to a higher proportion of civilians killed by US/NATO air strikes, e.g. 60-85%. But more importantly, the figures put forth by Human Rights Watch without the slightest bit of supporting evidence (in the form of data incident-by-incident), are very low absolute numbers of civilians killed by US/NATO occupation forces. For example, the HRW figures for Afghans killed by US/NATO air strikes are only 70% in 2006, 42% in 2007 and 27% in 2008 (first seven months) of those reported by Herold. In other words, Human Rights Watch carries on its long-established tradition of reporting a fraction of the truth as the whole truth when dealing with "bad bodies" (those killed by US/NATO forces).

Table 5. Afghan Civilian Deaths during 2006-8 as Reported by Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Herold

2006

2007

2008

HRW: US/NATO total

230

(683)

173 (7 mos)

: air strikes

116

321

119

HRW: air/total in %

50%

47%

69%

Herold: US/NATO total

653-769

1010-1297

573-674 (8 mos)

: mid point

711

1154

624

: air strikes

326-385 (50%)

675-868 (67%)

444-475

: mid point, air

356  
772  
460

Herold: air/total in %

50%  
67%  
74%

In his report, Garlasco inveighs that during the past year civilians killed in air strikes have nearly tripled. This figure is in the ballpark (for the years 2006-7) and was widely cited even by some critical of the Bush wars. But, the figure obscures the fact that HRW numbers are only a fraction of the overall Afghan human toll. Human Rights Watch counts only about 50% of all Afghans killed as indicated in the following Table 6:

Table 6. Comparison of Recorded Afghan Civilians killed by US/NATO actions

year  
HRW total  
HRW air  
Herold total  
Herold air

2006  
230  
116  
711  
356

2007  
683  
321  
1,154  
772

2008 (7 mos)  
173  
119  
448  
304

Total  
1,086  
556  
2,313  
1,432

Note: the figures for Herold are midpoint numbers of the reported range

Measuring the lethality of aerial bombing to the population is a complex endeavor. Clearly the bombing intensity needs to be related to the civilian toll as absolute numbers in themselves mean very little. The measure I have chosen to employ is civilians killed per 10



tons (or 10,000 tons) of bombs dropped. Obviously, bombing across countries with radically different levels of urbanization make crude comparisons difficult. The tonnage figures include bombs dropped on purely military targets. Were one able to tally only bombs dropped where civilians perished, the ratio of civilians killed per tonnage would be significantly higher. In 1999, Fred Kaplan noted that the lethality of bombing for civilians was about equal in Vietnam and Yugoslavia, namely one civilian died for every ten tons of bombs dropped. (104) The figures for Laos, Cambodia and Afghanistan (2001) were appreciably higher (more than double, Table 7).

Table 7. Civilians Killed per 100 Metric Tons of Bombs Dropped

Total tonnage dropped  
 Number of Civilians killed  
 Ratio of civilians per 100 tons

North Vietnam, Rolling Thunder, 1964-67

600,000  
 52,000  
 8.7

North Vietnam, Linebacker II, 1972

15,287  
 1,318  
 8.6

Laos, 1965-93

2,400,000  
 350-500,00  
 14.6-20.8

Cambodia, 1969-73

2,756,941  
 275- 826,000  
 11.5-34.4

Iraq Gulf War, 1991

60,624  
 2,278  
 3.8

Yugoslavia, 1999

13,000  
 1,200  
 9.2

U.S. Afghanistan, Oct 7 - Dec 10, 2001

14,000\*  
 2,569-2,949  
 18.4-21.1

Iraq, March 20-April 5, 2003

6,350

940-1,112  
14.8-17.5

U.S Afghanistan 2006  
at 50%  
261  
261  
653-769  
326-385  
250-295  
125-148

U.S. Afghanistan 2007  
at 67%  
567  
567  
1,010-1,297  
678-869  
178-229  
119-153

U.S. Afghanistan 2008, ½ year  
at 67%  
630  
630  
273-335  
183-224  
43-53  
29-36

Laos's data from <http://www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/17848>; Yugoslavia and Rolling Thunder data from Kaplan (1999); Cambodia data from Ben Kiernan; Iraq Gulf War casualties reported by Iraqi civil defense authorities.

\*figure is for October 2001 – February 2002

The civilian figures for Afghanistan above are for total civilian deaths caused by U.S/NATO actions. In order to achieve comparability, the deaths caused by aerial attacks need to be derived. A conservative estimate would be that during 2006, half the deaths were caused by aerial attacks and in 2007 and 2008 two-thirds.

Close air support strikes often involve a mix of civilian and military victims. Table 7 presents derived numbers in the last column for the number of Afghan civilians killed per 100 tons of bombs dropped. For the U.S. close air support bombing of 2006-8, I have employed figures in Table 1, conservatively assuming that one-half of recorded civilian deaths were from air strikes. The figures probably need to be adjusted downward slightly to take into account that some Afghan civilians died from strafing runs and not bombs. Recognizing that the U.S. reliance upon close air support strikes increased significantly during 2007-8, I will assume that in 2006 half of all civilian deaths were caused by aerial bombing, but that during 2007 and 2008 the figure is 67%. When one makes these adjustments, the lethality of close air support air strikes to Afghan civilians as measured by the ratio of civilians killed per 100 tons of bombs dropped is:

2006: 125-148  
2007: 119-153  
2008: 29-36

In all three years, the lethality of U.S. bombing in Afghanistan exceeded by far that recorded in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Yugoslavia, Iraq (2003) and Afghanistan (2001). The lethality of CAS strikes to Afghan civilians has fallen significantly during the first six months of 2008, though no doubt has risen greatly during July and August. (105) Yet, the figure for 2008 is still in the order of magnitude of those recorded for what are admitted to have been the terribly deadly U.S. carpet bombing of Cambodia and the Allied bombing of Germany during World War II. (106)

Disaggregated data for 2006 reveals that 653-769 Afghan civilians died as a result of U.S./NATO actions. The number of attacks was eighty, meaning that 8-10 persons perished per attack. But this average obscures a bi-polar distribution: 49 attacks resulted in 1-5 civilian deaths and 20 attacks killed at least 11 Afghan civilians.

Table 8. The Matrix of Death: Afghan Civilians Killed by US/NATO Actions, January 1 - July 1, 2008

Total killed by demographics

Men: 54

Women: 39-41

Children: 55

Undetermined: 124-184

Total by type of US/NATO attack

Air: 178-192

Ground: 50-80

Air & ground: 44-62

Numbers of attacks by type

Air: 20

Ground: 22

Air & ground: 2

Average killed by attack type

Air: 9

Ground: 2-4

Air & ground: 22-31

The matrix of death for 2008 constructed in Table 8 indicates that of the total number of Afghan civilians killed (272-334), air attacks killed 178-192, ground attacks another 50-80, and combined air and ground attacks 44-62. **Aerial attacks were 3-4 times as deadly for Afghan civilians as were ground attacks.** Many more children and women are killed by US/NATO attacks than men. Two-thirds of the fifty-five identifiable children killed died in air or combined air & ground attacks. Some 57-65% of Afghans killed died from air attacks as compared with only 18-24% from ground attacks. On the other hand, not a single US/NATO pilot was killed but 123 foreign occupation ground soldiers died during January through June 2008. The recent increasing reliance upon unmanned drones to dispense death and destruction in the border regions is in a sense the penultimate disconnect between

killing them and saving ours.

**The trade-off is very clear: by relying upon aerial close air support (CAS) and drone attacks, US/NATO forces spare their pilots and ground troops but kill lots of innocent Afghan civilians.** Air strikes are 4-10 times as deadly for Afghan civilians as are ground attacks. The matrixes of death (Tables 8 and 9) for January-August 2008 couldn't be clearer about this trend:

Table 9. The **Matrix of Death:** Afghan Civilians Killed by US/NATO Actions, July and August 2008

Total killed by demographics, July

Men: 25

Women: 20

Children: 47

Undetermined: 42-63

Total by type of US/NATO attack

Air: 119

Ground: 12-15

Air & ground: 2-20

Numbers of attacks by type

Air: 9

Ground: 4

Air & ground: 1

Average killed by attack type

Air: 13

Ground: 3-4

Air & ground: 2-20-

Total killed by demographics August

Men: 23

Women: 23

Children: 76

Undetermined: 44-62

Total by type of US/NATO attack

Air: 147-164

Ground: 15-16

Air & ground: 4

Numbers of attacks by type

Air: 8

Ground: 7

Air & ground: 1

Average killed by attack type

Air: 18-20

Ground: 2



Figure 5. Canadian occupation forces kick down a door in the village of Pashmul, south west of Kandahar in September 2006 (photo by Richard Mills for The Times)

### **What is a Dead Afghan worth to the United States?**

In the very rare instances, when the U.S. military acknowledges that Afghan civilians wrongfully died or were wounded because of military action, what monetary compensation (the U.S. military refrains from using the word compensation, preferring instead condolence) is paid? (107) Rather than estimating ex ante what might be the monetary value of an Afghan life, I focus instead upon how much compensation has been paid ex post for a death caused. (108) Afghans have been seeking compensation from the United States since early 2002. (109) A particularly egregious case occurred in the dark of night at 3 A.M on January 24, 2002, described meticulously in The Afghan Victim Memorial Project:

In the village of Hazar Qadam, Uruzgan Province. Amanullah, 25, was sleeping when a rocket hit the Islamic school, the Sharzam high school, and U.S troops burst into the school spraying it with bullets. He saw his cousin struggle with U.S occupation soldiers. But Amanullah fearing for his life, fled to hide in the village mosque. When he returned he found his cousin dead with bullets in his neck, stomach and shoulder. Bari Gul also described how Haji Sana, his brother died. Bari Gul was heading up a group of 18 Afghans who were negotiating disarmament locally. The U.S occupation forces beat them, abducted all of them and 9 other civilians, keeping them in wooden-barred cages and beating them for 2 weeks at the Kandahar base. Allah Noor, 40, a farmer, suffered 2 broken ribs from the beatings. The masked U.S Special Forces troops killed 14 men in one compound, 2 in a second compound serving as the district office. Villagers later found 2 local men dead with their hands tied behind their backs with plastic bands stenciled with the words, "Made in U.S.A.," killed execution-style. The school courtyard was a graveyard of twisted, shrapnel-shredded vehicles. Its façade was pocked with hundreds of bullet holes. The floor of one classroom was marked with bloodstains. "Made in U.S.A.?" Bari Gul added, "None of our friends fired on the Americans because they were asleep." An Uruzgan elder told TIME (Feb. 2002), "The U.S. must be punished for what they did in this room, what they did in this place." In June 2003, a participating member in this deadly U.S. attack upon the schoolhouse, Sgt. Anthony Pryor, of the 5th Special Forces Group, was awarded the Silver Star medal and was given a ring made of Afghan lapis lazuli.

Less than ten days after the attack, CIA agents visited the village to pay condolence. Bari Gul whose brother was a member of a local disarmament commission and was slaughtered by the U.S. Special Forces, was given ten \$100 bills. [\(110\)](#)



Figure 6. Bari Gul with his ten \$100 bills (photo by Qudratullah Ahmady for NPR)

Five-and-a-half years later, the U.S. military stated it intended to pay \$90,000 in compensation to the families of at least 16 victims killed in an air strike in Tulokhan west of Kandahar on May 21/22, 2006. The U.S. military said 16 civilians had died, but rights groups like the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) insisted the number was 37. However, U.S. Col. Tom Collins added the caveat that compensation would only be paid when security improved in the area. [\(111\)](#) In the night of April 17/18, 2006, U.S. soldiers shot and wounded three women and a newborn in Khost Province when the women were on their way home in a vehicle after one of them had given birth to a baby in a nearby clinic. The family of Gardez Khan was given compensation in the amount of 80,000 Afghanis (or \$1,600). [\(112\)](#)

On March 4, 2007, U.S. Marines were hit with gunfire and went on a shooting rampage killing and injuring scores of Afghans in Nangarhar Province. The U.S. Army later apologized to the affected people and offered a “condolence” sum of \$2,000 to each affected family. [\(113\)](#) In July 2007, families of 25 victims of a NATO air strike during June on the Alam Khan village, Gereshk district of Helmand Province, were awarded compensation in the amount of 2.2 million Afghanis (or \$50,000), or \$2,000 per dead relative. [\(114\)](#) The villages demanded that the NATO troops be punished for killing ordinary citizens. On September 27, 2007, a U.S. bombing raid killed 49 persons in Uruzgan. The families received 100,000 Afghanis (\$2,000) for a dead relative and 50,000 Afghanis (\$1,000) for those injured. [\(115\)](#) On the other hand, the family of a 13-year-old boy who was killed by U.S. troops’ gunfire in Kabul in March 2006, received \$4,000. In March 2007, the U.S. military offered \$2,000 in compensation to the family of Alexander Ivanov, a truck driver who was killed by U.S. troops’ gunfire at the entrance of the U.S. Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan. [\(116\)](#)

Condolence payments to Iraqis slain by U.S. occupation forces vary from \$500 – \$5,000 with the variation accounted for by the degree to which the death of a high-profile victim might have an impact on U.S.-Iraqi relations. [\(117\)](#) A typical case is that of Ali Kadem Hashem who in 2003 watched his wife burn to death and his three children die after an American missile hit his home. Almost a year later, M. Hashem received \$5,000 in a stack of crisp \$100 bills

(or \$1,250 per victim) and an “I’m sorry” from a young captain. (118) Or take the case of Said Abbas Ahmed who was given \$6,000 after an American missile killed his brother, his sister, his wife and his six children. He received \$1,000 for each dead family member; Abbas commented, “Are we not worth more than a few thousand?” (119) A U.S. official in 2007 is quoted in a U.S. Congressional Hearing making the astounding claim that compensation should be modest lest “this could cause incidents with people trying to get killed by our guys to financially guarantee their family’s future.” (120)

The U.S. military gives at most \$2,500 condolence payment (not compensation which would admit wrong-doing) for a death and half that for an injury. Canadian per person condolence payments to Afghans since 2006 range from \$1,100 – \$ 9,000. (121) British compensation aside from being totally sporadic and arbitrary are paltry: of the 1,289 claims filed by Afghan civilians, just 397 were settled and less than 150,000 pounds has been paid in compensation to civilians injured or killed in the intense fighting in Helmand. (122) Mirwais Ahmadzai who leads the AIHRC says these compensation figures are far too low. He pointed out that the “blood price” for a killing under Afghan customary law is more than ten times the U.S. offer. (123) According to Afghanistan’s current Islamic penal code, a person who mistakenly kills an individual should pay Islamic compensation (“Diyat”) equivalent to the price of forty camels to the affected family – or roughly \$25,000. (124)

The London-based Global Commons Institute reported (1995) that the cash value of a statistical life in the EC or the USA was ~ \$1’500’000 per head,

Centre for the Social and Economic Research of the Global Environment (C-SERGE) based in the UK has already published a valuation of the lives to be lost. In a recent research paper it stated that the cash value of a “statistical life” in the EC or the USA is \$1,500,000 per head, but in “poor” countries such as China, it is only \$150,000. (The disparate figures are derived from peoples’ ability-to-pay for damage insurance). In global cost/benefit analysis, this means therefore these economists discard a real Chinese life ten times more easily than a real life in the EC or the USA. (125)

I propose to compare compensation paid by the U.S, military to Afghan civilians to other instances of compensation. The following Table 10 describes a dozen such cases:

Table 10. The Monetary Value of Life Paid in Compensation Measured in PPP \$’s

Victim’s nationality	in nominal \$’s	GDP PPP\$’s/GDP US \$’s ratio	in PPP US \$’s
of Americans 1988*	\$1’850’000	1.00	\$1’850’000
of WTC victims 2002	\$ 1’800’000	1.00	\$ 1’800’000

of Italians 1998

\$1'900'000

1.09

\$ 2'071'000

of Japanese 2001

\$1'440'000

0.70

\$1'010'000

of Chinese 1999

\$ 150'000

4.58

\$ 687'000

of South Koreans 2002

\$162'500

1.7

\$276'250

of Iranians 1998

\$ 132'000'000/290

2.5-3

\$ 125,172

of Indians (Bhopal) 1984

\$3'200

5.01

\$16'032

of Afghans @ lifetime earnings\*\*\*

\$ 3'300 - \$ 5'000

~4\*\*

\$13,200-\$20,000

of Afghans @ US military

\$2000

~4

\$8'000

of Afghans @ Diyat

\$25,000

~ 4

\$100,000

\*average compensation paid to 270 victims of the 1988 Lockerbie, Scotland, Pan Am Flight 103 disaster [see Amanda Ripley, "WTC Victims: What's A Life Worth," Time (February 6, 2002)]. The value for victims of airplane crashes into World Trade Center is from Beverly Eckert, "My Silence Cannot Be Bought," USA Today (December 19, 2003). In 1984, in United States court cases, awards for a person negligently killed were \$500'000. Recent estimates used by the Environmental Protection Agency have been \$ 6.1 million [see the excellent



paper by Frank Ackerman and Lisa Heinzerling, "The \$ 6.1 Million Question" [Medford, MA.: Global Development and Environment Institute Working Paper No. 01-06, Tufts University, April 2002], available at: <http://ase.tufts.edu/gdae>). A comprehensive bibliography on the Economics of Disasters and Valuation of Life may be found at <http://www.geo.umass.edu/courses/geo510/economics.htm>. The figure for Bhopal is from <http://www.iced.org.au/files/iced/bhopal/injustice.html>

\*\*the Afghan ratio of 4 is estimated on basis of GDP data and it is close to that for Pakistan where prices are similar, a ratio of 4.25 in Pakistan. The Afghan and Pakistani economies have been very tightly linked monetarily.

\*\*\*an average Afghan earns about \$300 a year and life expectancy is in the low 40's.

The incidents listed illustrate recklessness admitted to by the United States. These include the terrible Union Carbide chemical leak in Bhopal, India in 1984; the downing in 1988 of an Iran Air A300 Airbus by a US warship causing 290 civilian deaths (126); the low-flying U.S. Marine EA-6B jet severing two cables of an Italian ski-lift on February 3, 1998, killing 20 skiers from six nations (within a year and threatened with an international lawsuit, the U.S. settled paying for 3/4 of the \$40 mn compensation) (127); and in November 2002, the U.S. Government paid out \$13 mn to the families of those killed when a U.S. Navy submarine had struck a Japanese fishing vessel in Feb. 2001. At 11:45 P.M. on May 7, 1999, a U.S. B-2 bomber deliberately dropped three JDAM 'smart' bombs upon the Chinese Embassy in New Belgrade. (128) Three young Chinese journalists were killed and 23 other persons in the embassy were wounded. Four months later, the United States agreed to pay \$ 4.5 million in damages to the families of the deceased and to the injured. This amounts to about nominal \$150'000 per victim. On July 22, 2002, a little over a month after a U.S. armored vehicle in South Korea struck and killed two South Korean teenagers, the U.S. military offered \$162'500 in compensation to each family. (129)

The data in Table 10 reveals that the West 'values' life in direct proportion to a nation's level of average material development. Afghanistan figures at the bottom along with the victims of Bhopal. When presented in PPP \$'s a clear hierarchy is revealed: Euro-Americans are worth most followed by East Asians whereas Central/South Asians figure last. Were an Afghan compensated for according to the traditional practice of the Diyat, the amount would approach that paid out (in PPP \$'s) by the United States to the family of a victim of the Iranian Airbus shooting-down. Instead, the U.S. military distributes a condolence payment one-fifteenth the amount offered the family of an Iranian victim. *Approximately US \$ 80'000 was spent on the rehabilitation of every sea otter affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill,* (130) that is, ten times the condolence amount offered by the U.S. military to the family of an Afghan killed.

Bombs away! US/NATO bombs kill about ten times more Afghan civilians with a ton of our "precision" bombs than we killed Serbs in 1999. (131) They (Afghans) are only worth one-tenth of an Alaskan sea otter rather than forty camels. We spend ten dollars on the military in Afghanistan to pursue our geo-strategic aims and \$1 on reconstructing the everyday lives of Afghans destroyed by thirty years of war (132) For (most) Americans, Afghans truly are lesser versions of humanity. Lest we forget, what did "America" do for Afghans when its geo-strategic goal of defeating the Soviets was achieved in 1989? America cut and ran.

**Conclusion: Obama's Afghanistan as a Surreal Hunting Estate**

*"The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results" - Albert Einstein*

Candidate Obama, his Clinton era advisers, and sadly all too many others fail to recognize a web of inter-connected, persistent constraints, or given realities. One might label them as the "five cannots": US/NATO cannot send 400,000 combat troops to garrison Afghanistan's towns, hamlets and countryside (133) (which is a pre-condition for reconstruction to win hearts and minds (134)); the US/NATO cannot impose a powerful central government upon Afghanistan (135); the US/NATO cannot neutralize the very effective least-cost weapons of choice of the Afghan resistance (IED's and suicide bombers); the US/NATO cannot seal the Afghan-Pakistan border and hence will not eliminate the vital sanctuary so necessary to a guerrilla movement); and lastly, the Pakistan government has never been able to dominate its vast tribal borderlands and there is no reason to believe such will change. Those who choose not to understand these "five cannots" advocate change in a vacuum. The present military impasse begets a political solution and the abandonment of any nation-building fantasy. (136)

The perceived poison of a foreign occupation, the rampant corruption, the all-too-frequent desecration of Islam by the occupiers, the sheer folly of the US/NATO seeking to extend the writ of a central government into the Pashtun tribal regions (137), the spiraling count of civilian deaths has shifted the Afghan struggle towards being a war of national liberation. The presence of foreign forces is furthermore according to the United Nations' senior expert on Al Qaeda, providing the glue with which Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda network is bonding support in the region. (138) Anatol Lieven of King's College (London) puts things aptly. Afghanistan is

Becoming a sort of surreal hunting estate, in which the U.S. and NATO breed the very terrorists they then track down. (139)

No matter that in Kabul even foreigners speak about being "inside a living hell." (140) No matter that veteran reporter Kathy Gannon notes that Afghans are fed up with the U.S. and Karzai. (141) No matter that Karzai and U.S. bombs have transformed what was once a backward looking Taliban primarily espousing sharia into a thriving modern movement of resistance and national liberation. (142) No matter that anti-Americanism is spiraling in Pakistan as U.S. raids take place. (143) Obama and McCain propose dusty death without end in Afghanistan. (144)

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## **Footnotes:**

1- Emphasized by Simon Jenkins, "Stop Killing the Taliban - They Offer the Best Hope of Beating Al-Qaeda," *The Times* (June 22, 2008) at [http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/simon\\_jenkins/article4187504.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/simon_jenkins/article4187504.ece)

2- See my "More of the Same Packaged as Change. Barack Obama and Afghanistan," *Counterpunch* (August 6, 2008) at <http://www.counterpunch.org/herold08062008.html>

3- Details on this sordid individual may be found in "Gul Agha Gets His Province Back," *New York Times Magazine* (January 6, 2002) at <http://www.petermaass.com/core.cfm?p=1&mag=74&magtype=1>

4- This point is made in detail in my book, *Afganistan Como un Espacio Vacio. El Perfecto Estado Colonial del Siglo XXI* (Madrid: Foca, ediciones y distribuciones generales S.L., 2007), 312 pp.

5- Aunohita Mojumdara, "Inside a Living Hell," *The Hindu* (July 20, 2008) at <http://www.hindu.com/mag/2008/07/20/stories/2008072050020100.htm>

6- Kathy Gannon, "AP Impact: Afghans Fed Up with Government, US," *Associated Press* (September 5, 2008) at <http://wiredispatch.com/news/?id=331772>

7- Emphasized by Simon Jenkins, "Stop Killing the Taliban - They Offer the Best Hope of Beating Al-Qaeda," *The Times* (June 22, 2008) at [http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/simon\\_jenkins/article4187504.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/simon_jenkins/article4187504.ece)

8- See my "More of the Same Packaged as Change. Barack Obama and Afghanistan," *Counterpunch* (August 6, 2008) at <http://www.counterpunch.org/herold08062008.html>

9- Details on this sordid individual may be found in "Gul Agha Gets His Province Back," *New York Times Magazine* (January 6, 2002) at <http://www.petermaass.com/core.cfm?p=1&mag=74&magtype=1>

10- This point is made in detail in my book, *Afganistan Como un Espacio Vacio. El Perfecto Estado Colonial del Siglo XXI* (Madrid: Foca, ediciones y distribuciones generales S.L., 2007), 312 pp.

11- Reported in Oxfam International, "Major Donors Failing in Afghanistan due to \$10 bn Aid Shortfall," *Oxfam.org* (March 20, 2008) at [http://www.oxfam.org/en/news/2008/pr080325\\_donors\\_failing\\_afghanistan](http://www.oxfam.org/en/news/2008/pr080325_donors_failing_afghanistan). See also John Hemming, "Afghan Aid 'Ineffective or Inefficient'; Military Spending Dwarfs Development," *Reuters* (November 20, 2007) at <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/ISL28902.htm>

12- As I have long argued, most recently in "An 'Empty' Buffer," *Frontline. India's National Magazine* 25, 13 (June 21 - July 4, 2008): 62-64 at <http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl2513/stories/20080704251306200.htm>

13- In the magisterial book by Jorg Friedrich, *Der Brand* (Munich: Propylaen Verlag, 2002), 592 pp.

14- As in Choe Sang-Hun, "Korean War's Lost Chapter: South Korea Says U.S. Killed Hundreds of Civilians," *New York Times* (August 3, 2008) at [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/03/world/asia/03korea.html?\\_r=1&partner=rssuserland&mc=rss&pagewanted=all&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/03/world/asia/03korea.html?_r=1&partner=rssuserland&mc=rss&pagewanted=all&oref=slogin)

15- See Neil Munro and Carl M. Cannon, "Data Bomb," *National Journal* (January 4, 2008) at <http://news.nationaljournal.com/articles/databomb/index.htm>

16- Paul Rogers, "Afghanistan: on the cliff-edge," *OpenDemocracy* (August 28, 2008) at <http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/afghanistan-the-edge-of-calamity>

17- For an analysis, see Edward S. Herman, David Peterson and George Szamuely, "Human Rights Watch in Service to the War Party: Including a Review of 'Weighing the Evidence: Lessons from the Slobodan Milosevic Trial' (Human Rights Watch, December 2006)," *ZNet* (February 25, 2007) at [http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Herman%20/HRW\\_Yugoslavia.html](http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Herman%20/HRW_Yugoslavia.html). For a broader critique of Human Rights Watch, see also Michael Barker, "Hijacking Human Rights," *ZSpace* (August 3, 2007) at <http://www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/14804>

18- I have elaborated upon this in "Truth about Afghan Civilian Casualties Comes Only through American Lenses for the U.S. Corporate Media [our modern-day Didymus]," in Peter Phillips and Project Censored [eds], *Censored 2003: the Year's Top 25 Stories* [New York: Seven Seas Publishing, 2002]: 265-294. Some reporters for the mainstream press have been able to maintain their independence, e.g., Kathy Gannon of the Associated Press, Carlotta Gall of the New York Times, etc.

19- Ibid.

20- For such photos which upset the mainstream narrative, one needs to go to peace activists or Central Asian sources, see for example Maso Notarianni, "Burnt Children after a NATO bomb attack. Their disfigured faces are the real face of war," *PeaceReporter.net* (October 31, 2006) at <http://www.rawa.org/temp/runews/rawanews.php?id=18>

21- After John Pilger, "Censorship by Omission," in Phil Hammond and Edward S. Herman (eds), *Degraded Capability. The Media and the Kosovo Crisis* (London: Pluto Press, 2000): 132-140.

22- Michael Griffin, "Picturing America's 'War on Terrorism' in Afghanistan and Iraq. Photographic Motifs as News Frames," *Journalism* 5, 4 (2004): 381-402 and Barbie Zelizer, "Death in Wartime: Photographs and the 'Other War' in Afghanistan," *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 10, 3 (2005): 26-55. As open as the Vietnam War was to photo journalists, as closed are America's more recent wars. Further discussion in Michael Kamber and Tim Arango, "Who Controls Images of Iraq War's Carnage," *New York Times* (August 2, 2008) at [http://www.startribune.com/world/26196639.html?location\\_refer=World:highlightModules:4](http://www.startribune.com/world/26196639.html?location_refer=World:highlightModules:4)

23- "US Military Jails 'Black Holes', say US Reporters for Afghan Reporter," *Agence France Presse* (July 21, 2008) at [http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition\\_id=10&categ\\_id=2&article\\_id=94304](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=10&categ_id=2&article_id=94304)

24- Jim Rutenberg, "Fox Portrays a War of Good and Evil, and Many Applaud," *New York Times* (December 3, 2001) at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C03E6D6113DF930A35751C1A9679C8B63>

25- See Glenn Greenwald, "The Government, the Media and Afghanistan," *Salon.org* (September 11, 2008) at <http://www.commondreams.org/print/32265>

26- See my "Dead Afghan Civilians: Disrobing the Non-Counters," *Cursor.org* (August 20, 2002) at <http://www.cursor.org/stories/noncounters.htm>

27- Nick Meo, "Britain Pays for a Surge of Spin Doctors in Kabul to Counter Taliban Propaganda," *The Telegraph* (September 13, 2008) at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/2827216/Britain-pays-for-surg>

[e-of-spin-doctors-in-Kabul-to-counter-Taliban-propaganda.html](http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/War_Peace/Tragic_Errors_Military.html)

28- Michael Mandel, *How America Gets Away with Murder: Illegal Wars, Collateral Damage and Crimes against Humanity* (Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2004): 49

29- Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* [London: Allen Lane, 1977]: 156.

30- John MacLachlen Gray, "The Terrible Downside of 'Working the Dark Side'," *The Globe & Mail* [October 31, 2001]: R3.

31- The Spanish-American War does not qualify as it was waged on the land of Afro-Cubans.

32- Herold (2001), op. cit.

33- Argued in Nicholas J. Wheeler, "Dying for 'Enduring Freedom': Accepting Responsibility for Civilian Casualties in the War against Terror," *International Relations* 16, 2 (2002): 205-225 available at <http://ire.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/16/2/205>

34- See Edward S. Herman, "'Tragic Errors' in U.S. Military Policy. Targeting the Civilian Population," *Z Magazine* 15, 8 (September 2002) at [http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/War\\_Peace/Tragic\\_Errors\\_Military.html](http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/War_Peace/Tragic_Errors_Military.html)

35- Mark Benjamin, "When is an Accidental Civilian Death not an Accident?" *Salon.com* (July 30, 2007) at [http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2007/07/30/collateral\\_damage/](http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2007/07/30/collateral_damage/)

36- Dahr Jamail and Tom Engelhardt, "An Increasingly Aerial Occupation," *Antiwar.com* (December 14, 2005) at <http://www.antiwar.com/engelhardt/?articleid=8255>

37- Patrick Coburn, "The US Strategy for Afghanistan Won't Work," *The Independent* (September 15, 2008) at <http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/patrick-cockburn-the-us-strategy-for-afghanistan-wont-work-930874.html>

38- Incidentally, the same myth was applied to Hezbollah in Lebanon in July 2006. As Norman Finkelstein argues, Alan Dershowitz has repeatedly alleged in numerous op-ed pieces that Israel typically takes "extraordinary steps to minimize civilian casualties," while Hezbollah's typical tactics were to "live among civilians, hide their missiles in the homes of civilians, fire them at civilian targets from densely populated areas, and then use civilians as human shields against counterattacks." No evidence is ever presented to substantiate such claims of using human shields. No mention is made of Israel using such indiscriminate weapons as cluster bombs fired by artillery or dropped by aircraft (see Norman Finkelstein, "Descent into Moral Barbarism. Should Alan Dershowitz Target Himself for Assassination?" *Counterpunch* (August 12/13, 2006) at <http://counterpunch.org/finkelstein08122006.html>). See also Mitch Prothero, "The 'Hiding Among Civilians' Myth," *Salon.org* (July 28, 2006) at <http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2006/07/28/hezbollah/>

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