

Afghanistan, “Operation Enduring Slaughter”: Ten Bloody Years

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As the clever hopes expire
Of a low dishonest decade:
Waves of anger and fear
Circulate over the bright And darkened lands of the earth,
Out of the mirror they stare,
Imperialism’s face And the international wrong. (W.H. Auden, 1907-1973.)

What a murderous, infanticidal, appalling, shameful, ignorant – and arguable, decade-long war crime.

“Operation Enduring Freedom”, turned “Operation Enduring Slaughter.”

Announcing the assault on Afghanistan on 7th October 2001, George W. Bush said, citing “Enduring Freedom”, that it defended: “... the freedom of people everywhere to live and raise their children free from fear.”

Further, that: “If any government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocents, they have become outlaws and murderers themselves, (a) lonely path ...”

Moreover: “ the oppressed people of Afghanistan will know the generosity of America and our allies. As we strike military targets, we’ll also drop food, medicine and supplies, to the starving and suffering men, women and children of Afghanistan.”

“We’re a peaceful nation”, the President assured the world.

In London, “ally”, the then Prime Minister Blair was reading from the same script: “We are peaceful people. But we know that sometimes to safeguard peace, we have to fight ... We only do it if the cause is just. This cause is just.”

In pursuit of justness, between 7th October and 10th December 2001, 12,000 bombs were dropped in 4,710 sorties, on a population of just 28 million people (Globe and Mail, 19th January 2002) with 42% of the population aged 0-14; children being thus raised in unimaginable terror, rather than “free from fear.”

With the bombs, aid parcels were indeed dropped. They were the identical colouring to the

accompanying cluster bombs. Resultantly, those who rushed to collect brightly coloured yellow packages, in anticipation – so often children – had limbs blown off at best, or life blown away. Exited anticipation turned terminal. The US belatedly issued warnings.(i)

Between October 2001 and early 2002, United States aircraft dropped 1,228 cluster bombs containing 248,056 bomblets, in 232 strikes on locations throughout the country., according to Cluster Munitions Monitor.(ii)

It is unclear whether they have been further used. Though Coalition forces have confirmed deploying cluster munitions for possible use.(iii)

Lest the indiscriminate carnage of the early days be obscured by that of the subsequent years mass graves and ongoing, frenetic destruction by :“The United States of America, a friend to the Afghan people, and of almost a billion worldwide who practice the Islamic faith”, as also declared by Bush in his 7th October address.

On 11th October, Khorum a village of mud huts, 29 kilometres west of Jalalabad, was “systematically bombed” by US warplanes. As many as 200 people were killed, with whole families wiped out. (iv)

“Survivors accounts were consistent. Just after early morning prayers, two US warplanes circled, then attacked the village.”

On the first run, only a few were injured, but as people came out, they returned twice, killing men, women and children, including refugees from Jalalabad, who had fled to the isolated dwellings feeling they would be safer there. There was no military, or Taliban presence nearby., wrote Norman Dixon, in his carefully researched piece at the time.

Donald Rumsfeld’s denials, first as “ridiculous”, then lies, then declaring “certain knowledge” of a nearby military installation (statements now so familiar in mass murders across Afghanistan, Iraq and since March, Libya) were soon found to be baseless.

A reporter in the village showed Nightline “extensive footage” of the destruction, confirming: “that the village had been ‘completely obliterated’ estimating at least 100 people had been killed. Giant craters were where houses once stood. Dead animal carcasses littered the area. Survivors angrily denied that there were military installations or al Qaeda ‘training camps’ anywhere near Khorum.”

Further: “Having run out of targets within days of the start of the bombing campaign, Washington has authorised pilots to seek ‘emerging targets’, meaning that they can blast just about anything they like.

“Four workers employed by a United Nations mine-clearing operation died while they slept, when a US cruise missile demolished their Kabul building in early hours of October 9th.

On October 12th, a 900-kilogram satellite-guided US ‘smart’ bomb, hit houses almost two kilometres from Kabul airport, destroying four house, killing at least four people.

“On October 13th, a bomb landed in a busy market in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, killing five people.

“A refugee (stated) that 160 people were taken to hospital when US bombs hit Khushkam Bhat, near Jalalabad airport, on October 13th. An unknown number may have died. More than 100 houses were ‘damaged or flattened’.

“On October 16th, at least two US bombs hit Red Cross warehouses near Kabul, wounding an employee, and setting them on fire. Wheat, medicines and supplies were destroyed. The roofs of the buildings were emblazoned with vast Red Cross insignia.

“The Pentagon confirmed the strike.

“The previous day as US missile exploded just 150 metres from a World Food Programme warehouse in Kabul as trucks were loading, injuring a worker.

“Later on the same day that US warplanes had bombed the Red Cross warehouses, President Bush was visiting the headquarters of the American Red Cross in Washington to promote his appeal for US kids to give a dollar each for the children of Afghanistan.

“ ‘ Winter arrives early in Afghanistan. It’s cold, really cold. “The children need warm clothing, they need food, they need medicines. And thanks to the American children, fewer children in Afghanistan will suffer this winter’, Bush told an assembled group of children.

He didn’t mention the bombs.” (v)

Lying and destroying food stocks, medicines and essential services are tried and tested (illegal) tactics. In Iraq the UK and US repeatedly did the same in 1991, and then between 1993 and the 2003 invasion – even dropping lighted flares on harvested wheat and crops (a crime still, allegedly, ongoing.)

In Libya, the same is happening – the vocabulary has changed, they call it bombing: “command and control posts.”

If the above carnage is a tiny snap shot, of several very small areas, and that wrought in little over three months, what is the true cost of Afghanistan, in human terms, little over 3,650 days later?

In June 2004, with “President” Hamid Karzai, in the White House, Bush declared Afghanistan a success, indeed, a model for Iraq. Womens’ rights and education had “risen from the ashes”, Iraq would follow in the same mould. (China Daily, 16th June 2004.) Iraq is now estimated to have an upper estimate of approaching two million excess, invasion-related deaths, since 2003.

Just before last year’s marking of the ninth anniversary of the onslaught on Afghanistan, of which George W. Bush had predicted in his invasion speech: “.we will win this conflict by the patient accumulation of successes ..”, Professor Marc Herold wrote an encyclopaedic, searing summary of these “successes.”(vi)

Included was: “In Afghanistan, according to the United Nations’ Childrens Fund, about 600 under-five children perish every day from preventable diseases, such as diarrhea, cholera, dysentery, typhoid, parasitic worms and pneumonia.”

Dr Gideon Polya, author of “Body Count – Global Avoidable Mortality Deaths since 1950”, cites the death rate for under 5 Afghan infants, as higher in percentage than their Polish

counterparts in Nazi occupied Poland, or French-Jewish children in Nazi occupied France.

Afghanistan's child mortality is the second highest on earth. (vii) Life expectancy for men and women is just 44 years old. Further, according to the Afghan Human Rights Monitor, in 2010, an average of 7 civilians were killed by occupying forces, every day. Given the remoteness of so much of the country, an underestimate almost certainly.

In Blair's near carbon copy of Bush's onslaught-day speech, he said: "It is now nearly a month since the atrocity occurred (9/11.)

It is more than two weeks since an ultimatum was delivered to the Taliban to yield up the terrorists or face the consequences... They were given the chance of siding with justice (or) terror. They chose terror."

Well, no, as Iraq's non-existent "WMD's" were a fabrication for war, so was this. On the same day, CNN reported:

"The White House on Sunday rejected an offer from Afghanistan's ruling Taliban to try suspected terrorist leader Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan under Islamic law.

The offer came as the United States massed forces in southwest Asia for a possible strike against Afghanistan if the Taliban refuse to surrender bin Laden. A Bush administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, rejected the Taliban offer and repeated U.S. demands that bin Laden be turned over unconditionally.

The Taliban's ambassador to Pakistan, Abdul Salam Zaeef, made the offer at a news conference in Islamabad. Zaeef said the Taliban would detain bin Laden and try him under Islamic law if the United States makes a formal request and presents them with evidence." Emphasis mine, CNN 7th October 2001. (viii)

On 7th October this year, General Stanley McCrystal, who commanded coalition forces in Afghanistan 2009-2010, told the US Foreign Relations Committee that the US had gone in to Afghanistan with a "frighteningly simplistic view." After ten years they still lack knowledge, were little better than 50% towards reaching their war goals. (That gas pipeline through the country still not built, then?)

"We didn't know enough and we still don't know enough," he said. "Most of us, me included, had a very superficial understanding of the situation and history, and we had a frighteningly simplistic view of recent history, the last 50 years." Can they not read? Did they truly know nothing of this "graveyard of Empires"?

In 330 BC., even Alexander the Great met his match, nearly being killed by an arrow to his leg and with one of his soldiers writing:

"Here the foe does not meet us in pitched battle, as other armies we have dueled in the past. . . . Even when we defeat him, he will not accept our dominion. He comes back again and again. He hates us with a passion whose depth is exceeded only by his patience and his capacity for suffering."(ix)

Little has changed. Seemingly, US Generals and military planners ignore the lessons of history.

They did not make enough effort, said the General, to understand the culture; forces made little effort to learn the languages. There forty nine listed languages in Afghanistan, General. And here is just one of many history reading lists, with, at a quick count, about three hundred titles.(x)

Going in to Iraq under two years later, whinged the General, didn't make things any easier. It didn't make them any easier for the Iraqis in their mass graves since, either. The culture and language was also not understood there. Remember the countless shootings at road blocks, where culturally ignorant troops stood with arm up, palm out? Uncounted car loads of families, individuals, ended blown to pieces as they resultantly drove through. It means "Welcome."

"The headlines of the past decade in Afghanistan have been written in blood", wrote Declan Welsh this week, in the Guardian, adding: "the greatest failures have been political."

Indeed, and towering arrogance and pig ignorance of not even the desire to learn and understand the ways of ancient lands, McDonald-free civilizations. Simply to kill, smash, grab - and then blame the invaded.

To return to George W. Bush's words, Britain and America, have seemingly become: "government sponsors, the outlaws and killers of innocents, they have become outlaws and murderers themselves, (a) lonely path ..."

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Notes

i. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/monitoring/media_reports/1624787.stm

ii. <http://www.stopclustermunitions.org/news/?id=3394>

iii. *ibid*

iv. <http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/24053>

v. *ibid*.

vi. <http://globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=21174>

vii. <http://pulitzercenter.org/articles/afghanistan-poverty-child-mortality>

viii.

http://articles.cnn.com/2001-10-07/us/ret.us.taliban_1_abdul-salam-zaeef-surrender-bin-taliban-offer?_s=PM:US

ix. <http://www.stevenpressfield.com/the-afghan-campaign/>

x. <http://www.afghanweb.com/books/books.html>

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