

US Occupation Forces in Afghanistan. Incompetent, Irreverent, and Irrelevant

By [Dana Visalli](#)

Global Research, March 18, 2013

Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [AFGHANISTAN](#)

On Fridays in Kabul there is a bazaar at the edge of the U.S. military base, Camp Eggers, so I went one day in March to have a look. Penetrating the perimeter area takes some time; there are four checkpoints manned by Afghan soldiers and U.S. contractors as one walks down a half mile alley of concrete blast walls topped by razor wire. At last there is a guarded doorway that leads down a narrow concrete hall, which ends at another checkpoint, and then a last little hut where a badge is issued to visit the bazaar. My American passport was an adequate ticket to gain entry.

The bazaar is a simple affair in a courtyard between blast walls, where Afghan women and girls (on this day, men on other Fridays) set out their simple wares, and soldiers, mostly American, come to relax, peruse, and purchase mementos. The soldiers only relax so much; all of them had at least a pistol, and many were in helmets and flack jackets, toting submachine guns.

On several occasions I tried to engage the American soldiers in conversation, but they were reticent in the extreme to talk. I asked one how the food was on base, and he responded that, "We are not allowed to talk with outsiders." I asked another how often they went beyond the gate and he replied, "We can't comment on operations." I asked a third how he felt about most U.S. forces being scheduled to leave in 2014, and he said, "I don't really think about it, sir; I'm just here doing my job."

After I had been perusing the bazaar for an hour, an American officer suddenly took offense at the camera hanging around my neck and demanded to see my 'press pass' and know 'who I was with.' I had no pass and wasn't with anyone, which created quite a stir. I was taken to a small hut on the base proper where as series of increasingly higher ranked officers expressed their agitation at my presence. One ordered a young female recruit to check the images on my camera and delete any that were of 'infrastructure' (which could only be blast walls), but she was afraid to touch my camera without permission from her immediate superior officer.

For the soldiers gathered, the situation didn't fit any previous training or SOP (standard operating procedure), and the entire throng seemed unsure how to proceed. I had the discomforting feeling that everyone on the base was programmed to talk and act according to a script, almost as if they had forfeited the capacity to think and speak for themselves in order to retain their membership in the military fraternity.

One gets this same impression of unthinking rigidity from American military field operations. One example out of many is an airdrop of supplies to troops on the ground in Badghis

province in 2009. The airdrop fell into the fast-flowing Murghab River, along with two paratroopers, who drowned. Five soldiers went into the river to retrieve the airdrop and four of them drowned. American troops initiated a search operation along the Murghab River and came under accidental 'friendly fire' attack from U.S. aircraft, killing seven American troops. Friendly fire also hit eight Afghan living compounds and killed another 20 people.¹

Another example of expert incompetence occurred in February of 2010, when U.S. forces entered a village in the Paktia Province in Afghanistan. After surrounding a home where a celebration of a new birth was taking place, the soldiers shot dead two male civilians who exited the house in order to inquire why they had been surrounded. They then shot and killed three female relatives, including a pregnant mother of ten, a pregnant mother of six, and a teenager. These U.S. special forces soldiers proceeded to dig the bullets out of their victims' bodies, then lied to their superiors about what had transpired.

When the Pentagon issued a statement on the raid it claimed that the dead males were terrorists, the bodies of the three women had been found by U.S. forces bound and gagged inside the home, and it suggested that the women had already been killed by the time the U.S. had arrived, likely the victim of "honor killings" by the Taliban militants killed in the attack. This was all a fabrication, and the Pentagon was later forced to admit as much.² Such bumbling efforts by the American military are so commonplace as to be legion. One could write a book about them; in fact many people have, including David Swanson's *War is a Lie* and Nick Turse's recent *Kill Everything that Moves*.

A classic tale of ineptitude during the Vietnam war appears in Jonathan Shay's *Achilles in Vietnam*. During one patrol in the dry season, a U.S. Army squad ran out of water. They walked for a day and a half in search of something to drink in Vietcong-controlled territory. When men started to collapse from dehydration in the heat, an officer's plea for emergency resupply was heeded: a helicopter flew over and "bombed" the squad with cases of Tab, seriously injuring one of the men. The major whose helicopter dropped the Tab was recalled to evacuate the casualty. There was no enemy activity. The major later put himself in for and had received the Bronze Star for resupplying the troops and evacuating the wounded "under fire."³ Remember that story the next time you see a soldier's chest full of medals.

There is one more rather salient point illustrating the blind obedience of the members of the U.S. military, and that is the fact that every war that the organization has fought since the end of World War II has been completely unnecessary. For example, there could have been no war between the north and the south of Korea if the U.S. had not divided the country in half two weeks before the end of World War II—without consulting the Koreans.⁴ The U.S. established a military government in the south by restoring key Japanese administrators who had ruled Korea prior to the Second World War, thus maintaining an unjust status quo against the wishes of the Korean people. Most Americans—including most soldiers—do not know this because they know nothing about Korean history.

Similarly Vietnam declared its independence from the French—who had ruled it as a colony since 1887—at the end of World War II. The U.S. supported France's effort to retake its colony after the world war.⁵ When the French were decisively defeated in 1954, the U.S. continued the pointless and meaningless war on its own for another 20 years, carpet bombing Laos and Cambodia for ten years at the same time for good measure. More recently, the U.S. military invaded Afghanistan after 9/11 even though most of the hijackers were Saudi (and none were Afghan), and soon after fought an eight year war in Iraq to

remove weapons of mass destruction that did not exist.

An archeologist recently described the proto-human Neanderthals as “clever but stupid,” because while their stone weapons were well made, their behavior changed very little for more than 300,000 years. Does this not sound like an apt description of the U.S. military, who wield clever weapons but engage in the same irrational, fruitless, stupid, destructive behavior year after year and decade after decade? We as a nation are handicapped with a massively dysfunctional Department of War composed mostly men who are unable to think for themselves and whose primary skill and training is killing other human beings. At this endeavor it can be said that they are quite successful; it is estimated that the United States military has killed between 20 and 30 million people in their own countries, many of them in their home cities and villages and some of them in their own beds, since the end of World War II.⁶

Twenty-two veterans and one active-duty military individual now commit suicide per day.⁷ The military brass spin in confused circles as they strive to grasp why young men who find themselves murdering other human beings for an endless succession of fabrications and falsehoods are traumatized for life by their experiences. Forty per cent of the homeless men on the streets of America are veterans.⁸ Why? Because the U.S. military is a life-destroying organization. First it destroys other cultures, then it destroys its own soldiers, then it destroys the economy of this American nation. Almost all of the \$16 trillion national debt owes its etiology to our many wars.¹⁰

The near-term solution may be to turn the entire military-industrial complex into a welfare society, in which all members currently employed continue to show up and to be paid, but do absolutely nothing while at work. The nation and the world would be immeasurably improved in an instant. Afterwards we can slowly dismantle the organization as the old soldiers die off, and then reallocate our diminishing resources from life-destroying to life-enhancing endeavors.

Dana Visalli is an ecologist and organic farmer living in Twisp, Washington. He is available for powerpoint presentations on the topics covered in this article in the Pacific Northwest. Contact him at dana@methownet.com

See also Afghanistan, Ecology and the End of War at <http://www.globalresearch.ca/afghanistan-ecology-and-the-end-of-war/5326749>

Notes

1. http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/KK13Df05.html
2. http://www.salon.com/2010/04/05/afghanistan_34/
3. Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character, Jonathan Shay, 1995.
4. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_War
5. <http://www.colorado.edu/AmStudies/lewis/2010/vietnam.htm>
6. <http://www.methownaturalist.com/20-War,Ecology&Intelligence.pdf>
- 7 .

http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_slatest/2013/02/01/veterans_and_suicide_new_veterans_affairs_study_finds_that_about_22_veterans.html

8. <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/who.html>

9. <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/who.html> 10. <http://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Economic-Consequences-of-War.pdf>

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Dana Visalli](#), Global Research, 2013

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Dana Visalli](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca