

Colonialism and Greed: Trump Considers Afghan War Expansion to Exploit Minerals

Trump is reportedly being encouraged by corporate executives to take advantage of Afghanistan's mineral wealth

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Featured image: Trump appears committed to the belief that mineral extraction “could be one justification for the United States to stay engaged in” Afghanistan, the New York Times reported. (Photo: DVIDSHUB/Flickr/cc)

As the 16th anniversary of the U.S. invasion of [Afghanistan](#) approaches, President Donald Trump is [reportedly being pressured](#) by a billionaire financier and a chemical executive to extend the scope of the conflict for one simple, [greedy](#) reason: to exploit Afghanistan's mineral reserves.

According to James Risen and Mark Landler of the *New York Times*, the Trump administration is “considering sending an envoy to Afghanistan to meet with mining officials” as the president is receiving encouragement from Stephen Feinberg, the billionaire head of DynCorp, and Michael Silver, the head of American Elements, a firm that specializes in “extracting rare-earth minerals.”

“In 2010, American officials estimated that Afghanistan had untapped mineral deposits worth nearly \$1 trillion,” Risen and Landler note.

This large figure reportedly “caught the attention of” the president, who has in the past argued that the biggest failure of the U.S. in Iraq was not “[taking](#)” the country's oil.

Trump is hardly the first president to notice and eagerly examine Afghanistan's mineral reserves.

“In 2006, the George W. Bush administration conducted aerial surveys of the country to map its mineral resources,” Risen and Landler note. “Under President Barack Obama, the Pentagon set up a task force to try to build a mining industry in Afghanistan—a challenge that was stymied by rampant corruption, as well as security problems and the lack of roads, bridges or railroads.”

Nonetheless, Trump appears to be committed to the belief that mineral extraction “could be one justification for the United States to stay engaged in the country,” despite warnings from security analysts that such a strategy could risk further deadly confrontations with the

Taliban.

If Trump moves forward with a mineral extraction plan, Eric Levitz of *New York Magazine* [adds](#), there is a serious

“danger of feeding the Taliban top-notch propaganda. It’s hard to win hearts and minds, when you’re also trying to win minerals and mines.”

But as *Gizmodo*’s Adam Clark Estes [observes](#), such concerns are unlikely to move Trump, whose “greed has led the man [to leave a path of destruction behind him](#) on his pursuit of profit and glory.”

“That sort of habit makes some people rich in the business world, at the expense of making others poor,” Estes writes. “When you’re talking about global politics and terrorism, however, people die, and nations fail.”

As *Common Dreams* [reported](#) earlier this month, the Trump White House has been consulting with high-profile war profiteers who have argued that the way forward in Afghanistan is to further privatize military operations in the country. White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon and senior advisor Jared Kushner reportedly “recruited” both Feinberg and Blackwater founder Erik Prince to lay out a war plan for the president.

Critics denounced this development as a step toward “colonialism,” and commentators had similar words for Trump’s apparent attraction to Afghanistan’s mineral wealth.

Law professor and former White House lawyer Andy Wright concluded that the *Times* report lays bare Trump’s “[British Empire thinking](#),” which places plunder over “threat-based security.”

so... more lives and treasure, then <https://t.co/edkkPho4Grpic.twitter.com/33LgXUVINI>

— Matt Pearce (@mattdpearce) [July 26, 2017](#)

Colonialism is back — and dumber than ever!<https://t.co/ZMRWbOizPh>

— Eric Levitz (@EricLevitz) [July 26, 2017](#)

Almost funny how we occasionally have to reverse engineer a "national interest" for our longest war <https://t.co/tUtjjcrlhj>

— Chase Madar (@ChaseMadar) [July 26, 2017](#)

This is like free PR for the Taliban about US intentions under Trump. <https://t.co/kq4kjyoWma>

— Laura Rozen (@lrozen) [July 26, 2017](#)

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