

Empty words over hopeless Afghan war

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NATO troops in Afghanistan have recently once again hit people's houses, causing civilian casualties. White House spokesman Jay Carney said Washington was taking the situation "very seriously."

Time and again Americans have said those empty words. Time and again have they taken reports of civilian casualties "very seriously." Yet nothing changes, and US troops continue routinely shooting and bombing civilians in Afghanistan.

Even Afghan President Hamid Karzai, whose power relies solely on NATO's presence, lost his patience a few days ago. The outrage across the nation and among Karzai's associates reached a point where Karzai was forced to give the Americans his "last warning." Should the attacks continue, he said, Afghanistan would regard NATO troops as "occupiers."

In fact, they are occupiers, and few Afghans harbor any doubt about that. Furthermore, this occupation is even worse than the Soviet one, because, as the Afghan people themselves admit, while the Soviets killed civilians too, they at least built schools, power stations and roads, whereas the Americans only shoot, bomb and wreak havoc.

"NATO and American forces have been warned repeatedly that their arbitrary and unnecessary operations cause the deaths of innocent people," Karzai said. "But it appears that nobody listens to us. NATO should realize that they have no right to attack Afghan villages. The Afghan people can no longer tolerate this," he said.

"It's just a tragic fact that some civilian casualties may be inevitable and unavoidable," US State Secretary Hillary Clinton retorted brusquely. That means civilian deaths will continue in Afghanistan - in their hundreds and thousands. And this in the presidency of the peace-loving Obama, not of the hawkish George W. Bush. This merely proves that regardless of who is president, the United States remains committed to its policy everywhere, from Libya to Afghanistan.

But let's ask ourselves what US and NATO troops are actually doing in Afghanistan. They have been there for so long that nobody seems to remember why they went there in the first place. They went in because the Taliban, which controlled Afghanistan in 2001, had refused to extradite bin Laden after 9/11. In other words, their objective was to capture bin Laden dead or alive, to quote George W. Bush. But now that bin Laden has been killed (incidentally, outside Afghanistan - if we are to believe the US administration), why are US troops still in Afghanistan?

We are told that they are fighting Al-Qaeda and international terrorism, thus protecting Central Asian republics, which should be in Russia's interest. However, the ever-elusive Al-

Qaeda is a network organization, and while you cut off one of its heads, it grows ten more.

Anyway, the United States has demonstrated that it is possible to fight Al-Qaeda forever without inflicting tangible damage on it. Al-Qaeda is all over the world, from Morocco to Indonesia, via Yemen and Pakistan. Why then is it Afghanistan that has been ravaged by a large-scale war for the past ten years? And what do the US and NATO expect to achieve there? Regardless of what they guard Central Asia against and how many Taliban they kill, it is perfectly clear that this war is hopeless. "The Americans and their allies are winning all the battles, and they are losing the war," German magazine Der Spiegel says.

It seems that the US is continuing this war mechanically, simply out of fear of a disgraceful withdrawal. It is clear that sooner or later America will have to engage the Taliban in a dialogue, work out an agreement with them and eventually include them in the government. No wonder Karzai and his cohorts are buying up property in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. They know better than anyone how fragile their regime is.

To summarize, it is not freedom or democracy that civilians die for in Afghanistan. In fact, Americans are unable to give them those things anyway. They die because the United States is reluctant to admit the obvious. We saw the same thing happen in Vietnam years ago, and yet the US had to quit after all. How many women and children have to die in Afghanistan before the US finally realizes that it is waging a hopeless and pointless war?

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