

Million Dead, \$1.8 Trillion Spent On Decade-Long U.S. “War On Terror”

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US pays price in blood and treasure for war on terror

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In the decade since 9/11 about a million people worldwide have lost their lives in what is now known as the global war on terror.

The term “war on terror”, was first used by President George Bush on September 16th, 2001, at Camp David as the US began to configure its military response to Osama bin Laden’s attacks on New York and the Pentagon.

In the weeks and months following 9/11, the Bush administration launched a series of robust military and intelligence interventions worldwide. The first phase started with the invasion of Afghanistan, or Operation Enduring Freedom, which began in October 2001.

The war aims were simple - to remove the Taliban leadership in Kabul and deny al-Qaeda physical sanctuary within the country. The US aimed to destroy al-Qaeda and disrupt its capacity to mount international operations from Afghan soil. It also sought to capture or kill bin Laden.

In January 2002, the US began the lesser publicised Operation Enduring Freedom - Philippines, to destroy the Islamist terror groups Jemaah Islamiyah and the Abu Sayaf group who had been co-ordinating terrorist operations throughout the Philippines and Indonesia from the island of Besilan...

In October 2002, the US military started African military operations from Djibouti, establishing Operation Enduring Freedom - Horn of Africa, designed to identify and destroy al-Qaeda affiliated Islamist terror cells within Ethiopia, Somalia, Chad and Niger.

This operation was subsequently broadened to include Operation Enduring Freedom – Trans Sahara, widening the scope of its operations to Central Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. This little-known war on terror in Africa has been fought in the main by thousands of US special forces and has been overshadowed by US military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan.

In March 2003, the US invaded Iraq in Operation Iraqi Freedom. The war aims of the US in Iraq were less clear than in its other interventions. Faulty and false intelligence reports on so-called weapons of mass destruction were mobilised as a motivation to attack Iraq.

The initial invasion phase, involving approximately 200,000 coalition troops, managed to topple Saddam Hussein's regime. Saddam was subsequently captured, tried and hanged in Iraq. But no weapons of mass destruction were discovered and the invasion had the unintended consequence of strengthening Iran's influence in the region.

A decade after the Twin Towers attacks, the US continues to wage its war on terror on several continents – from the Horn of Africa and Yemen to Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The term “war on terror” has entered the language as a catch-all phrase for everything from the inconvenience of security checks at airports to drone attacks in Pakistan. Officially, however, the global war on terror is now over. The Obama administration has rebranded and renamed the Global War on Terror, the Overseas Contingency Operation.

Since March 2009, the Pentagon and US Department of Defense have been requested to refrain from using the term, Global War on Terror.

In terms of blood and treasure, the wars have been costly for the US and Nato. In Iraq, the US and its allies lost almost 5,000 troops. More than 32,000 were wounded. In Afghanistan, where casualty rates have increased five-fold in five years, the US and its allies have lost almost 3,000 killed in action with a further 13,000 wounded.

More than 10,000 US and foreign mercenaries – euphemistically termed security contractors – have also been killed and injured in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The strain of a decade of war on America's volunteer army has been heavy. According to the US Army Surgeon General 66,935 US troops suffer from acute combat stress reaction. In addition, the US Congressional Research Service has reported that a staggering 178,876 US veterans have suffered traumatic brain injuries. Almost 2,000 of these veterans are amputees and hundreds have also died of self-inflicted wounds or suicide while on active service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The rate of suicide among US troops has more than doubled since 9/11. For civilians, the cost of war has been especially high. While estimates vary, British medical journal The Lancet suggests that a minimum of 655,000 Iraqi civilians were killed during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Similar studies suggest that approximately 4,000 Afghan civilians have died during Operation Enduring Freedom. These figures represent those killed by both coalition troops and belligerent forces within Iraq and Afghanistan. The majority of civilian casualties, in both countries, were inflicted by insurgents.

The US Congressional Research Service, in its March 2011 report, states that the Overseas Contingency Operation has cost the US taxpayer \$1.3 trillion – \$130 billion per annum since

9/11. At present, US military operations worldwide cost \$386 million per day, or \$4,000 dollars per second. According to US Congressional estimates, the final bill will total \$1.8 trillion.

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