

NATO Carnage in Afghanistan

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[Stop the War](#)

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In one weekend in Afghanistan, two separate 'green on blue' attacks have left six troops dead — two of them British — killed by Afghan police. Another British soldier was killed by a roadside bomb.

And two US marines were killed when the Taliban attacked Camp Bastion, the heart of occupation military operations.

That is nine soldiers in three days. Most alarming for the occupying powers is the green-on-blue attacks by Afghan forces, which now account for around a quarter of NATO deaths.

To have the very Afghan forces being trained to take over security for the country by the end of 2014 turn their guns on their western trainers must put into doubt the whole exit strategy and create a level of fear and insecurity among the occupying armies far beyond the actual numbers being killed.

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The timing for this weekend's violence could not be worse for the UK Defence Secretary Philip Hammond. Only last week, he was claiming that [progress was so significant in Afghanistan that the Ministry of Defence was accelerating the withdrawal of British troops](#), bringing home many before the planned withdrawal date of 2014.

Hammond looks pretty stupid now. Or maybe deceitful. It is hard to assess exactly what measures of ignorance, wilful self deception, foolishness and deceit has allowed successive government ministers to claim that "we are winning" in Afghanistan. Or to imply that somehow there is a relatively smooth and successful path to an orderly western departure.

From the beginning of the war, our government has been helped by a supine mainstream media, its reporters 'embedded' with the troops, and doing little more than regurgitating army press releases and human interest stories, [the deployment of Prince Harry](#) — third in

line to the British throne — being the latest example.

Most members of parliament — the exceptions can be counted on the fingers of two hands — regard the war as at worst inconvenient background noise and hope that it won't become an issue at elections. What they should be doing in parliament is reflecting the views of their constituents, who by a large majority — according to the latest polls — want the British troops withdrawn now.

But it must be dawning on the politicians and media who have supported this war for eleven years that, if — as Phillip Hammond suggested was possible — British troops begin leaving earlier than the announced exit date, it will not be a sign of victory, but of defeat.

Just days after the cosy media reporting on Prince Harry's return to Afghanistan, the Taliban announced explicitly that it wants to kidnap or kill him. Whatever the truth of their claim that this was the purpose of last Friday's attack on Camp Bastion — where Harry is stationed as a helicopter pilot — the Taliban's offensive that killed two US Marines, and injured nine more, was highly significant.

Camp Bastion is regarded as safe territory. It is in the middle of flat desert and is the destination of choice for visiting politicians who want their pictures taken when visiting the troops. Presumably that's why Prince Harry is there.

Yet the Taliban made a serious breach in its defences. The deaths and injuries to US forces were enough of a blow. But — and as yet little reported — the Taliban attack also destroyed six US Harrier jets, severely damaged two more, destroyed three refuelling stations and damaged aircraft hangars. "Our resources in the south — including aircraft — are already stretched," a US Marine officer said. "We couldn't afford this loss, and [our troops on the ground are going to feel this.](#)"

If Camp Bastion is the safest place for NATO troops, we can only surmise which are the most dangerous.

The impact on the morale and discipline of the NATO troops can only be a matter of conjecture — fighting as they are a war they cannot win, and subjected to an increasing rate of attacks by those they are training as their replacement to enable them to go home. It's little wonder that [more US troops have died in 2012 from committing suicide](#) than have been killed in combat.

Recent events, such as the murder of 18 women and children by a US sergeant — who was then spirited out of the country to avoid trial in Afghanistan — or the burning of copies of the Koran by US troops, or the urinating by US troops on the bodies of Afghans they had just killed, may themselves be products of discontent and bitterness towards the local population among the troops. They have certainly helped create widespread opposition to the occupation. The cry heard from the relatives of the eight women and girls killed by NATO this weekend was, "Death to America".

Last weekend, President Obama pronounced yet again that the motivation of US imperialism is to deliver stability, peace and democracy to the countries where it intervenes. In reality it produces the opposite — as is shown by the last decade of war, occupation, torture, bombing, support for corrupt dictators, imprisonment without trial and insulting of local cultures and religions.

While NATO generals and western politicians blunder towards an exit strategy in Afghanistan, their policies elsewhere ensure this era of endless wars will be prolonged — whether it be in Pakistan, Syria, Iran, Yemen, Somalia or elsewhere. Unless it is stopped by a movement of active opposition on such a scale that it becomes politically impossible to ignore, which says loud and clear: Not in Our Name.

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