

The American-Made Insurgency in Afghanistan

A Million McVeighs Now

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity, US NATO War Agenda](#)

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The “Good War” in Afghanistan – the Bush-launched war that Barack Obama tells us we must fight and win – continues to deteriorate before our eyes. Just like every other operation in the so-called “War on Terror” (another Bush-launched campaign that Obama has fully embraced as his own), the Afghan war, now in its seventh year, has proven entirely counter-productive to its stated aims. Instead of stabilizing a volatile region and denying it as a base for violent extremism, it has of course done the opposite. The shock waves of the heavy-handed American-led invasion of Afghanistan – a country that no foreign power has ever conquered and held – have spread across Central Asia, most dangerously into Pakistan.

Afghanistan itself is in a desperate condition, laden with a weak, foreign-installed government dominated by warlords and riddled with corruption. The illegal opium trade, quashed by the Taliban, has now surged to historic levels, and is flooding the streets of Europe and the West with cut-rate heroin – not to mention fuelling an astonishing rise in drug addiction among Afghans, Pakistanis and Iranians. At every turn, the iron hand of American militarism is producing more suffering, more chaos, more corruption, more extremism, more slaughter, both directly and as blowback from people maddened into wanton violence by the relentless stream of atrocities.

And no, to comprehend an origin of violence is not to condone it; but reality compels acknowledgement of the fact that state-terror atrocity breeds “asymmetrical” atrocity in turn. It also teaches by example. The state militarists of empire say: Violence works. Violence is honorable. Violence is the most effective way to accomplish your goals. And you must not blench at killing innocent people in your violent operations. Is it any wonder that others adopt these methods, which are championed and celebrated by our most respected and legitimized elites? Recall the words of one of America’s own home-grown “asymmetricals,” Timothy McVeigh, who at his sentencing for the Oklahoma City bombing quoted Justice Louis Brandeis: “Our Government is the potent, the omnipresent teacher. For good or for ill, it teaches the whole people by its example.”

McVeigh of course was schooled in death and violence as a soldier in the first Iraq War, where he had been appalled to find himself killing people who wished America no harm, and to see the wholesale slaughter of innocent people in a conflict that need never have been fought. A peaceful settlement of the complex financial and territorial dispute between Iraq and Kuwait had been brokered by the Arab League; but although Iraq accepted the deal, at the last minute, the Kuwaiti royals – long-time business partners of then-President George H.W. Bush – reneged and declared, “We will call in the Americans.” Then the regional squabble between Iran and Kuwait was deceitfully turned into a “global threat” by the false claim that Iraq’s invading forces were massing on the borders of Saudi Arabia. Pentagon

chief Dick Cheney claimed secret satellite imagery showed vast Iraqi armies preparing to swoop down on the Saudi oilfields, the lifeline of the American economy. Bush Family capo James Baker, then Secretary of State, went before Congress and declared that the imminent war was all about saving American jobs. But commercial imagery obtained by a US newspaper at the time showed there were no Iraqi forces on the Saudi border. It was all a knowing lie – as were the claims paraded before Congress that Iraqi soldiers were flinging infants from their incubators in Kuwaiti hospitals. This bearing of false witness had been arranged by a prominent Bush-connected PR firm. The first Iraq War was just as falsely based and pointless as the second.

Unfortunately for the innocents in Oklahoma City, McVeigh too fully absorbed the lessons of the omnipresent teacher, even as he came to reject the teacher's authority. But his greatest crime in the imperial system was not that he killed innocent people in furtherance of political aims, but that he did it free-lance, without the "legitimacy" of a militarist government which slaughters innocent people by the hundreds of thousands in furtherance of its political aims.

Now in Afghanistan, the atrocities of the "legitimate" forces are fueling a prodigious growth in the "illegitimate" insurgency, transforming thousands of people who once opposed the Taliban into fighters under its banner. (Of course, "Taliban" has become a generic term for an array of opponents to the Western presence in Afghanistan). But these atrocities are an inevitable by-product of the very presence of foreign armies, which require "force protection" and close air cover and missile strikes to maintain and protect their operations. This inevitably produces large amounts of "collateral damage" (i.e., dead, maimed, ruined and dispossessed civilians.) The larger the foreign force, the more "force protection" it needs, which produces more atrocities, which fuels more resistance and more extremism. This is virtually a mathematical law. But of course, the very essence of a militarist state is that it feels unbounded by any law – not even the laws of human nature. Thus Washington is now increasing its military presence in Afghanistan, with Obama promising even more.

What will be the results of this policy? Do the math.

II. The Guardian provides an illuminating look at the fruits of American policy in Afghanistan today. This is what Barack Obama wants to see more of:

It was 7.30 on a hot July morning when the plane came swooping low over the remote ravine. Below, a bridal party was making its way to the groom's village in an area called Kamala, in the eastern province of Nangarhar, to prepare for the celebrations later that day.

The first bomb hit a large group of children who had run on ahead of the main procession. It killed most of them instantly.

A few minutes later, the plane returned and dropped another bomb, right in the centre of the group. This time the victims were almost all women. Somehow the bride and two girls survived but as they scrambled down the hillside, desperately trying to get away from the plane, a third bomb caught them. Hajj Khan was one of four elderly men escorting the bride's party that day.

"We were walking, I was holding my grandson's hand, then there was a loud noise and everything went white. When I opened my eyes, everybody was

screaming. I was lying metres from where I had been, I was still holding my grandson's hand but the rest of him was gone. I looked around and saw pieces of bodies everywhere. I couldn't make out which part was which."

Relatives from the groom's village said it was impossible to identify the remains. They buried the 47 victims in 28 graves.

Stories like this are relatively common in today's Afghanistan. More than 600 civilians have died in Nato and US air strikes this year. The number of innocents killed this way has almost doubled from last year, and tripled from the year before that. These attacks are weakening support for the Afghan government and turning more and more people against the foreign occupation of the country...

The latest figures from the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, taken a month ago, suggest about 750 civilians have been killed by foreign forces this year. Most were killed in air strikes. The remainder were shot by jumpy soldiers, who often open fire in crowded public places after an attack on one of their convoys.

Humanitarian aid agencies say privately that they believe the figure is significantly higher, as many victims classed as "insurgents" are actually non-combatants...

Nato and US spokesmen say their forces go to great lengths to avoid civilian casualties. But all too often after an air strike, they deny civilians are among the dead or claim far fewer were killed.

A recent Human Rights Watch report said US investigations, when launched, have been "unilateral, ponderous, and lacking in transparency, undercutting rather than improving relations with local populations and the Afghan government".

The routine denials and hands-off attitude are contributing to a growing sense among Afghans that their lives are cheap in the eyes of the foreigners.

"We know they don't intend to kill the civilians but we don't believe they care enough not to," said Ahmad Zia, a jeweller in Kabul's busy bazaar. "If it continues we will see a lot more people joining the fight against the foreigners. It's inevitable..."

Sharif Hassanyar, a former interpreter with US Special Forces who is now working as a journalist, described how decisions were taken to bomb areas based on flimsy intelligence.

"I remember when I was working with a group of Rangers and a spy in the area told them the Taliban were training in a garden of a house so they bombed the house, without checking the information. Afterwards they found out that there had not been any Taliban there, only civilians were killed by the bombs," he said.

Informants for the foreign forces often give bad information either accidentally or because they are pursuing tribal or personal vendettas against individuals in neighbouring villages, he added...

It is not just the deaths from air strikes that are poisoning the hearts of Afghans. In the capital, Kabul, each day, terrified drivers swerve out of the way as foreign troops hurtle through the streets in their armoured convoys training their rifles on the drivers and pedestrians and shouting obscenities: "Stay the fuck back!"

The Afghans know to keep out of the way. Last year a US military convoy ploughed into several vehicles, killing seven people including a family. The incident sparked a riot involving thousands of angry Kabul residents. It was suppressed only after the security forces started shooting protesters on the streets. At least 15 people were killed.

“The anti-American feelings in Afghanistan are not just coming from conservative or religious elements,” said Shukria Barakzai, a female MP.

“These feelings stem from the actions and military operations of the foreign troops. The anti-western sentiment is directly because of the military actions, the civilian casualties, and the lack of respect by foreign troops for Afghan culture.”

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