

The CIA's "Brown Bags" Full of Cash: Millions of Dollars for Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai...

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The report Monday that the CIA regularly hands over sacks filled with hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars to Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai is only the latest episode in Afghanistan's long and tragic encounter with US imperialism.

According to the *New York Times*, "For more than a decade, wads of American dollars packed into suitcases, backpacks and, on occasion, plastic shopping bags have been dropped off every month at the offices of the president."

Following their White House meeting earlier this year, President Barack Obama and Karzai issued a joint statement declaring their intention to maintain US military forces in Afghanistan into the indefinite future under a Strategic Partnership Agreement. The two also proclaimed their respect for Afghan "sovereignty" and stated that their economic strategy for the country was "focused on investing in its human capital to lead the country's institutions and to create an enabling environment for inclusive economic growth and investment."

As the revelations about suitcases stuffed with American dollars make clear, the US has invested heavily in "human capital to lead the country's institutions" and without a doubt has created an "enabling environment" for a collection of CIA stooges, warlords, drug traffickers and murderers to pillage Afghanistan and terrorize its people, while filling their bank accounts with money from Washington.

The same criminal methods employed by the Bush White House have been carried over lock, stock and barrel into the Obama administration.

But the CIA spigot has been open for much longer than that. The multi-million-dollar payoffs go back to the late 1970s, when the Democratic administration of President Jimmy Carter adopted a strategy of ensnaring the Soviet Union in "its own Vietnam" by fomenting and financing an Islamist insurgency against a Soviet-backed government in Kabul.

Working on the CIA payroll at the time was a young Hamid Karzai, who served as a go-between for the American intelligence agency, the Pakistani ISI and the mujahideen. At the time, he no doubt rubbed shoulders with Osama bin Laden, who was serving in a similar capacity.

In the wake of the Soviet withdrawal, the forces backed by the CIA carried out a protracted civil war that ended with the coming to power of the Pakistani-backed Taliban in 1996. This war was resumed under CIA auspices when Washington used the September 11, 2001

attacks as the pretext for invading and occupying Afghanistan. The agency began handing out suitcases full of cash once again to the Afghan warlords to contract their services as proxy troops in the US war for regime change.

Traveling in northern Europe on another money-gathering trip, Karzai made the improbable claim that the CIA cash wasn't really that much and was being spent on "providing assistance to the wounded, the sick."

In reality, whatever doesn't go into the pockets and off-shore accounts of the Karzai family and its immediate periphery is still being used to pay off the warlords, including war criminals like Abdul Rashid Dostum, who, while on the CIA payroll, organized the massacre of thousands of Taliban prisoners near Mazar-i-Sharif in 2001. According to some reports, he alone has received up to \$100,000 a month.

Until his assassination in 2011, the president's half brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai, was also on the CIA payroll, running a death squad known as the Kandahar Strike Force while playing a pivotal role in Afghanistan's multi-billion-dollar heroin trade.

Also getting a share of the cash is the chief of Karzai's National Security Council, Mohammed Zia Salehi, who was arrested in 2010 after a US-led investigation implicated him in smuggling money out of the country, heroin trafficking and the financing of the Taliban. Karzai and the CIA intervened, forcing his release within hours and terminating the investigation.

To keep this puppet regime of killers, drug dealers and kleptocrats in power, the US has waged the longest war in its history, claiming the lives of some 2,200 American and 1,000 other foreign occupation troops, while leaving tens of thousands suffering grievous wounds, both physical and mental. The cost of the war, CIA cash not included, reached some \$60 billion a year in 2009.

For the Afghan people, the dead and wounded number in the millions since the CIA first began organizing military operations in the country nearly 35 years ago.

The huge amounts of money poured into the criminal US operations in Afghanistan have done nothing to aid the Afghan people. According to some estimates, ninety cents out of every dollar in the \$20 billion in foreign aid spent there over the past decade has been lost to corruption.

More than half of the country's families live in extreme poverty, while over one third suffer from hunger. One out of ten Afghan children die before they start primary school. Less than a quarter of the population has access to clean drinking water and a similar fraction among those over the age of 15 is able to read and write.

The slaughter of Afghan civilians continues on a daily basis. On Sunday, Karzai's office issued a formal protest over the fatal shooting of four civilians by a US military convoy in the eastern province of Nangarhar. Earlier this month, a NATO air strike killed eleven children, aged between two months and seven years, in Kunar province near the border with Pakistan.

While a formal deadline for the withdrawal of foreign occupation troops has been set for the end of 2014, the Obama administration has no intention of ending the US military presence. Plans are being prepared to leave anywhere between 6,000 and 20,000 US troops behind to

continue killing those who resist the rule of Karzai and his criminal clique.

This regime, installed against the will of the Afghan people, is a tool of a financial oligarchy in the US that is determined to advance its interests by militarily asserting its hegemony over Central Asia and its strategic energy reserves, while leaving working people in both Afghanistan and the US to pay the price.

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