

Towards America's Electronic, Troop-less Wars

Future U.S Wars will involve Massive Use of Drones

By [Marc W. Herold](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

Global Research, March 01, 2010

1 March 2010

Abstract.

*Future U.S wars in the Third World will involve massive use of drones to police the territory, employ local satrap[1] forces (like those of Karzai's Afghan Army) and once the territory has been pacified sufficiently, the deployment of "Government Ready-to-Rule (GRR)" kits. The drones provide the critical and the weak link: critical insofar as they represent **the ultimate American-style war where only the "Others" (opponents and civilians) die** but weak insofar as this type of warfare only works against an opponent without any anti-drone/aircraft capability. In other words, this type of technological warfare can only be carried out upon weak opponents lacking independent industrial capacities (not against China, Russia, and India). This approach represents the culmination of disconnecting the delivery of deadly force - the rain of Hellfire missiles - upon the Others and incurring no human (physical or psychological - PTSD) costs. Or put in other terms, it represents the quintessential American way of "solving" problems with technological short-cuts, a military effort begun in 1942 with the Allied fire-bombing of German cities.[2] The current American war in Afghanistan is a harbinger of what is to come, America's electronic, troop-less war.*

Prophetically the first victims in 2010 of Obama in his Afghan war were a teacher in a government school, Sadiq Noor, and his nine-year old son, Wajid as well as three other persons. Both were killed on Sunday night, January 3, 2010 in a U.S. drone strike involving two missiles fired into the home of Sadiq Noor in the village of Musaki, North Waziristan in Pakistan.[3] During January 2010, a record number of twelve deadly missile strikes were carried out on Pakistan's tribal areas. Three Al-Qaeda leaders were killed and 123 innocent civilians.[4] During 2009, 44 U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan killed 708 people but only five Al Qaeda or Taliban; that is for each enemy fighter 140 civilian Pakistanis had to die.[5]

Those who pull the gray trigger to fire are located in Nevada, Kandahar, or Pakistan.[6] As Philip Alston points out, "Young military personnel raised on a diet of video games now kill real people remotely using joysticks. Far removed from the human consequences of their actions, how will this generation of fighters value the right to life?"[7] In early 2010, the U.S. Air Force had more drone operators in training than fighter and bomber pilots.[8]



Occupied Afghanistan. A U.S. Marine walks past Afghan youths near Khan Nashin, Helmand, on December 4, 2009 (photo by Kevin Frayer, AP at http://www.navytimes.com/xml/news/2009/12/ap_afghan_offensive_120509/120509_marine_s_afghanistan3_800.JPG, last accessed on February 25, 2010)

The Long Bloody History of America's Resort to Technology in War: Six Episodes

The electronic battlefield represents the end stop in more than a half century (1942-2010) of the United States resorting to technology in order to save its troops yet indiscriminately inflicting horrendous casualties upon an opponent's military and civilians.

The first obvious use of technology which inflicted massive and indiscriminate civilian deaths was the firebombing of German cities during World War II.[9] The use of incendiary bombs against German cities initiated in March 1942 was adopted as a strategy because Allied bombing of German military targets was generally unsuccessful and very costly in terms of airmen lost.[10] The horrific tale is recounted in the classic account by Jorg Friedrich, *Der Brand*. [11] For example, the massive firebombing by U.S. and British air forces of Dresden on the night of February 13/14, 1945 illustrates the effects. At least 55,000 -250,000 persons perished within hours.



Dresden on the Morning After

Source:

http://www.cityofsound.com/m/photos/uncategorized/2007/10/29/dresden_aftermath.jpg
(accessed February 21, 2010)

The British bomber Command attacked at night and U.S 8th Air Force Boeing B-17 Flying Fortresses followed up with three massive strikes the next day. A city known as “Florence on the Elbe” was reduced to rubble in hours. Eighty-five per cent of its buildings were destroyed.[12]

The second episode involves the use of atomic bombs on Japan in early 1945 as a means of pre-empting a U.S. invasion of the Japanese heartland which no doubt would have involved numerous U.S. casualties. Between February and August 1945, Jorg Friedrich reports in the cities of Dresden, Pforzheim, Wurzburg, Halberstadt, Kobe, Osaka, Nagoya, Yokohama, Tokyo, etc. a total of 330,000 people died in conventional aerial incendiary bomb attacks, an additional 300,000 perished in the two U.S. nuclear attacks upon Japanese cities carried out by Boeing B-29 Stratofortresses.[13] The total estimated death toll: in Hiroshima 100,000 were killed instantly, and between 100,000 and 200,000 died eventually; in Nagasaki about 40,000 were killed instantly, and between 70,000 and 150,000 died eventually.

The third episode involves the high-altitude carpet bombing of Cambodia during four years (March 18, 1969-August 15, 1973) by U.S. Boeing B-52 bombers. The intention was to disrupt supply routes of the North Vietnamese Peoples’ Liberation Army. The Americans unleashed a holocaust of 2,756,941 tons of bombs on more than 113,000 Cambodian sites during October 1965-August 1973 which killed over 150,000 rural Cambodians.[14] Owen summarized, “civilian casualties in Cambodia drove an enraged populace into the arms of an insurgency that had enjoyed relatively little support until the [U.S.] bombing began.”[15]

The fourth episode occurred some twenty years later when U.S. forces bombed Iraqis **fleeing** from Kuwait on the Highway of Death on February 26/27, 1991. The defenseless Iraqi forces were retreating and the column included Kuwaiti captives as well as civilians. Iraqi soldiers as well as Iraqi, Palestinian, Jordanian and other civilians piled into whatever vehicles they could commandeer, including a fire truck, and fled north towards Iraq. U.S. planes disabled vehicles at both ends of the convoy, creating a 7-mile long traffic jam. U.S.

planes then began to bomb and strafe the entire line of some 2,000 vehicles for hours, killing tens of thousands of helpless soldiers and civilians while encountering no resistance and receiving no losses to themselves. The bombing was inspired by destroying as much Iraqi military equipment as possible before an eventual U.S ground assault upon Baghdad. The scenes of carnage on the road were seen by the international community as a “turkey shoot” and led to the war’s quick end subsequently. The attacks violated the Geneva Convention of 1949, common article 3, which outlaws the killing of soldiers who “are out of combat,” not to mention the incinerated civilians.



Source: Iconic photos at <http://iconicphotos.wordpress.com/2009/05/27/the-highway-of-death/> (accessed on February 21, 2010)

The fifth episode was the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan during October 7 – December 10, 2001, upon which I originally reported and have continued to do.[16] U.S. air power and purchased satrap soldiers of the Northern Alliance were substituted for the use of numerous U.S. ground forces. The result was predictable: during three months about 2,600-2,900 Afghan civilians perished at the hands of U.S. forces whereas only 12 Americans died during October-December.[17] Again, technology in the guise of aerial bombing replaced U.S. ground forces. The ratio of Afghan civilians killed per U.S. military casualty was an astonishing 230.

The sixth episode involves a chapter in America’s invasion/bombing of Afghanistan in 2001, the use of the “Daisy Cutter” bombs, another technological spectacle originally designed to create jungle clearings. On November 4, 2001, the U.S. upped the ante and dropped two BLU-82 sub-atomic bombs (equivalent to a tactical nuclear weapon) upon humans, on Taliban positions in northern Afghanistan.[18] The bombs destroy everything in a 600-yard radius, giving off a mushroom-like cloud and have an un-nerving effect upon the targeted troops. On November 23rd — a week into Ramadan — a third BLU-82 was dropped just south of Kandahar. A fourth was dropped in the Tora Bora campaign. A nightmarish progression had taken place:

It's nightmarish to see that the U.S. is slowly desensitizing the public to the level of destruction taking place in Afghanistan. They have progressed from medium-sized missiles to Tomahawk and cruise missiles, to bunker-busting 2,000 lb bombs, then to [B-52] carpet-bombing using cluster bombs, and now the devastating daisy cutter bombs that annihilate everything in a 600-meter radius.[19]

Towards America's Electronic, Troop-less Wars

For a year before 9/11, CIA-operated Predator surveillance drones flying over Afghanistan had occasionally picked up Bin Laden.[20] Even before the U.S. bombing campaign against Afghanistan started in October 2001, a CIA-operated RQ-1 Predator had crashed in Afghanistan on September 23, 2001. Such an inauspicious beginning was soon followed by another Predator crash on November 2, 2001 in Afghanistan, two more crashes during the week of January 21, 2002, and another crash on May 17, 2002 in the hills near the U.S. air base in Jacobabad, Pakistan. The big brother of the Predator, called the Global Hawk, fared even worse. Both of the \$15 million U.S. Air Force-operated unmanned craft have crashed — the first on December 30, 2001, and the second on July 10, 2002, near another U.S. air base at Shamsi, Pakistan. The U.S. Air Force flew Predator drones out of its bases in Uzbekistan [near the Afghan border] and Pakistan (Jacobabad and Shamsi). Clear weather and the lack of Taliban anti-aircraft defenses allowed the drones to collect real-time imagery which was relayed to hovering strike aircraft.

The step from mere surveillance to offensive killing took place during in the summer of 2001 when some Predators were equipped with two of Lockheed's Hellfire AGM-114 laser-guided anti-tank missiles (\$45,000 apiece). By January 2003, four reported cases existed of the Predator-Hellfire combination being used. Two of these attacks resulted in the deaths of at least 13 innocent civilians. On February 4, 2002, a Predator Hellfire missile killed three Afghans scavenging for metal in the hills around Zhawar Kili, Paktia.[21] On May 6, 2002, a Predator fired a Lockheed missile at a convoy of cars in Kunar province, seeking to assassinate Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, but succeeded only in destroying a madrassah and killing at least 10 civilians nearby.

Move forward eight years to late 2009 when some would claim that "unmanned aircraft used both for surveillance and for offensive strikes, are considered the most significant advance in military technology in a generation." [22] These killer drones will allegedly replace the need for U.S ground forces. A senior U.S. Defense official stated, "The technology allows us to project power without vulnerability." [23] Much less than the B-17's who had to deal with Messerschmitts over Hitler's Germany or the B-52's which occasionally confronted MIGs over Indochina.

A drone in late 2009 staring down at a single house or vehicle kept constant watch on everything that moved within an area of 1.5 square miles. This year the capability will double to three square miles. In 2006, the USAF flew six drones at a time; in 2009, the number was 38 and the Air Force hopes to have 50 aloft simultaneously in 2011.[24]

America's path to the electronic, troop-less war in Afghanistan follows upon three previous tactics. During 2004, the United States successfully pressured NATO allies to bear the fighting costs in Afghanistan. The aim was to spread the human and monetary costs felt in each nation. The effort proved eminently successful insofar as during 2004, U.S. military deaths amounted to 87% of foreign military casualties in Afghanistan but had fallen to 51%

by 2006 remaining at about that share during 2007-8. But the restrictions put upon troops by NATO governments limited their combat role and by 2006, the Taliban were rapidly increasing their reach across Afghanistan. The U.S high command then resorted in the second phase (2006-8) to heavy use of air strikes. The predictable ensued: spiraling of Afghan civilian casualties (**Table 1**), drawing severe NATO criticism by early 2009. In May Obama's military decided to substitute increasing ground forces for air strikes - the McChrystal Interlude.

The currently insufficient number of drones and control support systems has necessitated a temporary U.S. troop surge in Afghanistan - **the McChrystal Interlude** - while the local satrap forces and drone capability are built up.[25] The clear-hold-and-build effort in Helmand is a stop-gap measure in which U.S/NATO ground shock troops are surrogates for drones (and take casualties). But the image - recall America is the land which pioneered marketing - presented by the military-industrial-media-information complex (MIMIC) is one of strength. Endless spectacles of drones, Ospreys, Apaches, HiMARS, etc. are beamed into American homes by the MIMIC, a domestic shock-and-awe in the living rooms of America. At the same time, all photos of Afghans killed by U.S forces are suppressed here. The whole bromide is further marketed to the general public with endless displays of the Stars-and-Stripes, "Support Our Troops" posters (even on the helmet of U.S. athletes at the Vancouver Winter Olympics), the militaristic rituals that intrude on most American social events, and prancing National Football League cheerleaders providing the necessary "moral support" for American occupation troops in Afghanistan.[26] Football cheerleaders in Afghanistan and media cheerleaders here in America.



Five Rams cheerleaders [visited Marines of 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment](http://sportsbybrooks.com/rams-cheerleaders-tote-goodwill-heavy-weaponry-26641) at the Forward Operating Base Delaram, Farah Province, Afghanistan, in September 2009. Photo posted "Rams Cheerleaders are Gorgeous, Heavily Armed," Sportsby Brooks (October 23, 2009) at <http://sportsbybrooks.com/rams-cheerleaders-tote-goodwill-heavy-weaponry-26641> (last accessed on February 21, 2010)

The corollary is that during the McChrystal Interlude Orwellian Newspeak is deployed by the Pentagon and its media mignons (carried to the extreme with the embedded "reporters" in Afghanistan and cheerleaders outside, e.g., CBS's Lara Logan) which emphasizes the value of Afghan civilian lives. But, **every effort is made to conceal the true toll of civilian**

casualties and the UNAMA implicitly participates in such effort. For example, in the current US/NATO offensive against Marja in Helmand, the medical coordinator of the Italian NGO, Emergency Lashkar Gah hospital, has claimed the NATO forces blocked the movement of wounded Afghan civilians to the Emergency hospital.[27] When some innocent Afghans die and such cannot be concealed we are treated during the McChrystal Interlude to a torrent of regrets, condolences, and a few thousand dollars of “compensation” are doled out “to soften war’s blow.”[28] Sorry or sincerest regrets for killing your family members and we promise to make changes[29]...next please.

But in the countryside, midnight raids by mostly clandestine commando U.S. Special Operations forces and aerial onslaughts are increasing far away from the public’s eyes.[30] Such Special Operations raids are carried out at night, killing and/or abducting villagers to secret U.S. prisons dotting Afghanistan. According to a report filed by Gopal, the villagers in Zaiwalat, Maidan Wardak Province, with 300 people are “afraid of the dark” because of the ten middle-of-the-night raids during 2008-9 in which 16 people were killed.[31] These Special Forces operate outside of regular military channels. On February 21st, airborne Special Operations forces incinerated three mini-buses travelling on a road in Daikundi, Uruzgan. The result was 27-33 dead Afghan civilians including women and children. Almost two months earlier, U.S. Special Operations Forces had air-dropped into a village in the middle of the night in Narang district, Kunar, and proceeded to drag ten people from their homes (including eight school children grades 6-10, handcuff and execute them.[32] This has long been the practice of U.S. Special Forces in Afghanistan.[33]

Another news management tactic employed by MIMIC is to assert after a bomb or drone attack somewhere in the Muslim world that a “top” Al Qaeda or militant leader was killed as stated by an official “anonymous source.” Invariably, the “top” leader re-emerges and the account of slaughtered civilians makes its way into the back pages of a U.S. newspaper. As Glenn Greenwald so cogently put it, “framing the story this way “ensures there is no attention paid to the radicalizing effect of these civilian deaths and our attacks for that country and in the region.”[34] The future **American war menu of drones-satrap-GRRs** represents the end game of such concealed massacre and neocolonialism. Would any independent western reporter venture out into the Afghan killing fields and brave the rain of Hellfire missiles from U.S. drones? The menu will also conveniently cost much less monetarily to a massively indebted United States than what it currently spends to deploy 150,000 U.S. ground forces in Afghanistan.

America’s Afghan Civilian Casualties Conundrum during the McChrystal Interlude

The McChrystal Interlude is characterized by two costly outcomes: still many visible dead innocent Afghans (caused by the technological spectacle deployed by the U.S. occupiers) and many U.S./NATO occupation (rather than “coalition”) force casualties (caused by the deadly duo - IEDs and suicide bombers). The civilians killed refer here only to those killed by US/NATO actions. The relationship between these two counts is captured by the ratio of Afghan civilian deaths per dead foreign occupation soldier. **Table 1** below presents monthly figures for the past year of the Obama regimen. **More Afghan civilians died under the Obama clock in 2009 than under his predecessor, George W. Bush during 2008.**

Table 1. The Relative Lethality for Civilians and Occupiers during the Bush and Obama Years

Year or month

Afghan civilian deaths killed by US/NATO (1)

Foreign occupation deaths (2)

Ratio (1) / (2) =

2001-Dec 2006

4,851-5,684 midpoint @ 5,268

520

10.13

Year of 2007

1,010-1297 midpoint @ 1,154

232

4.97

Year of 2008

864-1,017 midpoint @ 941

295

3.19

January 2009

107-115 midpoint @ 111

25

4.44

February

50

24

2.08

March

36

28

1.29

April

77-82 midpoint @ 80

14

5.71

May

147-220 midpoint @ 184

27

6.81

June

119-143 midpoint @ 131

38

3.45

July

47-56 midpoint @ 52

76

1.46

August

64-66 midpoint @ 65

77

0.84

September

99-118 midpoint @ 109

70

1.56

October

62-69 midpoint @ 66

74

0.89

November

66

32

2.06

December

57-61 midpoint 59

35

1.69

Year of 2009

922-1,073 midpoint @ 998

520

1.92

January 2010

71

45

1.58

February 1-24

71-77 midpoint 74

51

1.45

Sources: Afghan civilian deaths from Marc W. Herold, Afghan Victim Memorial Project data base and for foreign occupation troops from <http://www.icasualties.org/oef/> .

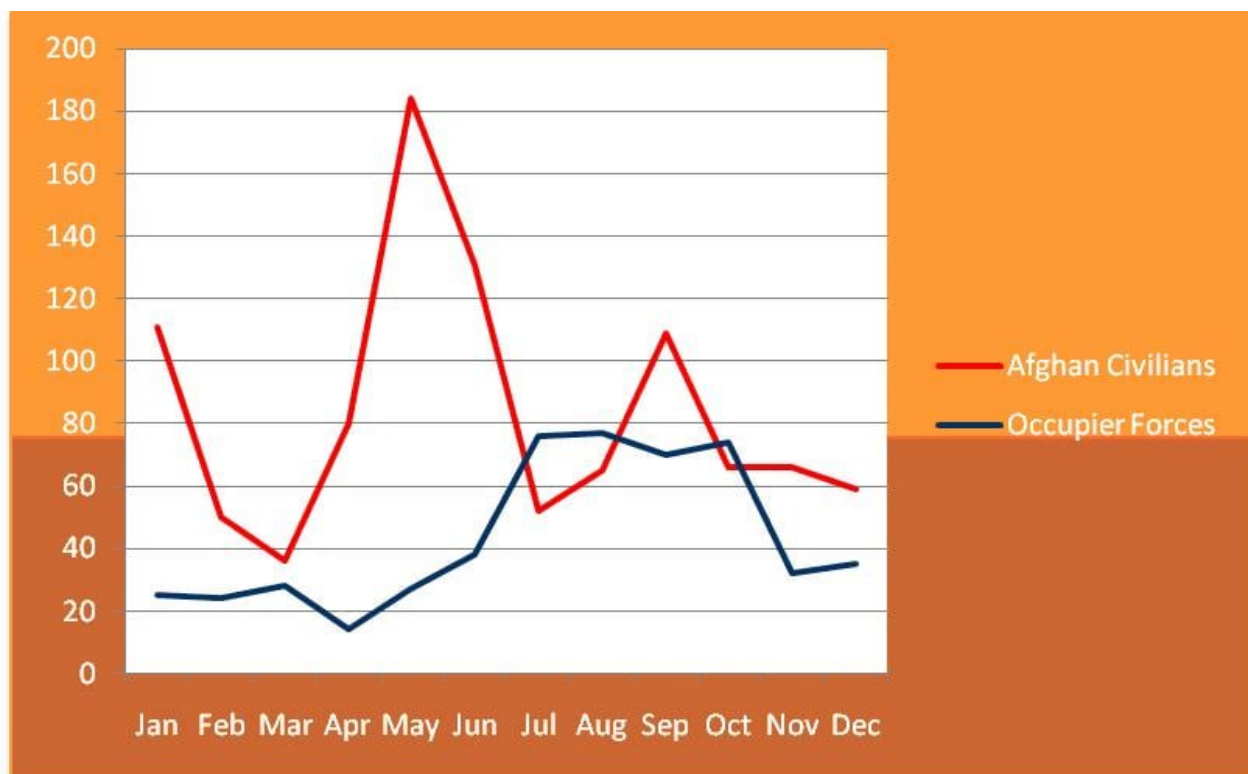
Up through December 2006, before dying in combat, a foreign occupation soldier in Afghanistan will on average have participated in the killing of ten Afghan civilians.[35] During his first months in office, Obama's military was more deadly for Afghan civilians than his predecessor. As I noted in mid-2009,

Comparing this with the data for five months...clearly demonstrates that even

by the standards of the Bush administration, the Obama regime cares less about the well-being of Afghan civilians at least insofar as waging a “clean war”, that is, on the metric of civilian casualties, Obama fails.[36]

At the end of 2009, such failure is confirmed insofar as during the Obama year some 1,000 Afghan civilians perished as compared to 941 during 2008 under Bush. On the other hand, the announced metric of civilian casualties by McChrystal may have merely been for public consumption. But, the data in **Table 1** also clearly displays that in terms relative to each other, fewer civilians are killed per foreign occupation soldier killed: in 2007, for every occupation soldier killed, 5 Afghan civilians were killed whereas in 2009 the figure was two.

In May 2009, close to 200 Afghan civilians had perished (**Table 1**), which caused alarm amongst NATO allies. Obama’s new National Security team recognized that killing Afghan civilians fuels the Afghan resistance. A decision was made to cut back upon air strikes and rely more upon ground forces. In effect, the Obama regimen involved trading off US/NATO soldier deaths for fewer Afghan civilian ones in order to placate critical NATO members.[37] The following chart plots Afghan and occupiers’ forces deaths during 2009:



Source: derived by the author

In July 2009, for the first time during America’s Afghan War, the number of foreign occupation soldiers killed exceeded the number of Afghan civilians killed by them (**Table 1**). The number of U.S. occupation soldiers killed during 2009 was 317, compared to 1455 during 2008. In addition, NATO reported that for every IED soldier death, there can be up to eight casualties, many with severe injuries including loss of limbs.[38] Predictably, Laura King of the Associated Press and a charter member of the U.S. media’s MIMIC cheering squad, proclaimed in late August 2008 that “Afghan civilian deaths decline under new U.S. tactics.”[39] As **Table 2** documents the July drop-off was short-lived. Moreover, the much-touted decline in air strikes ordered by McChrystal was temporary.

Veteran reporter, Kathy Gannon, with a record of independent reporting on Afghanistan

going back to October 2001, noted that the Taliban fighting foreign forces in Marja are villagers.[40] She also provided rare details on victims of foreign forces there: Musa Jan's home was hit by an aircraft around February 16th killing five occupants inside including children; Sayed Lal was outside in a field with a friend when he was shot by foreign soldiers. Assadullah, 22, was riding his motorcycle when the Americans fired at him shattering his arm; Abdul Hamid, 12, was in front of his home when raiding foreign forces arrived,

...they were running and shooting. I tried to get back in my house, but they shot me in the leg, and there were more bullets, and they shot me again in the belly. Near me some other people fell into a canal. They called a plane and they bombarded.[41]

And this is supposed to be the McChrystal approach of protecting civilians.

For its part, the UNAMA lacks the ground capacity to accurately tally casualties and refuses to divulge disaggregated data in the way for example ***Iraq Body Count*** (or in other words, the UN offers merely ***faith-based figures***). The UNAMA figures for 2009 exhibit an egregious underestimate of Afghans killed by foreign occupation forces. The following **Table 2** contrasts the UNAMA count with my own:

Table 2. Afghan Civilians Killed by All Pro-Government Forces (PGFs) and Foreign Forces

Month

Killed by all PGF's (UNAMA)

Killed by Foreign Forces (Herold)

January 2009

63

98-106

February

46

50

March

29

36

April

30

77-82

May

87

147-220

June

47

119-143

July

18

47-56

August

24

64-66

September

75

99-118

October

33

62-79

...subtotal

452

799-956

November

?

66

December

?

57-61

Total for 2009

?

922-1,083

Sources: UNAMA figures as reported in IRIN, "Afghanistan: Over 2,000 Civilians Killed in First Ten Months of 2009," IRIN News (February 21, 2010) at <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=87003>.

The **UNAMA data captures less than 47-56% of Afghan civilians killed by foreign forces** since their data includes civilians killed by Karzai satrap forces whereas mine only counts deaths caused by foreign occupation forces. Figures reported by the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission are as flawed. For 2009, this organization stated that 606 Afghan civilians died at the hands of "foreign troops." [42] As I have analyzed elsewhere such under-counting by the UNAMA is nothing new. In 2008,

...one can safely assume that UNAMA captures only about 70 per cent of those counted by Herold.²⁷ This serves to lessen U.S./NATO culpability and improve U.S./NATO "performance" on the metric of Afghans protected from violence. [43]

In 2008, the UNAMA captured about 70% of Afghans killed by foreign forces, but in 2009 the figure was under 40%, **justifiably earning UNAMA's performance as being faith-based (or ideologically-inspired) counting**. Sadly, western media uncritically go about citing such spurious figures, for example endlessly mentioning that Afghan civilian deaths caused by "coalition forces" have declined: naturally they have since the UNAMA missed only 30% of such deaths in 2008 but 60% in 2009!

Government Ready-to-Rule (GRR) Kits

U.S. Army General Stanley A. McChrystal, "We've got a government in a box, ready to roll in." [44]

"...the professorial Obama is the new killer on the block, authorizing more drone attacks in the first year of his term in office than Bush did in his entire presidency." [45]

The "new" McChrystal counter-insurgency strategy in Afghanistan being tried out at Marja is a re-titled version of nation-building cum a military jumpstart: clear, transfer, build, and hold. Massive US/NATO offensives clear an area of the Taliban and a government-ready-to-rule is rolled in to whom power is quickly transferred. The alleged focus is to be less on killing Taliban and more upon "sparing Afghan civilians and building an Afghan state." [46] A first assumption here is that once Afghans see a government taking hold and doing things, they will switch allegiance. But this presumes many things: that the government-ready-to-rule is capable, not corrupt, and that the Taliban can be bought-off by material offers and do not fight either for a particular vision of an Islamic society or simply to throw-out the invader.

The GRR will build schools, repair roads and irrigation systems, provide carrots to farmers to grow wheat or saffron, and jump start employment. As Michael noted wryly, "the general

thinks you can bring in a government as easily as he requisitions more meals-ready-to-eat for his soldiers.”[47] The entire approach founders upon an Afghan rural reality where family, clan, tradition, and locality reign. These cannot be imported and rolled in. It takes **a conservative member** of the British Parliament (not the “liberal” MIMIC members of the American Public Broadcasting System like Jim Lehrer or “intellectuals” in “liberal” U.S think-tanks) to admit that

...the Taliban are, in fact, hundreds of groups, most of whom are no more than traditional Afghan Muslims, the sons of local farmers...they are united not by Islam but by the presence of foreign troops on their soil, and a hatred of external governments. Approximately, 80 per cent of those we call the enemy die within 20 miles of where they live: does that tell you something about who we are really fighting?...So, finally, we are left with what we are told is the solution to our problem, our “exit strategy” – strong Afghan national security forces and yet more Nato “military operations”. It sounds great on the floor of the House of Commons, and even hardened BBC correspondents can be heard parroting the line. Alas, what this really means is a large army mainly composed of Afghans from the northern Tajik ethnic group replacing us in the south and the east. Such an army may not be foreign, but these people are complete outsiders to the ethnically Pashtun villagers. Heaven knows what the this-week-“liberated” people of Marjah make of the new arrivals – Afghan and British – in their town in Helmand. This is like an insurgency in Wales, in which a Scottish army with some Welsh officers imposes the will of a British prime minister who comes from a gangster family.[48]

If 80% of Taliban live within 20 miles of where they die that should “vaporize” **the western canard that the Taliban use civilians as human shields**. In a people’s war, the rebels (the fish) live amongst the people (the ocean). They would be suicidal to drain the ocean.

A valiant (desperate?) effort to provide an optimistic, positive spin to the McChrystal approach has been provided by the well-connected reporter of the New York Times, Tom Shanker. He begins by informing us that U.S. officials polled civilians in the Marja area to determine their feelings about the U.S., Taliban, etc. This can be discarded as the pollsters were no doubt received only by the choir. Shanker then tells us that once the Taliban have been cleared, the Afghan GRR will move-in comprised of “political and economic development advisers, now standing by...along with two thousand Afghan police officers.”[49] No doubt a healthy contingent of USAID personnel, rented U.S. university academics serving as Human Terrain System team members (often anthropologists and other social scientists), United Nations staffers, humanitarian imperialists (e.g., from Harvard’s Carr Institute), and throw in a couple Rhodes scholars will descend upon Marja.

At best, the McChrystal strategy will buy time be a sort of holding action though with huge human and monetary costs until a satrap army is built up and the drone numbers and infrastructure are greatly enlarged. At that point, the **Pol Pots of the skies** – U.S. Reaper and Predator drones – will lord over the Afghan killing fields (in which Pashtuns fight Tajiks), U.S and the few remaining **minor** NATO ally occupation forces (like Estonians and Croatians) will head home, and Afghan civilian casualties will resume their invisibility.

Conclusion

America’s future electronic, troop-less war upon Afghanistan represents another chapter in “Afghanistan as an empty space.”[50] United States officialdom has never cared what

concretely goes on within Afghanistan so long as no perceived threat to the United States exists. After all, Bush senior, Clinton and G.W. Bush had friendly relations with the mujahedeen and Taliban up until 9/11. Who will care what happens when the rain of Lockheed Martin Hellfire missiles descends upon the Afghan killing fields? America's drone warfare fits perfectly with a widely-held U.S. penchant to blame others – revealed here in the frenzy of law-suits and suing[51] – and lack of taking responsibility... "the others do [that] but we do not," e.g., they lie, they intentionally kill civilians, they practice imperialism, they engage in torture...we do not. The United States is the exceptional nation. God Bless America.

Wars tend to end when soldiers themselves and their families declare they have had enough of the blood-letting. Drone warfare removes such a constraint.[52] When combined with the employ of local satrap forces, it eliminates the main reason why the United States has ended its wars during the past half century: the public's perception that the **cost in U.S. fatalities** had in the end become too high.

Notes

[1] The word satrap is also often used in modern literature to refer to world leaders or governors who are heavily influenced by larger world superpowers and serve as their surrogates. MRE's refer to the U.S. military's meals ready-to-eat. The major manufacturers of MREs for the U.S. military are Ameriquel, Sopakco, and Wornick. Both the Predator and the Reaper drone is made by General Atomics Aeronautical Systems.

[2] During 1942, 37,000 tons of bombs were dropped on Germany, primarily at night and in residential areas (Sven Lindqvist, *A History of Bombing* (New York: The New Press, 2000): 92). The first city to be so bombed was Lubeck in March 1942 by the RAF Bomber Command.

[3] "US Drone Attacks Kill Five in North Waziristan," Dawn.com (January 4, 2010)

[4] Amir Mir, "US Drones Killed 123 Civilians, Three Al-Qaeda Men in January," The News (February 1, 2010).

[5] "U.S Drone Hits in Pakistan Killed 700 Civilians in 2009," The Peninsula. Qatar's Leading English Daily (January 2, 2010)

[6] More details on these young men at David Zucchino, "Drone Pilots Have a Front-Row Seat on War, from Half a World Away," Los Angeles Times (February 21, 2010) at <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/feb/21/world/la-fg-drone-crews21-2010feb21>

[7] Philip Alston and Hina Shamsi, "A Killer above the Law?" The Guardian (February 18, 2010) at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/feb/08/afghanistan-drones-defence-killing>

[8] Paul Keogh, "America's Deadly Robots Rewrite the Rules of War," Sydney Morning Herald (February 12, 2010) at <http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2010/02/12>

[9] The history of civilian casualties from early modern Europe until today is examined in Stephen J. Rockel and Rick Halpern (eds), *Inventing Collateral Damage. Civilian Casualties, War, and Empire* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2009), 356 pp.

[10] Christopher Bollyn, "German Revisionist Historian Brings Allied terror Bombing to Light," Rumor Mill News (January 23, 2004) at <http://www.rumormillnews.com/cgi-bin/archive.cgi/read/43417>

[11] Jorg Friedrich, *Der Brand. Deutschland im Bombenkrieg 1940-1945* (Munich: Propylaen Verlag, 2002), 592 pp.

[12] "Florence on the Elbe Turns 800," Deutsche-Welle (January 4, 2006) at <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,1949422,00.html>

[13] See the gripping account in Jorg Friedrich, "The Mongol Devastations," Signandsight.com (May 4, 2005) at <http://print.signandsight.com/features/93.html>

[14] Details in Taylor Owen and Ben Kernan, "Bombs Over Cambodia," at Cambodian Genocide Program (Yale University) at http://www.yale.edu/cgp/Walrus_CambodiaBombing_OCT06.pdf

[15] From Phann Ana and Frank Radosevich, "Villagers Recall Living in Shadow of US Bombers," The Cambodia Daily (March 18, 2009) at http://www.camnet.com.kh/cambodia.daily/selected_features/cd-Mar-18-2009.htm

[16] See my "A Dossier on Civilian Victims of United States' Aerial Bombing of Afghanistan: A Comprehensive Accounting [revised]," Cursor.org (March 2002) at http://cursor.org/stories/civilian_deaths.htm

[17] from <http://www.icasualties.org/oef/>

[18] Richard Norton-Taylor, "Taliban Hit by Bombs Used in Vietnam," The Guardian [November 7, 2001] at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2001/nov/07/afghanistan.terrorism6>

[19] "The Evils of Bombing," The Guardian (November 8, 2001)

[20] The following is taken from my "The Problem with the Predator," Cursor.org (January 12, 2003) at <http://cursor.org/stories/dronesyndrome.htm>

[21] Engelhardt was inaccurate when he wrote that "One of the earliest armed acts of a CIA-piloted Predator, back in November 2002, was an assassination mission over Yemen in which a jeep, reputedly transporting [six suspected al-Qaeda operatives](#), was incinerated" (From his "Terminator Planet," TomDispatch.com (April 7, 2009) at http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/175056/filling_the_skies_with_assassins

[22] Julian E. Barnes, "Military Refines a 'Constant Stare against our Enemy'; the rapidly increasing surveillance power of unmanned aircraft gives U.S. officials an Option besides Troops," Los Angeles Times (November 2, 2009) at <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/nov/02/nation/na-drone-eyes2>

[23] Barnes, op. cit.

[24] Barnes, op. cit.

[25] Terry Michael first wrote about McChrystal's "Government in a Box" in his "Our Afghan 'Government in a Box' Did Gen. McChrystal Reveal More Than he Intended," Reason.org

(February 18, 2010) at <http://reason.com/archives/2010/02/18/our-afghan-government-in-a-box/print>

[26] Such spectacles have long been a part of the American occupation of Afghanistan, see my "Holiday Cheer, Pompoms, Bombs and Refugees: Thanksgiving 2001 in Afghanistan," Cursor.org (November 28, 2002) at <http://cursor.org/stories/thanksgiving.htm>

[27] "Group: NATO Forces Blocking Movement of Wounded Afghan Civilians," Democracy Now! (February 17, 2010) at http://www.democracynow.org/2010/2/17/group_nato_forces_blocking_wounded_afghan

[28] Christopher Torcha, "US Compensates Afghans for Death, Damage from War," Washington Post (February 19, 2010) at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/19/AR2010021901293.html>

[29] "Afghanistan War: As Civilian Deaths Rise, NATO says, 'Sorry'," Christian Science Monitor (February 23, 2010)

[30] Eric Schmitt, "Elite U.S. Force Expanding Hunt in Afghanistan," New York Times (December 27, 2009) at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/27/world/asia/27commandos.html>

[31] Anand Gopal, "America's Secret Afghan Prisons," The Nation (February 15, 2010) at <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20100215/gopal/4>

[32] Jerome Starkey, "Western Troops Accused of Executing 10 Afghan Civilians, including Children," Times (December 31, 2009)

[33] See my Afghan Victim Memorial Project data base (at <http://pubpages.unh.edu/~mwherold/memorial.htm>) and "U.S. Special Forces in Afghanistan: Vietnam Redux," Cursor.org (October 31, 2002) at http://cursor.org/stories/vietnam_redux.htm. For details on an execution-style raid carried out by US Navy Seals in Angoor Adda on September 2, 2008 see <http://pubpages.unh.edu/~mwherold/latest.htm>

[34] Glenn Greenwald, "The Joys of Airstrikes and Anonymity. No matter how many times government claims about attacks turn out to be false, the American media repeats them," Salon.com (December 26, 2009) at http://www.salon.com/news/opinion/glenn_greenwald/2009/12/26/airstrikes/index.html

[35] Marc W. Herold, "Relative Lethality," Frontline. India's National Magazine 24, 01 (January 13 - 26, 2007) at <http://www.thehindu.com/fline/fl2401/stories/20070126001206000.htm>

[36] See my "The Afghan Tragedy," Frontline. India's National Magazine 26, 18 (June 20 - July 3, 2009) at <http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl2613/stories/20090703261300400.htm>

[37] See my "Obama's Unspoken Trade-Off," Frontline. India's National Magazine 26, 18 (August 29 - September 11, 2009) at <http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl2618/stories/20090911261813000.htm>

[38] Lynne O'Donnell, "US Troop Deaths in Afghanistan Double 2008 Toll," Yahoo!News

(December 27, 2009)

[39] Laura King, "Afghan Civilian Deaths Decline under New U.S. Tactics," Los Angeles Times (August 28, 2009) at <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/aug/28/world/fg-afghan-civilians28> . Ms. King's status as a charter member of the under-counters is examined in my "Dead Afghan Civilians: Disrobing the Non-Counters," Cursor.org (August 20, 2002) at <http://cursor.org/stories/noncounters.htm>

[40] Kathy Gannon, "Afghan Wounded Tell of More Left Behind in Marjah," Associated press (February 24, 2010) at <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iEB2VT9-Ux1pdXs8XuxMSo6zcajgD9E2N4Q00>

[41] ibid

[42] "Afghan Civilian Death Toll Drops in 2009," Pajhwok Afghan News (January 5, 2010)

[43] "Afghan Tragedy (2009)," op. cit.

[44] Cited in David E. Sanger, "A Test for the Meaning of Victory in Afghanistan," New York Times (February 13, 2010) at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/14/weekinreview/14sanger.html>

[45] McGeough, op. cit.

[46] Michael, op. cit.

[47] Michael, op., cit.

[48] Adam Holloway, "An End to Steely-Eyed Killing Machines," The Independent (February 21, 2010) at <http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/adam-holloway-an-end-to-steelyeyed-killing-machines-1905729.html> . Gareth Porter has argued that the current U.S./NATO offensive in Marja is largely about shaping U.S. public opinion, see "Marja Offensive Aimed to Shape U.S. Opinion on War," Inter Press Service News Agency (February 24, 2010) at <http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2010/02/23-8>

[49] Tom Shanker, "Afghan Push Went Beyond the Traditional Military Goals," New York Times (February 20, 2010) at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/20/world/20military.html>

[50] A concept I have elaborated upon in my "Afghanistan as an Empty Space (lecture," Cursor.org (October 25-26, 2007) at <http://cursor.org/stories/emptyspacetalk.html>

[51] Americans spend more on civil litigation per capita than any other industrialized country, details in "How Many Lawsuits are there in the U.S. & What are they for? An Amazing Overview," at <http://www.sixwise.com/newsletters/06/10/05/how-many-lawsuits-are-there-in-the-us-amp-what-are-they-for-an-amazing-overview.htm>

[52] Well argued in Joni Dahlstrom, "Drones, Cowboys and the Right to Surrender," Infowars.com (December 11, 2009) at <http://www.infowars.com/drones-cowboys-and-the-right-to-surrender/>

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Marc W. Herold](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca