

US Afghan Strategy: Senseless and Merciless

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John Robles' Interview with Rick Rozoff, the manager of the Stop NATO website and a contributing writer to Global Research., Montreal. Canada.

I want to ask you some questions about the transfer of command in Afghanistan from General Petraeus to General Allen. Do you see any definitive change in the situation in the country in the near future

No, I don't. This is the latest in a series of rotations of the top military commanders simultaneously, of course, throughout the US's so-called Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and NATO's International Security Assistance Force. Two years ago, Gen. David McKiernan was ousted and replaced by Gen. Stanley McChrystal, who in turn was kicked out in favour of Gen. David Petraeus.

And now we have Marine General John Allen stepping in. Throughout that succession of top commanders, the situation has gone from bad to worse and, with recent events in Afghanistan, there is no reason to believe anything is going to be changed and certainly not improved. We do know that successive commanders intensified the brutality and intensity of military actions, that Petraeus most notably increased so-called night raids, special forces operations, which, as often as not, resulted in deaths of Afghan civilians but also in the intensification of air raids.

We know, for example, that, as of the end of last month, the first half of this year, almost 1,500 Afghan civilians were killed, which is the highest in that six-month period in the war and certainly higher than it was a year ago during the same period. There is also a recent report that stated that in the last two years 250,000 – a record – Afghan civilians have been forced to flee their towns and villages because of the intense fighting. So, if there is any index, there is no way of portraying the situation in Afghanistan as having become any better.

Why is the US in Afghanistan?

I'll give you my personal estimate and I think it's the one that became apparent with the initial thrust into Afghanistan almost ten years ago, which occurred less than three months after the founding of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the summer of 2001. My supposition is – notwithstanding the hunt for Osama bin Laden and whatever else was presented as the casus belli for the invasion of Afghanistan and its continuation for ten years – that, in essence, the US and its Western allies wanted to plant themselves firmly at the point of confluence where Russia, China, Iran, India, Pakistan and other nations might be able to cooperate in building a multipolar alternative to the US-dominated unipolar world by being in Afghanistan and its environs. We have to keep in mind that the US and its NATO

allies, their military facilities, are still based in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Pakistan, where the US recently has been told to leave a base from which it was waging drone missile attacks, which have killed 2,500 or so people in Pakistan; last year was the highest with almost a thousand people killed. In January of 2010 Dawn News, citing Pakistani Defense Ministry sources, stated there were something like 714 people killed in Pakistan by US drone missile attacks in the preceding year and out of those 714 only five were either al-Qaeda or Taliban fighters.

Five?

Five. And let's assume, several hundred, if not a thousand or more civilians have been killed in the drone attacks, which are now, of course, being spread with increased intensity not only in Afghanistan and Pakistan and, earlier, in Iraq, but in Yemen, most recently in Somalia and with the deployment of US Predator drones in Libya, in that country. So we now have six countries in which the US is waging drone warfare. And I think we will see the intensification of that mode of warfare under Gen. Allen as he assumes the command of American and NATO forces in Afghanistan. The Pentagon is not responsible for those attacks. The Central Intelligence Agency is - and guess who is taking over that agency in September?

Petraeus?

Yes. So, there will be continuity on that end now that the top Western military commander in Afghanistan is in charge of the US government agency that is waging the drone attacks. So I think one would be justified in expecting an escalation of drone attacks inside Pakistan. The carnage inside Afghanistan is keeping pace with the killings by drone missile attacks, Hellfire missiles, inside Pakistan.

How would you characterize the entire campaign by NATO and the US in Afghanistan? As a complete failure, or were there any gains?

There was an article recently by the US Department of Defense, the Pentagon's, press agency, American Forces Press Service, that just happened to mention in passing that the Shindand Air Base in Herat Province has tripled in size recently to become the second largest military air base in Afghanistan next to that at Bagram.

Last year, the US and its NATO allies stepped up the extension of air bases in Afghanistan - in Kandahar, in Mazar e Sharif, in Jalalabad in addition to Bagram and Shindand - they are going to have air bases that control the entire region, a good deal of the Greater Middle East, if you will, in addition to continuing troop transits.

They've also set up the Northern Distribution Network. It's an extensive network of air, rail and truck transportation, which now includes 13 of 15 former Soviet Republics, all except Moldova and Ukraine currently.

Men and materiel are being moved in and out, and this is an amazing network, when you look at it, including just recently the first air flight from the US over the North Pole and then over Kazakhstan into Afghanistan. So, in terms of building up a military network around the world - and we also have to remember there are troops from over 50 countries serving under NATO in Afghanistan, which is the largest amount of countries offering troops for one military command in one nation in world history. We also have to recall that Afghanistan has

become a training ground, if you will, to place US-NATO allies and partners in real-life combat situations, to integrate the militaries of at least 50 countries under, basically, US command, using English as their common language. I'm arguing that Afghanistan is a laboratory for integrating the militaries of these various countries.

Stop NATO e-mail list home page with archives and search engine:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stopnato/messages>

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