

US atrocities reach all time high in Afghanistan

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

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“The purpose for which Afghanistan was invaded — to secure safe passage for a gas and oil pipeline from Central Asia and lay hands on the rich mineral deposits of Afghanistan — has not been achieved so far. Yet there is growing anxiety among ordinary Americans over the extended military mission that has nearly bankrupted America. Unemployment is high, the debt is rising and American cities are crumbling while the US pours billions of dollars into a war that appears to have no end or any identifiable benchmarks by which to measure progress. US officials talk optimistically about training Afghan police and army but the targets they have set have not been met so far.”

Even as American officials optimistically talk about starting troop withdrawal from Afghanistan according to schedule in July, news about their atrocities continue to send shock waves globally. Recent reports and photos of torture and mutilation of Afghan civilians make Abu Ghraib look like a mild affair. These crimes are compounded by denials that the Americans have done or are capable of doing anything wrong since these are contrary to American “standards and values.” Their victims know better.

This past winter, American troops murdered even more Afghan civilians than in previous years. And true to form, they routinely claim the attacks were aimed at militants and that no civilians were killed. There has been a spate of such attacks in recent weeks that have soured relations between the US military and the Afghan government. To their customary brutality, the Americans have now added another tactic. Following a particularly gruesome attack in Ghaziabad district of Kunar province in late February, General David Petraeus said Afghan civilians had “deliberately burnt” their children’s legs and arms to make the attack look bad.

“I was dizzy. My head was spinning,” said an aide to Afghan President Hamid Karzai, referring to Petraeus’s remarks, during a meeting. “This was shocking. Would any father do this to his [own] children? This is really absurd.” Fazlullah Wahidi, governor of Kunar province, said at least 50 women and children perished in the attack carried out by US Apache helicopters. While the dust had not settled over this incident, NATO air strikes killed another nine children on March 1. Again, the Americans initially claimed these were insurgents. Later they apologized when it was confirmed that these were boys collecting wood in the mountains. Gates apologized for the attacks as did Obama. A day earlier, Afghans had demonstrated in Kabul against such attacks and Karzai angrily rejected an apology from Petraeus.

During a visit to Asadabad, capital of Kunar province on March 11, Karzai said NATO and the US should stop their operations in Afghanistan. “I ask NATO and US, with honor and humbleness and not with arrogance, to stop its operations on our soil,” Karzai said. The children were between the ages of 7 and 13 and collecting firewood in the Manogay district

when they came under bombardment. “Afghans want peace and security and they cooperate with the world to bring peace and security,” Karzai said. “But we don’t want this war to continue any longer. We don’t want to repeat such bombardments and casualties.” The Americans have paid no attention to such appeals in the past; they are not likely to pay heed now and will dismiss them with contempt, regardless of how much suffering they cause.

Meanwhile, there was even more shocking news when the German weekly, Dier Spiegel on March 20 published photos of Afghan civilians killed by US soldiers and then posed with their naked bodies. The London daily, the Guardian, compared them to the photos of detainees tortured and humiliated in Iraq’s notorious Abu Ghraib prison. The British daily reported “commanders in Afghanistan are bracing themselves for possible riots and public fury triggered by the publication of ‘trophy’ photographs of US soldiers posing with the dead bodies of defenceless Afghan civilians they killed” (March 21). Some senior NATO officials have expressed fears the pictures could be even more damaging as they show the aftermath of deliberate murders of Afghan civilians by a rogue US Stryker tank unit that operated in the southern province of Qandahar last year.

Some of the activities of the American “kill team” are already public knowledge; 12 men are currently on trial in Seattle for their role in the killing of three civilians. Five soldiers are on trial for pre-meditated murder, after they staged killings to make it look like they were defending themselves against Taliban attacks. Other charges include the mutilation of corpses, the possession of images of human casualties and drug abuse. Other soldiers cut body parts of victims as “trophies”. The Dier Spiegel report says there are approximately 4,000 photos and videos taken by the men.

True to form, the US military has tried to keep the photos out of the public domain fearing it could damage its already tarnished reputation, especially in Afghanistan and Pakistan where anti-American sentiment is running very high. Also typically, the US army apologized for the distress caused by photographs “depicting actions repugnant to us as human beings and contrary to the standards and values of the United States.” But such actions by US soldiers are so routine that it is mind-boggling for the US army to claim these run contrary to their “standards and values.” These are precisely the standards of the US from Bagram and Abu Ghraib to Guantanamo Bay. The latest batch of photos simply confirms a pattern of behaviour common among US soldiers, crossing all limits of human decency and dignity. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of Afghans and people elsewhere, look upon Americans with disgust and wish to have nothing to do with them.

Dier Spiegel also narrates another episode that occurred last May. An Afghan religious leader, standing by the road perhaps waiting for a ride, was apprehended by the “kill team”, taken to a ditch and made to kneel down. The staff sergeant, one Calvin Gibbs, then threw a grenade at the man while an order was given for him to be shot. As if this was not enough, Gibbs then cut the man’s little finger and pulled one of his teeth out.

With the publication of Dier Spiegel’s report and photos, many organizations that employ foreign staff, including the United Nations, ordered their staff into a “lockdown”, banning all movements around Kabul and requiring people to remain in their compounds. One security manager for the US company DynCorp sent an email to clients warning that publication of the photos was likely “to incite the local population” as the “severity of the incidents to be revealed are graphic and extreme.”

The Americans do not wish to improve their manners. After each act of barbarism that exceeds their previous atrocious behaviour, they put out a press release dismissing the incident as not in accord with American standards and values. What precisely are these values the Americans are so eager to export to the rest of the world through cruise missiles and “kill teams”?

Amid reports of American crimes against humanity, a debate is raging in the official circles whether they are staying in Afghanistan or leaving? They appear to be speaking from both sides of their mouth. The purpose for which Afghanistan was invaded — to secure safe passage for a gas and oil pipeline from Central Asia and lay hands on the rich mineral deposits of Afghanistan — has not been achieved so far. Yet there is growing anxiety among ordinary Americans over the extended military mission that has nearly bankrupted America. Unemployment is high, the debt is rising and American cities are crumbling while the US pours billions of dollars into a war that appears to have no end or any identifiable benchmarks by which to measure progress. US officials talk optimistically about training Afghan police and army but the targets they have set have not been met so far.

During an unannounced visit to Kabul on March 7, US Defence Secretary Robert Gates said the US was “well-positioned” to begin withdrawing troops from Afghanistan in July. This was the date President Barack Obama had set on December 1, 2009 when he announced a 30,000-troop surge for Afghanistan. But Gates also said the US would remain involved in Afghanistan even after the 2014 date, when the withdrawal of troops is scheduled to be completed. American officials always leave caveats so that they have wiggle room to manouvre and implement whatever policy they want.

But their atrocious behaviour is turning even ordinary Afghans against them. They wish to have nothing to do with the Americans, their hi-tech weapons and their dollars. They would rather be left alone to their poverty-stricken but safe life, free from Hell-fire missiles and Apache helicopter attacks.

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