

**"A 'Killing Failure'. 25 Months of Immiserating Revenge - an Afghan Balance Sheet"**

by

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France - Vietnam, U.S. - Vietnam, Soviets - Afghanistan, U.S. - Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup>

**"Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it"** - George Santayana  
A month after the U.S. bombing began, one of Britain's most distinguished foreign correspondents and a person very familiar with the region, Robert Fisk wrote,

"So why on earth are all my chums on CNN and Sky and the BBC rabbiting on about the "air campaign", "coalition forces" and the "war on terror"? Do they think their viewers believe this twaddle?

Certainly Muslims don't. In fact, you don't have to spend long in Pakistan to realize that the Pakistani press gives an infinitely more truthful and balanced account of the "war" – publishing work by local intellectuals, historians and opposition writers along with

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<sup>1</sup> for an elaboration, see John Pilger, "Bush's Vietnam. Once More, We Hear That America is Being 'Sucked Into a Quagmire'," The New Statesman (June 23, 2003), at: <http://www.commondreams.org/views03/0625-04.htm>

Taliban comments and pro-government statements as well as syndicated Western analyses – than *The New York Times*; and all this, remember, in a military dictatorship."<sup>2</sup>

I speak about the immediate aftermath. Two days after 9/11, President Bush proclaimed,

"the most important thing for us is to find Osama bin Laden. It's our number one priority and we will not rest until we find him."

The "search" involved killing directly well over 3,000 innocent Afghan civilians, another 20,000 indirectly, and devastating homes and land (with cluster bombs and depleted uranium). But, the Al Qaeda leadership remained largely elusive - the few alleged leaders (Binalshibh, Zubaydah, Khalid Mohammed) now in custody were apprehended in Pakistani cities. Bin Laden and Ayman Al-Zawahiri were recently seen on video strolling together amongst beautiful mountain greenery.

Six months later, facing failure on his own criteria, Bush in a pattern repeated later in Iraq, shifted the rationale, saying

"I don't know where he is. I have no idea and really don't care. It's not that important. It's not our priority."<sup>3</sup>

All sorts of new pseudo-rationales were presented, ranging from liberating Afghan women - amazing how so many persons all of a sudden cared for girls' education, no? - to unseating an oppressive government, from eliminating so-called terrorist camps to creating democracy.<sup>4</sup> But the immediate cause for the U.S. attack launched on October 7, 2001, less than a month after 9/11, was pure and simple revenge to appease the American public.<sup>5</sup> As with Iraq's Hussein in the 80s, the U.S. had officially supported the Taliban from 1996 well into 2000. The *British* journalist, Simon Jenkins of *The Times*, wrote, "Afghanistan was a show of retaliative firepower."<sup>6</sup>

Here on the U.S. shores, the Bush wars have been carefully scripted, a fact clearly announced with the hiring in September 2001 of Charlotte Beers, former chairwoman of advertising giant, J. Walter Thompson,

<sup>2</sup> Robert Fisk, "Hypocrisy, Hatred and the War on Terror," *The Independent* [November 8, 2001] at <http://www.commondreams.org/views01/1108-08.htm>

<sup>3</sup> from [www.angelfire.com/co/COMMONSENSE/Kabul.html](http://www.angelfire.com/co/COMMONSENSE/Kabul.html)

<sup>4</sup> for a critique of this latter, see Benjamin Barber, "No Country Can Democratise Another," *The Observer* (June 29, 2003)

<sup>5</sup> as argued by many, most persuasively by Tariq Ali, "In the case of Afghanistan, they didn't even make that pretense (of humanitarian intervention). It was essentially a crude war of revenge designed largely to appease the U.S. public. In Canada in mid-November, I was debating Charles Krauthammer, and I said it was a war of revenge and he said, "Yeah, it was, so what?" The more hardline people, who are also more realistic, just accept this. And the United States has perfected the manipulation. The media plays a very big, big role" (from "The Progressive Interview: Tariq Ali," *The Progressive* (January 2002), at: <http://www.progressive.org/0901/intv0102.html>).

<sup>6</sup> Simon Jenkins, "The Bali Bombing Must Kill Off War With Iraq," *The Times* (October 16, 2002), at: <http://www.dailymirror.lk/2002/10/17/opinion/3.html>

to "sell the war" to the American public.<sup>7</sup> The scripting, of course, continues as we meet here - with senior editors of the Los Angeles Times three days ago ordering its reporters to not use the word "resistance" to describe Iraqi opposition to the U.S. occupation, and to the White House banning media coverage of body bags returning to Dover Air Base.<sup>8</sup>

What all should know notwithstanding the abysmal reporting by the groveling U.S. mainstream corporate press, is that the common people and land of Afghanistan have born the wrath of the world's superpower for 25 months. A girl's school built here or a clinic there, should not obscure the true balance sheet.

I want to develop two arguments.<sup>9</sup> First, give you a sense of the carnage perpetrated upon Afghanistan. Secondly, note how such carnage has not brought forth the desired results, and close by documenting the escalating and continuing resistance - anything but attacks waged by Taliban "remnants" - to the U.S. occupation forces - another topic largely avoided by the U.S. corporate mainstream press. Reality on the ground in Afghanistan, debunks Secretary Rumsfeld's widely reported comment on May Day 2003, in Kabul that major combat was over in Afghanistan.<sup>10</sup>

The following "map" shows some of the more important interconnections of the human and environmental costs of the U.S. attack and occupation.

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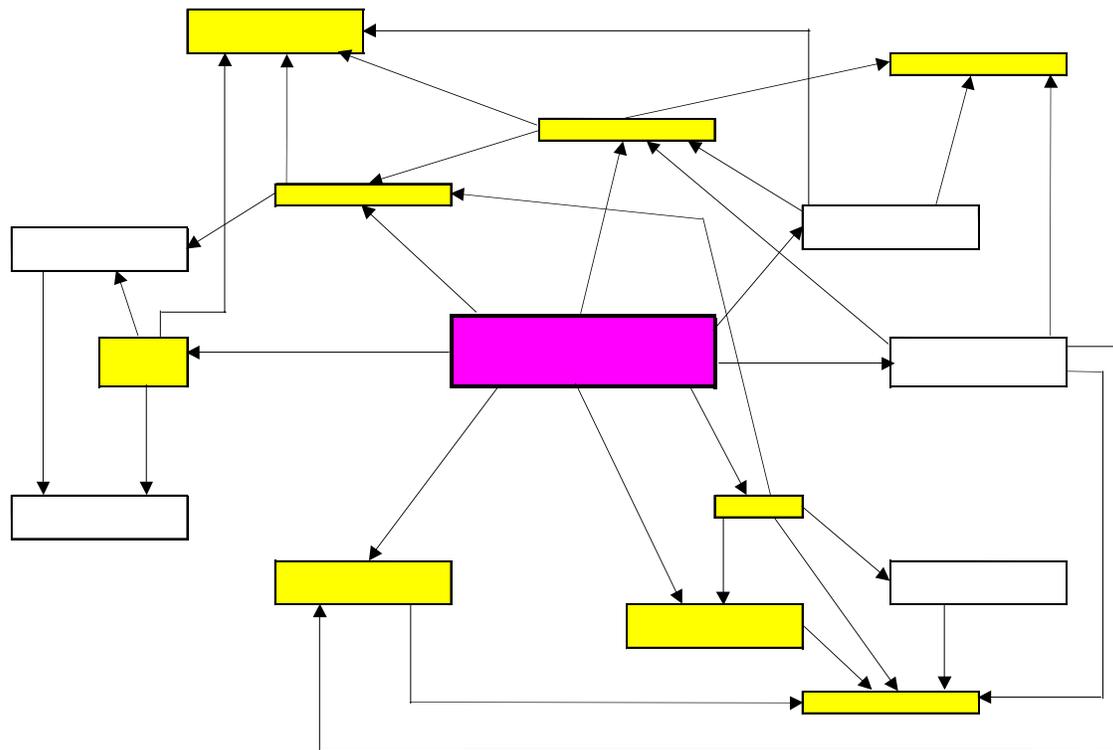
<sup>7</sup> David Stout, "Official Hired to Improve U.S. Image Resigns," New York Times (March 3, 2003)

<sup>8</sup> Gary Younge, "Don't Mention the Dead," The Guardian (November 7, 2003), at: <http://www.commondreams.org/headlines03/1107-01.htm>

<sup>9</sup> John Pilger presented a splendid more general overview of what has happened in Afghanistan over the past two years, in his "What Good Friends Left Behind," The Guardian (September 20, 2003), at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/weekend/story/0,3605,1044751,00.html>. A longer version of a similar talk of mine, "The Bombing of Afghanistan as a Reflection of 9/11 and Different Valuations of Life," September 11, 2002 can be found on-line at: <http://www.cursor.org/stories/heroldon911.htm>

<sup>10</sup> "Rumsfeld Declares Major Combat Over in Afghanistan," Fox News.com (May 1, 2003)

military deaths refugees infrastructure deadly legacies -cluster bombs, DU civilians injured **Bombing** costs psychological economic burden displacement



An examination of twenty weeks of U.S bombing of Afghanistan reveals the following human costs of this attack:

- between 3'100 - 3'600 civilians killed directly by bombs, missiles and U.S ground forces;
- another 4'000 - 6'500 civilians injured, many requiring prostheses;
- 8'000 - 10'000 dead Taliban and allies - most of whom were untrained, young conscripts;
- an additional 19'000- 43'000 Afghan refugees dying of hunger, disease and cold in camps;
- an additional estimated 5'000 war widows and thousands of orphans;
- destroyed animals and livestock;
- 49'000 BLU-97 cluster bomblets, more deadly than land mines;
- long-term health effects from using munitions containing depleted uranium;
- an infrastructure further destroyed - bridges, power plants, water supplies, roads, communication systems, hundreds of incinerated trucks, burned fuel storage facilities, etc. ;
- environmental costs in addition to aforementioned unexploded ordnance which causes loss of agricultural land and human injuries, including massive forest fires in Tora Bora, killed wildlife, altered migratory patterns, a resurgence of locusts, etc. ;
- and the psychological costs of being bombed - post traumatic stress disorders, anxiety, irritability, loss of appetite, depression, and there

"is a real feeling of loss - loss of body, loss of money, loss of friends and family," according to Dr. Ghulam Rasool, psychiatrist treating Afghan refugees in Quetta.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Martin Parry, "Mounting Concern Over the Human Cost of War in Afghanistan," Agence France-Presse [November 16, 2001]

A report in November of the World Health Organization estimated mental illness is serious for one in five Afghans as a result of 23 years of war.<sup>12</sup> A recent account detailed the forms of mental disorders,

"a 4 year-old boy named Hasib grimaces like an animal and repeatedly butts his head on the floor. A young man named Fawad says his father startles awake, terrified, in the middle of every night. A man, Mohammad, averts his eyes from the rubble of his village, when he looks, he is overwhelmed by a flashback vision of dismembered bodies..."

More than 3'000 bodies directly dismembered by U.S. bombs, missiles, cannon fire.

Having all too briefly documented the extent of the killing of Afghans, let me now turn to why the U.S. attack and occupation can be labeled a failure. Naturally, different vantage points offer different assessments of these failures and successes, but let me briefly try to draw a balance sheet.<sup>13</sup>

The stated successes might include:

- dismantling the network of training camps in Afghanistan ;
- drying up the source of funds flowing to support Al Qaeda by blocking \$112 mn of its funds ;
- ouster of the Taliban government;
- detained or killed one-third of Al Qaeda leadership.<sup>14</sup>

These successes are questionable. The training camps were very low-tech facilities easily re-established elsewhere. Certainly, future operation of such camps will have to be more clandestine and without the support of a host government.<sup>15</sup> But the decentralization and dispersal of Al Qaeda caused by U.S. bombing has resulted in a more dissimulated and dangerous structure. Eric Margolis reported that

"according to a secret government report revealed last week by The New York Times, the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan not only 'failed to diminish the threat to the United States,'

<sup>12</sup> Charles J. Hanley, "A Generation of War Leaves Many Afghans With Mental Disorders" Associated Press [May 5, 2002, at 9:02 P.M. E.T]

<sup>13</sup> an outstanding reflection on the U.S. 'war' in Afghanistan may be found in Juergen Todenhofer, "We Can't Simply Bomb a Just World Into Shape. It's a Lot Easier to Declare Victory Than to Earn It," The Chicago Tribune [June 30, 2002] at : <http://commondreams.org/views02/0630-04.htm> . See also Hubert G. Locke, "What Has War Brought Us So Far?" Seattle Post-Intelligencer [February 22, 2002] at [http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/opinion/59290\\_lockcol.shtml](http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/opinion/59290_lockcol.shtml) . A fascinating assessment made from a women-centered perspective made be found in Saba Gul Khattak, "The U.S. Bombing of Afghanistan: A Women-Centered Perspective" [New York: Social Science Research Center Viewpoint Essay #0, December 2001] at <http://www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/khattak.htm> . See also "So, Was It Worth It?" The Guardian (October 12, 2003) , a debate between Tariq Ali and Mike O'Brien.

<sup>14</sup> mentioned in, for example, Faye Bowers, "Al Qaeda Network Frayed," Christian Science Monitor [September 6, 2002]

<sup>15</sup> from Frank Gardner, "War on al-Qaeda: One year on," BBC News [August 30, 2002 at 16:14 GMT] at <http://www.afgha.com/article.php?sid=16233&mode=&order=0>

but actually complicated the U.S. counter-terrorism campaign by dispersing its radical foes across the Muslim world."<sup>16</sup>

Jason Burke of The Guardian argues that "Bin Laden and his aides instigated only a fraction of the attacks for which they have been blamed."<sup>17</sup> Instead, hundreds of radical activists beat a path to Bin Laden's door to present him with their dreams of destruction, seeking his approval. The Saudi with his monies, experienced experts and training camps, could turn these dreams into reality. In other words, Al Qaeda now possesses a highly globalized, decentralized nature.

A leaked U.N. report warned that Al Qaeda's finances are in good shape and that the early successes in choking off its funding by freezing 'terrorist-related assets' have tailed off.<sup>18</sup>

The ouster of the Taliban has not given way to a popular, multi-ethnic, national government. Ethnic strife continues, possibly even worse than during the Taliban era with Pashtun victimization and rising Pashtun ire towards Karzai and his U.S. backers.<sup>19</sup> Opium production after a hiatus under the Taliban, is soaring despite Karzai's ban.<sup>20</sup> The Karzai regime is an American invention - and hence widely seen as a U.S. puppet - and is de facto a weak mayoralty - dominated by the old Northern Alliance and a coterie of returned pro-U.S. exiles - supported by 5'000 foreign troops and a special 46-strong U.S. contingent which serves as Karzai's private body guards.<sup>21</sup> U.S. tax payers are paying for a foreign leader's private protectors! Karzai's weakness is exposed insofar as he does not even have a platoon of troops that is both trustworthy and capable of protecting him. When he ventures out of Kabul's presidential palace, he likely suffers assassination attempts.<sup>22</sup>

The un-stated 'successes' are much more compelling :

- 9/11 provided Bush II with a much needed powerful domestic political boost [and an 'enemy'];
- the military campaign has allowed a major U.S. politico-military-economic presence to be established in Central Asia at the heart of the Muslim world, something the U.S. had not possessed since the Shah of Iran was overthrown in 1979 by a militant Muslim movement. What had began as a limited operation to capture Al Qaeda leaders and disrupt that organization, has evolved into a full-fledged empire-building scheme with major regional projection. William Blum has summarized such expansion,

<sup>16</sup> Eric Margolis, "Anti-U.S. Militants Showing Up All Over," Ottawa Sun [June 23, 2002]

<sup>17</sup> Jason Burke, "Chaos Lurks in an Abandoned Land," The Observer [September 8, 2002]

<sup>18</sup> Gardner, op. cit.

<sup>19</sup> for example, see Scott Baldauf, "Newest Flood of Afghan Refugees: Pashtuns Fleeing South," Christian Science Monitor [August 30, 2002], at : <http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0830/p07s02-wosc.htm> . On Pashtun anger, see Paul Wiseman, "Frustration Boils in Afghanistan's Pashtuns," USA Today [July 30, 2002] at <http://www.usaday.com/usatonline/20020730/4316801s.htm> and Anthony Shadid, "Pashtun Ire Towards US Grows," The Boston Globe [January 22, 2002]

<sup>20</sup> Scott Baldauf, "Poppies Bloom in Afghan Fields Again," Christian Science Monitor [August 21, 2002]

<sup>21</sup> see STRATFOR.com, "If You'll Be My Bodyguard, I'll Be Your Long Lost Pal" [July 25, 2002], at <http://www.e-ariana.com/ariana/ariana.nsf/allArticles/610D0338B07CD2F587256C1000553FB3?OpenDocument>

<sup>22</sup> Rahimullah Yusufzai, "Attack Exposes Karzai's Weakness," BBC News Online [September 5, 2002 at 22:12 GMT]

"Washington's war on terrorism is primarily a euphemism for extending US control in the world. Following its bombing of Iraq, the US wound up with military bases in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar. Following its bombing of Yugoslavia, the US wound up with military bases in Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, Hungary, Bosnia and Croatia. Following its bombing of Afghanistan, Washington appears on course to wind up with military bases in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and perhaps elsewhere in the region. Thus does the empire grow."<sup>23</sup>

I underscore here the U.S. politico-military presence rather than the fanciful notion that getting access to Caspian oil reserves motivates the U.S. war.<sup>24</sup> No large corporation will make major investments in Afghanistan as the political risks are far too large and the economic payoff paltry.

- certain key industries here - in oil, defense contractors and security branches - have prospered enormously from the new military buildup.<sup>25</sup> War has enriched the likes of Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, General Atomics, Northrup Gruman and General Dynamics.<sup>26</sup> 9/11 has also been used to roll-back the environmental movement's successes and benefit the raw materials industries ;
- 9/11 has heightened the tensions between an aggressive, consumerist, individualist McWorld and what Benjamin Barber calls 'jihad' [or resistance].<sup>27</sup> I do not wish to support the 'clash of civilizations' argument, but it strikes me that two very different visions of living and happiness do exist in, say, Beverly Hills and Kandahar. We know how expansionist the capitalist individualist consumer system has been through the centuries of modernity.

The failures [or costs] of the U.S. military campaign are formidable. I believe these are :

- a world which is no safer than before 9/11 - from Morocco to Kenya, Bali to Baghdad. Karachi to Riyadh, etc.;
- the perpetrators of 9/11 roam free. As others have pointed out, this war against enemies has dispersed the Al Qaeda network once firmly centered in Afghanistan, making for a much more decentralized, horizontal organization which is far more difficult to combat. Al Qaeda was disrupted but not destroyed. An article in the Washington Post in March 2002<sup>28</sup>, mentioned that of the 27 members in Al Qaeda identified by the C.I.A. as 'leaders', 13 have either been killed or captured - those in captivity

<sup>23</sup> William Blum, "The Truth About the U.S. Bombing of Afghanistan," The Ecologist [March 22, 2002]

<sup>24</sup> Ken Silverstein, "No War for Oil! Is the United States Really After Afghanistan's Resources? Not a Chance," The American Prospect 13,14 [August 12, 2002]

<sup>25</sup> see James M. Cypher, "Return of the Iron Triangle: The New Military Buildup," Dollars and Sense no.239 [Jan/Feb. 2002]

<sup>26</sup> see Anne Marie Squeo, "Budget Plan to Brighten Skies for Defense Contractors," Wall Street Journal [February 1. 2002]: A20.

<sup>27</sup> Benjamin Barber, Jihad vs. McWorld. How Globalism and Tribalism are Reshaping the World [New York: Ballantine Books, 1995]

<sup>28</sup> Bradley Graham, "Al Qaeda, Taliban Leaders Elusive. Capture of Enemy Has Slowed in War," Washington Post (March 30, 2002)

include Abu Zubaydah, Abu Zubair, Ibn al-Sheikh al-Libi<sup>29</sup>, Abd al-Hadi al-Iraqi, Abdul Rahim al-Sharqawi alias 'Riyadh the Facilitator, Ramsi Binalshibh, and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.<sup>30</sup> The much ballyhooed discoveries of weapons caches are simply no substitute for apprehending the key perpetrators of 9/11. Recently, the inability of U.S. forces to engage and/or locate Al Qaeda and Taliban has demoralized U.S special forces who state that the hunt for Al Qaeda in Afghanistan is now "a waste of time"<sup>31</sup>;

- the likely prospect of an expanding regional war including a long, drawn-out replay of the Soviet-Afghan war as the Al Qaeda and Taliban have re-grouped and are well funded according to Scott Baldauf of the Christian Science Monitor, one of the few independent investigators in the U.S. mainstream press<sup>32</sup> - most simply congregate at Bagram air base acting as stenographers of a Pentagon lieutenant colonel. These elements had grossly underestimated the damage a U.S. air campaign might inflict and hence, suffered near total dis-organization during the months after October 7<sup>th</sup>. But, *Al Qaeda is a modern management organization - a 'learning organization,'* meaning here it is changing and adapting to the loss of its Afghan infrastructure.<sup>33</sup> For example, during 2002-3, it has all but eliminated communicating through sat phones, it has adopted the motorcycle as vehicle of choice, and it has switched to remote-controlled bombs as a weapon.<sup>34</sup> And the Taliban were never systematically disarmed, but simply away faded into villages and hills, often linking up with disgruntled warlords [e.g., the still powerful Hekmatyar]. The backlash against American actions and its Panjshiri-Tajik proxy force in Afghanistan, was just beginning a year ago.<sup>35</sup>
- a deteriorating financial-economic domestic condition, manifested by capital flight from the U.S. towards a resurgent Euro, deteriorating federal and especially state budgets and international trade balances, and a stalled economy with rampant poverty and even hunger.<sup>36</sup> The U.S military campaign in Afghanistan is estimated to be costing \$1 billion a month.<sup>37</sup> U.S. government expenditures at all levels will now run close to \$ 100 billion to improve 'first responders' and tighten security. This is bankrupting cities and states and siphoning funds away from vital unmet needs like Medicaid<sup>38</sup> ;

<sup>29</sup> The Libyan-born, Palestinian Al-Libi is alleged to have run Al Qaeda's Al Khalden training camp in the mountains of Paktia and reported directly to Abu Zubaydah. The Khalden camp consisted of only four tents and four stone buildings and ca. 50-100 international recruits at one time. In late December after the fall of Tora Bora, al-Libi tried to escape into Pakistan near Khost but was captured by the Pakistanis and quickly turned over to U.S. forces. Al-Libi was not mentioned on the original U.S. list of the 22 most sought-after Al Qaeda by the U.S Government. Doubts persist as to al-Libi's stature within Al Qaeda [Rahimullah Yusufzai, "U.S. Gains from Zaef, al-Libi Probe Uncertain," The News.Jang [January 7, 2002] and Mark Fineman et. Al., "Camps Are Rubble But Their Threat Remains," Los Angeles Times [December 18, 2001] ].

<sup>30</sup> James Risen and Dexter Filkins, "Qaeda Fighters Said to Return to Afghanistan," New York Times [September 10, 2002].

<sup>31</sup> Roland Watson, "Hunt for Al Qaeda in Afghanistan 'A Waste of Time'," Times [September 4, 2002]

<sup>32</sup> Scott Baldauf and Owais Tohid, "Taliban Appears To Be Regrouped and Well-Funded," Christian Science Monitor (May 8, 2003), and powerfully and cogently argued in STRATFOR, "Situation Deteriorating Rapidly in Afghanistan" [August 28, 2002], at : <http://no-war.laccesshost.com/stratfor1.html>

<sup>33</sup> Riser and Filkins, op. cit.

<sup>34</sup> "Taliban 'Switching to Bombs'," News24.com (South Africa) August 7, 2003)

<sup>35</sup> Robert Fisk, "Return to Afghanistan: Americans Begin to Suffer Grim and Bloody Backlash," The Independent [13, 2001], at : [http://new.independent.co.uk/world/asia\\_china/story.jsp?story=324164](http://new.independent.co.uk/world/asia_china/story.jsp?story=324164)

<sup>36</sup> Julian Borger, "Long Queues at Drive-In Soup Kitchen," The Guardian (November 3, 2003)

<sup>37</sup> Calvin Woodward, "War May be Costing \$1 Billion a Month," Associated Press [November 11, 2001 at 1:54 PM EST]

<sup>38</sup> see article by John Tirman, "One Year Later: Unintended Consequences of 9/11 and the War on terrorism," Alternet [August 31, 2002], at : <http://www.alternet.org/story.html?StoryID=13979>

- attacks at home on civil liberties of immigrants and U.S. citizens and the stifling of dissent.<sup>39</sup> Let us remember that after seven months and more than 1'200 arrests in the U.S., only one man, Zacarias Moussaoui, has been charged with terrorism offenses tied to 9/11 and he *was picked up a month before the hijackers hit the twin towers*. For most Americans, the domestic crackdown has meant standing in line a little longer to get on a flight, for many Muslims [and Sikhs, etc.] it has meant arbitrary detention ;
- the Bush II reaction to 9/11 has increasingly isolated the United States from erstwhile Allies in Europe and, of course, the Muslim world, exacerbating the Administration's 'go-it-alone' unilateralist penchant. Whereas Europe puts greater faith in supranational institutions and covenants, the U.S. elevates its national interest above all else.<sup>40</sup> Jim Lobe writes,

"the Bush presidency, especially after September 11, has shifted U.S. engagement in global affairs out of the post-WW II framework of multilateralism toward an unapologetic unilateralist approach.....not just a superpower, America is the global hegemon."<sup>41</sup>

The blind arrogance of the Bush neo-cons after a relatively quick ouster of the Taliban, led them to try again 17 months later, in Iraq.

But, let me now conclude by closing the circle of killing failure. U.S. bombing and ground attacks upon villages and compounds in mountain and desert have served primarily to build up hatred of the U.S. occupation. By the beginning of this year, the Taliban and their associates had regrouped, re-armed, established a new command leadership and begun a classic campaign of guerrilla warfare - **relentless small attacks upon weak targets with maximum psychological impact across the country (not just in border areas)** - like NGOs, the Kabul-Kandahar highway, and Afghan puppet army and police units, small groups, and never fighting the more powerful enemy on his terms. Over the past few months, Taliban attacks have demoralized the Afghan militia which has virtually stopped conducting search and seizure missions. Secondly, Taliban supporters among the population have gained in confidence and are more openly extending their support. As a result of these two factors, the Taliban have set up their own governates in villages across the 8 provinces of Kunar, Nangarhar, Paktia, Paktika, Uruzgan, Zabul, and Helmand. The ground situation is similar to during the early years of the anti-Soviet struggle.<sup>42</sup> An important element of the Taliban strategy is to make the countryside unsafe for any type of reconstruction. In this, they have succeeded with the pull-out of numerous NGO's.

<sup>39</sup> see the excellent review in Marissa Wilkinson, "Civil Rights Missing in Action," *Sydney Morning Herald* [September 9, 2002]

<sup>40</sup> see Lionel Barber, "Not Against You But Not Always With You," *Financial Times* [September 3, 2002]

<sup>41</sup> Jim Lobe, "Unilateralist Path Scored as Self-Defeating," *Foreign Policy in Focus* [FPF] [July 2, 2002]

<sup>42</sup> the above is from Syed Saleem Shahzad, "Taliban Raise the Stakes in Afghanistan," *Asian Times* (October 29, 2003)

The Taliban and Al Qaeda know time is on their side and they can wear down the U.S. (like the Soviets) with small attacks.<sup>43</sup> The U.S. politicians and population get tired of bodies and taxes. The Administration realizes this and has tried its hardest through threats and bribes to get others to do the fighting (and take wounded or killed) - once called Vietnamization - and others to foot the bills. All with little success. Oh sure, a few Romanians, Estonians, Lithuanians and soon Serbs in Afghanistan alongside the "new" Afghan Army, Poles, Bulgarians and Ukrainians in Iraq. U.S. emissaries scour the globe seeking troops to do their bidding - just yesterday, the US Ambassador to NATO called for an increase in German arms spending.<sup>44</sup>

The item handed-out here, documents the fighting going-on in Afghanistan in the two most recent months. Low-intensity guerrilla warfare waged by the Taliban and allies (Al Qaeda and the Hezb-i-Islami) during September-October 2003, spanned a dozen provinces in Afghanistan and the border areas of Pakistan. *Let there be no mistake, this is not a campaign waged by mere remnants from the Pakistan border provinces!* The attacks led to the deaths of at least 39-46 civilians, 75-92 Taliban, 104-121 Afghan soldiers and 13 North American troops. Four girls' schools were burned to the ground and four convoys of NGOs were ambushed.

#### September-October 2003. Guerrilla Warfare in Afghanistan

Date	Place	Type of incident	Occupation forces deaths	Afghan forces deaths	Civilian casualties	Taliban et al. deaths
Sept. 1	Shah Joi, Zabul	Attack road construction team		4 - 7		
Sept. 3	Sar Murghab, Uruzgan	Remote-controlled bomb kills senior Army officer		3		
Sept. 3	Mohammad Agha, Logar	Taliban burn down girls' school				
Sept. 5-14	Dai Chopan area of Zabul	Major battle involving ~100 US Special Forces, planes, and ~600 Afghan troops	1	30 est.		30 est.
Sept. 5	Bannu-Kohat area of Pakistan	100s of Pak. troops, helicopters and US Special Forces				
Sept. 6	Lashkar Gah, Helmand	Rocket fired at home of intelligence officer, 3 injured				

<sup>43</sup> see David Rohde, "Taliban Eyes Wearing Down US With Small Attacks," *New York Times* (September 12, 2003)

<sup>44</sup> Gethin Chamberlain, "US Ambassador to NATO Calls for Increase in German Arms Spending," *The Scotsman* (November 7, 2003)

Sept. 6/7	Ziruk, Paktika	Attacked district headquarters				
Sept. 7	Kighai Gorge near Shahwalikot, Kandahar	Attacked pick-up truck full of Afghan troops, 6 killed, 4 injured		6		
Sept. 7	US Special Forces bases in Kunar and Paktika	Rocketed and injured 2 U.S. soldiers				
Sept. 9	Makur village, Ghazni	Attacked pickup truck of NGO, DACCAR, killed 4 employees			4	
Sept. 11	Kabul	Rockets hit German and Canadian ISAF bases				
Sept. 11	Dai Chopan, Zabul	Week after conclusion of US sweep, Taliban attack US patrol				
Sept. 13	Jani Khel village, Paktika	15 armed men attack gov't bldgs. and drive out local police				
Sept. 13	Sorkamar	Ambush US convoy killing 6 US Special Forces	6			
Sept. 13	Shkin fire base, Paktika	Attacked with mortars and machine-gun fire				
Sept. 14/15	Spin Boldak area, Kandahar	US bombs Taliban, killing ~15 incl. Mullah Abdur Rahim				15
Sept. 16	Moqor, Ghazi	Remote-controlled bomb explodes in front of US convoy				
Sept. 16	Birmal area, Paktika	Taliban ambush convoy and capture 4 US troops				
Sept. 17	Shahwalikot, Kandahar	Firefight near "rebel hideout"				3
Sept. 17	Ghazni	Car bomb kills senior police officer		3		
Sept. 17	Wah Hawah, Paktika	Taliban take over gov't buildings				
Sept. 17	Naubahar near Shinkay, Zabul	US helicopters fire on "a tent" killing 9-10 nomads			9-10	
Sept. 18	Garjani Khel, Paktika	Taliban attack, take over gov't bldgs., setting them ablaze				6
Sept. 18	Shkin base	1-hour firefight, Talib. retreat				
Sept. 18	Wana, Pakistan	US planes drop 3 bombs in Pakistan				
Sept. 19	Sangisar, Kandahar	Ambush district police commander, killing him		1		
Sept. 21	Near Ghazni, Ghazni	Attack on US troops by 4 men				
Sept. 24	Gereshk, Helmand	Attack on NGO, VARA, pickup truck, killing 1			1	

		employee				
Sept. 25	Sarobi, Kabul	Taliban capture town				
Sept. 26	Central Uruzgan	Fighting leads to death of Taliban commander, Mullah Abdul Razzaq Nafees				1
Sept. 26	Near Gardez, Paktia	US patrol attacked with bomb and small arms fire				
Sept. 27	Shaga village, Nangarhar	Taliban burn down a girls' school				
Sept. 27	Sangeen district, Helmand	Attack Afghan army vehicles, killing 7		7		
Sept. 28/29	US firebase at Macha Dad, Paktia	Base hit with rockets which destroy an Apache helicopter				
Sept. 28	Charar Bolak, Balkh	Taliban burn down a girls' school				
Sept. 29	Shkin, Paktika	Ambush US patrol, kill 1 and injure 2 US soldiers	1			
Sept. 29	Angoor Adda near Shkin, Paktika	At 2 PM, US planes bomb house				
<b>Totals for September</b>	<b>An average of 1.3 attacks per day</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>55</b>
Oct., no date	Ghazni city	Capture governor's uncle and his two sons to swap for Taliban				
October 1	Dara-i-Noor village, Kandahar	Attack Afgan Army patrol, killing 10-18, planes called-in		10-18		4
October 1	Baghar village near Angoor Adda	Large Pakistani force with helicopters attacks village(s)			5-10 est	8-12
October 2	Sandy creek 3 kms. s.w. Darulaman, Kabul	Soviet TM-57 mine explodes, killing 2 Canadian soldiers	2			
October 3	Khak-e-Afghan district, Zabul	50 Taliban take-over district office, firefight				2?
October 3	U.S. firebase at Zormat, Paktia	Hit by rockets				
October 4	Zhery, 16 kms w. Of Kandahar	Afghan NGO 2 vehicles attacked, NGO worker injured				
October 4	Bolan district, 7 kms w. of Laskkar Gah. Helmand	Attacked Afghan Army post, killing 2, injuring 3		2		
October 4	Near Kandahar	Gov't 2 vehicle convoy		10	2	1

		attacked				
October 5	U.S. firebase at Orgun-e, Paktika	US patrol attacked, firefight. 2 other US bases also hit - Ghecko near Kandahar and Jalalabad				1?
October 5	US base near Khost, Paktia	Hit with rockets and ordnance. US planes called-in				
October 8/9	Border area near Angoor Adda, Pakistan	Large Pakistani operation, seeking to capture tribesmen. Leads to 36-50 arrests				
October 10	Kandahar	Large prison escape by 41 Taliban prisoners				
October 11	Khost-Kabul highway	Attack on US convoy	1	4		
October 12	Pol-i-Charki Afghan Army base in Kabul	Attackers fire upon US Special Forces training puppet army. injure 1 US soldier				1
October 12	Arghandab village, Zabul	150 Taliban attack police station, kill 13, kidnap 8, burn down buildings		13		1
October 13	Char Cheny, Uruzgan	Taliban attack police post		4-8		
October 15-16	Char Cheny area, Uruzgan	400 puppet troops and 2 dozen US soldiers., helicopters				3-10
October 17	Pashat village, 15 kms w. of Asadabad, Kunar	Attack pick-up truck filled with persons working with US, kill 4 and injure 5		4		
October 17	Highway near Khost	Taliban takeover highway for 3 hours				
October 17	40 kms. s. Of Lashkar Gah, Helmand	Attack Afghan military intell. Pick-up truck with mine, kills 3. Wounds 3		3		
October 18	Near Deh Rawud, Uruzgan	Spot and arrest Mullah Janan				
October 20	Faisalbad, railway station, Pakistan	Arrest 3 Al Qaeda suspects (2 Yemenis and 1 Pakistani)				
October 22	Bombings in Jalalabad	Bombs explode near gov't offices				
October 17-23	Dai Chopan region (again), Zabul	1,000 Afghan and 10-0 US Special Forces carry out another operation in area once declared cleared: 10-16 suspects taken				
October 23	Road east of Aybak, Samangan	Vehicle ambushed at 9:30 PM			10	
October 25	Kunduz	German troop contingent,				

		part of a PRT, arrives				
October 25	School s.e. of Khost, Paktia	Taliban attacked empty girls school and burned it down				
October 25	Kandao area of Paktika	US-Afghan patrol attacked, 6 hrs battle. 8 vehicles destroyed		12		
October 25	South of Shkin, Paktika	Taliban capture/kill two CIA operatives	2			
October 27	Faisalbad, Pakistan	Arrest a 4 <sup>th</sup> Arabic speaker				
October 27	Near US base at Orgun-e, Paktika	Attack a US patrol, injuring 3 US soldiers, 2 hr firefight				
October 30	Deh Rawud area Uruzgan	Attacks US patrol, killing US Special Forces soldier. Planes called-in	1			
October 30	Shahjoy district, Zabul	Taliban kidnap Turkish engineer working on rebuilding Kabul-Kandahar highway				
October 31	Gereshk town, Helmand	Fighting between 2 Afghan forces, kills 20 persons		(8)	(15)	
October 31	Arsent village, near Kunar border, Nooristan	US airstrike on remote village, hits 2 houses and kills 6-8 civilians. Targeted house of Hekmatyar commander			6-8	
October 31	highway between Gardez and Khost, Paktia	4 Taliban stop vehicle they believed carried US journalists of CSM. Only an Afghan driver was in vehicle. He was beaten up and the vehicle stolen				
<b>Totals for October</b>	<b>An average of .9 attacks per day</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>62-74</b>	<b>23-30</b>	<b>20-37</b>

The magnitude of the U.S. (and other occupation forces - for that is what they are, not peacemakers) failure in Afghanistan is magnified by many related considerations which go mostly untold in the U.S. mainstream corporate press (except by a handful of journalists who try to present the facts, e.g., Phillip Smucker, Carlotta Gall, David Rohde, the Canadian Kathy Gannon, etc.): (1). The U.S.-groomed Karzai puppet regime is largely confined to Kabul and within Afghanistan Karzai only moves around with his fifty U.S. protectors (paid by U.S. taxpayers) - no other nation's leader has hired foreign personnel protecting him/her; (2). The rest of the country is, as shown above a battle zone or in the hands of regional

powerbrokers; (3). The opium crops during the past two years are record-breaking; (4). An upper middle-class, largely urban so-called reconstruction is being undertaken, utterly irrelevant to 85% of Afghans<sup>45</sup>; (5). Persisting widespread poverty in a pseudo-economy driven by foreign monies - on a visit to India earlier this year, Karzai revealed a new insight into the meaning of economic well-being when he said his country was doing very well because there were lots of traffic jams in Kabul; (6). More than 80% of the \$10 bn which flowed into Afghanistan - and recall that in 2002, the country's GDP was estimated to be \$ 4.4 bn - has gone into further bombing, paying warlords, maintaining the occupation army; (7). the return of massive corruption (into the highest reaches of the Karzai regime) crime, violence, lawlessness, and even torture<sup>46</sup> to the countryside on a scale reminiscent of pre-Taliban times - in a rare incident where outside observer was allowed in, U.S. Special Forces blocked the exit to the town of Dai Chopan in Zabul, as their paid mercenaries of the Afghan militia beat up, robbed and abducted villagers.<sup>47</sup> (8). A pro-Taliban region covering most of western Pakistan has come into being through elections, where "tribesmen take cash, count 'blessings' from Al Qaeda."<sup>48</sup>

The U.S. corporate press delights in reporting upon beauty schools opening in Kabul, a girls' school opening here or there, the "American Highway" from Kabul to Kandahar, lifting of the burqa (in Kabul!), kites flying, new Internet cafes, body-building joints, traffic jams, Kabul's new restaurants and a supermarket, the new Miss Afghanistan 2003 in red bikini (in Manila), a planned private American University with annual tuition of \$ 5'000 (when average monthly income in Kabul hovers around \$ 30 ), the deluxe 205 room \$ 40 mn hotel of Chicago-based Hyatt in Kabul to arise opposite the U.S. Embassy,<sup>49</sup> .....

Reality is other, as an astute Indian observer has argued the past two years have really been about ***the fall and rise of the Taliban*** on a devastated landscape littered with mines, cluster bombs, depleted uranium, destroyed infrastructure, carcasses of wars gone-by, dead and injured Afghans.<sup>50</sup>

Post 9/11 has been ***a killing failure and about the fall and rise of the Taliban.***

<sup>45</sup> described in my "AfghaniScam: Livin' Large Inside Karzai's Reconstruction Bubble," dated September 23, 2003, at: <http://www.cursor.org/stories/afghaniscam.html>

<sup>46</sup> see Paul Watson, "Afghans Tell of Torture During Security Sweep. Villagers Say a Militia Working for the U.S. Went on a Rampage While Hunting Taliban," *Los Angeles Times* (October 30, 2003), at: <http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/national/20031030/20031030A10.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> Watson, op. cit. A photo (on p. A10) shows a Special Forces Humvee in Dai Chopan blocking the village exit.

<sup>48</sup> Owais Tohid, "Tribesmen Take Cash, Count 'Blessings' From Al Qaeda," *Christian Science Monitor* (October 29, 2003)

<sup>49</sup> for details, see [http://www.export.gov/afghanistan/pdf/hotel\\_2-hyatt.pdf](http://www.export.gov/afghanistan/pdf/hotel_2-hyatt.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> B. Raman, "The Fall and Rise of the Taliban," *Asia Times Online* (October 23, 2003), at: [http://atimes.com/atimes/Central\\_Asia/EJ23Ag02.html](http://atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/EJ23Ag02.html)

## Some lesser-known glimpses of Karzai's Afghanistan

Photos: upper left - Children in Kabul sort through garbage seeking materials to burn for keeping homes warm (AP photo, Kamram Jebreili)  
 upper right - a "liberated" Afghan woman, Vida Samadzai, at the 2003 Miss Earth pageant in Manila (AP photo, Wally Santana)  
 lower left - Karzai in an A-10 Warthog at Bagram Air Base showing his appreciation, March 2002 (source: <http://www.army.mil/operations/oef/images20.html>)  
 lower right - Karzai strolling *WITHIN* the presidential palace in Kabul, well-protected, June 17, 2003.



Photo montage by Marc W. Herold, November 2003