

# Afghanistan: Any 15-30 Year-Old Male is a Target for US “Elimination”

The US built Al-Qaeda and Osama’s encampments – exclusive interview Kathy Kelly

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Global Research, March 03, 2013

[Stop NATO and Voice of Russia](#) 28 February 2013

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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In Afghanistan any 15-30 year-old-male is a target for US “elimination”, activists were arrested and sent to prison in the US for attempting to deliver a letter to Whiteman Air Force Base, where drone operations are conducted, stating why the United Nations believes drone are illegal, war and killing people is profitable for war-profiteers and the US government knew about war crimes and the stealing of US weapons by former Blackwater-XE Academy but looks the other way. All of these matters and more were discussed in an interview with three-time Nobel Peace Prize nominee Kathy Kelly, the co-coordinator for Voices for Creative Non-Violence.

## [Part I](#)

Robles: Do most Americans know, or is the “man-in-the-street” in the United States right now, are they aware of the fact that al-Qaeda and the Taliban, and even Osama bin Laden, they got their start in a large part thanks to the United States when they were fighting against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan? Do Americans know that?

Kelly: Well, if they do it’s not because they heard it on the mainstream media; they would have had to do some investigating. One of the reasons why initially the United States knew where to bomb potential encampments for Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan was because the United States built them.

Robles: Recently there was this white paper came out justifying drone attacks on US citizens and basically it says: “...anyone who is a senior...A US citizen who is a senior al-Qaeda operative or associate...”, back to al-Qaeda: how many American senior operatives of al-Qaeda do you know in the world, or have you ever heard of, or known about?

Kelly: You know there’re some real tragedies associated with that. There was a 16-year-old boy who had gone to a conference in Pakistan and at the conference they had given the youngsters cameras and said: “Try to – because we can’t get journalists into North and South Waziristan, we can’t document what’s happening but maybe you can, and then send the footage out.”

And he was targeted for assassination and killed. He wasn't an American but al-Awlaki of course was, and this means that people with no due process, with no judge, jury, no trial, sometimes no charges whatsoever, people are targeted for assassination.

They actually say that if you are a young man between the ages of 15 and 30, you potentially could be a figure that the United States could eliminate, without any consultation. The president has a Tuesday morning meeting with about 100 people sometimes, on a conference call, and then they draw up their list.

Robles: Medea Benjamin told me that's called Terror Tuesdays, is that correct?

Kelly: Yes. She has done such a wonderful job. I hope people will read her book. And of course she stays on top of these issues.

There are many people all across the country right now who are protesting drone warfare. Our co-coordinator Brian Terrell is serving a six-month prison sentence because he crossed the line at the Whiteman Air Force Base where they are operating drones. And he just wanted to deliver a letter with Mark Kenney who served four months in prison for the same action, and Ron Faust who was given five years probation. They had a letter showing the Air Force, how it is that the United Nations believes that the usage of drones is a violation of international law.

Robles: Before we started the interview you mentioned some peace volunteers in Afghanistan. Can you tell our listeners a little bit about them and what they're doing? And some of the things you are doing on your trips to Afghanistan?

Kelly: Well, a group of youngsters have decided that they want to live without wars. They are not interested in revenge and retaliation, even though some of them lost their fathers, their brothers, uncles. Even though they've been among those displaced by the war.

Young Abdullah, when he was just a toddler had to be held over an open flame so that they could thaw out his body when they lived in a wretched refugee camp.

But these kids – I shouldn't say kids – these young men and women have decided that it is in their best interests by far to try to overcome ethnic divisions. So, the young men living together inter-ethnically and every morning they welcome seamstresses and students from different tribes and backgrounds and ethnic groups to come into their home, and some are heading to an English class and some are part of seamstress cooperative. And they delivered 2,000 very heavy quilts (they're called duvets) to the neediest of families, and they fanned out up the mountainside and into the refugee camps to find out, where these duvets would most be needed.

The women seamstresses made them: they came every day and collected materials and then they'd send their little kids with wheelbarrows bringing back the finished duvets. And it is a very astounding project to me.

All the duvets were delivered free of charge and the women were paid a meager salary. And it was international, through Voices' outreach, that paid for the materials and for this meager salary.

So we see small microcosmic examples of people wanting to work together to alleviate

suffering, to build a better world. I find it so hopeful when I go to Afghanistan, but I'll tell you it's also really cold, and the harsh winters are hard even if you are in a room with a wood-burning or coal-burning stove, and people have respiratory diseases all across the country.

The conditions are very, very hard because the infrastructure is so awful. I mean the electricity goes out and your water might be dependent on a well linked to the electricity, and then you are without water. And you know, that's how people get cholera; they can't flush down their own wastes.

Robles: Who is causing all this suffering in your opinion?

Kelly: Well, I do want to remind us that the United States has been spending \$2 billion a week, much of it lining the pockets of corrupt warlords. \$2 billion a week on its military presence, while right across the street from some of the military bases there are sprawling refugee camps.

So, I think any time the US public wages a war of choice and chooses as its target civilians who are living in one of the poorest countries in the world, then I think we have to do with the cause of a great deal of suffering. We may not know it, but we are not innocent.

Robles: \$2 billion a week. How many years has it been, over 12 years now? You'd think that every single Afghan person would be living in a mansion driving a Bentley for that much money.

Kelly: Yes, of course there are people who have amassed huge fortunes, and before we point fingers at Afghans who have, through corruption amassed fortunes, we should look at the war profiteers and major US companies in the United States and the universities that take their contracts and the faith-based communities that look the other way and the media people that refuse to tell the story. So, there is plenty of blame to go around, and there are plenty of other countries that have fought their wars within Afghanistan.

Pakistan and Iran are fighting proxy wars as we speak today, and in many ways there are Cold War competitions going on between the United States and China, the United States and Russia, and all of those could be solved through negotiation and dialogue and coming to our senses, but instead people like to continue these wars because there is profitability in killing people.

Robles: You talked about war profiteers. Can you tell us a little bit, because we are almost out of time, about the former Blackwater who was then XE, and are now called Academy I believe?

Kelly: This is a group of mercenaries. They are people who have contracted themselves out at great profit. I mean, the going rate for the high-end security contractors is a salary of \$129,000 a year, first \$89,000 of it tax free. And uh, they're adapted Special Forces Operations, and Academy, the new Blackwater incarnation I suppose, is building Camp Integrity on 10 acres of land just outside of Kabul which will train people in Special Forces Operations.

They got the contract from the United States government, even though the US Government certainly knew that their antecedents in Blackwater had been convicted of killing Afghan civilians and also allegedly killing Iraqi civilians, in Tahrir Square and also of stealing weapons from the United States military, but they must have fantastic inner connections to

keep getting these contracts.

Robles: Before they changed their name to XE they were being investigated for war crimes in Iraq. What percentage would you say there are of private mercenaries and contractors in Afghanistan? And are those counted in any way when the US government talks about a drawdown or a withdrawal of forces?

Kelly: You know, it is so hard to learn that information. I honestly don't know. You don't see Westerners at all in the neighborhood where I am, when I'm moving around the city. It's odd because when you are in the airports you see plenty of Westerners and most of them seem to be connected to some kind of military or security group. But I don't have any numbers.

I think that also the CIA must have many, many operatives and they don't have to give that kind of information out, but it is a good thing to keep exploring and trying to better understand. At one point there were as many security contractors in Iraq as there were US military, and the same could be true for Afghanistan.

Robles: Last point, this training base they are building, I was going to ask, is this supposedly to train Afghan peacekeeping forces or Afghan security services?

Kelly: I certainly wouldn't call it peacekeeping. I think that would be euphemistic.

Robles: Yeah sure!

Kelly: The different versions of Afghan armed troops are staggering in their number; there is the Afghan local police and the Afghan National Security Force, you've got special operations now being trained amongst quite a few different military branches. So, it is not certain that the more armaments, the more weapons that flow into the country the more rage that is being felt between different ethnic groups, the more of a prescription for civil war there is, and so it is very alarming to see more sophisticated weaponry coming in and people being trained, to train their weapons on their own people.

Robles: Ok, thank you very Kathy. Unfortunately we are out of time. I really appreciate you speaking with me.

Kelly: Thank you!

*This is John Robles you were listening to an interview with Kathy Kelly the co-coordinator for Voices for Creative Nonviolence. Thanks for listening, and I wish you the best.*

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