

America's "Lily-Pads" in Afghanistan and Central Asia: Pentagon to Increase the Number of "Small Military Bases"

The "Lily-Pad" policy of keeping small military presence in very large numbers of places around the world,

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US have many small military bases in Central Asia and can add to them more, Professor of Anthropology, Central Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at Indiana University, USA, Nazif M. Shahrani, told Trend.

"Since the first Gulf War of the 1990's US security policy has been one described as the "Lily-Pad" policy of keeping small military presence in very large numbers of places around the world, but no large military bases in any particular area. The land based Lily-Pads are complemented by the US navy on the high Seas. Yes, US already has many small military contingents in Central Asia and may add to them, but will not ask for establishing long-term military bases in the region including in Afghanistan. With the widespread use of drones, long-range missiles and extremely mobile US military force, establishing large military bases are not cost effective, so small lily pads-i.e., a military foothold in various places in Central Asia will suffice", Shahrani said.



As he mentioned, most but not all of US troops will leave Afghanistan by 2014 for a number of reasons. First of all, the cost of keeping every American service men in Afghanistan is very high-estimated now at \$1.2 million a year per soldier – and President Obama is searching for ways to reduce the cost to the US tax payers who are getting tired of the longest US war, especially in light of very unpromising accomplishment in Afghanistan during the last eleven years. More importantly the country is facing trillions of dollars budget deficit in the midst of economic crises.

According to Shahrani, the second reason is increasing cost of the Afghan war in blood-over 3000 dead so far in battle and some are killed by the so called "Blue on Green" (Afghan soldiers killing their US trainers). More importantly it is reported today that in 2012 suicide among US military personnel in Afghanistan has surged to the record number with some 349 US army personnel taking their own lives in Afghanistan. This number far exceeds American combat deaths according to Associated Press in Afghanistan during last year.

"The numbers of seriously injured, both physically and mentally, among the Afghan war

casualties are also very high and they require long term care and there are estimates that the long-term cost of US-Afghan war may run more than two trillion dollars in decades to come," the professor said.

"The third reason is that US want to Afghanize the war and that is why they have established security force of more than 350,000.00 for the Kabul regime. Now they have to take over from the US. Some Afghans, especially President Karzai wants reduction in the US troops because he will not be the President after 2014. If the conditions should deteriorate under his successor, he could then argue that his role as leader of the country was and is indispensable. He has always thought of himself and hardly ever of the country or the nation," the professor mentioned.

According to Shahrani, in Afghanistan there are a range of reactions to the talk about US ending combat role for the US-ISAF/NATO forces and pulling out by the end of 2014. The range includes-denial by some that US will never completely leave the country or the region because of her own interest in CA; extreme anxiety by many that after US withdrawal Afghanistan government will fold and another round of regional proxy wars may return to Afghanistan and the region.

As he mentioned, these include women and the non-Pashtun ethnic groups in western central and northern parts of the country.

"However, the US and Europeans are unlikely to allow such a disaster from happening; and great many in Afghanistan whose expectation of the international community bringing better and more effective governance and economic reconstruction have been thoroughly crushed, they are disappointed and no longer see the presence of US and European armies and promises of any consequence to them," Shahrani mentioned.

Currently, there are 50,000 U.S. servicemen in Afghanistan. In early May of last year, U.S. President Barack Obama and Afghan President Hamid Karzai signed a long-term strategic partnership between the two countries. The document provides for the signing of an agreement on safety, better known in diplomatic circles as the "protocol on troops." It is this agreement that will govern the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan after 2014.

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