

Obama's First 100 Days: The Afghan War is becoming America's War

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"We know they don't intend to kill civilians but we don't believe they are doing enough not to. If it continues we will see a lot more people joining the fight against the foreigners. It's inevitable" - Ahmad Zia, a jeweler in Kabul's busy bazaar (2008)

"Today the people in this region hate the Americans whereas they were welcomed when they arrived in 2001" - Raza Nawaz Tani, head of an association of tribal chiefs in Khost Province

The first 100 days of a new administration in Washington is always a time for comment and speculation about the future. It is an American tradition dating back to Franklin Roosevelt's tenure in 1933 during the Great Depression. But my focus here is upon what has the arrival of the Obama administration meant not within the United States, but rather for the everyday life of common Afghans. Naturally, a qualification need be noted insofar as this is a very short time span and changes might only be revealed in the years to come. On the other hand, some things have changed, as for example in the execution of the Afghan war which increasingly is becoming America's war.¹ Many commonly used old words and phrases which described things related to the Afghan conflict have been jettisoned by the Obama group in what Jon Stewart aptly called "Operation Redefinition." The high-visibility Guantanamo prison will gradually be closed to be replaced by Obama's Guantanamo at Bagram Air Base.² Neo-conservative Bill Kristol declares "All Hail Obama."³ And under Commander-in-Chief Obama, Americans will now apologize to Afghan families for killing their relatives - a U.S. Special Forces Lt. Col. who killed a father's three sons in a fire fight, went to the father's house to apologize, to tug at the old man's beard and caress his face.⁴

An excellent concise summary of the tactics of Obama's "new" Afghanistan strategy was provided by Gideon Rachman, the chief foreign affairs columnist of *The Financial Times*, Obama's new Afghanistan ... is much as expected: more troops, more training for the Afghan army and police, more reconstruction and more of a focus on terrorism and Pakistan, with less emphasis on democracy-building. The whole exercise suggests that the distinctions between the Bush and the Obama approaches to foreign policy may be less hard-and-fast than we thought. In the caricature version, it was Bush who was obsessed with the "global war on terror", while Obama pushed idealistic ideas about democracy and human-rights. But here we have Obama ramping up the emphasis on terrorism and

downplaying the liberal nation-building.⁵

A couple other pieces of the Obama plan include reconciliation (finding the “moderate” Taliban, or splitting off the “accidental guerrillas” from the committed jihadists,⁶ and the usual paeans to improving “Afghan governance.”

The Obama plan’s priority is clearly upon the military dimension and the strategic aim is now identical to that of George W. Bush in 2001 before he converted to “nation-building.”⁷ That aim was and is to disrupt Al Qaeda and prevent its return to Afghanistan. But never mind that that has already been accomplished as Al Qaeda has long dispersed to Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, etc. *Obama’s plan is a counterterrorism plan couched in the language of counterinsurgency.*⁸

The latter was simply too expensive, too demanding as regards necessary occupation troops, and the outcome too uncertain.

The Taliban in Afghanistan rejected the Obama offer of reconciliation labeling it as “lunatic” and reiterating from a position of strength that the withdrawal of foreign troops was the only way to end the war in Afghanistan.⁹ Why would the Taliban give up anything in order to join with a failing, corrupt, dysfunctional regime in Kabul? Reconciliation might have worked in 2003 when the Karzai regime still had the upper hand. The latest report (December 2008) of the International Council on Security and Development (ICOS), a European think-tank, says the Taliban now hold a permanent presence in 72% of Afghanistan, up from 54% a year ago. The lead researcher at ICOS, Norine MacDonald, is emphatic, “The Taliban are now controlling the political and military dynamic in Afghanistan.” The informal spokesman of the so-called moderate Taliban, Mullah Abdul Salem Zaeef himself said that the Obama troop surge would merely serve to attract jihadis to the country and moreover the Taliban movement was united.¹⁰

U.S. support for reconstruction and humanitarian aid in Afghanistan has averaged only a little more than \$1 billion per year since 2001 – or about \$50 per capita – but U.S. military spending there is about 20 times greater. During 2002-2008, the U.S. pledged \$10.4 bn in reconstruction aid to Afghanistan but only delivered \$5 billion of that sum. The Obama approach involves raising non-military up from \$2 bn per year to \$3 bn (as compared to over \$36 bn per year currently in military outlays in Afghanistan). The Supplementary Appropriations Request for 2009 lists \$3.6 bn for Afghan security forces, \$3.1 bn for counter-terrorism operations and \$1.6 bn for economic assistance (a portion of which goes for supporting additional personnel and diplomatic operations).¹¹ A paltry \$170 million – or \$6.40 per capita – is earmarked to support economic development in Afghanistan (including agriculture sector development). Under the “new” Obama plan, for every dollar spent on non-military aid, four dollars are spent on military operations in Afghanistan. The priorities are clear. This aid would allegedly fund reconstruction, police and army training, embassy operations, and local projects including efforts to impact the lives of ordinary Afghans and to give farmers alternatives to growing opium poppies. During 2008, foreign aid to Afghanistan was a paltry \$57 per capita.¹² Obama’s plan would raise the U.S. amount to \$ 112 per capita.¹³ But this is an *input* measure and includes monies going to police and army training, etc, not an indicator of *what might reach average Afghans*. The U.N. figures suggest that barely 19% of outside aid reaching Afghanistan goes to its intended use with most vanishing into the same melting pot as the opium harvest revenues.¹⁴ Indeed, all indicates that the deplorable past practices – huge overheads, corruption, shoddy workmanship, vastly overpriced projects, etc. – making for the “Afghan Reconstruction

Boondoggle” are not about to change.¹⁵

In other words, everyday life of average Afghans will continue as-is with Afghanistan continuing to receive a paltry amount of reconstruction aid under the Obama plan both in absolute terms and relative to other post-conflict countries. Admittedly, a few more roads and schools will be built and contractors enriched. Nearly half of American development aid (47%) goes to so-called “technical assistance,” that is to over-priced American private sector “experts”,¹⁶ like DynCorp, Blackwater, the Louis Berger Group, Bearing Point, etc. By contrast, the admired aid programs of Sweden and Ireland allocate a mere 4% and 2% respectively to such technical assistance.



The scene in Now Zad, Helmand, after U.S. Marines arrived, April 12, 2009

(Photo by Cpl. Pete Thibodeau, U.S. Marine Corps)

What emerges clearly in the Obama plan is scaling back ambitious “nation-building” and bringing “democracy” in Afghanistan. The focus rather seems to be upon much more modest (though still expensive – over \$3 bn per month) aims: building infrastructure and protecting the existing state as it is – warlords are useful partners in such a limited approach. The aim is to have a functioning state in the narrowest sense without the public relations glitz of “nation-building.”¹⁷ Obama’s preference was well displayed when he visited Afghanistan in July 2007 and chose to meet one of Afghanistan’s most notorious war lords, Gul Agha Sherzai, once governor of Kandahar and now governor of Nangarhar.¹⁸ This shift away from nation-building probably played a role in Karzai’s signing of a law affecting the country’s Shite minority that places severe restrictions on women. It also explains the upholding of a 20-year jail sentence imposed upon Parwez Kambakhsh, a young journalist, for printing an article that was critical of the role traditionally assigned to women under Islam. On the other hand, such practices have been more the norm since the U.S.-supported regime of Karzai was installed in 2002. In other words, in matters such as the role of women, press freedom, corruption, more lavish *poppy palaces* in the Sher Pur neighborhood of Kabul¹⁹, etc. one can expect more-of-the-same in Afghanistan.

During 2008-9, rising violence and lack of funds have been slowing down the projects of the

National Solidarity Programme (NSP) initiative, a country-wide community-based development initiative.²⁰ Growing violence has forced the closure of NSP projects in 40 of the country's 364 districts in 11 (out of 34) provinces. Insecurity in Afghanistan's vast rural hinterlands makes Obama's civilian surge (of agronomists, engineers, lawyers, etc.) sound irrelevant. But these "civilian and aid workers" will be embedded in the counterinsurgency-inspired Provisional Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), again revealing the Obama priority upon a military approach. The focus will remain upon the network of PRTs, an approach heavily criticized since its inception by humanitarian groups because it blends humanitarian and military objectives. Many NGOs active in the field – like Oxfam, Care, Action Aid, Save the Children and others – have been calling for a phasing out of the PRTs.²¹ The neutrality of legitimate humanitarian organizations is undermined by the PRTs which led to the exit from Afghanistan of Medecins Sans Frontieres some years ago.

What about the vaunted Obama troop surge? While I do not intend here to assess the different options proposed for U.S. policy towards Afghanistan, Obama's surge deserves some comments as it directly affects the everyday lives of Afghans.²² As one pundit noted, "The planned (Obama) escalation in Afghanistan is being billed as necessary for a successful counterinsurgency strategy, but that's like saying a few bags of sand are necessary to stop New Orleans from flooding." Counterinsurgency doctrine posits 20-25 troops per 1,000 of a country's population, precisely the ratio which existed in the basket case called Kosovo in 2008. Richard Pape stated that for a successful occupation, one needs about one combat soldier for every 40 people in the country, or 25 soldiers per 1,000 inhabitants. What that equates to in Afghanistan would be well over a quarter million Western combat forces in Afghanistan. The Afghan ratio in 2008 was a mere 5.2 and with the Obama surge will only reach 6.4.

But the above argument is seriously flawed in a number of ways: can one really assume that Afghan army (ANA) and police (ANP) will count as counterinsurgents? That NATO forces in toto will engage in heavy fighting? A more plausible though generous (to Obama and NATO) calculation would be:

- Combined US/NATO forces (47,600) plus proposed Obama surge of 30,000 plus ANP & ANA @ 127,000 = 204,600
- Assuming an Afghan population of 26,6 millions, the ratio would be only 7.7
- If we assume the only hostility comes from the 14 mn Pashtuns in Afghanistan, the ratio would still be 14.5, a far cry from the suggested 25.



The Pakistani Taliban on full display in Swat, April 19, 2009 (photo by B.K. Bangash, A.P.)

More U.S troops in Afghanistan's border areas simply pushing radical Islamists across the Pakistani border where the writ of a feeble Pakistan government is non-existent. The inflow of such radical Islamists only further destabilizes Pakistan where the sway of the Pakistan Taliban increases weekly.²³ The weak Pakistani regime is losing territory to the now unified Pakistani Taliban commanders, unified to fight against the foreign occupation forces in Afghanistan.²⁴ As Carlotta Gall of the *New York Times* argues, the Obama surge has served to unify Pakistani and Afghan Taliban.²⁵ But, such cross-border sympathies have long been a reality of the area.²⁶ The evidence is overwhelming that Obama's military "solution" – his surge – is a pitiful half-measure and as the Strasbourg NATO meeting in April demonstrated, Europe is unwilling to pick up the slack. Two hundred thousand Pashtuns cross the 2,640 km long border with Pakistan daily.²⁷ Clearly, such a border cannot be sealed. The dearth of occupation troops is captured in the following photo:



U.S Army occupation soldier in village of Tsapowzai, 50 kms west of Kandahar, in early 2009

(Photo by Danfung Dennis, *New York Times*)

The chimera of building up the Afghan National Police needs to be recognized. According to the U.S Government Accountability Office report of June 2008, the \$6.2 bn already spent on creating a functioning Afghan National Police force has not resulted in a single police unit capable of fulfilling its mission.²⁸ Ann Jones presents a sobering account by inspectors general of the Pentagon and State Department of U.S. efforts to train the Afghan police,

...They found the number of men trained (about 30,000) to be less than half the number reported by the administration (70,000). The training had lasted eight weeks at most, with no in-the-field experience whatsoever. Only about half the equipment assigned to the police — including thousands of trucks — could be accounted for, and the men trained were then deemed “incapable of carrying out routine law enforcement work.” ²⁹

The U.S-backed idea of establishing local, village-level armed civilian militias – known as Afghan Public Protection Forces (APPF) – whose members are given weapons after a scant three weeks of training, has been met with near unanimous condemnation by Oxfam and leading aid organizations involved in Afghanistan. In March, the first 240 members of the APPF graduated from their 21-day training course and were placed in the Jalrez district of Wardak Province.³⁰ The fear is that more Afghans will be targeted by the resistance and that the scheme will help re-create tribal militias of the type the international community has spent 6-7 years disarming.³¹ Critics fear that the APPF will be a repeat of an earlier auxiliary police force which was poorly disciplined and very predatory. Similar critiques are made of the new “outreach” program, Afghan Social Outreach Program approved in September 2008 by the Afghan government. NGO’s have nothing but harsh words for this counter-insurgency approach which puts Afghans at great risk.³²

Misguided bombs and midnight raids upon Afghan homes are about as disastrous as the Western effort (led by the British) to rid Afghanistan of opium, the only source of income in many farming communities. Obama’s emissary, Richard Holbrooke, in late March described the current eradication policy as “the most wasteful and ineffective programme I have seen in forty years...The United States alone is spending over \$800 million a year on counter-narcotics. We have gotten nothing out of it, nothing...By forced eradication we are often pushing farmers into the Taleban hands.”³³ Instead the effort will be to on providing alternative sources of income for farmers. But this has been attempted for many years and flies in the face of the reality that opium is a commodity in poor Afghan rural communities which functions as a social glue.³⁴

But even more importantly, as many have argued and as early data for 2009 examined herein confirm, sending more troops will primarily serve to raise civilian casualties; and more civilian casualties will simply create more recruits for the Afghan resistance to foreign occupation. ³⁵ Mullah Zubiallah Akhund, a Taliban leader in Uruzgan, believes that foreign attacks helped turn their fight against the foreigners into a nationwide popular struggle,

The people who are fighting with the Taliban are the brothers, uncles and relatives of those killed by the Americans. They have joined the Taliban and are fighting because they want to avenge their brothers, fathers or cousins. There are now Taliban in every village; many of them have rejoined the movement after the savage attacks carried out by Americans.³⁶

Many view Obama’s Afghan surge as precisely the wrong thing to be doing. A coalition of

Afghan NGOs – including Oxfam, the International Rescue Committee and others – has expressed deep concern that Obama’s military surge will raise civilian casualties. Some Afghans (including RAWA) have called for a complete withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. Others like veteran *New York Times* correspondent Stephen Kinzer admit that hostile acts by U.S troops fuel the resistance and argue that the U.S should engage in a holding action, not raise U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan as such sends the wrong signal, reduce visible U.S aggressive troop presence and acts, buying time to train Afghan forces.³⁷



An Afghan man in Azizabad offers prayers beside graves of people killed in a US airstrike in August 2008.

(Photo Agence France Presse).

During 2007, the number of US/NATO troops in Afghanistan was increased by 45% and the number of civilians killed by direct US/NATO actions was 1,010-1297. During the first half of 2008, when the number of U.S. occupation forces in Afghanistan surged from 26,607 to 48,250, 38, I estimate that the number of Afghan civilians killed (at the point of impact) by U.S/NATO actions during 2008 to be 864 – 1,017. This compares closely with the figure of 1,100 who died in US-led or NATO raids during 2008 as reported in January by the Afghanistan Rights Monitor Group.³⁹

The belief is widespread that in the months to come violence will escalate further given the current strategy being followed by the U.S and its NATO allies.⁴⁰ A confidential NATO report from January 2009 released by Wikileaks documents the dramatic escalation of war and civil disorder across Afghanistan during 2008: a 50% increase in kidnappings and assassinations, a 25% increase in roadside bombings, etc. The Afghanistan NGO Safety Office first quarter report for 2009 adds more recent data: suicide attacks went from 19 to 31 during the first

quarter of 2008 to the first quarter of 2009, IED strikes from 159 to 239 and rocket strikes from 98 to 177, small arms/RPG attacks usually on military convoys or bases up from 366 to 744. 41 In Khost Province, violence has spiraled: 50 “insurgent” attacks in 2005, 107 in 2006, 165 in 2007 and 196 in 2008.42

The Obama military effort in Afghanistan during the first 100 days which relies more on ground attacks than aerial bombing has one clear message as will now be demonstrated: **Afghan women and children run for cover!** The “mindless U.S/NATO air strikes” have simply been replaced by equally senseless and deadly ground attacks. In effect, **Obama has implemented a ‘democratization of death’** in the sense that killing civilians across a wide demographic cut has occurred, from grandparents to an un-born fetus, from farmers to nomads, etc. as demonstrated in **Table 1**.

Table 1. The ‘Democratization of Death’ for Afghan Civilians under President Obama, Jan 20- April 30, 2009

Person’s status

Date Killed

Location killed

Killed by

A grandparent

3 A.M. Jan. 24th

Laghman

U.S close air support

Nomads

4 A.M. Feb 16th

Herat

A U.S air strike

A cook

3:30 A.M. March 22nd

Kunduz

U.S Special Forces

Mother

8 P.M. April 17

Helmand

A helicopter attack

Father

P.M. Feb 20th

Logar

U.S ground forces

An un-born fetus

0:30 AM April 9th

Khost

U.S ground forces

Two farmer

P.M. March 24

Khost

U.S ground forces' fire

A little girl

March 2009

Helmand

Danish soldiers

A tribal elder

Jan 31st

Paktika

U.S forces' ground fire

A middle school principle

P.M. Feb 6

Khost

U.S forces' ground fire

Male motorcyclist

Feb 3rd

Helmand

NATO ground fire

Shop keepers

April 8th

Pakistan

A CIA drone's missiles

Four sons

2:30 A.M. March 14th

Logar

U.S. Special Operations troops

A government employee

0:30 AM April 9th

Khost

U.S ground forces

A driver

8 P.M. April 17

Helmand

A helicopter attack

Source: Marc W. Herold, *The Afghan Victim Memorial Project* data base

Five groups gather data on Afghan civilian casualties on a regular basis though using different classifications (making direct comparisons difficult). The results are presented in **Table 2** below.

Table 2. Counts of Afghan Civilian Casualties for 2008

UNAMA: Taliban and allies

Foreign forces and Afghan troops

1,160

828 (air: 552)

AIHRC: Taliban and allies

Foreign forces and Afghan troops

1,000

800

Marc Herold: Foreign Forces

864-1,017

ARM: Taliban and allies

Foreign Forces

Karzai forces

2,300 (930 suicide bombs)

1,100 (air: 680)

520

ANSO: Armed opposition groups

International military forces

1290

459

NATO: Armed Opposition groups

International military forces

992

248

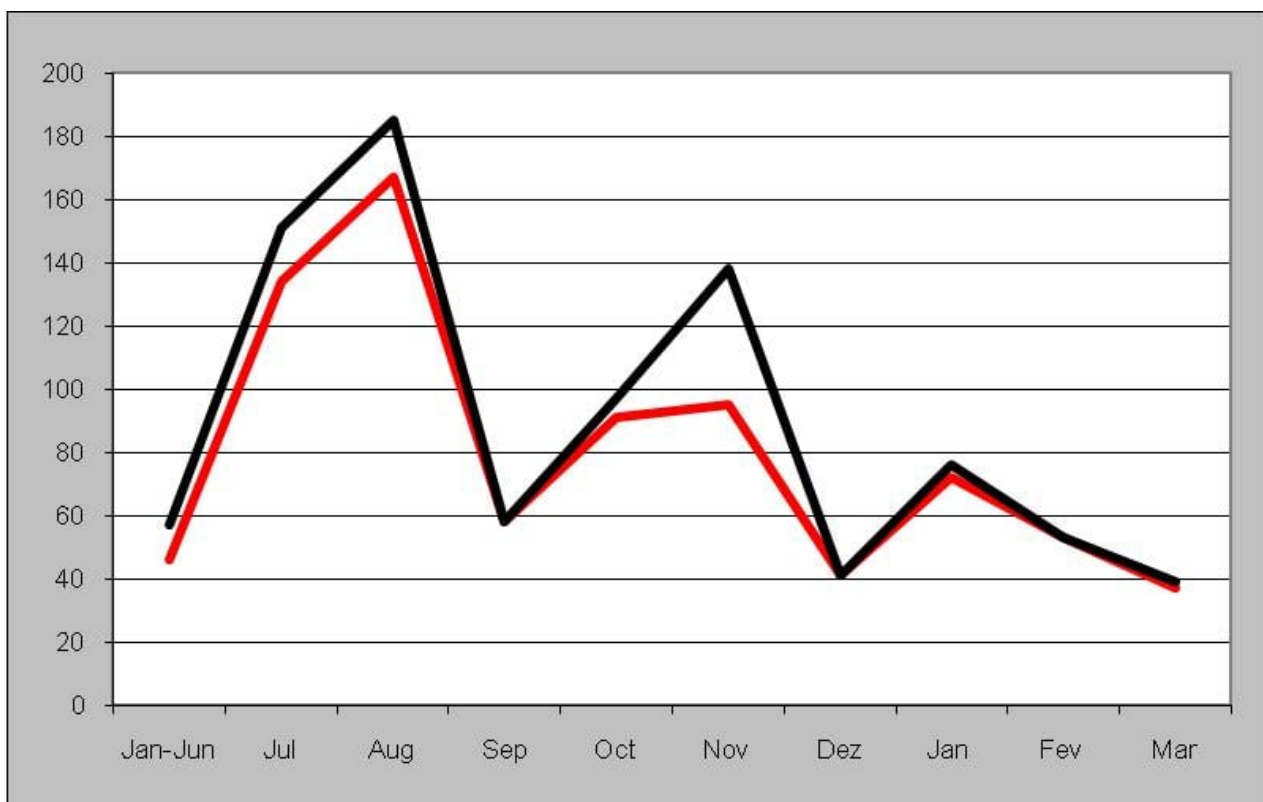
Notes: AIHRC = Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission; ARM = Afghanistan Rights Monitor; ANSO = Afghanistan NGO Safety Office

In other words, foreign forces alone were responsible for 800-1,100 dead Afghan civilians during 2008, that is, about 80 per month (though such an average obscures different monthly averages in Afghanistan due to weather-related fighting intensity, **Figure 1**). The propaganda nature of NATO numbers merits no further comment. I am the only analyst who presents disaggregated data which allows fact-checking of the compilation (a sine qua non

for serious academic research). The figures reported by the independent Afghanistan Rights Monitor (ARM) team are close to those I report.⁴³ Data for the first quarter of 2009 is only available from ANSO and Herold. Herold reports 162-168 Afghan civilians killed by foreign forces whereas ANSO lists 107. NATO's James Appathurai proclaimed that civilian deaths caused by Taliban and Western actions fell by almost 40% in the first quarter of 2009 compared to the same period in 2008 (no evidence provided).⁴⁴ But, my data shows that during the first quarter of 2009, US/NATO forces killed on average 54-56 civilians per month as compared to 46-57 per month during the first half of 2008.

Figure 1. Monthly Averages of Civilians Killed by US/NATO Actions,

January/June 2008 – March 2009



An analysis of the demographics of Afghan civilians who perished at the hands of the U.S. and NATO since Obama assumed the presidency reveals the following (**Table 3**). Women and children killed by US/NATO forces amounted to 63% of the identifiable deaths (and men 37%). This compares to figures respectively of 72% and 28% during January – August 2008.⁴⁵ The difference is accounted by the much greater reliance upon aerial bombing during 2008. In other words, first Bush then Obama and their NATO allies have been killing twice as many civilian women and children than civilian men in America's Afghan war. Very little change in the relative proportion has occurred since Obama became Commander-in-Chief. My argument here includes men as civilians, thereby not falling into the essentialist trap of equating women and children with innocent civilians.⁴⁶ The high proportion of women and children killed reflects the fact that US/NATO forces are assaulting domestic or home spaces.

Table 3. The Demographics of Afghan Civilians Killed by US/NATO Actions during Obama’s Presidency (Jan. 21 – April 19, 2009)

Men
43-45 (mid. pt 44)
25.1%
Women
13
7.4%
Children
60
35.3%
Undetermined
54-57 (mid.pt 55.5)
31.6%
Total.....
173-178 (mid.pt 175.5)
100.0%

Source: derived from the Afghan Victim Memorial Project data base

Much ado was made during the beginning of 2009 that U.S/NATO forces would rely less upon deadly air power strikes which kill lots of civilians.⁴⁷ Instead, more focused ground attacks would be mounted as the Obama surge materialized. What does the data for January 20 – April 19th show? **Table 4** shows that air (including air and ground) attacks still account for 57% of civilian deaths and are 2.5 times more deadly than ground attacks. The typical foreign forces’ ground raid kills 2-3 persons and an air strike over 6 persons, almost identical to Iraqi civilians killed per attack by small-arms gunfire or air attacks (respectively 2 and 9).⁴⁸ By far the deadliest, however, are CIA drone attacks in the Pakistan border areas: during the period of Jan. 1 – April 8, 2009, CIA drones launched 14 air strikes killing 152 civilians, giving a per strike casualty figure of 11.49

Table 4. The Causes of Afghan Civilian Deaths, Jan. 21 – April 19, 2009

air
Air & ground
ground

other

drones

attacks

14

2

28

4

14

killed

85-89

13

69

7

153

Killed/attack

6.0-6.4

6.5

2.5

1.8

11

In effect, the Obama administration continues to rely upon air attacks though the number of such strikes was 16 as compared to ground attacks @ 28. Obama has shifted the deadly burden of air strikes onto Pakistani border Pashtun tribe people. This would seem to be an especially flawed tactic insofar as most Pashtuns adhere to the code of Pashtunwali where a mal deed against a family member requires revenge. In other words, such attacks causing civilian injury or death are creating an endless supply of new resistance fighters. Widely cited figures suggest that for every dead Pashtun, 3-5 revenge seekers are created.

Under Obama's surge "These troops are going to help us counter Taliban territorial advances, deny safe havens and create security for Afghan civilians," said a senior Obama administration official, speaking on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly.⁵⁰ My data documents that rather than security, Afghan civilians continued to be killed or injured by America in large numbers and suffer the

humiliation of having foreign troops breaking and entering their homes.⁵¹ Does it matter to be killed by a Mark-82 bomb made by Raytheon Corp. or in a raid by U.S. Special Forces?



In this image dated Wednesday Feb. 18, 2009, British Royal Marines of 42 Commando, break down a door during Operation Diesel, an assault launched by British troops into the Taliban heartland in Afghanistan's notorious Sangin Valley In Helmand Province (Source: <http://www.daylife.com/photo/01d8g9EdAR097>)

Conclusion:

Obama's approach represents continuity with that of his much critiqued predecessor. As with Bush, Obama offers no exit strategy. The major "changes" are an increased U.S. military presence, more attacks in the Pakistan border areas, further militarization of reconstruction aid, a jettisoning of nation-building and its concerns for citizens' rights, killing Afghan civilians through ground troop action rather than aerial bombing, and the all marketed with increased sophistication to an American public still enamored with the rhetoric of change and still hungry for the comforting words of a Harvard-trained lawyer.

Notes

1 As I have argued elsewhere, see my "America's Afghan War: The Real World versus Obama's Marketed Imagery," *RAWA.org* (April 12, 2009)

2 Nina Wekheuser and Deanne Corbett, "Will Bagram Become Obama's Guantanamo?" *Deutsche Welle* (April 18, 2009)

3" 'All Hail Obama' - Obama's Afghan Strategy Wins Neo-conservative Plaudits," *The Spectator* (March 27, 2009)

4 Mayhill Fowler, "Afghanistan: Obama's Men and Women Go to War," *Huffington Post* (February 25, 2009) and Peter Graff, "New Tactic for U.S., NATO in Afghanistan: Say Sorry," *Reuters* (April 17, 2009).

5 Gideon Rachman, "The New Afghanistan Strategy," *The Financial Times* (March 27, 2009)

6 The term "accidental guerrilla" was coined by Australian soldier and anthropologist David Kilcullen. For a critique of Kilcullen's analysis, see Michael Scheuer, "The Accidental Guerrilla and the Deliberate Interventionist," *Antiwar.com* (April 14, 2009). Gareth Porter argues that the plan to split the Taliban lures Obama deeper into the Afghan war, see Gareth Porter, "Plan to Split Taliban Lures Obama Deeper into War," *Antiwar.com* (March 17, 2009)

7 as I have argued elsewhere and also articulated in Aunohita Mojumdar, "Old Military Hardware in a New Bottle," *Asian Times* (April 23, 2009)

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16 Ann Jones (2009), op cit.

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18 Matthew Rosenthal, "U.S Sees Former Warlords as Useful Partners," *Wall Street Journal* (March 20, 2009)

19 Kelley Vlahos, "Poppy Palaces," *The American Conservative* (April 22, 2009)

20 "Insecurity, Lack of Cash Threaten Development Projects," *IRIN News* (April 16, 2009)

21 As in Matt Waldman, "Caught in the Conflict. Civilians and the International Security Strategy in Afghanistan" (Brussels: A briefing paper by 11 NGOs operating in Afghanistan for the NATO heads of State and Government Summit, 3-4 April 2009), 27 pp.

22 See for example, Fred Kaplan, "What Are We Doing in Afghanistan? We're Still Figuring That Out," *Slate.com* (February 6, 2009)

- 23 Robert Birsel, "Fears for Pakistan as Taleban Make Gains," *Arab News* (April 20, 2009)
- 24 Ahmed Rashid, "Slide toward Anarchy," *Globe & Mail* (February 28, 2009)
- 25 Carlotta Gall, "Pakistani and Afghan Taliban Unify in Face of U.S. Influx," *International Herald Tribune* (March 27, 2009)
- 26 Superbly described in Dexter Filkins, "Right on the Edge," *New York Times Magazine* (September 7, 2008)
- 27 Tariq Osman Hyder, "The Afghan Labyrinth," *The News International* (February 26, 2009)
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- 31 Jon Boone, "Aid Agencies Attack US Plan to Arm Afghan Militias," *The Guardian* (April 3, 2009)
- 32 see "Caught in Conflict (2009), op. cit. cited in Peter O'Neill, "Aid Agencies Release Scathing Critique of Afghan Counter-Insurgency Efforts," *Canada.com* (April 3, 2009)
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- 40 Chris Sands, "War-Wearied People Fear Little Hope of Peace," *The National* (March 9, 2009)
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46 A theme explored in R. Charli Carpenter, *'Innocent Women and Children': Gender, Norms and the Protection of Civilians* (Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 217 pp.

47 Tom Vanden Brook, "Fewer Airstrikes in Afghanistan Mirror Tactical Shift," *USA Today* (April 8, 2009)

48 See Madelyn Hsiao-Rei Hicks et. al., "The Weapons That Kill Civilians – Deaths of Children and Noncombatants in Iraq, 2003-2008," *New England Journal of Medicine* 360, 16 (April 16, 2009): 1586

49 Data from "60 Drone Hits Kill 14 Al-Qaeda Men, 687 Civilians," *The News* (April 10, 2009)

50 Julian Barnes and Greg Miller, "Obama Orders More troops to Afghanistan," *Los Angeles Times* (February 18, 2009)

51 If Afghan victims of American or NATO forces get mentioned at all in the mainstream press, it is the dead. Those permanently maimed in "precision" air strikes or midnight assaults by U.S. Special Forces hardly ever are worthy of notice. Yet, such attacks result in injured as well as killed; indeed, the ratio of wounded to civilians killed in the predominant air attacks in Afghanistan during the initial U.S. bombing campaign was about 1.8 to 1. This ratio has likely decreased as the fighting became more lethally focused, but a decreasing ratio raises the specter of war crimes having been committed against civilians. See my "Uncomfortable Others: Afghan Civilians Wounded by America," *Uruknet* (February 20, 2009)

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