

The West's Afghan War: From Conquest To Bloodbath

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Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)
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On December 29 the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) released figures demonstrating that Afghan civilian deaths had risen by 10 percent in the first ten months of 2009, from 1,838 during the same period a year earlier to 2,038. The majority of the killings were attributed to insurgent attacks, including those directed against U.S., NATO and government targets, but almost 500 civilians were killed by American and NATO forces.

Matters only grew worse last November and December, culminating in several massacres of Afghan civilians by Western forces at the end of the year.

In early December a NATO air strike killed thirteen civilians in Laghman province. One account also documents a deadly raid by American special forces there. "According to witnesses, US troops entered a number of houses near the provincial capital, Mehtar Lam, in an overnight operation. The victims included Mohammed Ismail, whose 10-year-old son, Rafiullah, described what happened: 'When the soldiers came to our house, my father asked them, "Who are you?" Then they shot him in the head and told us, "Be quiet and tell us where the weapons are."' [1]

The chairman of the Laghman provincial council presciently commented on the killings that "When the commander in Kabul asked Obama for the extra troops, he knew the USA would end up with one achievement, and that is more civilian casualties." [2]

On the same day that the above-cited UN report was made public an air attack by U.S.-led warplanes killed four Afghans in the northern province of Baghlan. According to one report "A father and his three sons were reportedly among the [fatalities]. The raid also wounded eight others." [3]

A member of parliament from a neighboring province, Haji Farid, said after the aerial onslaught that "Every time an American soldier gets killed, they bomb an entire village." [4]

The following day a NATO missile strike killed seven Afghan civilians in Helmand province.

According to the New York Times, “Neither NATO forces nor the Helmand governor’s office gave a definitive number of dead, but reports from local people said that five to seven civilians had been killed, including three children.” [5] Later a spokesman for the governor of the province confirmed that seven civilians had been slain and another wounded.

Far more atrocious news broke the same day, December 30, when, according to the next day’s edition of The Times of London, “American-led troops were accused...of dragging innocent children from their beds and shooting them during a night raid that left ten people dead” in Kunar province near the Pakistani border. [6]

U.S.-installed and -supported President Hamid Karzai dispatched an investigative team headed by former governor of Helmand province Assadullah Wafa to the scene of the massacre, dubbed by at least one news source as an Afghan My Lai.

A statement was later issued on the official website of the Afghan president that said in part: “The delegation concluded that a unit of international forces descended from a plane Sunday night into Ghazi Khan village in Narang district of the eastern province of Kunar and took ten people from three homes, eight of them school students in grades six, nine and ten, one of them a guest, the rest from the same family, and shot them dead.”

The delegation’s head, Wafa, added that “US soldiers flew to Kunar from Kabul, suggesting that they were part of a special forces unit,” and was quoted as saying “I spoke to the local headmaster. It’s impossible they were al-Qaeda. They were children, they were civilians, they were innocent. I condemn this attack.” [7]

The investigation he led established that eight of the victims were between the ages of 11 and 17. The slain students’ headmaster, Rahman Jan Ehsas, described the details of Barack Obama’s and top U.S. and NATO military commander Stanley McChrystal’s new special operations-led counterinsurgency approach as it was applied to his pupils:

“Seven students were in one room. A student and one guest were in another room, a guest room, and a farmer was asleep with his wife in a third building.

“First the foreign troops entered the guest room and shot two of them. Then they entered another room and handcuffed the seven students. Then they killed them. Abdul Khaliq [the farmer] heard shooting and came outside. When they saw him they shot him as well. He was outside. That’s why his wife wasn’t killed.” [8]

NATO’s International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) attempted to both widen and evade responsibility for the murders by claiming “the raid was a joint operation and it was still under investigation,” a ploy quickly exposed when “Afghan Defence Ministry spokesman Zaher Azimy said Afghan troops had not taken part.” [9]

Demonstrators, particularly university students and their instructors, took to the streets in the provinces of Kabul and Nangarhar denouncing the rapidly escalating and by now routine slaughter of civilians, including children, by U.S. and NATO troops and warplanes. Their chants included “Obama! Obama! Take your soldiers out of Afghanistan!” and “Stop killing us!”

Professors and students at Kabul University passed a resolution demanding that NATO troops leave Afghanistan. [10]

Referring to the first of December's massacres, a Middle Eastern newspaper wrote, "The raid in the eastern province of Laghman this month followed a pattern that has become sadly familiar in Afghanistan over recent years. As is often the case, international forces insisted militants were killed, but local officials and villagers claimed the dead were civilians." [11]

With the increase of U.S. and other NATO nations' and partners' troops to over 150,000 in the near future and the announced shift from counterterrorism to counterinsurgency operations, the killing of Afghan civilians will grow exponentially.

On the other side of the border, Washington's and NATO's proclaimed AfPak war is no less murderous.

On January 2 Dawn News, Pakistan's first 24-hour English news channel, reported on its website that 44 CIA-directed Predator drone missile attacks last year had killed 708 people, only five of them alleged al-Qaeda and Taliban targets. "According to the statistics compiled by Pakistani authorities, the Afghanistan-based US drones killed 708 people in 44 predator attacks targeting the tribal areas between January 1 and December 31, 2009.

"For each Al Qaeda and Taliban terrorist killed by US drones, 140 innocent Pakistanis also had to die. Over 90 per cent of those killed in the deadly missile strikes were civilians, claim authorities....On average, 58 civilians were killed in these attacks every month, 12 persons every week and almost two people every day." [12]

There has been no diminution of such attacks. In the waning days of 2009 they were intensified. On December 27 "At least 13 people were killed in a suspected United States drone attack" in North Waziristan. "Following the strike, a U.S. B-52 jet plane, along with other spy planes, continued their flights over the tribal areas...." [13]

The preceding day another U.S. missile attack in North Waziristan killed three and wounded two people. "A statement from the [Pakistani] military Saturday said that a targeted airstrike at a compound in Orakzai had killed some civilians along with eight suspected militants." [14]

The U.S. launched deadly drone missile attacks in Pakistan's North Waziristan on both ends of the New Year. On December 31 "Five people were killed and at least two more injured" and on January 1 "A US pilotless aircraft fired a missile into Pakistan's North Waziristan tribal district" and "the attack destroyed [a] car and killed three people." [15]

In the second case a regional security official was quoted by Reuters as stating "The bodies were burned beyond recognition. We are trying to determine their identity." [16]

On January 3 five more people were killed in the same part of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas by American drone attacks. However much the U.S., NATO and the Western media attempt to sanitize these killings, the Pakistani government figure – that over 99 percent of the victims are civilians – is a damning indictment of what can only be characterized as wanton war crimes.

A yearender feature in the U.S. military newspaper Stars and Stripes reflected on 2009 and looked forward to this year.

"When President Barack Obama took office in January, he inherited a drifting and under-

resourced war in Afghanistan, being fought with roughly 35,000 U.S. troops.

“Obama ordered 21,000 additional troops in March and then 30,000 more in December.

“In a little over a year, he will have nearly tripled their numbers, taking ownership of what he calls ‘the war we must win.’

“[E]very step the president has taken represents an escalation of the war, now in its ninth year.” [17]

Afghan and Pakistani civilians deaths have climbed correspondingly. They will rise even more in 2010 as the war, in its tenth calendar year, is broadened further and intensified in earnest.

For all the carnage wreaked on innocent Afghans and Pakistanis, a senior NATO intelligence officer told Western media representatives at a briefing on December 27 that “The Afghan Taliban have expanded their influence across Afghanistan and are now running a ‘full-fledged insurgency’ with their own ‘governors’ in all but one of the country’s provinces.” [18]

“In 33 out of 34 provinces, the Taliban has a shadow government...has a government-in-waiting, with ministers chosen” for the day the government falls in the unnamed official’s words. [19]

Over eight years of bombing villages, conducting deadly raids against civilian households, multiplying projected American and NATO troops strength by a factor of fifteen since 2003 and extending the war into Pakistan have produced this result.

NATO’s first ground war and its first armed conflict outside Europe has also cost the citizens of its own member states both blood and treasure.

Jeff Loftin, press officer of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force, was recently quoted as confirming that last year 512 Western troops were killed in Afghanistan, the highest total for any year in the over eight-year war.

That number is over a third of the 1,481 ISAF fatalities (excluding American troops assigned to Operation Enduring Freedom) since the war began on October 7, 2001. The deaths include those of soldiers from NATO partner states Finland, Sweden and South Korea.

Germany, engaged under NATO command in its first combat operations since World War II, lost five soldiers last year, its highest number to date, and “Some 13,900 German soldiers served in Afghanistan this year [2009], up 1,700 from in 2008.” [20]

“At least 70 Western soldiers died each month from July through October, virtually double the rate of the previous summer. In the past year, nearly 500 foreign troops have lost their lives in Afghanistan, including more than 300 Americans.” [21]

On December 27 NATO announced the death of an American service member in a bomb attack in Afghanistan and the icasualties.org website calculated it to be the U.S.’s 310th of the year, double the 155 figure for 2008.

That number was also twice that of U.S. military deaths in Iraq in 2009, 148, the first time

since 2003 that deaths in the first theater have been higher than in the second, and “Afghanistan is likely to become an even deadlier place for American forces as reinforcements are rushed there to battle insurgents.” [22]

How much deadlier was first revealed on January 3 when four U.S. soldiers were killed in a roadside bomb attack in southern Afghanistan.

Former U.S. Army General Barry McCaffrey, now an adjunct professor of international affairs at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, recently “traveled to the war zone...as an academic from West Point at the invitation of theater commander Gen. David Petraeus, commander of Central Command, and Gen. Stanley McChrystal, the operational commander in Afghanistan” and upon returning was cited by an armed forces news source as asserting that “Americans should prepare to accept hundreds of U.S. casualties each month in Afghanistan during spring offensives with enemy forces.”

Regarding the New Year’s surge, which will push U.S. troop strength to over 100,000 and combined U.S. and NATO numbers to over 150,000, he predicted that “this thing is going to be \$5 billion to \$10 billion a month and 300 to 500 killed and wounded a month by next summer. That’s what we probably should expect. And that’s light casualties.” [23]

As many 500 American soldiers killed and injured monthly is in McCaffrey’s estimate light casualties.

Another milestone in U.S. losses was marked on December 30 when a reported suicide bombing at the Forward Operating Base Chapman killed seven CIA agents, including the agency’s station chief. The Wall Street Journal quoted a former American intelligence official describing the event as “Pearl Harbor for the agency,” the second-largest loss in one day in the CIA’s history, only the 1983 attack on the U.S.’s embassy in Lebanon, which resulted in eight agency deaths, exceeding it. “The base played a critical role in the CIA’s significant operations in the country, including helping with drone attacks and informant networks in Pakistan.” [24]

According to a former agency official interviewed by the newspaper, “That was one of the bases where they were paying people and running people and sending them into Pakistan.” [25]

The White House of last year’s Nobel Peace Prize recipient and the Pentagon of former CIA director Robert Gates, who in the past boasted of funding and arming the founders of two of the three groups he is now waging war against in Afghanistan and Pakistan [26], have promised to increase the bloodshed in South Asia this year to an unprecedented level. In this instance if in no other the government can be trusted to faithfully fulfill its pledge.

Notes

1) The National (United Arab Emirates), December 28, 2009

2) Ibid

3) Press TV, December 29, 2009

4) Ibid

5) New York Times, December 31, 2009

6) The Times, December 31, 2009

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/Afghanistan/article6971638.ece>

- 7) Ibid
- 8) Ibid
- 9) Reuters, December 30, 2009
- 10) Pakistan Observer, January 4, 2010
- 11) The National, December 28, 2009
- 12) Dawn News, January 2, 2010

<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/18-over-700-killed-in-44-drone-strikes-in-2009-am-01>

- 13) Xinhua News Agency, December 27, 2009
- 14) Associated Press, December 26, 2009
- 15) Deutsche Presse-Agentur, January 1, 2010
- 16) Press TV, January 1, 2010
- 17) Stars and Stripes, December 31, 2009
- 18) Reuters, December 27, 2009
- 19) Agence France-Presse, December 28, 2009
- 20) Brunei News, Agencies, January 1, 2010
- 21) Stars and Stripes, December 31, 2009
- 22) USA Today, December 31, 2009
- 23) Army Times, January 4, 2010
- 24) Wall Street Journal, January 1, 2010
- 25) Ibid
- 26) Afghan Warlords, Formerly Backed By the CIA, Now Turn Their Guns On U.S. Troops, U.S. News & World Report, July 11, 2008

<http://www.usnews.com/articles/news/world/2008/07/11/afghan-warlords-formerly-backed-by-the-cia-now-turn-their-guns-on-us-troops.html?PageNr=2>

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