

U.S. And NATO Escalate World's Deadliest War On Both Sides Of Afghan-Pakistani Border

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The United States and its military allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization have entered the third month of war in Afghanistan this year, which President Barack Obama in December of 2009 announced as the year in which American and other foreign occupation forces would be reduced preparatory to their full withdrawal.

Within months of the U.S. head of state's claim, the commander-in-chief had over 90,000 troops in the conquered country and currently there are 60,000 more from some fifty other nations serving in NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The total number exceeds that of any foreign military force ever before stationed in Afghanistan. The presence of American and allied troops, beginning as it did on October 7, 2001, is the longest in the Asian nation's history, with U.S. forces already in the country for several months longer than Soviet troops were stationed there from late 1979 until early 1989.

Since Obama's pledge that U.S. and NATO troop strength would be reduced this year – not a firm deadline but an evasion, a self-serving lie designed to take the sting out of the announcement of increased troop deployments, one the international community, self-styled and genuine, chose to take at face value – the world's only ongoing war of occupation has stretched into not only the longest armed conflict in Afghanistan's history but also in that of the U.S.

In the same interim several new force contributors like Armenia, Bahrain, Colombia, Egypt, Japan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Montenegro, Mongolia, South Korea (which had withdrawn an earlier contingent in 2007) and Tonga were recruited to provide troops to serve under NATO's Afghan command, to which the overwhelming majority of American troops are now also assigned, and to be initiated into 21st century warfare under the control of the West.

Last year marked the largest amount of U.S. and ISAF deaths in the war that is now in its eleventh calendar year, as well as the most Afghan government troop and police fatalities, the highest number of reported insurgent deaths and the most civilians slain in the nearly

decade-long war. 712 foreign soldiers and almost 10,000 Afghans were killed in 2010.

To the east of Afghanistan, unmanned aerial vehicle (drone) missile attacks conducted by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency killed in the neighborhood of 1,000 people in Pakistan last year, the most in any year since the cowardly targeted assassinations and concomitant civilian “collateral damage” were begun in 2004 and almost half of the total dead for the entire period.

As last year wound down, bombing, strafing and other air attacks launched by the U.S. and NATO increased in intensity, with October registering the highest monthly number of air combat missions, over 1,000, of the war to date.

The Pentagon has ordered a record quantity of Predator, Reaper and other death-dealing drones for this year, beyond to the new “drawdown” date – 2014 – and for as far afterward as it chooses to continue and further escalate the war on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistani border.

On that score, the infinite plasticity of a final withdrawal date, U.S. Marine General James Mattis, the head of U.S. Central Command, stated last month that he was “militarily uncomfortable” with the 2014 deadline, [1] and Senator Joseph Lieberman said “it was unwise to set the beginning of any exit date.” [2]

In addition to unprecedented foreign troop numbers, air attacks and drone operations, head of U.S. Special Operations Command Admiral Eric Olson recently said of special forces operations, increasingly the ground combat emphasis for America’s counterinsurgency war in South Asia, that the demand for special operations forces in Afghanistan is “insatiable,” and:

“As we have essentially doubled our force over the last nine years [and] tripled our budget over the last nine years, we have quadrupled our overseas deployments over the last nine years.” [3]

U.S.-selected and -protected Afghan President Hamid Karzai announced last month that Washington intends to establish permanent military bases in his nation – a development that was evident to many almost a decade ago – and “The bases would enable US troops to remain in the area beyond the planned transfer of security responsibility from US and NATO troops to Afghan forces by end of 2014....” [4]

The military installations to be retained, added and expanded would include the Bagram, Kandahar and Shindand air bases in the north, south and west of the nation from which the Pentagon could conduct surveillance and combat operations not only in Afghanistan but throughout the region.

Afghans are not to be spared another decade – or generation or more – of Western military occupation and attacks of the sort that occurred on February 17 in the eastern province of Kunar.

A week after the event, an Afghan government investigation determined that NATO air strikes targeted civilians in a village in the province, killing over five dozen people including 50 women and children, among them 19 females from seven months to 18 years of age. 21 teenage boys and 15 elderly men were also slain. [5]

The head of the government delegation appointed to conduct the probe stated:

“After four days of discussions and interviews with tribal leaders, security officials and other civilians, we found that 65 civilians were killed by NATO missiles in the Ghazi Abad district of Kunar province.” [6]

In the week between the slaughter and the release of the report documenting its details, a NATO attack in the province of Nangarhar “hit a house, killing a couple and their four children,” according to a spokesman for the province’s governor. [7]

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During the same period the U.S. was occupied in killing people on the Pakistani side of the border. Drone missile attacks were launched near Miranshah, the administrative headquarters of North Waziristan in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. A local security official told the news media that “three missiles were fired at a residential compound in Dattakhel Mohammedkhel,” resulting in five people being killed in an “attack which completely demolished [their] house.”

The same source added, “the identity of those killed could not be ascertained.”

Another local official described what has become the typical modus operandi of the murderous CIA missile strikes when he detailed that “two people were killed when a missile strike from another drone hit a vehicle proceeding towards the house that was targeted earlier.” [8]

The day before, February 20, the U.S. also attacked a village in South Waziristan, killing six people and wounding several others.

According to a Pakistani news source which placed the death toll for the other attack at eight, “The two attacks by the US drones in the Pakistani tribal areas were the first ones after the arrest of CIA spy Raymond Davis for killing two Pakistanis in Lahore.” [9]

Regarding the strike in South Waziristan, it was reported that the “identity of the slain people could not be ascertained, but local tribesmen claimed all of them were tribal people.”

And in reference to the attacks in North Waziristan:

“Villagers and official sources said 10 US spy planes were seen hovering over various villages in Mir Ali and Miramshah throughout the day on Monday [February 21]. According to villagers in Mir Ali, the drones fired four missiles and hit two rooms and a car parked inside [a] mud house.

“The villagers claimed all the victims were local tribespeople and had no affiliation with militants. They said the injured people were rushed to a nearby hospital in the town of Mir Ali, where doctors said the condition of some of them was critical. The tribesmen who pulled out bodies from the debris of the

house said the bodies of the majority of the slain people were mutilated beyond recognition.”

According to a local tribesman, “The Americans don’t care for others and they will continue killing us.” [10]

American and NATO war deaths in Afghanistan are at 71 so far this year, before the spring fighting season has begun, but Afghan and Pakistani civilian deaths exceed those of Western belligerents.

Earlier last month NATO and Afghan government forces shelled a Pakistani military post in North Waziristan, killing a soldier and wounding seven more.

A local news source said some of the injured were in critical condition and that “Pakistani forces returned the fire with artillery and rocket launchers and targeted the Nato and Afghan forces’ positions across the border.”

“Soon after the shelling, Nato helicopters intruded into Pakistan airspace and kept flying for some time over the area....Some reports said Nato jet fighters also violated the Pakistani airspace in the border area....Later in the evening, five mortar shells fired by Nato forces landed in the Saidgi locality in Ghulam Khan Tehsil.” [11]

Two days later, February 4, NATO renewed the bombardment and “Shelling from across the Durand Line continued unabated as 22 more mortar shells fired by Nato and Afghan forces from Afghanistan’s territory fell in North Waziristan,” with shells landing in populated areas of the agency. [12]

The deadly attack by NATO against Pakistani military targets was not the first such incident and will not be the last. On September 30 of 2010 NATO helicopter gunships attacked a security post in the Upper Kurram Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, killing three Pakistani soldiers and reducing the fort to rubble in the third violation of the nation’s airspace in a week.

Two fixed-wing NATO aircraft accompanied the helicopters, which launched two attacks over four hours apart. “According to local people, the dead and injured had suffered severe burn injuries.”

In a strike in the same agency three days before, “Nato claimed killing six insurgents and injuring eight others while local people contradicted the claim and said those killed were Muqbal tribesmen.” [13]

The following month NATO aircraft penetrated the province of Balochistan when “NATO warplanes and helicopter gunships entered up to 15 kilometers inside Pakistani airspace.” [14]

By November NATO attack helicopters had, in addition to conducting strikes in the tribal belt, “violated Pakistani airspace, defying the integrity and sovereignty of Pakistan, over half a dozen times in...northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and southwest Balochistan provinces....” [15]

Not only has the U.S. killed over 2,000 people with drone missile strikes in North and South Waziristan, but over the last five months NATO has slain several Pakistani military personnel, extending the war into a nation with a population of 170 million and nuclear weapons.

While most of the world's attention is concentrated on events in North Africa, the West is steadily and inexorably intensifying the longest, largest and most lethal war on the planet.

Notes

- 1) Reuters, February 2, 2011
- 2) New York Times, February 6, 2011
- 3) U.S. Department of Defense, February 8, 2011
- 4) Deutsche Presse-Agentur, February 8, 2011
- 5) Deutsche Presse-Agentur, February 27, 2011
- 6) Ibid
- 7) Deutsche Presse-Agentur, February 21, 2011
- 8) RTT News, February 24, 2011
- 9) The News International, February 22, 2011
- 10) Ibid
- 11) The News International, February 3, 2011
- 12) The News International, February 6, 2011
- 13) DawnNews, October 6, 2010
- 14) Asian News International, October 19, 2010
- 15) Xinhua News Agency, November 28, 2010

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