

U.S. Expanding Bases In Afghanistan For Permanent Presence

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Why U.S. forces bent on expanding military bases in Afghanistan?

Of late, the United States planned to expand the Bagram, Kandahar and Mazar-e-Shairf air bases in Afghanistan with an allocation of 300 million US dollars. The expansion of U.S. military bases in Afghanistan is obviously running counter to the commitment to begin withdrawing U.S. troops from Afghanistan in 2011; the United States is aiming to build permanent military bases in the “post-antiterrorism era” and to consolidate its global military network and to guard against the possible future global volatile situations.

In fact, the United States has tried hard to secure its permanent military presence since it launched the war in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001 as the US military Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) along with the British military, in response to the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the U.S., with the construction of its permanent military bases and “frontline” operation bases.

To date, the United States has established a dozen military bases in Afghanistan, with the airbases at Bagram, Kandahar and Mazar-e-Shairf as the permanent bases and the Herat, Jalalabad and other airfields as the “frontline” operation bases. These U.S. military bases are currently serving not only as a stronghold for control of Afghanistan and to battle hostile forces but also as a springboard to cope with the volatile situation in Iran and elsewhere in the Middle East.

The intention of the United States with its permanent presence in the Afghanistan is indicated by the new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan President Barack Obama’s administration has been pursuing since assuming its presidency in January 2009. The United States has set forth the limited goals to battle and destroy the “Al Qaeda” terrorist organization inside Afghanistan but involved itself in quelling rebellions and national construction in an all-round way. And the limited goals and extensive means show in a protruding way the U.S.’ strategic goal which is far more “grandiose” and audacious than its purpose regarding the war on terrorism.

President Barack Obama pledged to begin withdrawing from Afghanistan in July 2011, according to David Petraeus, the commander of the U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, Obama would continue the US effort and postponing the withdrawal of forces if the war situation “is bad” and unfavorable. Although the U.S. has publicly come out to say they will start withdrawing in 2011, noted US Defense Secretary Robert Gates, it does not affect the U.S. continued support to Afghanistan in the political, economic and military realms.

Apparently, the United States will not abandon the strategic and geopolitical interests it has paid in blood for easily. At a time when the Taliban insurgent forces are staging a comeback, the U.S. will easily find many excuses to suspend withdrawing its forces.

As a matter of course, the United States has made a series of preparations for its permanent presence in Afghanistan. The U.S. 2005 Annual Defense Report made it clear [that it would] increase the number of military bases in southwestern Asia, in an effort to cope with the possible volatile global situation in the years ahead. In 2006, the U.S. forces started building a 3,000-meter runway at the Bagram air base and a living facility for 1,000 servicemen the Corps of Engineers were building at the time, a giant step ahead toward the goal of building the permanent military bases.

The United States and Afghanistan plan to work together to develop appropriate arrangements and agree to implement their strategic partnership; they also signed an agreement on the lease of additional land for a military purpose at the Bagram air base. So, the U.S. has undoubtedly the same purpose in nature with its endeavor to build permanent bases together with Japan and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) in East Asia.

Obama pledged to withdraw his forces from Afghanistan to gear to domestic political factors as the mid-term elections are historically difficult for the president's Democratic Party. The expansion of U.S. bases and the permanent U.S. military presence in Afghanistan have been a set policy of the Obama administration. As the Middle East and South Asia are the "frontline" in the U.S war on terrorism, Central Asia has much weight or a bearing in the U.S. global geopolitical and strategic interests and, hence, the maintenance of a long-term military presence in Afghanistan is a crucial component part of the vital U.S. military chain around the world to cope with possible volatile global situation in years ahead.

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