

Oppose Obama's escalation of the Afghan-Pakistan war! Withdraw all troops now!

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Obama's speech last night, which packaged the deployment of an additional 30,000 US troops to Afghanistan as the prelude to withdrawal, was a cynical exercise in evasion, double-talk and falsification.

The new deployment is a major escalation of an unpopular war that will lead to the deaths of countless thousands of Afghans and Pakistanis and a significant rise in US casualties. Indeed, many of the West Point cadets who were assembled to listen to the president's speech will be sent to Afghanistan to fight in a war that the majority of Americans oppose.

Obama's invocation of the attacks of September 11, 2001 to portray the war as a defense against terrorism is a fraud. The real reason for the US occupation of Afghanistan—widely discussed within the foreign policy establishment—is to maintain a dominant position in oil-rich Central Asia in the interests of the global strategy of American imperialism.

This month marks the 30th anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which then-president Jimmy Carter denounced as an illegal act of international aggression. What was not widely known at the time is that the US deliberately provoked Moscow into undertaking its military adventure by financing and arming Mujahedeen guerrillas opposed to the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul. Among those on the CIA payroll were Osama bin Laden and current leaders of the Taliban.

The result of this imperialist policy, authored by then-national security adviser and current foreign policy adviser to Obama, Zbigniew Brzezinski, has been three decades of war, civil war and social devastation. The Obama administration is intensifying this colonialist enterprise.

No credibility can be given to Obama's talk of beginning the withdrawal of troops in July of 2011. This supposed timeline was hedged by references to "conditions on the ground." Moreover, it was followed by statements to the effect that the war in Afghanistan is only one of many military interventions to come.

"The struggle against violent extremism will not be finished quickly," Obama said, "and it extends well beyond Afghanistan and Pakistan." Calling this struggle an "enduring test," Obama went on to speak of "disorderly regions and diffuse enemies," mentioning by name Somalia and Yemen.

In reality, the US colonial enterprise in Central Asia is open-ended. The *Washington Post* on Monday cited a US official as saying, "Our game is to convince them [the Pakistani military] that our commitment to Afghanistan and the region is long-term. We're not going to pack up our bags and leave them as soon as we're done."

Far from Obama's escalation hastening an end to the war, it creates the conditions for new and even greater military conflagrations. The injection of additional troops will further inflame tensions in the region and beyond—between Pakistan and India, India and China, Iran and the US, Russia and China and the US.

Perhaps the biggest lie is the claim that the war is being waged to protect the Afghan people. They overwhelmingly oppose the US-led foreign occupation.

Obama's decision means that 2010 will be a year of increased death and destruction in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. A central focus of the new US deployment is to "lock down" Kandahar, a center of insurgent opposition

to the US-NATO occupation. This can only mean a drive to terrorize the local population and kill as many insurgents and ordinary Afghans suspected of sympathizing with the resistance as possible.

At the same time, the US is threatening to launch ground operations on Pakistani soil, in addition to the drone missile attacks that are killing hundreds of Pakistani civilians. The *Washington Post*, reporting Monday on the recent visit to Islamabad by Obama's national security adviser, retired Marine General James L. Jones, cited an American official as saying, "If Pakistan cannot deliver, he [Jones] warned, the United States may be impelled to use any means at its disposal to rout insurgents based along Pakistan's western and southern borders with Afghanistan."

The cost to the peoples of Central Asia is incalculable. The American people are to pay for the war policy of the US ruling elite with the loss of thousands more lives, the squandering of trillions in resources, unprecedented attacks on social services, and the further erosion of democratic rights.

The most glaring contradiction in a speech shot through with contradictions was Obama's attempt to disentangle the war in Afghanistan from the war in Iraq. "I opposed the war in Iraq," he said, "precisely because I believe that we must exercise restraint in the use of military force ...". But he was unable to establish any essential difference between that criminal enterprise and his war in Afghanistan.

Obama's escalation is yet another flagrant violation of the will of the American people. In one election after another, they have gone to the polls to express their hostility to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In every case, their will has been ignored and the wars have been expanded.

Obama won the presidency by running as an opponent of the Iraq war and appealing to popular opposition to militarism. Once in office, he quickly increased the US deployment in Afghanistan by 21,000, while reneging on his promise to carry out a rapid withdrawal from Iraq. Now he is increasing the total US troop level in Afghanistan to 100,000, more than double the level under Bush.

As with his pro-Wall Street economic policy and his assault on democratic rights, Obama, in his military and foreign policy, is continuing and deepening the reactionary program of Bush. The decision to expand the war in Central Asia is a devastating exposure of the entire US political system. Both parties and Congress are instruments of a ruling financial aristocracy, whose interests they defend in opposition to the needs and views of the working class, the vast majority of the population.

Of immense significance is the international line-up of imperialist powers behind the US-led war. The participation of Britain, Germany, France and other powers in the war constitutes an international onslaught aimed at subordinating the entire region to imperialist interests. Every one of these governments is acting in defiance of the anti-war sentiments of its population.

This underscores that the fight against war requires an international struggle of the working class against world imperialism and the capitalist system, which is the root cause of war.

In the United States, the fight against war can be waged only as a struggle against the Obama administration, the two-party system and the American financial oligarchy. It must be based on a socialist and internationalist program, and the building of a new leadership in the working class to fuse the fight against war, unemployment, poverty and attacks on democratic rights into an independent political struggle for a workers' government.

This is the program of the Socialist Equality Party and the International Committee of the Fourth International. All those who are opposed to imperialist war should make the decision to join and build the SEP as the new revolutionary leadership of the working class.

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