# US, NATO commit to indefinite occupation of Afghanistan

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The NATO summit held in Lisbon from November 19 to 20 endorsed the Obama's administration's demand that troops from the US and allied countries occupy Afghanistan indefinitely. The summit declaration stated that any changes in troop numbers would be "conditions-based, not calendar-driven".

While the end of 2014 was put forward as the date when the US and NATO hope that Afghan government troops and police will be able to carry out all frontline combat against the anti-occupation insurgency, NATO secretary general Anders Fogh Rasmussen said: "We will stay after transition in a supporting role… NATO is in this for the long-term. If the Taliban or anyone else aims to wait us out, they can forget it."

This commitment by the various heads of state to indefinite war was given in outright contempt for the popular opposition to the occupation in every country that has troops taking part. For their own imperialist motives, governments across Europe, in Canada and Australia have lined up behind the determination of the American ruling elite to turn Afghanistan into a de-facto US colony in the centre of Central Asia.

The summit endorsed the counter-insurgency strategy being implemented by General David Petraeus, who took over command of Afghan operations in July and who previously presided over the suppression of resistance in Iraq during 2007 and 2008.

Petraeus is utilising the deployment of 30,000 additional US troops ordered by Obama—which has boosted overall US and NATO troop numbers to close to 150,000—to carry out major offensives into the southern Afghan provinces of Helmand and Kandahar, the two key strongholds of the Taliban insurgency.

Under Petraeus, US and NATO operations are marked by an unprecedented degree of savagery. Special forces units are seeking to behead the insurgency with a policy of assassination and terror. Petraeus claimed at Lisbon that 370 alleged Taliban leaders have been killed or captured over the past three months. Thousands of alleged Taliban fighters have also been killed. David Kilcullen, an Australian-born military advisor to Petraeus, boasted to *USA Today* last week that so many Taliban are being killed that the average age of insurgent commanders has dropped from 36 to just 25.

The number of air strikes being carried out against alleged Taliban positions has nearly doubled since Petraeus took command, increasing to over 1,000 per month. The US military is now deploying M1 Abrams battle tanks to southern Afghanistan, to give Marine units combating insurgents in Helmand province more "awe, shock and firepower", according to a military spokesman.

In areas of Kandahar province that have recently been captured, American troops are demolishing entire villages to prevent the civilian population from returning. Kandahar itself, a city of over 500,000 people, has been turned into fortress of blast walls, barbed wire, check points and machine gun positions.

Civilian casualties have soared. The Red Cross revealed last month that the number of civilians with war injuries being admitted to hospitals in the Kandahar region has doubled compared with 12 months ago. More the 1,000 patients a month are being treated at one hospital alone.

The Red Cross also stated that the intensity of the fighting in rural areas surrounding the city has prevented people from getting basic medical care. Reto Stocker, the Red Cross head in Kabul, told the British *Guardian*: "The result is that children die from tetanus, measles and tuberculosis—easily prevented with vaccines—while women die in childbirth and otherwise

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strong men succumb to simple infections."

Not one word of criticism of the barbaric and murderous character of the war was raised at Lisbon by any NATO or non-NATO ally of the United States. Instead, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, European leaders such as Germany's Angela Merkel joined with Obama to chastise Afghanistan's puppet president, Hamid Karzai, for daring to call on the occupation forces to do more to avoid civilian casualties.

Obama made no attempt to conceal his indifference toward Karzai and his views. Over the past several weeks, Karzai has publicly called for foreign forces to "reduce military operations" and condemned air strikes and night-time raids by US and NATO troops on the grounds that they often result in civilian casualties and fuel popular anger toward the occupation.

Obama dismissed Karzai out of hand, reminding him that he is nothing but a bought-and-paid-for servant of US imperialism. "If we're ponying up billions of dollars to ensure that President Karzai can continue to build and develop his country", Obama declared, "then he's got to pay attention to our concerns as well." Rejecting Karzai's concerns over civilian casualties, and brushing them aside as so-called "collateral damage", Obama said: "He's got to understand that I've got a bunch of young men and women who are in a foreign country being shot at and need to protect themselves."

Obama is reportedly also pressuring the Pakistani government to allow the US to launch Predator drone missile attacks against alleged members and supporters of the Taliban insurgency in areas around the Balochistan city of Quetta. The head of the Taliban, Mullah Omar, is believed to operate from Quetta. Missiles launched by Predators have killed hundreds of people, mainly innocent civilians, in attacks on alleged insurgents in the northwest tribal agencies of Pakistan. At least 101 attacks have taken place so far this year, compared with 53 in all of 2009.

The basic perspective of the Obama administration is to use mass killing and terror to pressure the Taliban insurgency into accepting the US domination of Afghanistan and ending their resistance. Substantial cash incentives are also being extended to those who agree to a deal.

The *New York Times* revealed last week that Petraeus has authorised the formation of so-called "local police forces", numbering between 250 and 350 men, in 68 areas of southern Afghanistan over the next six months. The areas where these forces are to be constituted are primarily in Kandahar and Helmand, where it almost certain that most of the men who will be recruited have been involved in the anti-occupation insurgency. The wages of the local militia will be paid directly by the US military.

While no figures have been made public, it is safe to assume that their payments will be significantly higher than the estimated $300 per month that the Taliban allegedly pays men who take part in insurgent activities. The pay-off to the local insurgent commander will no doubt be far more substantial, and his "police force" will enforce his authority over the local population.

The proposed militias have already been dubbed the "Sons of the Shura", due to the unmistakable parallel with Petraeus's recruitment of tens of thousands of Iraqi Sunni insurgents into US-paid militias during 2007, which came to be called the "Sons of Iraq".

As in Iraq, tribal heads and suspected insurgent leaders in Kandahar and Helmand will be given a blunt choice: accept the US bribes to form a police force or be killed or driven out. The British officer who commanded NATO forces in southern Afghanistan until recently, Major General Nick Carter, told the *New York Times*: "You have to know enough to be able to hold their feet to the fire."

For its part, the central Taliban leadership responded to the NATO summit with another rejection of any talks with the occupying powers. Labelling the US occupation a "failure" and a "meaningless, imposed and unwinnable war", a Taliban statement demanded that all foreign forces immediately leave Afghanistan.

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