

The US debacle in Afghanistan

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A US soldier on patrol in southern Afghanistan with Afghan security forces was shot to death Sunday when one of the Afghans opened fire. It was at least the sixth such attack in the past two weeks. Over this period, twelve US soldiers have been killed by Afghan soldiers or policemen who were supposedly their allies.

The latest incident brings the total of such attacks since the beginning of 2012 on US or NATO forces, dubbed “green on blue” incidents by US military spokesmen, to 32, resulting in 40 deaths. The number of soldiers wounded in such insider attacks is likely far greater, but concealed by a US-NATO policy of refusing to discuss non-fatal injuries.

The proliferation of such attacks has produced mounting concern among US military and security officials both in Afghanistan and in Washington. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta telephoned Afghan President Hamid Karzai Saturday to urge more systematic vetting of Afghan soldiers and policemen to uncover Taliban agents.

The top US military commander in Afghanistan, General John Allen, issued an order Friday that demonstrates the precariousness of the US position in the occupied country. He directed that US soldiers carry loaded weapons with full magazines of ammunition at all times, even when resting in supposedly secure facilities, such as the huge US compound at Bagram Air Base.

In any encounter with Afghan troops or police, at least one American is to be designated as a “guardian angel,” tasked with watching the purported allies and shooting first if they seem about to attack Americans.

Despite Panetta’s call for stepped-up counterintelligence activity, the US military command was at pains to emphasize that there was evidence of Taliban “infiltrators” in only 11 percent of the cases where Afghan soldiers or police turned their weapons on Americans, while the bulk of the attacks involved

individuals acting on their own.

If true, this only demonstrates that hostility to the American military occupation is so widespread and deep among the Afghan population that any incident can provide the spark to provoke violent resistance. This is the case after ten years and \$43 billion devoted by the US military to training an Afghan military and police force to do its bidding.

These incidents have a significance far beyond the actual death toll, since they give a glimpse of the real relationship between an oppressed population and the US-NATO occupation, now approaching the end of its eleventh year.

The vast majority of the Afghan population opposes the US-NATO forces and the Karzai stooge regime. Hence the endless supply of recruits for the “Taliban,” the name the US military and media apply to any and all insurgents, most of them simply poor farmers who fight in and around the rural villages where their families live.

The rationales for the US conquest and occupation of Afghanistan, advanced first by George W. Bush and now by Barack Obama, have been exploded one after another.

Bush claimed his order to invade Afghanistan was a response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the Taliban’s refusal to hand over Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. Obama has repeatedly cited the 9/11 attacks as the reason for the continued US occupation. But Bin Laden was killed by US special forces more than a year ago, and Al Qaeda is now a key ally of the US campaign to destabilize the government of Bashar al-Assad in Syria.

Bush and Obama both claimed to be freeing the people of Afghanistan from Taliban despotism and promoting democracy and human rights. Instead, Washington has installed and maintained a stooge regime, headed by Hamid Karzai, which rigs election,

carries out torture and repression on a wide scale, and steals without restraint.

Earlier this month the Afghan parliament impeached both the defense minister and interior minister on corruption charges, while press reports indicate vicious infighting within Karzai's family over the division of the loot they have plundered from the Afghan state.

There is a stench of decomposition over the whole US-NATO enterprise in Afghanistan. US troops are being drawn down, US equipment removed, US subsidies cut back, and the US collaborators in the Karzai regime are packing their bags—usually stuffed with cash—and checking their passports. Kabul today increasingly recalls Saigon in the final months and weeks before the collapse of the US-backed puppet regime of South Vietnam.

The Obama administration and the Pentagon have no answer to this deepening debacle except ever-wider violence. US bombing raids and missile strikes continue to take a heavy toll, both among Afghan civilians and across the border in Pakistan, in the Pashtun-speaking regions where there is widespread sympathy for the insurgents fighting in Afghanistan against the occupation forces.

This process unfolds without the American people having any say. Neither President Obama nor his Republican challenger Mitt Romney have spoken publicly about the wave of attacks on US soldiers by their Afghan allies. Neither the Democrats nor the Republicans take a break from their mutual mudslinging to discuss US policy in Afghanistan. Both parties invoke the same slogans—the “war on terror,” the struggle for “freedom and democracy” against the Taliban—without any examination of the colossal cost of the 11-year war for the Afghan population, as well as the American.

More than 2,000 American soldiers have died in Afghanistan, along with nearly a thousand soldiers from the other NATO powers, and countless tens of thousands among the Afghan population. The country has been laid waste for a third time in three decades—first by the US-backed war against the Soviet Army, in the course of which the CIA helped create Al Qaeda; then by the civil war that followed the collapse of the Soviet-backed regime, which led to the coming to power of the Taliban, sponsored by Pakistan, a major US ally; and now the war that began in 2001 and has

extended longer than any previous US war.

The constant factor in these bloodbaths is the rapacious and reactionary role of American imperialism. The United States was the most important factor in the creation of Al Qaeda—formed by bin Laden in the course of his efforts to support the US-backed mujaheddin fighting the Soviet occupation—and in the victory of the Taliban, initially welcomed by Washington as providing a guarantor of stability and a potential partner for oil-pipeline deals in Central Asia.

The American working class has therefore a special responsibility to oppose and denounce the ongoing bloodbath in Afghanistan. Tens of thousands of Afghan civilians are being slaughtered and their country is being bled white and plundered in the name of defending “American interests.” The truth is, only the imperialist ruling elite has an interest in the war in Afghanistan.

Working people must demand an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all American and NATO military forces from that war-devastated country, the payment of compensation to the millions whose lives have been uprooted by successive US interventions, and the prosecution of top US government and military officials for the war crimes they have ordered against the people of Afghanistan.

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