In his latest book, *The Kings and Their Gods: The Pathology of Power*, Daniel Berrigan SJ wrote: "A dementia of death lies heavy on us....Death as an acceptable social method...from torture to 'terrorists'."

CONTENTS:

* Rethink Afghanistan film
* Petition for Exit Strategy
* OMNI Book Forum
* Wounded US Soldiers
* Afghanistan for Dummies
* Women of Afghanistan
* Nir Rosen, Failure
* Go to [www.omnicenter.org](http://www.omnicenter.org) for the complete Newsletter

August '09 Presidential Election
October '09 Protests
United For Peace and Justice '09 Protest
Cindy Sheehan on President Obama
Chris Hedges, “War Without Purpose”
Jim Hightower to President Obama
Bill Fletcher, Jr., “Wrong on Afghanistan”
Sarah Chayes, Plan for Afghanistan
William Blum, Anti-Empire

OCTOBER PROTESTS
October 7, 2009 marks the start of the ninth year of the invasion of Afghanistan. On that day, there will be anti-war actions in cities and towns throughout the country. There will also be anti-war actions on Monday, October 5, and Saturday October 17. See below.

AFGHANISTAN BLOG


*RETHINK AFGHANISTAN FILM BY ROBERT GREENWALD OPENED IN NYC OCTOBER 2.* See below to see segments free and how to purchase the entire film. (If links do not respond—UA has tightened security--, go to google and type Rethink Afghanistan.)
This is a crucial, pivotal moment for ending this war. The public is growing aware of the cost of the Afghan war, which is approaching $200 billion, and of its futility, given the history of the country, its geographical, political, cultural realities, and the enemies created by the occupation and killing of
civilians. These wars are making us less safe. The Obama Admin. is profoundly ignorant and uneasy about the war. But they are confronted by a Pentagon (the War Department) bristling with aggression and demanding more troops (as during the Vietnam War). Promote this film. Together we can achieve maximum viewing in NWA. An aware public will push our congressional delegation to vote to withdraw our troops and planes from Afghanistan and Pakistan and to use the money to help people there and here. And read a book on Afghanistan. Knowing its history is the surest way of understanding why we must stop this indefensible invasion and occupation. See the list of books below, and plan to attend OMNI’s Book Forum Friday Nov. 6. (Volunteers needed for that.) Dick

“The war in Afghanistan is increasing the likelihood that American civilians will be killed in a future terrorist attack. Part six of Rethink Afghanistan brings you three former high-ranking CIA agents on the record to explain why. There is no “victory” to be won in Afghanistan. Help build a movement to change this misguided policy.

http://rethinkafghanistan.com/videos.php

Yours,
Robert Greenwald
and the Brave New Foundation team

Follow us:
You can get our latest videos via email, RSS, iTunes or YouTube.
And, if you prefer, follow us on Facebook and Twitter.
Brave New Foundation | 10510 Culver Blvd., Culver City, CA 90232

Results include your SearchWiki notes for rethink afghanistan. Share these notes
Copy and paste this link into an email or IM:

See a preview of the shared page

1. Rethink Afghanistan
Too many critical questions surround the war in Afghanistan that only public debate and Congressional oversight hearings can answer.

rethinkafghanistan.com/-

Videos Groups
Troops Blog
Vets Español
Press Share this video

More results from rethinkafghanistan.com »

2. Rethink Afghanistan videos
Rethink Afghanistan is a ground-breaking, full-length documentary focusing on the key issues surrounding this war. By releasing this film in parts for free ...

rethinkafghanistan.com/videos.php-

3. Rethink Afghanistan - Brave New Films videos
Rethink Afghanistan is our newest full-length documentary, released in segments online for free. Watch experts from the U.S., Afghanistan, and Russia ...
bravenewfilms.org/videos/rethinkafghanistan/-Cached-Similar-

4. Rethink Afghanistan – Brave New Films blog
Sep 17, 2009 ... You can learn more about the dangers posed to U.S.
national security by the war in Afghanistan by watching Rethink Afghanistan (Part Six): ...

bravenewfilms.org/blog/?cat=11 - Cached - Similar -

5. Video results for rethink afghanistan

11 min  the ...

www.youtube.com  11 min
Rethink Afghanistan (Part 4): Civilian  blip.tv
Casualties
12 min

www.youtube.com

6. News results for rethink afghanistan

Rethink Afghanistan: Filmmaker Robert Greenwald Launches Film ... - 28 minutes ago
Its called "Rethink Afghanistan" and premieres today in New York. Robert Greenwald,
Founder and President of Brave New Films. He is a producer, director, ...
Bay Area Indymedia

7. Rethink Afghanistan - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Jun 11, 2009 ... Rethink Afghanistan is a 2009 documentary about the ongoing war in Afghanistan. This full-length documentary campaign features experts from ...
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rethink_Afghanistan - Cached - Similar -

8. Donate and get a Rethink Afghanistan DVD

Rethinking our policy toward Afghanistan requires vigorous public debate and Congressional oversight. Every major war or military action since World War II ...
https://bnf.democracyinaction.org/o/552/p/10040/rtadvd -
Rethink Afghanistan - Anna Almendrala - God's Politics Blog
This is the kind of footage we saw, over and over again, as we cut and shaped the Rethink Afghanistan: Civilian Casualties segment. The first time I saw it, ...
blog.sojo.net/2009/06/18/rethink-afghanistan/ -
You have removed results from this search. Hide them Loading...

You are welcome to copy this petition, gather signatures, and send to our congressional delegation.

PETITION FOR EXIT STRATEGY FROM AFGHANISTAN
TO: SENATORS LINCOLN AND PRIOR AND REPRESENTATIVE BOOZMAN.

The proposed 2010 War Budget contains approximately $128 billion for the Iraq and Afghan wars through September 2010. But there is no exit plan for Afghanistan, while General McChrystal calls for tens of thousands of additional U. S. troops and a long-term commitment.
We need a different policy in Afghanistan, one that emphasizes diplomacy and humanitarian assistance. And we need an exit plan.

We urge you to support Congressman James McGovern’s H. R. 2404 that requires President Obama to provide an exit plan no later than December 2009.

OMNI CENTER FOR PEACE, JUSTICE, AND ECOLOGY
Fayetteville, AR October 2009

NAME (print) email address

FOR LINCOLN AND PRYOR CONTACTS
SEE BELOW

OMNI AFGHANISTAN/PAKISTAN BOOK FORUM
NOV. 6, 2009, NIGHTBIRD BOOKS, 6PM

PANELISTS (seeking 4)
Jesse Barr: Kolhatkar and Ingalls, Bleeding Afghanistan
Edrene McKay: Chayes, The Punishment of Virtue
And?
And?

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED (Dick Bennett, 442-4600)
Coordinator:
Moderator:
Greeter: Kathy Hall
Publicity Campaign (using Dick’s Guide):
Photos:
Video: Jeffrey Seidensticker
Video Editor:
Flyer and Poster:
Distribution of Flyer and Poster:
News Release (traditional):
News Release (electronic):

(OMNI also seeks a volunteer dedicated to book-length analysis of issues and history to become the coordinator of the every-other-month Book Forums.)

BOOKS

Ahmed Rashid (below) and Ali’s books were Rev. In These Times (Dec.
2008). Rashid and Ali’s books on US forays into South and Central Asia depict the US as not only “incompetent and ill-informed” but as “a vicious nation” that bombs Afghanistan and Pakistan and is complicit in their repression of their populations. Rashid gives “a naked view of American power at work. It mobilizes... in order to further its own interests, not those of Afghans or Pakistanis pining for democracy.” The Duel “serves as an excellent corollary.”

“...a harrowing yet beautiful novelistic depiction of an Afghanistan mutilated by war and oppression ...” Boston Glob
“This novel seeks to reveal the psyche not just of one rural village or one immigrant community but of Britain, the Soviet Union, the United States and Afghanistan. The revelations throughout are artful.” NYTimes
“It’s a bold task to attempt to point out the similarities between a Muslim fundamentalist’s zeal and an American CIA agent’s righteous view of his job, yet... Aslam does exactly this with considerable poise ..."

--Bick, Barara. Walking the Precipice. Witness to the Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Rev. by Susan Yanow: This book does an excellent job of explaining the complicated history and factional rivalries that have shaped Afghanistan, through the lens of the author's first-person experiences traveling in that country over a period of 15 years. Bick was in Afghanistan on Sept. 11, 2001, and gives a unique perspective on the impact of that attack and its aftermath on the people of Afghanistan. The book, informed by Bick’s deep history in the feminist and peace movements, also focuses on the historic human rights struggles of women in Afghanistan. The book is invaluable to understanding the challenges faced in shaping future foreign relations with Afghanistan and understanding the complexities of its society. In addition to being extremely informative, it is a great read!

"From the managing editor of the Washington Post, a news-breaking account of the CIA’s involvement in the covert wars in Afghanistan that fueled Islamic militancy and gave rise to bin Laden's al Qaeda. For nearly the past quarter century, while most Americans were unaware, Afghanistan has been the playing field for intense covert operations by U.S. and foreign intelligence agencies-invisible wars which sowed the seeds of the September 11 attacks and which provide its context. From the Soviet invasion in 1979 through the summer of 2001, the CIA, KGB, Pakistan's ISI, and Saudi Arabia's General Intelligence Department all operated directly and secretly in Afghanistan. They primed Afghan factions with cash and weapons, secretly trained guerrilla forces, funded propaganda, and manipulated politics. In the midst of these struggles bin Laden conceived and then built his global organization. Comprehensively and for the first time, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Steve Coll tells the secret history of the CIA's role in Afghanistan, from its covert program against Soviet troops from 1979 to 1989, to the rise of the Taliban and the emergence of bin Laden, to the secret efforts by CIA officers and their agents to capture or kill bin Laden in Afghanistan after 1998. Based on extensive
firsthand accounts, *Ghost Wars* is the inside story that goes well beyond anything previously published on U.S. involvement in Afghanistan. It chronicles the roles of midlevel CIA officers, their Afghan allies, and top spy masters such as Bill Casey, Saudi Arabia's Prince Turki al Faisal, and George Tenet. And it describes heated debates within the American government and the often poisonous, mistrustful relations between the CIA and foreign intelligence agencies. *Ghost Wars* answers the questions so many have asked since the horrors of September 11: To what extent did America's best intelligence analysts grasp the rising threat of Islamist radicalism? Who tried to stop bin Laden and why did they fail?

Chayes, Sarah *The Punishment of Virtue: Inside Afghanistan After the Taliban*. 2006, “Far more than a travelogue, Chayes’s book is a detailed critique of American policy in post-Taliban Afghanistan. She argues that a combination of American ignorance and arrogance, an unwillingness to confront Pakistan, and a need to divert American troops and resources to Iraq caused the United States to implement a disastrous policy in Afghanistan. The United States backed corrupt and dictatorial local warlords, she writes, rather than engage in what Afghans desired: the slow, costly and messy process of turning Afghanistan into a relatively stable country with an Afghan form of self-determination. “I have found that Afghans know precisely what democracy is — even if they might not be able to define the term,” she writes. “They want to participate in some real way in the fashioning of their nation’s destiny.” See her essay in OMNI NEWSLETTER ON AFGHANISTAN #3.


--Gould, Elizabeth and Paul Fitzgerald. *Invisible History: Afghanistan’s Untold Story*. Official US history of Afghan. and as reported by mainstream media (esp. by Dan Rather) are erroneous. Sovietphobic US created the present quagmire during the 1970s and 80s by arming the Afghans (including bin Laden) to expel the Soviets, replacing the developing progressive government with mujahedin medievalists. Then civil war ensued, and the Taliban moved into power.


“With the re-building of the failed Afghan state now at the center of the new international intervention, this book explores how the perceptions of outsiders have been at odds with Afghans’ own understandings of their country. It shows how the lack of understanding that
characterized past policies remains highly problematical. By continuing to indulge in a superficial, selective portrayal of the country, the international community risks manufacturing a state that does not exist, and policies that will not work.”

--Kolhatkar, Sonali, and James Ingalls. Bleeding Afghanistan: Washington, Warlords, and the Propaganda of Silence. 2006. I have just finished this book, and I will guess that if only a minority of people in the US had read this book, we would be out of Afghanistan by now. The key is knowledge of Afghan history. Kolhatkar interv. DN: Afghanistan now ruled by 3 contesting warlords: 1) USA super-warlord, 2) Regional warlords—Northern Alliance under Dostum, etc., 3) Taliban. Karzai’s corruption runs deep: he recently joined with Northern Alliance warlord Dostum for his election support, and he signed a Shiite bill to legalize marital rape to gain male support. Kolhatkar is the Founder and Co-Director of the Afghan Women’s Mission.

“In his appropriately titled "Descent Into Chaos," Ahmed Rashid says the Clinton administration bears some responsibility for where we find ourselves today in South and Central Asia..... But the real target of Rashid’s blistering critique is the Bush administration, and particularly Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld insisted on bringing Afghanistan’s notorious warlords into the government. He blocked a "Marshall Plan" for Afghanistan. ....And the litany goes on throughout this timely book..... Pakistan, Rashid explains, supported the Taliban when they were in power, to keep Afghanistan in Pakistan's corner against India.....”


(from Joel, seconded by Ted):
“Ahmad Rashid is #1 to start with. He'll be familiar to NPR, Democ Now listeners. Tariq Ali also, and there's a great tape of him at UCLA (or UC-Berkeley) on Youtube. Of course AR and Rashid trace all this back to the Afghani Jihad.”

RELATED FILMS
--Afghan Massacre: Convoy of Death by Jamie Duran: prisoners of war under control of Northern Alliance war lord Dostum, ally of President Karzai, were murdered, with knowledge of US Special Forces.

Ronald J. Glasser, M.D. Bestselling Author of Wounded: Vietnam to Iraq [Dr. Glasser was interviewed on “Independent Voices” on FSTV recently.]
The Wounded Keep the Death Count Low
The real "body count" of this war is not only our dead, but our wounded. The real risk to our troops is no longer the numbers of dead but the numbers ending up on orthopedic wards and neurosurgical units.

"Americans who believe that the human cost of Iraq can be measured primarily by body bags, need to read ‘Wounded: Vietnam to Iraq.’" —Michael Arnold Glueck, New Wounds, Orange County Business Journal, April 24, 2006

A War of Disabilities
For most soldiers, the war doesn’t end with the playing of taps. The tens of thousands of wounded are rarely heard and as a result, as pointed out in the recent Washington Post articles on the lack of adequate care at Walter Reed and in the current government hearings, these casualties are not getting the help they need.

Those not returned to duty within a week number (excluding PTSD) now number over fifty thousand.

- Amputations are well over eight percent of those wounded—numbers not seen since our Civil War.
- The number of traumatic head injuries is well over thirty percent of those wounded.
- Physical injuries combined with TBI and PTSD puts the number of casualties at well over a hundred thousand and those numbers are growing.
- The ultimate cost of this war has been calculated to be over 600 billion dollars for disability benefits and another 700 billion for medical care for the wounded and injured…and those numbers grow each day.

The Revealing Book
Best-selling author, Ronald J. Glasser, M.D., offers in his newest work, Wounded: Vietnam to Iraq (George Braziller), an unflinching investigation into the frightening injuries to our soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan and the military and medical innovations that made this a war of disabilities.

RAY MCGOVERN, AFGHANISTAN FOR DUMMIES
(If the following link does not work—UA computer services has increased its blocking of links--, simply google “Afghanistan for Dummies,” and for many more references to McGovern’s essay.)

1. Afghanistan for Dummies: Information Clearing House - ICH
“Afghanistan for Dummies” By Ray McGovern. September 02, 2009 "Information Clearing House" —“I’m going to ask for my money back. I’ve seen this Afghanistan movie before. The first time, Vietnam was in the title. As in an early scene from the Vietnam version, U.S. military officials are surprised to discover that the insurgents in Afghanistan are stronger than previously realized. And our protagonist, Gen. Westmoreland — sorry, I mean McChrystal — sees the situation as serious but salvageable. As Westmoreland did with President Lyndon Johnson, McChrystal is preparing to tell President Barack Obama that thousands of more troops are needed to achieve the U.S. objective — whatever that happens to be……”

WOMEN OF AFGHANISTAN: HISTORY AND RESCUE
Soviet invaders supported a progressive, pro-women Afghan government against the Muslim mujahidin guerrillas led by warlords (bin Laden one of them) and US, that spent $40 billion to
arm the Afghan mujahidin to defeat the Soviets. When Soviets withdraw, the mujahidin defeated the Afghan communist government, took over as loose coalition, suppressed women, fell into civil war, and further ravaged the country, until the Taliban conquered most of the warlords, and further repressed women. The US invaded Afghanistan to revenge 9-11 and capture or kill bin-Laden, and set up Hamid Karzai as its puppet, who recently signed a law legalizing marital rape. (See my Newsletter #2 on Afghanistan, Jan. 2009, 24 Reasons for Leaving Afghanistan.)

HELPING ABUSED AFGHAN WOMEN
A method for protecting Afghan women is available and is within the power of the people of the U.S. It is expressed by the U.N.’s Refugee Convention of 1951, signed by the U.S (i.e., it is US law), which established guidelines for deciding who should be offered asylum. We can give haven to the Afghan victims of domestic violence (and similar victims around the world) who can prove serious abuse and their government is unable or unwilling to protect them. Britain and Canada already grant such asylum. Dick

REPORTS ON AFGHAN WOMEN

“Law Will Let Afghan Husbands Starve Wives Who Withhold Sex”
http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2009/07/10-4

Perwiz Kambaksh, a 23 year old newspaper reporter in 2008 was sentenced to death for “blasphemy”—distributing an article on the role of women in Islamic societies. The sentence has been reduced to 20 years in prison. Urge Afghanistan Ambassador Said Jawad at 202-483-6410 to press for Kambaksh’s release.

NIR ROSEN INTERV. DEMOCRACY NOW (9-1-09)
Al-Qaeda not in Afghanistan now, but is worldwide via the internet. The new surge of military is not improving US/NATO control, and the new civilian support is eight years too small and too late! The Karzai government, which includes war lords and drug dealers, is corrupt. The election was a “massive fraud.” See Hedges and Sheehan essays below.

LINCOLN AND PRYOR CONTACTS
LINCOLN
http://lincoln.senate.gov

355 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-4843
Fax (202) 228-1371
912 West Fourth St.
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 375-2993
Fax (501) 375-7064
Toll Free 1-800-352-9364

-----------------------------------------------

Fay office = John Hicks
Community Affairs Specialist
tel 251-1224
fax 251-1410
john_hicks@lincoln.senate.gov

PRYOR CONTACTS
http://pryor.senate.gov/contact

Little Rock Office
The River Market
500 Clinton Ave
Suite 401
Little Rock, AR 72201
Phone: (501) 324-6336
Fax: (501) 324-5320
Toll Free from AR:
(877) 259-9602

Washington, D.C. Office
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
Phone: (202) 224-2353
Fax: (202) 228-0908

For the remainder of this Newsletter, go to www.omnicenter.org and click on “periodicals” at the bottom of the page.
AUGUST 2009 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION
Amy Goodman interv. Jonathan Landay reporting from Kabul for McClatchy newspapers: Over 500 violent elections incidents occurred in the countryside. Karzai opponents accuse him of widespread fraud. Registered voters unknown, so % of voters not known. Many registered women prevented from voting. If election illegitimate, then US/NATO praise for it seems to be illegitimate.

OCTOBER 7 PROTESTS
On the 8th Anniversary of the War on Afghanistan
Back to the streets!
Protests set for October 2009
The ANSWER Coalition organized thousands of people to march on the very first day of the invasion of Afghanistan.
Above is the ANSWER demonstration in San Francisco on October 7, 2001 — less than four weeks after the September 11 attacks.
October 7, 2009 marks the start of the ninth year of the invasion of Afghanistan. On that day, there will be anti-war actions in cities and towns throughout the country. There will also be anti-war actions on Monday, October 5, and Saturday October 17.
Many national and local anti-war organizations are initiating these actions. The ANSWER Coalition is either initiating or endorsing and supporting all of these actions.
The war and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq are both colonial-type wars. Bush used the “War on Terror” as a pretext for the escalation of imperialist intervention. Bush is gone but the brutal occupations continue.
Now, eight long years after the invasion of Afghanistan, the U.S. and its NATO allies are vastly expanding the war, doubling the numbers of troops. Casualties on both sides are soaring. Resistance to foreign occupation is growing rapidly inside Afghanistan and across the border in Pakistan. The war is a disaster for the peoples of those countries, just as are the occupations of Iraq and Palestine. It is also growing disaster for the people here — not only the soldiers and their families, but the tens of millions of people suffering from the economic crisis.
The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq cost more than $14 billion per month, $160 billion every year, nearly $1,000,000,000,000 ($1 trillion!) since the start. At the same time, we are told by the politicians — who never say no to the military-industrial complex and have given away more than $10 trillion to the big banks — that there’s no money for single-payer health care. They have proven that the money is there. The problem is that the politicians are dedicated to protecting the interests of the military and health insurance corporations, not of the people.
The ANSWER Coalition is calling for people across the country — in cities, towns and campuses — to take action on Wednesday, October 7, 2009, and at all the planned actions between October 5 and October 17 to demand an end to all the wars and occupations, and health care for all. We urge you to organize a rally, picket, teach-in or some other kind of activity that day.
A list of all the anti-war actions in October will be posted within the next week on the ANSWER Coalition website at www.ANSWERCoalition.org.
By clicking this link, you can let us know what you are planning and we’ll add it to the national calendar.
UNITED FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE PROTEST

To: haw-info@stopthewars.org
Subject: [haw-info] against escalation in Afghanistan

We are passing along the following statement just issued by United for Peace and Justice, the anti-war coalition to which Historians Against War belongs.

Call for National Action for Peace in Afghanistan

Today, President Barack Obama announced his plans to send another 21,000 troops to Afghanistan: he is girding the nation for a long and costly military occupation there. While he also made some good statements on increasing diplomacy and economic aid to Afghanistan and Pakistan, the emphasis is clearly on military operations. Predictably, the Pakistan and Afghan factions of the Taliban are already uniting to oppose our escalation of troops. As the spring fighting season approaches, only one thing is certain -- more death, destruction, and misery in a desperately poor country that has had little respite from war for decades.

Here in the U.S., Obama's escalation in Afghanistan and the continuing occupation of Iraq threaten our nation's urgent economic and domestic agenda. Now is the time for more diplomacy, not more war!

United For Peace and Justice calls for immediate action for peace in Afghanistan. Here are three things you can do:

1) Call the White House today - 202-456-1414
Make sure President Obama knows that you disagree with his plans to send more troops to Afghanistan. Call the White House comment line at 202-456-1414 between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM ET.

2) March with UFPJ on April 4!
Building on the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we are marching on the anniversary of his historic speech against the war in Vietnam and the anniversary of his assassination. On Saturday, April 4, we are taking our message to Wall Street in NYC: addressing this country's economic crisis must include drastic cuts in military spending and that means ending the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The last thing our country needs is a new quagmire in Afghanistan - it is time to bring the troops home, not send more.

3) Help organize local actions April 6 - 9
Congress will be in recess so this is a perfect time to meet with your representatives while they are home. Actions can also be community or media-focused -- vigils, rallies, public education forums with local speakers, film showings or other events to educate and mobilize support in your community. This is an important time to educate people about Afghanistan and the urgent need to change U.S. policy.

UFPJ calls for the following:
A halt to the planned escalation of 21,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan. We need to bring all our troops home now, not to send more into a country where military solutions have never worked.
A strong commitment to diplomacy as the only solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. The U.S. must
support negotiations already underway among various actors in Afghanistan, and must also engage all
countries in the region with a stake in a peaceful Afghanistan. The announcement that Iran will join
negotiations over Afghanistan is a positive development. We need to share more cups of tea for
negotiating rather than more weapons where military solutions have never worked.*
A dramatic shift from military spending by the U.S. to funding for Afghan-led humanitarian community
development and reconstruction projects to enable Afghan communities to improve daily life for their
own people. Our goal is to put an end to U.S. war funding.
Please let us know of the actions you are planning by posting them on the UFPJ calendar.
*The reference is to the work of Greg Mortenson as described in his New York Times #1 best-selling
book, 'Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace One School at a Time', by Greg
Mortenson and David Oliver Relin.
UNITED FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE
www.unitedforpeace.org | 212-868-5545
PO Box 607; Times Square Station; New York, NY 10108

CINDY SHEEHAN ON AFG-PAK WAR, TALIBAN, WAR ON TERROR
CindysSoapbox@gmail.com
The President Exhibits Crazy Speech Patterns
Cindy Sheehan
As I listened to clips of Obama's speech to the VFW on August 17th, 2009, I was wondering if his speechwriters were on vacation and they just recycled an old Bush/Cheney/Rumsfeld/Rice speech.
While the so-called left is focused on the health care debacle and is allowing the so-called right to define the debate when it should be: Medicare for all, and all for Medicare; Obama and his neocon foreign policy team are preparing for a decades long, bloody foray in Af-Pak.
As Yael T. Abouhalkah, an editorial writer for the Kansas City Star, put it:
President Barack Obama did his best imitation of former President George Bush Monday at the VFW national convention in Phoenix. Obama sounded downright hawkish -- and, yes, presidential -- when he addressed the issue of terrorism in front of the veteran-laden crowd... Dick Cheney could not have said it better.
This is one of the reasons I am leading protests next week on Martha's Vineyard where President Obama will be vacationing. The anti-war movement cannot allow itself to be co-opted by the Democratic Party any longer.
We cannot allow the War Party and other elites to define the terms of the War Debate.
Obama actually had this to say in his speech in front of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW):
We must never forget. This is not a war of choice. This is a war of necessity. Those who attacked America on 9/11 are plotting to do so again. If left unchecked, the Taliban insurgency will mean an even larger safe haven from which al Qaeda would plot to kill more Americans. So this is not only a war worth fighting. This is fundamental to the defense of our people.
He also made a lot of other crazy Bushian statements, but this one has to take the cake and lead the charge for peace!
One thing that we must NEVER forget is that the Taliban, and especially the people of Afghanistan (26 members of a WEDDING party, not WAR party, but WEDDING party were bombed and killed yesterday) DID NOT attack us on 9/11. Even if Osama did plan the attacks from someplace in Afghanistan (not likely) this war of choice is not about defending America. Remember: profit is not a consequence of war, it is the reason for war. And how can we as a nation allow the War Party to sacrifice innocent babies for the illusion of safety? Afghanistan is just as much a war of choice as Iraq is, and Obama is choosing to continue it by exploiting the lies.
What is fundamental to the defense of our people is a sane foreign policy, not more war crimes brought to the world by the War Criminals in DC. What is fundamental to our health and prosperity is to bring the troops home from Iraq-Af-Pak and reduce the Pentagon budget so we can afford such basic human rights as health care, housing and education.
Besides Afghans and Pakistanis being killed and displaced at a Bushian clip, these days, our troops are increasingly being killed and wounded so the War Profiteers can squeeze more bucks out of violence. More of our families will be harmed while most of the anti-war movement stands down for Obama. This is unconscionable.
I don't care if you love Obama, or hate him, or something in between (he has the lowest approval ratings of any President after 7 months in office), we must loathe his wars and his crazy hate speech directed at our brothers and sisters in war torn regions.
For more information please email, or call:
Laurie Dobson lauriegdobson@yahoo.com
(207) 604-8988
or
Bruce Marshall brmas@yahoo.com

Published on Monday, July 20, 2009 by TruthDig.com

“War Without Purpose” by Chris Hedges

Al-Qaida could not care less what we do in Afghanistan. We can bomb Afghan villages, hunt the Taliban in Helmand province, build a 100,000-strong client Afghan army, stand by passively as Afghan warlords execute hundreds, maybe thousands, of Taliban prisoners, build huge, elaborate military bases and send drones to drop bombs on Pakistan. It will make no difference. The war will not halt the attacks of Islamic radicals. Terrorist and insurgent groups are not conventional forces. They do not play by the rules of warfare our commanders have drilled into them in war colleges and service academies. And these underground groups are protean, changing shape and color as they drift from one failed state to the next, plan a
terrorist attack and then fade back into the shadows. We are fighting with the wrong tools. We are fighting the wrong people. We are on the wrong side of history. And we will be defeated in Afghanistan as we will be in Iraq.

The cost of the Afghanistan war is rising. Tens of thousands of Afghan civilians have been killed or wounded. July has been the deadliest month in the war for NATO combatants, with at least 50 troops, including 26 Americans, killed. Roadside bomb attacks on coalition forces are swelling the number of wounded and killed. In June, the tally of incidents involving roadside bombs, also called improvised explosive devices (IEDs), hit 736, a record for the fourth straight month; the number had risen from 361 in March to 407 in April and to 465 in May. The decision by President Barack Obama to send 21,000 additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan has increased our presence to 57,000 American troops. The total is expected to rise to at least 68,000 by the end of 2009. It will only mean more death, expanded fighting and greater futility.

We have stumbled into a confusing mix of armed groups that include criminal gangs, drug traffickers, Pashtun and Tajik militias, kidnapping rings, death squads and mercenaries. We are embroiled in a civil war. The Pashtuns, who make up most of the Taliban and are the traditional rulers of Afghanistan, are battling the Tajiks and Uzbeks, who make up the Northern Alliance, which, with foreign help, won the civil war in 2001. The old Northern Alliance now dominates the corrupt and incompetent government. It is deeply hated. And it will fall with us.

We are losing the war in Afghanistan. When we invaded the country eight years ago the Taliban controlled about 75 percent of Afghanistan. Today its reach has crept back to about half the country. The Taliban runs the poppy trade, which brings in an annual income of about $300 million a year. It brazenly carries out attacks in Kabul, the capital, and foreigners, fearing kidnapping, rarely walk the streets of most Afghan cities. It is life-threatening to go into the countryside, where 80 percent of all Afghans live, unless escorted by NATO troops. And intrepid reporters can interview Taliban officials in downtown coffee shops in Kabul. Osama bin Laden has, to the amusement of much of the rest of the world, become the Where’s Waldo of the Middle East. Take away the bullets and the bombs and you have a Gilbert and Sullivan farce.

No one seems to be able to articulate why we are in Afghanistan. Is it to hunt down bin Laden and al-Qaida? Is it to consolidate progress? Have we declared war on the Taliban? Are we building democracy? Are we fighting terrorists there so we do not have to fight them here? Are we “liberating” the women of Afghanistan? The absurdity of the questions, used as thought-terminating clichés, exposes the absurdity of the war. The confusion of purpose mirrors the confusion on the ground. We don’t know what we are doing.

Gen. Stanley McChrystal, the new commander of U.S. and NATO-led troops in Afghanistan, announced recently that coalition forces must make a “cultural shift” in Afghanistan. He said they should move away from their normal combat orientation and toward protecting civilians. He understands that airstrikes, which have killed hundreds of civilians, are a potent recruiting tool for the Taliban. The goal is lofty but the reality of war defies its implementation. NATO forces will always call in close air support when they are under attack. This is what troops under fire do. They do not have the luxury of canvassing the local population first. They ask questions later. The May 4 aerial attack on Farah province, which killed dozens of civilians, violated standing orders about airstrikes. So did the air assault in Kandahar province last week in which four civilians were killed and 13 were wounded. The NATO strike targeted a village in the Shawalikot district. Wounded villagers at a hospital in the provincial capital told
AP that attack helicopters started bombarding their homes at about 10:30 p.m. Wednesday. One man said his 3-year-old granddaughter was killed. Combat creates its own rules, and civilians are almost always the losers.

The offensive by NATO forces in Helmand province will follow the usual scenario laid out by military commanders, who know much about weapons systems and conventional armies and little about the nuances of irregular warfare. The Taliban will withdraw, probably to sanctuaries in Pakistan. We will declare the operation a success. Our force presence will be reduced. And the Taliban will creep back into the zones we will have “cleansed.” The roadside bombs will continue to exact their deadly toll. Soldiers and Marines, frustrated at trying to fight an elusive and often invisible enemy, will lash out with greater fury at phantoms and continue to increase the numbers of civilian dead. It is a game as old as insurgency itself, and yet each generation of warriors thinks it has finally found the magic key to victory.

We have ensured that Iraq and Afghanistan are failed states. Next on our list appears to be Pakistan. Pakistan, like Iraq and Afghanistan, is also a bizarre construct of Western powers that drew arbitrary and artificial borders, ones the clans and ethnic groups divided by these lines ignore. As Pakistan has unraveled, its army has sought legitimacy in militant Islam. It was the Pakistani military that created the Taliban. The Pakistanis determined how the billions in U.S. aid to the resistance during the war against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was allocated. And nearly all of it went to the most extremist wings of the Afghan resistance movement. The Taliban, in Pakistan’s eyes, is not only an effective weapon to defeat foreign invaders, whether Russian or American, but is a bulwark against India. Muslim radicals in Kabul are never going to build an alliance with India against Pakistan. And India, not Afghanistan, is Pakistan’s primary concern. Pakistan, no matter how many billions we give to it, will always nurture and protect the Taliban, which it knows is going to inherit Afghanistan. And the government’s well-publicized battle with the Taliban in the Swat Valley of Pakistan, rather than a new beginning, is part of a choreographed charade that does nothing to break the unholy alliance.

The only way to defeat terrorist groups is to isolate them within their own societies. This requires wooing the population away from radicals. It is a political, economic and cultural war. The terrible algebra of military occupation and violence is always counterproductive to this kind of battle. It always creates more insurgents than it kills. It always legitimizes terrorism. And while we squander resources and lives, the real enemy, al-Qaida, has moved on to build networks in Indonesia, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan and Morocco and depressed Muslim communities such as those in France’s Lyon and London’s Brixton area. There is no shortage of backwaters and broken patches of the Earth where al-Qaida can hide and operate. It does not need Afghanistan, and neither do we.

© 2009 TruthDig.com

Chris Hedges writes a regular column for Truthdig.com. Hedges graduated from Harvard Divinity School and was for nearly two decades a foreign correspondent for The New York Times. He is the author of many books, including: War Is A Force That Gives Us Meaning, What Every Person Should Know About War, and American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America. His most recent book, Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle, will be out in July, but is available for pre-order.
JIM HIGHTOWER TO OBAMA: GET OUT OF AFGHANISTAN

“Team Obama’s Plan for Afghanistan Is a Disaster in Search of a Strategy. Here We Go Again—Invading When We Should Be Thinking.” The Hightower Lowdown (Feb. 2009). “Sorry to interrupt the Obama celebration even before the man gets settled into the Oval Office, but—what the hell is he thinking?!?” Special problems:

1) Extreme poverty, 70% living on less than $2 a day
2) Only 28% literate
3) Youngest pop. in world = life expectancy of 45 years, worsened by occupation
4) No substantial industries, little econ. Develop, subsistence farming for most
5) Most marketable product is opium—92% of world’s supply
6) Little electric power, roads nonexistent or poor
7) Weather often brutal
8) Mountains a guerrilla’s paradise
9) Warlords control most of the country by hundreds of tribal fiefdoms, no legit. national leader, no experience of a centralized state
10) President Karzai has no authority outside of the Kabul, and his gov’t. is seen as corrupt and ineffective
11) Police incompetent and corrupt
12) Small army poorly trained
13) US aims now unclear: after 9/11 “Operation Enduring Freedom” sought to a) capture bin Laden, b) destroy al Qaeda, c) crush the Taliban; none of these goals were achieved
14) Pakistan being destabilized by extension of war into it
15) Civilians killed by US bullets and bombs have increased, some 500 dying monthly from US cluster bombs, esp. children; suicide bombers are increasing in response
16) Dislike of our troops derives also from US torture in the some 50 firebases where about 800 cases of detainee abuse have been detected; in addition CIA has secret detention centers.
17) War profiteers: Bush admin. spent $5 billion and counting on Afghan reconstruction projects, but that was not enough (contrast the $24 billion / year on killing and destruction), and its privatized, no-bid contracts with favored companies resulted in shoddy work, missing funds, and more Afghan anger.
18) And much more in only 4 pp.www.hightowerlowdown.org

Solution: Contact Obama and demand end of brute force and emphasis on earning respect, friendships, alliances, funding schools and clinics: www.whitehouse.gov

Date: Friday, April 3, 2009, 3:34 PM

“Wrong on Afghanistan!” By Bill Fletcher, Jr.
BlackCommentator.com Executive Editor
April 2, 2009 - BlackCommentator Issue 318

http://www.blackcommentator.com/318/318_cover_aw_wrong_afghanistan.html

Sometimes I feel like I am reliving the era of President Lyndon B. Johnson. The era of ‘guns and butter,’ as they called it. At the same time that Johnson was launching his 'War on Poverty' he was escalating the US war against the
people of Vietnam and Laos, as well as carrying out the criminal invasion of the Dominican Republic (1965). Not only did these interventions (and others!) isolate the USA and set back the efforts of these various countries at self-determination, but they wrecked the US economy, siphoning off badly needed resources.

So, here we are today with the Obama administration carrying out a cautious and VERY partial withdrawal from Iraq (50,000 US troops will remain), while at the same time escalating the US troop presence in Afghanistan. Compounding this situation are US military attacks within Pakistan, an activity that is the equivalent of pouring kerosene on an open fire.

And just like President Johnson, President Obama has an ambitious domestic agenda.

It has been difficult for many liberals and progressives to outright oppose the Afghanistan war. This was true when Bush first invaded in 2001, and it remains true today. Following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, many people in the USA, including but not limited to the Bush administration, were looking for revenge. In fact, there were those who said quite explicitly that revenge should take precedence over justice. And so we got it—revenge that is.

The Afghanistan war was never a 'good war.' Yes, Al Qaeda had bases in Afghanistan. So, let's think about another situation and how it was handled. The Nicaraguan Contras, the US-backed terrorists who waged a war against the Sandinista government in the 1980s, were based in Honduras. The Honduran government did not control those bases, even if they turned a blind-eye to them. And, to emphasize the point, the Contras were supplied, resupplied, and further supplied by the US government. In fact, the USA mined Nicaraguan harbors, a clear act of war by one government against another.

So, should the Sandinistas have attacked Honduras, overthrown the Honduran government, and perhaps have attacked Miami for good measure? How do you think that much of the world would have responded? In fact, the Sandinistas went to the World Court and brought charges against the USA. The Nicaraguans prevailed in the Court, to the surprise of everyone, yet it did not matter because the USA ignored the judgment of the Court.

The Taliban government of Afghanistan, as despicable as they were, did not carry out the assault on 11 September 2001. It was easier, however, for Bush to carry out a conventional
assault against the people that only a few short months prior they had been treating as potential business partners. In carrying out that invasion the US walked into a quagmire that anyone who studied Central Asia could have (and many had) predicted. In fact, the Soviet Union had a horrific experience in Afghanistan a dozen years earlier.

So, now we are being told that the USA must continue its 'good war' in Afghanistan in order to crush the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The problem is that when something starts off wrong, it rarely gets much better. In fact, not only has the military situation been worsening due to a combination of bungling, corruption and cultural blindness by the invaders, but the regional political situation has been deteriorating. A popular movement in Pakistan brought an end to the military regime of President Musharaff. At the same time, right-wing Islamists began their own military actions against the Pakistan government, the US, Pakistani Shiites, and, when they had some free time, the Indian government. It should be noted that these are not the same Taliban as are operating in Afghanistan, but these distinctions never seem to matter to the USA. Each time the USA carries out a drone attack on alleged terrorist positions in Pakistan, they strengthen the arguments and support of the right-wing Islamists.

Further US involvement in Afghanistan brings no assurance of victory. More importantly, the conflict must be resolved politically. The puppet regime in Kabul has so alienated the population that they have little control outside of the city itself. The population which, in some cases welcomed the US invasion has turned against the US and their NATO and warlord allies even if they have no love for the Taliban. There is nothing that should lead anyone to believe that this will change with the introduction of even more US forces, even if the USA spreads money around the way that they did in Iraq in order to buy off opposition.

It is not just that furthering the Afghanistan aggression takes badly needed funds away from domestic projects in the USA. That should be a given. More importantly, the Afghanistan situation is integrally linked to the internal situation in Pakistan as well as the Pakistani conflict with India (over the Kashmir). There is little that the Obama administration is currently doing that seems to recognize the extent of the potential spillover affect from further military escalation. This in a region where there are two nuclear powers within minutes of turning each other into ashes, and seem to be driven toward this end.
Afghanistan, once thought of as the “good war,” is on the brink of being lost. But the failure of the US and international effort there is not a foregone conclusion. A thoughtful, wide-ranging shift in strategy on the part of the Obama Administration can still avert Afghanistan’s likely fate as an irrevocable – and dangerous – failed state, with ominous implications for the region and the rest of the world.

Such a shift ought to include the following components.

I. The concept

The United States should redefine its objectives in favor of the Afghan people, not the Afghan government. In a counter-insurgency, the people are the proverbial prize. It is only by supporting the Afghan people – not abusive powerbrokers – in their effort to reconstitute their social, economic, institutional, and cultural fabric, that stability in Afghanistan can be achieved, and the country be durably denied as a sanctuary for terrorists.

But divergent analyses of Afghan people’s situation and desires carry profoundly different policy implications. One school of thought, championed especially in the UK and by some US academics, maintains that Afghanistan is fundamentally a tribal society, which has never been governed from the center, and cannot be. Corollaries of this thesis include the notion that “functional corruption” is the norm, and that Pashtuns’
cultural backwardness makes them innately permeable to Taliban ideology.
The other analysis, more closely attuned to what the Afghan population
has been saying since 2001, highlights the historical inaccuracy of this
vision. For much of the past century, and certainly within living memory
(1950s-1979), Afghanistan was governed from Kabul by a well-
constituted and legitimate authority, which enjoyed monopoly of the use of force, wielded sophisticated judicial processes, both governmental and traditional, and fostered cultural dynamism and expanding civil liberties.
This analysis sees tribal forms of social organization as a kind of dual
citizenship - complementary to, not exclusive of, national identity and allegiance. Tribal social structures have come to the fore in moments of acute crisis, when the state itself was under attack (eg. by the British Empire, the USSR).
The Afghan population harks back to the period of functioning central authority with nostalgia, and sees excessive tribalism as an aberration - an aberration that grew so extreme in the early 1990s that even the Taliban seemed preferable. In other words, southern Afghans’ acquiescence to the Taliban in 1994 was not due to their adherence to extremist ideology, but rather to their acute suffering at the hands of the predatory warlords who dominated the landscape in the wake of the Soviet withdrawal.
Evidence for this view is that in Kandahar - the Taliban’s very heartland -
the demise of that regime in 2001 was greeted with universal joy and enthusiasm for the nascent Karzai administration and international presence in Afghanistan. Afghans, even the notoriously conservative southern Pashtuns, sent their girls to school in droves, and looked to President Karzai and the United States to help them build responsible and responsive government structures not tainted by extremist ideology.
Instead, obsessed by a counter-terrorism agenda, the United States reempowered the warlords that the population had repudiated in the early
1990s, for use as proxies in the hunt for al-Qaeda. It is because the US and its allies in NATO and the UN have consistently backed these men with treasure and weaponry and moral support, demanding no accounts in return, that southern and eastern Afghanistan has once again become permeable – reluctantly – to the Taliban. For, as painful as the extremists’ exactions are, they are seen as no more painful than the behavior of the government officials we back.

II. Governance

And so, the most critical element of a new approach to Afghanistan must be an urgent focus on good governance. For, the above analysis indicates a paradox. While international officials, especially in the UN, tout the Afghan government as “legitimate” and “democratically elected,” Afghans experience the opposite. They say that the United States imposed the current government officials upon them. And that it is therefore our responsibility to provide some means of recourse against their depredations.

Immediate initiatives should include:

- **Civilian mentoring. One of the most successful international programs** in Afghanistan has been the embedded mentoring of the Afghan National Army by US and other NATO military officers. In the space of three years, this effort has transformed the army into the most respected branch of Afghan government. That “best practice” – and a similar experience implemented by UNDP in the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development – should be rapidly expanded to the Afghan National Police, and emulated on the civilian side.

The United States and its NATO allies should provide trained mentors for government officials, not just at the ministerial level in Kabul, but especially in the provinces and municipalities, where Afghan people experience their government. These mentors, who must be experienced administrators, while canny and flexible of spirit, should not make decisions in place of the Afghans, but rather engage in true capacity-building, by helping and pressuring local officials on a day-to-day and case-by-case basis to make decisions that favor the interests of the citizens.

Such a program would fit with Pres. Obama’s call to public service, and also with the urgent need to re-burnish relations between the United States and its NATO partners. While continuing to request additional...
combat troops where possible, the Obama Administration could display understanding of the Allies’ constitutional and capacity constraints, and appeal to their strengths and the preference of their populations for civilian action.

- **Committees for Redress.** The political system built under international tutelage since the fall of the Taliban is bereft of effective checks and balances. Temporary, ad hoc mechanisms must be created to provide that function, while more robust and independent institutions develop.

  Every province or at least every regional command zone should have a joint committee for redress of grievances – a kind of ombudsman committee – made up of representatives from the battle group and PRT, the key donor agency, the lead country political advisor or diplomatic representative, an international law enforcement professional, and three to five Afghans of stature whose integrity and courage are prized by the community. This committee should have a small, dedicated team of police officers, who will be trained in whitecollar investigations. Its function would be to collect and vet complaints of major government abuse, including but not limited to abuse in the distribution of development inputs. Grievances determined to be well-grounded should be brought to the offending officials’ superior, eg. the governor, with a requirement that the wrong be redressed. The ombudsman committee must be responsible for follow-up, to the highest levels of the Afghan government if necessary.

- **Outreach to traditional structures.** Afghan democracy – a consensusbuilding model – functions most effectively on the local level. International actors must reach out more effectively to local tribal structures. But the intent should not be to substitute these structures for government institutions (eg., by arming them, for the police); rather it should be to enlist their wisdom and proximity to the population to contribute to a checks and balances role.

- **More effective use of existing partnering and mentoring relationships to achieve anticorruption effects.** Expanding partnering, not just with the ANA, but with the Afghan Border Police and Highway Police, provides an opportunity to exercise oversight. ABP together with its international mentors and partners could increase visibility over the customs department, or shut down the multiple illegal police tolls on major roads.

- **Pay raises:** In order to be materially able to refrain from corruption, civil servants need to be paid a living wage. Current salaries do not allow their recipients to buy an entire gunny sack of flour, of which a
normal Afghan family of 8-10 people consumes two to three per month. Therefore the salaries of Afghan civil servants must be doubled at least, to reach some $250/month. Money for this is abundantly available in revenues from customs, which are currently being siphoned off to line the pockets of regional strongmen. So the “accountability offensive” should be directed first at customs, with the increased revenue being earmarked for increasing civil servants’ salaries. Corruption is too important an issue to be left to the Afghan government - the prime offender - alone. The international community can no longer be taken in by bogus government-fostered “anti-corruption” initiatives, such as an anti-corruption office run by a man who has done Federal time for trying to sell cocaine to the DEA, or an “Independent Directorate of Local Governance” run by a member of President Karzai’s tribe, who spends part of each day closeted with the president.

III. Security

If the US objective is redefined as above - and if the prize in any counterinsurgency is indeed the people - then certain precepts must guide security operations.

➢ Do no harm. Despite orders from ISAF HQ, there are still too many escalation of force incidents, or indirect fire, or uses of air assets, in which Afghan civilians are killed. Officers must start considering a rule of thumb: every civilian killed results in 3-5 new Taliban. This calculus may make them realize that it is usually preferable not to engage Taliban at all than to engage them at the price of civilian lives. When civilians are killed, the officer responsible must take personal responsibility, and where possible, engage with the families of the victims. Similarly, property damage is still treated in too cavalier a fashion.

Afghanistan is one of the most poverty-stricken countries on earth. When military units damage orchard walls, knock over fruit trees, or land helicopters in wheat fields, the economic impact for the families involved can be devastating. A voucher system should be devised that would allow victims of property damage to quickly and safely claim compensation.
Protect the people. The bulk of incoming US military assets should be deployed in ways that benefit large swathes of the Afghan population. Small, mobile and lethally effective Special Forces teams are the units that should be assigned to the difficult fighting against seasoned guerrillas on steep terrain on the eastern edges of RC(E), especially in Kunar Province, and the eastern slopes of Paktika, Khost, and Paktia provinces. SOF have to date proven themselves too prone to call in air strikes when they are engaged, and so should not be deployed in populated areas.

Moreover, conventional infantry units operating out of fixed bases in peripheral provinces are targets of opportunity, their competitive advantages in intelligence and firepower effectively cancelled out. Or they remain effectively pinned to their outposts, engaged in a sterile, indirect firefight across the border. Those units should be redeployed to areas and tasks of greater benefit to the Afghan people. First among those is the durable reopening of Highway One to civilian and commercial traffic. Second is the protection of vulnerable civilians from intimidation and pressure by armed insurgents. The US should expand its basing of units in some towns and villages, ideally in partnership with the ANSF.

IV. Diplomacy
The government of Pakistan has proven to be a powerful force for instability in south Asia. Overwhelming evidence indicates that since the fall of the Taliban, Pakistani officials have not just been turning a blind eye to the re-constitution of the fundamentalist militia, they have been actively orchestrating it. Currently, the government of Pakistan is bifurcated, engaged in a struggle against itself. On the one side is the military, which for long periods has actually run the state and which is deeply enmeshed in all aspects of Pakistani life. On the other side is the new and still fractured civilian authority, which came to power in the wake of the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, and thanks to the dynamism of creative and tenacious civil
society
opposition to the Musharraf regime.
The military will not relinquish its domination of Pakistan’s
government
and much of its economy easily. There are indications that it is
actually
manufacturing threats – such as helping mastermind the Mumbai
terrorist
bombings so as to provoke an Indian reaction – to serve as a rational
for
its continued hold on de facto power.

US policy should take these dynamics into account by:

➢ Tempering its support of the Pakistani military, and becoming much
more attuned to the duplicitous behavior of that institution.
It is not really fair to ask our NATO allies to deploy in the most
dangerous part of Afghanistan, when US tax dollars in the form of
military aid to Pakistan are almost certainly paying for the bullets and
explosives that are killing their young men and women.
$1 billion/year in military aid to Pakistan should be reduced and
carefully monitored to ensure that it is not in fact financing the very
insurgency it is supposed to combat.
Pakistani military operations against Taliban in the border provinces
should not be taken entirely at face value. Careful study must
determine whether they are aimed only at Taliban operating inside
Pakistan, or against militants fighting in Afghanistan as well.
The Pakistani military must be asked to take effective action against the
leadership of a major part of the Taliban movement, commonly known
as the Quetta Shura, which currently operates with impunity out of the
capital of Baluchistan Province. If this is not done in a timely
fashion,
the US should consider targeted military action, just as it has been
willing to do against al-Qaeda figures.

Until the Pakistani army is credibly seen to oppose jihadism, it should
not be the beneficiary of sophisticated US weaponry.

➢ Redoubling its support for the civilian government and its
initiatives
in favor of development and institution-building.
In particular, US development assets should be earmarked for the
border provinces, to support healthcare, secular education, and
economic development, as well as a process of bringing those regions
into the fold of mainstream Pakistani government authority.

➢ Requesting greater cooperation from Pakistan in cross-border
issues
not directly linked to counter-terrorism. For example, US diplomats
should pressure the Pakistani government to remove the practical obstacles placed in the way of Afghan goods transiting through the country to markets in India and beyond.

V. Development
When Afghans think of “development,” they think of factories. US aid dollars should be redeployed to better support the productive, jobcreating, private sector.

- **Infrastructure improvements should be aimed at promoting economic activity.** For example, the industrial zones in the six major cities should each be equipped with a dedicated 1-5 megawatt solar electric array to power factories located there. Such infrastructure improvements should be launched in as laborintensive a way as possible, so as to absorb manpower that is currently being hired by the insurgency. A kind of Civilian Conservation Corps could be founded, whose members would address some of the grave residual infrastructure problems, such as the electricity distribution systems in all the major cities. (All the wires need to be restrung.) Members of this corps would thus receive precious on-the-job training, and gain a sense of esprit de corps and a feeling of pride and “ownership” in the new Afghanistan. This initiative should also be supported with a public relations campaign, billboards extolling the efforts of the “Soldiers of Peace.”

- **Fostering Afghan manufacturing.** We should not expect sensibly riskaverse private investors to wade into an active theater of war. International development resources must be applied to vitalizing the private sector. Supported manufacturing should focus on laborintensive, high-end artisanal products for export, and objects of local necessity for the domestic market. These investments should be supported by a pervasive “buy Afghan” advertising campaign.

- **Ending counterproductive policies on the part of the Afghan government.** The Afghan government must revise laws and regulations that penalize Afghan economic activity, such as the customs tariffs and official pricing scheme, which favor the import of manufactured goods over local production, and regulations imposing onerous reporting requirements on Afghan manufacturers and absurd fines in case of delay. The Afghan government – if necessary through effective use of partnering/mentoring relationships – must be induced to crack down on the smuggling of precious raw materials, such as kromite, to Pakistan.
Reinforcing best practices. The National Solidarity Program, though somewhat uneven in its implementation, is nevertheless widely seen as the most successful large-scale development program deployed in Afghanistan. The Community Development Councils it created and mentored should be used as the platform for delivering other development resources, such as USAID funding and even CERP money.

Revitalizing the institutional culture at USAID, to improve on the agency’s current bureaucratic immobility. USAID officials must be encouraged to be more proactive and flexible, and willing to do the extra work entailed in supporting smaller projects, rather than giving money away in multi-million dollar chunks to private contractors that absorb such a high proportion of our “development” dollars.

VI. Opium
The opium problem is an economic one, and should be addressed as such, and not as a noxious weed infestation. Afghans grow opium because, for a variety of reasons, they are structurally forced into it by economic realities. Those realities need to be addressed.

Access to credit should be dramatically increased, especially in rural areas. That credit should not be limited to business uses, but should also be available for major household events such as the marriage of a son.

Financial support for licit agriculture. Direct financial assistance should be offered to Afghan farmers to help them grow something that is not opium. Contract farming of products for which there is a known international market is one among several tools that should be wielded simultaneously. Another example: a massive re-treeing effort could be launched, via private smallholders, who should be offered fruit tree saplings, and should be paid the amount of money they would earn from the produce of the mature trees for the first five years, while the trees are growing. Fruit brings in significantly more revenue to farmers than opium, but the vast majority of Afghan landowners cannot afford to take large portions of their land effectively out of production for several years. Trees are a better alternative to opium than annual crops such as grain, as opium cannot grow under mature trees, and farmers would be loath to dig them up once they are producing. In the north and east, where rainfall permits the growth of trees in the wild, fast-growing lumber, cedar for essential oil, and other varieties
could be planted and tended in a cooperative fashion. Water-conservative irrigation methods should be taught to those farmers receiving saplings. Solar powered water pumps could be distributed. Development officials should act as sales representatives for inserting lucrative Afghan products – such as pine nuts – into the international market.

➢ **Agribusiness:** **Concerted effort should be applied to the improvement**
of processing and packaging of Afghan fruit and dried fruit, so it can meet Western phyto-sanitary standards. Afghanistan currently lacks even the laboratory necessary to test its products. Such a laboratory should be powered by a stand-alone solar generator. Development dollars should be spent on small-to-medium sized agroprocessing businesses: collection dairies for the local market, fruit juice plants for the local market, fruit juice and jam plants for the international market, extract plants (licorice, pomegranate seed) for the international market, seed oil plants for the local and international market, etc. Farmers should be encouraged to begin using organic processes so they can capture higher prices, and should be supported economically during the initial two-to-three year certification phase.

➢ **Rethinking eradication. In line with new authorities agreed upon by**
NATO, interdiction efforts should be aimed not at growers, but at traffickers and profiteers, even when they hold government positions. A few patient and determined well-placed ambushes on roads linking Urozgan and Kandahar Provinces, for example, could net several thousand kilos of opium paste in a single month.

WILLIAM BLUM
Anti-Empire Report, September 29, 2009

LINCOLN AND PRYOR CONTACTS
LINCOLN
[http://lincoln.senate.gov](http://lincoln.senate.gov)

355 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-4843
Fax (202) 228-1371