



## TWENTY-TWO REASONS FOR ENDING THE OCCUPATION OF AFGHANISTAN

By Dick Bennett

On the occasion of OMNI's February 7, 2009 Demonstration against the Invasions and Occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, an Appeal to President Obama to Leave Afghanistan.

### INTRODUCTION

We, the People, a nation of, by, and for the people—in the peace and justice movement for nonviolence, world peace, human rights, social and economic justice, stewardship of land and species, among many values. OMNI's numerous activities already demonstrate what can be done by resisting individuals banding together for change. We can truly say we have the potential power for change. Yet we are thwarted by the enormous established power exercised to control information. The Corporate-Pentagon-Mainstream Media Complex with its influence over Congress, blunts the peace, justice, and ecology movement. The consequences are disastrous to millions of people. To promote the invasion of Afghanistan, President Bush and his officials invoked patriotic retribution not merely against bin Laden's Saudi Arabian bombers but against the Afghanistan nation. Every member of Congress except Barbara Lee, in a frenzy of revenge, voted quickly to invade Afghanistan. The public trembled with righteous anger while its brain clamped shut, spurred on by the mainstream media beating the drums and gongs of war!

Eight years later we are still there. Below is the case for leaving.

But before commencing let it be clear that criticism of the invasion and occupation is not intended to diminish the sacrifice of the US soldiers who returned home physically and mentally injured and of their families. Criticism of the brutality, illegality, impracticality, and waste of the invasion and occupation does not detract from their physical bravery. (Further comment in Addenda.)

Note: Each item has received intense and elaborate attention in published essays and books and on the Internet. My intent is to suggest in short space how extensive and rational is the opposition to the US invasion and occupation of Afghanistan. Main sources are cited in text and given fully at the end.

Note 2: My newsletter on Afghanistan, like all of the OMNI special subject newsletters, is intended to invite participation from readers, for we are together, of, BY, and for the people Building a Culture of Peace. Together I expect we will find at least 50 good reasons for stopping the Afghanistan operation of the permanent "War on Terror" that is generated by the permanent "War on Terror."

1. The invasion and occupation VIOLATED INTERNATIONAL LAW. That is, the U.S.A. Congress approved and the President signed agreement to the U. N. Charter, an international treaty, which then became U. S. law. The Charter affirms seven principles: in the third the member nations agree to the settling of their disputes peacefully, and in the fourth they agree not to use force or the threat of force against other nations, except in self-defense. The object of the invasion, to inflict revenge upon the perpetrators of the 9/11 bombings of the World Trade buildings, was a criminal matter to be pursued through normal criminal channels. The U.S. was not attacked or threatened by attack by the government of Afghanistan. (U.N. Charter). (See Hornberner in Notes). One member of OMNI's Steering Committee wrote the following: "The OMNI Steering Committee agrees that war is not the answer either in

Afghanistan or anywhere on the planet. We are against warmongering when we see it and where we see it not only in Obama but elsewhere. There are no justifications for war and no justifiable or good wars. Feel free to individualize your signs and specify a war of your choice on Feb 7. Blame and criticism are not the answers nor is lament and mourning. Negotiation and diplomacy based on respect for our differences and similarities as well as international law are the only answers in Afghanistan and elsewhere. --

2. **WAR ON TERRORISM FEAR MONGERING.** Nor does the so-called "war on terrorism" justify the invasion and occupation. US leaders reflexively blame others for our own bombings, invasions, and occupations: Others are determined to destroy us. Fear-mongering is integral to recent US history. The communists, the drug lords, and now the terrorists are everywhere against us, and so we must have permanent war. Let us ask ourselves why we are in conflict all around the world. Is it because of Saddam Hussein or Osama bin Laden? Surely not, for they are only symptoms of US policies, of jingoism, of desire to control energy resources, of militarism, of state terrorism, of the National Security State. We have two wars with no exits, one with a distant deadline and the other none. Why? Look at our foreign policies since WWII. Connect the dots between those policies and US domestic values, urges, and fears. Confront the contradictions that make our society dysfunctional. Not bin Laden, not the Taliban, not the "terrorists," not the over forty countries we have invaded or intervened into illegally during the last five decades have caused our perpetual state of war. (Blum). Then what? As so often is the case, objects of veneration escape critical examination. In our case it is the idea—or the abuse of the idea-- of "freedom." "Freedom" has so arrogantly deluded and entangled us globally to our disadvantage, that we have in the name of freedom sought to dominate the world. Now we have ended in bankruptcy. (Bacevich).

3. The illegal occupation of Afghanistan has led to **THE ILLEGAL BOMBINGS OF PAKISTAN**, despite its government's repeated protests against violations of its sovereignty that often kill civilians and undermine its own campaign against terrorists. The US has staged more than 30 missile strikes inside Pakistan since August 2008. "At least 263 people...have been killed in the strikes since last August." (Brummitt) The militants retaliate. For example, in Dec. 2008 near Peshawar, Pakistan, they killed a guard and torched 160 US vehicles, including 70 Humvees (costing about \$100,000 each), on their way to Afghanistan for US forces. (Khan). Imagine Mexico firing rockets into the US to kill its enemies, which resulted in their enemies killing US police guarding equipment on the way to Mexico.

4 The invasion **KILLED AND DISPLACED MANY CIVILIANS** and the occupation continues killing them, some 6000 in 2008 alone, and some four million Afghans have been displaced since 2001. We properly opposed the invasion, for we saw the human suffering coming, permitted by the violation of civilized treaties our best have struggled to establish (from Hague IV of 1899, the Convention Regarding the Laws and Customs of War on Land to the Geneva Convention of 1949 and its protocols protecting civilians in time of war). And we should continue to oppose the occupation on this basis—on this basis alone is enough--of defending noncombatants, innocents, children, the elderly, the injured and ill, and noncombatant women (Grayling). Focus on the weddings, that Afghans love. US forces "bombed such a party in July, killing forty-seven. Then, in November, warplanes hit another wedding party, killing around forty. A couple of weeks later they hit an engagement party, killing three." (Gopal). On humane grounds alone the invasion should not have occurred and the occupation should not be continuing. President Karzai has repeatedly expressed concern over civilian deaths, and the forthcoming increase of 30,000 more troops caused him to demand that his government should be consulted about prior US operations and missions. (Grayling, Straziuso). Yet the Obama administration continues the Afghanistan policies of the Bush administration, with Vice-President Biden leading the way. (Abrashi,

Wallsten) These considerations raise certain questions. . Can the US be excused from the treaties passed by Congress and signed by the President making terror and indiscriminate death a moral crime? We must ask further: Are there ever circumstances in which killing civilians in wartime is not a moral crime, and do those circumstances apply to the US war against Afghanistan? Are there ever circumstances that would justify or at least exonerate those who have done the killing and those who planned and ordered the killing

5. BOMBERS NOT CAUGHT, OCCUPATION FAILING. The excuse given by the Bush administration for the invasion, to punish the bombers, failed. To satisfy his own and the public's desire for revenge, the Bush administration aggressively pushed to achieve early, highly visible successes, without a long-term strategy in the "war on terror," except for the idea of "regime change." Bin Laden escaped and the Pentagon was left with the occupation of the nation of Afghanistan. (Smucker) The occupation has also failed. "Bush, Karzai Talk about Troubles in Afghanistan: Problems Include Worsening Security, S. Korean Hostages, Resurgent Taliban." ADG 8-6-07. "The Security Situations in Afghanistan over the past two years has definitely deteriorated,' Karzai said." Taliban controls most regions outside Kabul, violence has worsened every year since Bush's "victory" declaration in 2002, soldier and civilian casualties have risen dramatically, and the country is in a "downward spiral." All despite 8 years of military occupation by 60,000 troops, costing US taxpayers \$2 billion a month, and NATO \$1 billion a month.. (Hightower). These killings and the refugees have incited violent opposition to the U.S. throughout Afghanistan and the world.

6. WELFARE OF WOMEN NOT THE PURPOSE OF THE INVASION. After the failure to capture bin Laden, the Bush Administration came up with another justification for the illegal invasion and occupation—the humanitarian defense of the WOMEN and children of Afghanistan from the brutal treatment women suffer from men. The flaws in this argument are plentiful. For example, many women in other nations, such as Bangladesh and Ethiopia, are beaten, sexually assaulted, or suffer compelled genital mutilation. Why have they not been invaded? No evidence has been presented that the safety of women has improved under the occupation, or would in Bangladesh if the US invaded that country. But 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., which established guidelines for deciding who should be offered asylum. We can and should give haven to the Afghan victims of domestic violence who can prove serious abuse and their government is unable or unwilling to protect them. Britain and Canada already grant such asylum.

(Kotlowitz) In 2008 [Ms Chayes was living in Kandahar where she started and supervises a co-op to help Afghans, especially women. She says that the US/Canadian military operations in support of the totally corrupt Afghan government are just creating more Taliban.](#) (Moyers).

7. CHILDREN especially are victims of invasions and occupations. A study of wartime through the voices of children in Bosnia, Israel, Rwanda, and Northern Ireland tell of atrocities they have witnessed, the losses they have suffered, and the traumas they have experienced that will last their lifetimes. And we learn how many have been killed: 15,000 in Bosnia, and the war lasted only three years, compared to the eight years of the Afghanistan war. The indifference to what is happening to the children, as the result of US rush to revenge, is reflected in the US failure to sign the CEDAW Rights of the Child Treaty. (Raymond). A story: the scientist Salk sought a rapid method of producing vaccine for polio. Risk was involved, but Salk believed that speed was essential because children were dying. US leaders sought revenge regardless of the sufferings of the children. And the killings continue, not against al Qaida, but against Taliban and the people, the children, of Afghanistan.

8. Children especially but all Afghans are endangered by "DEPLETED URANIUM," which as chemical warfare is prohibited by Geneva conventions signed by the U.S. Dr. Miraki was one of the presenters at the "Stop-DU" conference, Saturday, 19 May 2007, attended by the Christian Peacemaker Team Depleted Uranium (DU) Delegation, who wrote this report, at East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee. He gave a scathing condemnation of the U.S. bombing of innocent civilians in Afghanistan soon after the 9/11 attacks on the U.S. Various reports indicate that some of the U.S. ordnance used in attempts to destroy the Taliban and Al Qaeda consisted of DU munitions. Tons of DU, from bunker buster bombs used on the caves in the eastern mountains and from rapid fire machine guns of A-10 Warthogs or Apache helicopters, have left the beautiful Afghan landscape littered with the graves of whole and extended families plus a radioactive nightmare for those left alive. The DU burns when fired from a weapon or exploded, leaving fine, radioactive waste everywhere the wind blows, and causing increased rates of cancers, childhood leukemia and other illnesses for the people who breathe it in. Dr. Miraki showed slides demonstrating the dramatically increased rates of birth defects - nauseating photos of Afghan newborns with swollen heads, red tumours where lips and eyes should be; frog-like babies with no brain; abdominal and head organs left outside the body; babies with one eye in the middle of the forehead; club hands and feet and more.
9. OPIUM. Instead of capturing the villainous al Qaeda or bringing peace and protection to women and children, the US invasion and occupation have reversed Taliban successful reduction of opium. Afghanistan is now the main world source of opium. Afghanistan's foreign minister, for example, objected to a report in the Financial Times that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had called Afghanistan a corrupt narco-state, but did admit the government was not in control of Helmand, the country's largest drug-producing province. ("Rangin") In fact, much of the country is outside the control of Karzai's government. What is the US doing to provide alternatives to Afghani farmers? The first military unit, from the Missouri National Guard, just returned from its "pioneering mission in Afghanistan." After seven years of occupation, this was the first effort by the military to help revive a farming sector in order to wean farmers off the illegal crop and to wheat and other legal crops, by building wells, enhancing soil, and improving marketing. Seven years of the occupation's devastation too late. ("Agribusiness").
10. But the drug wealth is not distributed. There is a WIDENING GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR, which has created additional desperation, providing another reason for Afghans to accept Taliban insurgents. And it's not only in the countryside. In the capital, Kabul, startling contrasts of wealth abound. Hungry children beg near the mansions of the elite enriched by foreign aid and contracts and official corruption. Hundreds of tattered men compete at dawn for 50-cent jobs hauling construction debris. Seven years after the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world, "with rates of unemployment, illiteracy, infant mortality, and malnutrition on a par with the most impoverished nations in sub-Saharan Africa." This winter "threatens to be Afghanistan's most desperate in nearly two decades." (Constable). Seven years of war, minimal reconstruction and relief, Taliban attacks on supply routes, drought, and food prices rising, the people of Afghanistan need help. Thus the Pentagon's new report urging Obama to shift his strategy in Afghanistan from nation, "democracy" building to "targeting Taliban and Al Qaeda sanctuaries in side Pakistan" (Burns and Jelinek).seems astonishingly disconnected from reality, since precious little building has taken place.
11. These conditions are related. They are compounded in their harm by the FAILURE OF MAINSTREAM MEDIA to tell the full truth about the invasion and occupation, as Ed Herman and Marc Herold argue. Herman: "For years Herold has been documenting the

U.S. bombing of Afghanistan, and he has shown repeatedly that the Pentagon kills civilians on a large scale, often uses new barbaric weapons in areas where civilians are numerous, and regularly lies about it. They are using Afghanistan with especial ruthlessness and as a weapons experimental zone, because it is far away and out of media sight, so that they can get away with it. But the immorality involved here is staggering. If pictures like those shown here by Herold were available to the U.S. public this murderous policy would come to a screeching halt. But the [mainstream—DB] media protect the Pentagon. This recalls to my mind the fact that the Pentagon only used napalm in South Vietnam during the Vietnam war, not North Vietnam, although we were allegedly saving the south from aggression. The reason for this was that napalming the North would have led to global publicity of this ugly method of warfare—but in South Vietnam the US was an occupying power and had a puppet government, as in Afghanistan, and the media here kept quiet on this matter." See below for Herold's full essay.

12. **AFGHANISTAN PART OF THE US GLOBAL PRISON GULAG.** The moral and legal black hole that is Guantanamo is not alone. The some 270 prisoners there are but the tip of the iceberg, for the US has been and is holding thousands more prisoners around the world as "enemy combatants" as part of the immoral black hole of the global "War on Terror"--possibly as many as 27,000. Afghanistan is part of this global gulag, particularly at Bagram Air Base, the center of US operations in Afghanistan. Bagram "is one of the most infamous US prisons anywhere." Parallel to plans to continue the war in Afghanistan, there are no plans to close Bagram, but in fact the Pentagon plans to replace the current prison with a \$60 million, 40-0acre prison because the prison is overcrowded. Leaving Afghanistan will close that and other US prisons in that country. For extensive analysis see "Prisons Beyond Guantanamo" by Matt Vogel, *The Catholic Worker* (Jan.-Feb. 2009). Jim Hightower reports (from *Huffington Post*) that "about 800 cases of detainee abuse" have been reported at some 50 Army firebases. And the CIA operates its own secret detention centers.
13. **ILLUSION OF "SAFE HAVENS" ONLY IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN. WHO IS THE ENEMY?** Pres. Obama has committed us to an open-ended war ("I do not have yet a timetable") against terrorist "safe havens" in Afghanistan and Pakistan, despite the reality that the motive of al Qaida (opposition to US imperial over-reach) is global, wherever our 900 military bases are located, but especially in the Middle East. Also, many commentators think "the most dangerous part of the world is Afghanistan and Pakistan" with its nuclear weapons and growing Islamic radical ascendancy. (McFeatters). The larger matter is that al Qaeda is not close to the several homegrown insurgencies inside and outside the Taliban. "Foreign fighters, especially Al Qaeda, have little ideological influence on most of the insurgency, and Afghans keep their distance from such outsiders....Al Qaeda's vision of global jihad doesn't resonate...the major concern...is intensely local: personal safety." (Gopal). So who are we fighting? Does our government know? "...the US military has identified at least fourteen separate insurgent organizations in Afghanistan" and "there are as many as fifty separate Islamist formations in neighboring Pakistan." (Dreyfuss, Gopal). We need a surge of knowledge and negotiation.
14. **ADDITIONAL TROOPS AND BILLIONS MORE DOLLARS BUT NO EXIT PLAN CONTINUES BUSH PLAN.** Obama's Bushhawk advisors (Jones, Blair, Gats, Holbrooke, Lynn) drum for an intensified war. Many Democrats—including Rep. Jim McGovern, Sen. Russ Feingold-- are wary about sending more troops because "they could become further entrenched in an unwinnable war." Three more brigades will go soon, and more soon after, to double US combat presence to 60,000. More than 130 US personnel died in Afghanistan in 2008, compared to 82 in 2007. And all the old Bush/Pentagon slogans: more effective effort to root out safe havens, more effective coord. with NATO, etc. And the challenges are daunting:

"The country is one of the poorest in the world. Opium production....Corruption is rampant. Terrorist fighters move freely across the Pakistan border. European voters want their armies to leave." And Kyrgyzstan threatens to shut down the US base there from which troops and supplies are flown into Afghanistan. (Flaherty, Hightower) Complicating matters is that the insurgency is multiple and yet simple: multiple because there are "a host of insurgent groups in addition to the Taliban"; simple because although the "factions have competing commanders with differing ideologies and strategies," they "agree on one essential goal: kicking out the foreigners." (Gopal).

15. AFGHANS VERSUS US TROOPS

According to a report by Amy Goodman 2-10-09, at least a quarter of the people of Afghanistan supports "attacks on US troops." The cause of this animosity is largely our killing of civilians —, since 2006 a drastic increase in bombings, "tripling the number of civilians killed," and up to 500 monthly from US cluster bombs. The bombings "have inspired a surge in the recruitment of Afghan suicide bombers." (Hightower). Obama would curtail the indiscriminate use of air power and advocates negotiations with the "enemy," but he also is repeating Bush's plan to "surge" in Afghanistan. (Dreyfuss).

16. HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES UNDER US/KARZAI REGIME. Interview by Amy Goodman 2-10-09: UN official Prof. Cherif Bassiouni in 2004-05 accused US troops of torture, rape, killings, breaking and entering and other war crimes, and was forced out of the UN by the US. Especially indicted private contractors.

17. FAILURE TO PROVIDE ECONOMIC SOLUTION. Interv. *Democracy Now* 2-10-09 of Prof. Cherif Bassiouni, former UN official in Afghanistan. After the invasion he found "very little peace dividend or economic development." An economic solution to Afghan. Violence was possible, but probably too late now. A military solution is hopeless. Now the Afghan people have more to gain by supporting Taliban. Why is Obama increasing the war? Showing himself tough on terrorism/al Qaida. "It's a mistake."

18. WAR PROFITEERING. US spent \$5 billion over 6 years on reconstruction (training police, roads, etc.) and is spending \$24 billion a year on killing and destruction, most of the money given to private companies—DynCorp, Bearing Point, Louis Berger Group, KRB. The result is shoddy work, misappropriated funds, and Afghan anger. For example, DynCorp was paid nearly a billion dollars to train 30,000 Afghan police, and the effort, according to Richard Holbrooke was "an appalling joke": incompetent and corrupt officers, Taliban resurgence, rise in opium production. Despite this record the Bush admin. gave DynCorp \$317 million to continue the "training."

19. WARLORDS RULE. Because of 8 years of military occupation, Afghanistan is warlord state, with political power carved up into hundreds of fiefdoms ruled by tribal leaders. There is no legitimate national leader, not centralized state. President Hamid Karzai, handpicked by the Bush admin. in 2001, remains a US puppet (nominated by Bush for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002), but he has no authority outside Kabul. Afghanistan's police officers are renowned for incompetence and venality. Its army requires years to make it a useful force, and anyway the country lacks the money for a standing army.

20. The US invasion and occupation of Afghanistan repeats the SOVIETS in the 1980s: Invasion and overthrow of government, war against warlords, Taliban. "Many Afghan watchers consider the war unwinnable and they point out that in the 1980s the Soviet Union, with far more troops, had engaged in a brutal nine-year counterinsurgency war—and lost." British Ambassador to Afghanistan Serard Cowper-Coles warned against the Obama-Petraeus escalation: Sending more troops "'would

have perverse effects: it would identify us even more strongly as an occupation force" and inspire more resistance. (Dreyfuss).

21. **BRUTALIZATION OF US SOLDIERS AND CITIZENS.** Boudreau, Tyler. *Packing Inferno: The Unmaking of a Marine*. See his article "To Kill or Not to Kill," *The Progressive* (Feb. 2009), 30-32. "To master one's reluctance to take life, one must stop revering life so much, particularly that of an enemy. This unseemly dimension of war...was almost universally taken for granted within the Marine Corps." In military desensitization training "the enemy's death is meant to be regarded with indifference and sometimes with amusement." And who are the enemy in Iraq and Afghanistan? What about civilians? "...on the battlefield...'objectives' always supersede life...in our headlong pursuit to deliver freedom and democracy and to expel an oppressive regime and combat terrorism, we had inadvertently lost sight of the very people we'd been deployed to help." Boudreau served 12 years in the Marine Corps infantry. And many of the public back home are also desensitized. Sure, they say they dislike war, but they do nothing about the slaughters caused by one US war after another, and devote themselves to the limitless diversions offered by US affluence and commercialism. General Eisenhower summed it up: "I hate war, as only a soldier who has lived it can, as only one who has seen its brutality, the futility, the stupidity." 1946.
22. **CALLOUSNESS OF US LEADERS.** Secretary of State Madeline Albright, in response to the question: Was the death of a half-million Iraqi children as the result of the Clinton/Blair embargo and bombings during the '90s worth it? She replied: yes. Democrat or Republican, the people who seek and win high office feel no empathy with the innocent victims shot and bombed by soldiers under their orders. The soldiers have been trained to harden their hearts. But the civilian leaders? They can feel sympathy with no victim of their bombs? They have read nothing about the human beings of Afghanistan—by Khaled Hosseini, for example? Their upbringing in compassion, the religious precepts and stories, the literary vicarious identification with the feelings and thoughts of others, did nothing take? Did they become, as they seem, stone-like mechanicals in pursuit of empire and "national security"?

NOTE: Twenty-Two reasons. You and I know more reasons. Will you carry on? Twenty-three? Thirty? Fifty?

## CONCLUSION

Reinhold Niebuhr's concept of "concurrence" between national and international self-interest if peaceful policies are to be achieved among world nations applies to Afghanistan under US

occupation. Nations satisfy their interests more easily when those interests are compatible with the interests of others. But what are Afghanistan's interests? What do *the people* feel and think, want and need? In pursuit of bin Laden the US used all elements of its national power regardless of the people of Afghanistan. The consequences have been mass death and cruel suffering. (Alas, immediately following the announcement by Iran of its new satellite, President Obama announced the US "will use all elements of its national power" to protect the US from [undefined] danger.). But the Taliban is not a monolithic, ideologically obsessed, evil gang, but diverse and changing, full of niches of opportunity for influence and change. (Gopal.). We should ask: What are their legitimate concerns? How might we find rapprochement? Instead, we bombed, invaded, shot, occupied, bombed. Now, tit for tat, they shoot and bomb in endless killing, both surging to kill..

Do we have alternatives? We can end the occupation that births and nourishes enemies. We can escalate our diplomacy, development aid, and international cooperation toward Afghanistan and the world. We can double the number of well-trained State Department personnel and strengthen civilian crisis prevention and response capabilities. We can create a Department of Peace. We can strengthen the US Agency for International Development and appoint humanitarian officers to reassert civilian control over all foreign assistance. And we can rebuild US/UN relations, pay off the US debt to the UN, and increase support for UN prevention and peacebuilding efforts. ("The Responsibility"). These reforms would bring help to the world instead of armed threatening and invading. We can stop painting the world with a broad, too often black, brush. We can reduce the 900 military bases abroad, and bring these troops home too. We can stop trying to control the Middle East militarily. We can insist on an independent Palestinian state. The suffering people of the world—and all species—need these changes and more.

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## ADDENDA

### BRAVERY OF THE TROOPS AND MORALITY OF THEIR ACTIONS

But if the actions that required such courage amounted to complicity with leaders from President Bush on down in the commission of wrongs, particularly the killing of innocents, the courage with which they were carried out does not alter the fact that the killings were wrong. The excuse that the leader, the "commander in chief," has absolute authority and that subordinates must unhesitatingly and unquestioningly obey (the *Fuhrerprinzip*) was not acceptable even before the Nuremberg Trials. Nor does the public popularity of the invasion and the occupation transform wrong into right. Nor the belief by the troops that their cause was just, for that belief must be tested by law and morality, for a war must be both just and justly fought. (Grayling).

A peace organization committed to the values I listed in the introduction must then question whether the attack on Afghanistan—its men, women, and children—in order to apprehend a band of criminals was in whole or in part illegal and immoral. And we must pass judgment and take a stand, or be vulnerable to the accusation of insincerity or pusillanimity. Can the US be excused from adhering to its own laws and the laws of nations? Does the myth of US exceptionalism permit such double standards when judged by international law? (Perceiving ourselves as a peaceful people, we are deluded by the conviction that our international conflicts are not of our making.) (Bacevich). I believe the case set forth above allows us to reply NO to these questions, and in addition supports the moral and legal arguments with numerous other reasons why we must leave Afghanistan.

### EFFECTS OF DEPLETED URANIUM, A CHEMICAL WARFARE

CPTnet (Christian Peacekeeping Team) 29 May 2007

JOHNSON CITY, TN: "Depleted Uranium--the gift that keeps on giving"  
by Murray Lumley

"Congenital Deformities: the Gift That Keeps on Giving," is the title of a chapter in Dr. Mohammed Daud Miraki's book, Afghanistan: After Democracy, the Untold Story Through Photographic Images. [NOTE: I have not read this book, but am seeking it. DB]

Dr. Miraki was one of the presenters at the "Stop-DU" conference, Saturday, 19 May 2007, attended by the Christian Peacemaker Team Depleted Uranium (DU) delegation at East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee. Dr. Miraki left Afghanistan with his family in 1982 during the Soviet occupation.

He gave a scathing condemnation of the U.S. bombing of innocent civilians in Afghanistan soon after the 9/11 attacks on the U.S. He told us that most Afghans live in abject poverty after experiencing nearly thirty years of war. "Afghan civilians are still dying from thousands of mines left by the Soviet army," he said. Dr. Miraki has revisited Afghanistan several times in a personal quest for the truth behind the U.S.'s stated goal of bringing democracy to Afghanistan.

Various reports indicate that some of the U.S. ordnance used in attempts to destroy the Taliban and Al Qaeda consisted of DU munitions. Tons of DU, from bunker buster bombs used on the caves in the eastern mountains and from rapid fire machine guns of A-10 Warthogs or Apache helicopters, have left the beautiful Afghan landscape littered with the graves of whole and extended families plus a radioactive nightmare for those left alive. The DU burns when fired from a weapon or exploded, leaving fine, radioactive waste everywhere the wind blows, and causing increased rates of cancers, childhood leukemia and other illnesses for the people who breathe it in.

Dr. Miraki showed slides demonstrating the dramatically increased rates of birth defects - nauseating photos of Afghan newborns with swollen heads, red tumours where lips and eyes should be; frog-like babies with no brain; abdominal and head organs left outside the body; babies with one eye in the middle of the forehead; club hands and feet and more.

Dr. Miraki told us, "Tiny radioactive particles, inhaled by Afghan men and women of child bearing age, have altered the DNA of their sperms and eggs." Since DNA damage is inheritable, the increased incidence of birth defects will pass on to future generations. He also said, "Since the radioactive dust from DU has a half life of 4.5 billion years (the age of the Earth) this means that Afghans (and others people living where DU has been used - Iraq and the former Yugoslavia) will be suffering for an unforeseeable time."

U.S. and NATO veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan who may have been exposed to DU dust also return home with fear of having babies with birth defects. Truly, the use of DU munitions is the gift of death - that keeps on giving. As part of a civilization that would use such weapons on other people and

the Earth, I had an urge to put on sackcloth and ashes.

#### CODE PINK'S VALENTINE FOR AFGHANISTAN

Dear Dick,

Thank you to everyone who contacted Obama last week, asking him to send diplomacy, not unmanned drones, to Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Now, we want to shower the White House with valentines-- valentines that speak to both the hope in our hearts and to our heartbreak over Obama's furthering of Bush's tragic legacy in the Middle East by bombing Afghanistan and Pakistan and by appointing hawkish Dennis Ross to be in charge of diplomacy with Iran. Listen/Watch Democracy Now's report from earlier this week titled, "Obama Continues Bush Policy of Deadly Air Strikes in Pakistan."

It is said that the definition of insanity is to repeat the same action but to expect a different result. President Obama is a deeply intelligent man, but it is crazy for him to stay on Bush's course of empire building, and all the devastation and loss of life it leaves in its wake. Obama promised change; well, sometimes the best way to change is to STOP.

Let's send Obama hearts that say: STOP IN THE NAME OF LOVE, STOP IN THE NAME OF CHANGE. Click [here](#) to download and send a Valentine, or create one with paper, glue and your own crafty ingenuity and wit, and send it to the White House. Send it this week so it gets to him by Valentine's Day-- Congressional mail is slow!

Send your Valentine today and remind Obama to keep his promises to the American people by creating true and lasting change, not more of the same failed policies. As we speak from our hearts, we also need to educate our minds. Learn more about the volatile situations in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Gaza by visiting our PinkTank blog, full of articles, interviews and talking points about these complicated crises. PinkTank is updated with insightful commentary on a regular basis--including CODEPINK Co-founder Medea Benjamin's on-the-ground updates from her harrowing and courageous trip to Gaza--so be sure to read, comment, spread the stories and come back for

more. The more informed we can be, the more effective we can be as activists.

Thank you for filling our hearts and engaging our minds every day. You are our true Valentines!

Audrey, Dana, Deidra, Desiree, Farida, Gael, Gayle, Jean, Jodie, Liz, Lori, Medea, Nancy, Paris, and Rae

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