OMNI NEWSLETTER ON AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN #9, June 10, 2011, Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace

Here is the link to all the newsletters that are archived on the new OMNI site.

http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

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Commanders brace for backlash of anti-US sentiment that could be more damaging than after the Abu Ghraib scandal.

The Afghanistan 'kill team' photos of murdered civilians could be more damaging than those from Abu Ghraib, say Nato commanders. Commanders in Afghanistan are bracing themselves for possible riots and public fury triggered by the publication of "trophy" photographs of US soldiers posing with the dead bodies of defenceless Afghan civilians they killed. Read more http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/21/us-army-kill-team-afghanistan-posed-pictures-murdered-civilians?CMP=twt_gu

Bagram prison, bigger than Guantanamo, its prisoners in limbo, cries out for some news coverage

COMMENTARY | May 31, 2011

Some 1,700 detainees are being held with no charges, no trial, no way to prove their innocence despite a Marine Corps general's 2009 report saying many should be released. In addition, there has been almost no in-depth news coverage of practices that, if widely known, would no doubt add to the call for removal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan and criticism of the government's conduct of the war. Read More: http://www.readerssupportednews.org/off-site-opinion-section/55-55/6212-us-bagram-prison-dwarfs-guantanamo

“Pentagon Afghanistan Withdrawal Plan a Joke,”

Robert Greenwald and Derrick Crowe, Reader Supported News

Robert Greenwald and Derrick Crowe write: "According to The Wall Street Journal: 'US military officers in Afghanistan have drawn up preliminary proposals to withdraw as many as 5,000 troops from the country in July and as many as 5,000 more by the year's end ...' This joke of a 'withdrawal' plan isn't anything remotely approaching a real drawdown."


Howard Dean to Obama: Get Out of Afghanistan!

by McKay Coppins Info

McKay Coppins is a reporter for Newsweek and The Daily Beast covering politics and national affairs. His writing has also appeared in The Daily Caller and Salt Lake City's Deseret News.

The former Democratic boss says the Afghanistan war is not winnable, the Kabul government
is corrupt, and Karzai is almost as bad on women’s rights as the Taliban. . . . Dean is returning to his pacifistic roots—and he has a message for President Obama: Get our troops out of Afghanistan.

In a weekend interview with The Daily Beast, Dean said he’s had a change of heart when it comes to the war he has often defended. “I actually supported the president when he sent extra troops to Afghanistan,” Dean said. “But I’ve come to believe that’s not a winnable war.” Dean attributes his newly-held opposition to a crisis of faith in Afghan President Hamid Karzai—and in the war’s humanitarian value.

“The Vietnam War showed us we shouldn’t prop up corrupt governments, and that’s what we’ve got in Afghanistan.”

“I supported (ramping up troop presence) because I was concerned with what would happen to the women in the country” if the Taliban took control, Dean said. “But I recently read about Karzai saying some very sexist, terrible things, and it’s become obvious that there’s not a whole lot of difference between the two sides.”

He continued: “As much as I feel terrible about what’s happening to the women there, Karzai has shown he can’t be trusted any more than the Taliban to help them.”

Dean didn’t specify what Karzai had done to draw such sharp criticism, but the prime minister has taken heat recently from women’s rights advocates, who say he’s bending to Taliban pressure at the expense of the country’s women.

In just one example of the Taliban’s influence, Karzai’s government has recently begun cracking down on weddings—forming committees to enforce gender segregation at receptions, and working to outlaw “revealing” bridal gowns. Of course, such measures are relatively tame when compared with the brutality of past Taliban governments, but some say the efforts are symbolic of Karzai’s apathetic attitude toward women’s liberation. As feminist commentator Ruby Hamad recently wrote, “Karzai has proved himself to be ambivalent toward women’s rights.”

And without substantial gains in that area, Dean said, he sees no value in continuing to fight in the region: “The Vietnam War showed us we shouldn’t prop up corrupt governments, and that’s what we’ve got in Afghanistan.”

He is careful not to frame his argument as an attack on the White House, insisting he supports the president even though "we’re going to disagree sometimes on policy.”

But Dean’s combative rhetoric marks a return to the passionate liberalism that many on the left have missed in recent months, as the hope-and-change candidate of 2008 has gotten bogged down in the pragmatic business of running the country. With Obama pursuing neocon-esque military actions, and cutting deals with Congressional Republicans on fiscal issues, a newly emboldened Dean could effectively lead a much-needed pep rally in the Democratic Party…… http://readersupportednews.org/off-site-news-section/69-69/5660-howard-dean-to-obama-get-out-of-afghanistan

We Can't Afford the War in Afghanistan

By Rep. John Conyers, Reader Supported News 19 April 11

n this Tax Day, many Americans are likely taking a moment to consider the costs associated with funding the public services that, among other things, keep our air and water clean, create educational opportunities for our children, and provide financial security to our most vulnerable fellow citizens. Although no one likes to pay taxes, most Americans understand that our country is stronger because we
collectively fund our national priorities and promote the common good.

Unfortunately, Americans are all too aware that they are bearing another, highly unpopular, financial burden: the direct and indirect costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This year, the government will spend $159.3 billion in direct spending on these wars. In the decade since these conflicts began, we've spent approximately $1 trillion. And, if and when these wars finally end, the bills will continue to roll in, as our veterans return home with grievous mental and physical injuries. The economist Joseph Stiglitz has estimated that these legacy costs could push the final tally for our occupations to more than $3 trillion.

So what are Americans getting for their $107 billion taxpayer investment in Afghanistan this year? Troop casualties are up, civilian deaths are at an all-time high, and, according to our own CIA Director, there are fewer than 100 Al-Qaeda remaining in the country.

The American people are willing to pay their fair share and engage in shared sacrifice for the good of the country. It's all a part of being a responsible, patriotic citizen. However, as elected officials, we should not be asking our constituents to sacrifice unnecessarily. Right now, we just can't afford it. For example, according to the Rethink Afghanistan campaign, a household bringing in the median income in my district in Detroit, Michigan - a mere $32,365 - will pay $1,250 in taxes to support the War in Afghanistan and other military spending.

We shouldn't be asking Americans to spend more than $1,000 a year on a counterproductive and wasteful war when they're struggling to get by. Wouldn't it be better to put that money into popular programs that help working families? With the money spent on the wars this year, we could put 14.1 million children into the Head Start program or put 1.6 million additional cops on the beat or give 19.3 million low-income students a $5,000 Pell Grant scholarship. The math is clear. For the sake of working people across this country, for the health of our troops, for a more responsive democracy, and a stronger and smarter national security posture, we need to start bringing our troops home now.


March 10, 2009

Imagine an Occupied America
by Rep. Ron Paul
Listen to Ron Paul. Click the play button below.

Imagine for a moment that somewhere in the middle of Texas there was a large foreign military base, say Chinese or Russian. Imagine that thousands of armed foreign troops were constantly patrolling American streets in military vehicles. Imagine they were here under the auspices of "keeping us safe" or "promoting democracy" or "protecting their strategic interests." Imagine that they operated outside of U.S. law, and that the Constitution did not apply to
them. Imagine that every now and then they made mistakes or acted on bad information and accidentally killed or terrorized innocent Americans, including women and children, most of the time with little to no repercussions or consequences. Imagine that they set up checkpoints on our soil and routinely searched and ransacked entire neighborhoods of homes. Imagine if Americans were fearful of these foreign troops and overwhelmingly thought America would be better off without their presence.

Imagine if some Americans were so angry about them being in Texas that they actually joined together to fight them off, in defense of our soil and sovereignty, because leadership in government refused or were unable to do so. Imagine that those Americans were labeled terrorists or insurgents for their defensive actions, and routinely killed or captured and tortured by the foreign troops on our land. Imagine that the occupiers’ attitude was that if they just killed enough Americans, the resistance would stop, but instead, for every American killed, 10 more would take up arms against them, resulting in perpetual bloodshed. Imagine if most of the citizens of the foreign land also wanted these troops to return home. Imagine if they elected a leader who promised to bring them home and put an end to this horror.

Imagine if that leader changed his mind once he took office. The reality is that our military presence on foreign soil is as offensive to the people that live there as armed Chinese troops would be if they were stationed in Texas. We would not stand for it here, but we have had a globe-straddling empire and a very intrusive foreign policy for decades that incites a lot of hatred and resentment toward us.

According to our own CIA, our meddling in the Middle East was the prime motivation for the horrific attacks on 9/11. But instead of reevaluating our foreign policy, we have simply escalated it. We had a right to go after those responsible for 9/11, to be sure, but why do so many Americans feel as if we have a right to a military presence in some 160 countries when we wouldn’t stand for even one foreign base on our soil, for any reason? These are not embassies, mind you, these are military installations. The new administration is not materially changing anything about this. Shuffling troops around and playing with semantics does not accomplish the goals of the American people, who simply want our men and women to come home. Fifty thousand troops left behind in Iraq is not conducive to peace any more than 50,000 Russian soldiers would be in the United States.

Shutting down military bases and ceasing to deal with other nations with threats and violence is not isolationism. It is the opposite. Opening ourselves up to friendship, honest trade, and diplomacy is the foreign policy of peace and prosperity. It is the only foreign policy that will not bankrupt us in short order, as our current actions most definitely will. I share the disappointment of the American people in the foreign policy rhetoric coming from the administration. The sad thing is, our foreign policy will change eventually, as Rome’s did, when all budgetary and monetary tricks to fund it are exhausted.

* Barbara Boxer: Ending the Endless War
California Senator Barbara Boxer has re-introduced former Senator Feingold’s bill requiring the President to establish a timetable for the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan - a timetable with an end date. Senators Durbin, Harkin, Gillibrand, and Brown have already signed on as co-sponsors. A real deadline for US withdrawal would facilitate meaningful peace talks. More visible Senate criticism of the endless war can move the White House. Urge your Senator to co-sponsor.

http://www.justforeignpolicy.org/act/s186

Background: Barbara Boxer: Champion in the Senate Against the Afghanistan War
Setting a date certain for the exit of U.S. troops is crucial to the success of peace talks. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-naiman/barbara-boxer-afghanistan_b_852043.html]

*Action: Send a Letter to the Editor on Afghan withdrawal and drawdown*

Senator Boxer has introduced a bill requiring the President to establish a timetable for the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan - a timetable with an end date. A real deadline for US withdrawal would facilitate meaningful peace talks. More visible Senate criticism of the endless war can move the White House to a substantial drawdown of U.S. troops this summer. Send a letter to your local newspaper - we've provided a draft. [http://www.justforeignpolicy.org/act/s186/lte]

Gary Johnson: I Would Get Out of Afghanistan Tomorrow

In an interview with Robert Naiman, former New Mexico governor and GOP presidential candidate Gary Johnson advocates military withdrawal from Afghanistan within months; supports Boxer bill requiring a real timetable for military withdrawal; advocates 43% cut in the military budget; advocates ending US military involvement in Libya; questions why we have a U.S. military base in Okinawa that people there don't want; supports legalization of marijuana and says legalization would end 75% of the border violence in Mexico, saving thousands of lives. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-naiman/gary-johnson-i-would-get-_b_855500.html]

KUCINICH FOR WITHDRAWAL

No Surprise Tuesday, 19 April 2011

When multiple reports came out detailing the level of intervention the United States had in the so-called Arab Spring revolutions, you would think it would come as a shock. It wasn't. It's increasingly clear just how far our country has waded into the affairs of others with a policy of intervention, war, and preemption. The United States has no right to interfere in the internal affairs of any other nation, just as no other nation has the right to interfere in the internal affairs of the United States,

You would also think these reports would spark a wave of outrage across DC and Congress. The United States was financing the political opposition in Syria at the same time that the Administration was pursuing a policy of engagement with the Syrian government! Yet, throughout the halls of Congress, it's virtually a non-issue.

I will not be silent as we wade into the affairs of others without clear principles or credibility. I will not be silent as we spend trillions of dollars on war, while we continue to fail on reforms at home -- job creation, universal health care, and clean energy.

But I need your help to stay in Congress and continue our movement in Washington. Can you donate $20 and help me get the resources we need to overcome redistricting and keep our voice in Congress?
If we don’t have integrity in our dealings with other countries, there is no reason for anyone to believe anything the U.S. government will say. Reforms in Syria and other countries may be necessary but must come from within. Outside interference runs the risk of precipitating violence, inviting retaliation and even more violence.

The United States will continue to be on the wrong side of history when it continues to support anti-democratic regimes in the Arab world and support democratic movements only when they further our own interests. It seems our only solution to this self-created debacle is more money for arms and more money for war.

Our destructive and inconsistent foreign policy is contributing to war of all against all, and I will not back down until we change our foreign policy into a driver of peace not war.

Afghanistan Study Group: Growing List of Conservatives Including Coulter And Norquist Oppose War In Afghanistan
"Please help us by forwarding this information to your conservative friends."

1) support Afghan Women’s groups like RAWA, 2) demand implementation of U.N. Resolution 1325, 3) insist Congress enact the Afghan Women Empowerment Act (S229/HR2214), 4) end the occupation.

SHARING PARKS FOR PEACE
[The answer is emphatically NO. A better perspective would be the question reversed: “Can Photos of Afghanistan’s Natural and Cultural Wonders Inspire an End to the Vicious and Illegal Occupation?” A large dissemination of the beauties of Afghanistan and the explosions and tank tracks destroying them would surely awaken some people, formerly passive, to take action.]

PAKISTAN

Who Controls Pakistan’s Security Forces?
April 19, 2011, 9:30am-11:30am EST  
Location:  
U.S. Institute of Peace  
2301 Constitution Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20037 | Directions  
Please read: Important information for guests attending public events at USIP.  

After heavy U.S. investment in Pakistan’s defense forces since 9/11, there is growing interest in the state of the broader security sector in Pakistan. Civilian oversight is weak as the military exercises an outsized influence over domestic and foreign policy, hampering democratic governance. A panel of distinguished experts will discuss the challenges impeding security sector reform in Pakistan and the implications for the region.,,,. [Have these people not read a newspaper? Their discussion sounds like it’s from outer space. Let’s look at reports from our own Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.]

US ATTACKS ON PAKISTAN 2010/11 REPORTED IN ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT GAZETTE, a sample of 18 reports (not a scientific sample; I probably missed some reports)

Observations based upon the 18 reports:
1. The US is illegally invading the sovereign nation of Pakistan by drones and by numerous CIA agents, at least. According to other sources, the attacks have been by drones AND special ops ground forces, but I found no reports in these clips about the latter. This invasion violates the UN Charter, a treaty we have ratified, and other international rules, and it doesn’t begin to satisfy the principles of a just war.

The UNITED NATIONS CHARTER
“All Members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered.”
“All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.”

2. The US is putting intense pressure on Pakistan to kill its own people in three northwestern provinces. Remember that Pakistan had given semi-autonomy to these tribal areas. We are forcing them to kill their own people, causing their country to become increasingly unstable. And the people killed are mainly civilians, innocent people. A professor at a university in the North-West Frontier Province reported on Oct. 7, 2010 that the US drones had “killed 29 suspected terrorists and 1, 150 civilians, wounding 379 more.” (“Pakistan Body Count”).

3. The information comes in bits, a lamentable characteristic of daily journalism, but a careful reader can assemble enough contexts and details from the pieces to discern how grossly illegal and immoral is the relentless US attack on Pakistan.

Dick

Local Newspaper Reports about U.S. Attacks on Pakistan

Khan, Riaz. “Pakistanis say jets killed civilians; army disputes claims” ADG 4-14-10

Afzal, Hussain. “24 Killed as missiles slam Pakistan.” ADG 5-12-10
Ali, Mir. “U.S. missiles hit compound, kill 3.” ADG 6-28-10
Abbot, Sebastian. “U.S. apologizes for attack that killed two Pakistanis.” ADG 10-7-10
Ali, Mir. “Missiles kill 4 in Pakistani vehicle.” ADG 11-20-10
Peshawar, Pakistan. “U.S. drone strikes kill 14 in Pakistan.” ADG 11-8-10
Dawar, Rasool. “13 die in reported U.S. drone missile strikes.” ADG 11-4-10
Dawar, Rasool. “Missiles kill 5 in Pakistan.” ADG 11-14-10
Peshawar, Pakistan: “Missile strike kills 7 in Pakistan.” ADG 12-17 10

Democrat Gazette Press Services. “Pakistan counts 25 missile kills: U.S. drones struck militants trucks.” ADG 12-28-10. “Purported” drones “incinerated three trucks thought to be ferrying fighters….” “At least 110 such missile strikes have been launched this year—more than doubling last year’s total,” nearly all in N. Waziristan.

Deyoung, Karen. “White House to beef up its efforts in Pakistan.” ADG 1-9-2-11. US asking Pakistan to make more war against its own citizens, not because they are in rebellion or are disturbing the internal security of the nation, but because the US compels them to attack their citizens. Important geopolitical information about Pakistan’s fear of Indian influence in Afghanistan, and facts about Pakistan’s significant efforts to defeat the insurgents, pushing them into N. Waziristan, where the US attacks with drones.

Brulliard, Karen. “Key party rejoins Pakistani coalition.” ADG 1-8-11. Mentions also the killing of “six purported militants” in N. Waziristan.


Mahsud, Ishtaq. “Pakistan: Missiles Kill 4 suspected militants.” ADG 2-21-11. The killed were “purported militants.” Article notes that missile strikes had been “typically more than one a week” until the CIA agent Davis killed two Pakistanis. Again Pakistani protested the drones as “violations of its sovereignty.”

Gannon, Kathy. “2 Pakistan killings at root of spy rift.” ADG 2-24-11. Article about rift between CIA and Pak’s ISI, worsened by killing of 2 Pakistanis by CIA agent Raymond Davis. Also, some 400 claimed US Embassy employees entered the country recently without standard ISI processing, which disturbs ISI. Article notes that the rift intensified when the CIA’s chief in Pakistan was accused “of killing civilians in a drone strike.”

[Notice the March gap. I thought I had forgotten to clip then, but drone attacks had ceased temporarily after a mid-March attack had killed “what the Pakistanis said were dozens of peaceful tribesmen—denied by US.
Khan, Dera Ismail. “U.S. Strikes kill 6 Pakistanis.” ADG 4-14-11. The killed were “alleged Afghan Taliban.” The Pakistan gov’t. denounced the attacks.

Democrat-Gazette Staff. “Pakistan army rejects Washington criticism.” ADG 4-22-11. Pakistan claims it is fighting the insurgents but opposes US missile strikes.


AFGHANISTAN/PAKISTAN
“Beyond Bin-Laden, Beyond the Afghan War”
Rabbi Arthur Waskow to jbennet 5-4-11
office@shalomctr.org
A Prophetic Voice in Jewish, Multireligious, and American Life

Petition the President:
End the War in Afghanistan
Dear shalom-pursuer,

More than one hundred of our members and readers wrote yesterday agreeing with my letter about responding to the death of Bin Laden. Only two wrote disagreeing.

Thanks! --

And his death and the myriad deeper questions it raises suggest that --
Now it’s time to take a new direction for Afghanistan, and for America.
This letter today points toward a petition to President Obama that we invite you to sign, on-line:

End military operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan, bring our soldiers safely home, and redirect the hundreds of billions of dollars we are spending there to rebuild and renew America.

You can click here now, to sign right away, or absorb the rest of this letter and click to the Petition then.

Beginning when President Obama took office, there has been only one reason to send more and more American soldiers to kill and be killed, maim and be maimed, in Afghanistan.

That was the institutional claim of some in the American military and even more civilian hawks that only military force brings change.

That was never so, and now we know it:
The regions of Afghanistan that were in rebellion against a national government imposed and supported by the US are just as rebellious as they were three years ago.

Without popular support, the Afghan “government” is even more corrupt than it was three years ago.

The people and the government of Pakistan are more hostile to the United States than they were three years ago.

More American soldiers are dying than were three years ago.

More Afghan and Pakistani civilians are being killed than were three years ago.

The heart and muscle of Al Qaeda is no longer in Afghanistan, and the death of bin Laden confirms that it is no longer in Pakistan. The most dangerous Al Qaeda cells are thousands of miles away, and the US Army in Afghanistan has no effect upon them. AND perhaps most important, now we know that steadfast nonviolence on the part of the Egyptian people has done far more to bring democracy closer than years of US bombs and bayonets.

If we were serious about protecting the American homeland, we would –

• End the humiliation, exploitation, and support for tyrannical governments that Big Oil and Big Army have imposed on the Arab and Muslim worlds, thus spawning terrorism;

• Put our technological, economic, and political smarts into a swift transformation from fossil fuels and uranium to wind and solar power;

• Uphold our Constitutional commitment that American Muslims are full and equal participants in our society;

• Renew the American economy so that it is fair to everyone and does not generate pockets of rage and despair.

• Invest here, on behalf of life and prosperity, the hundreds of billions of dollars that are being worse than wasted on death and destruction in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Now is the time to bring home the American soldiers still fighting an endless, hopeless war in Afghanistan. All of them, not just a token few.

Now is the time to offer instead small-scale grassroots help to Afghan women’s groups, impoverished farmers, and the Pushtun patriots thrown by our policy into the hands of the Taliban.

Now is the time to appeal to those within the ranks of the Taliban themselves to choose between civil war and social peace. Not on the basis of a will-o’-the-wisp, ever-vanishing possibility of an end someday to American intervention, but a commitment that it is only Afghans who will rule Afghanistan, either with knives at each others’ throats or with hands clasping each others’ hands. They, not we, must decide.
And now is the time for Americans to say so.

If you agree, please join in a Petition to our newly empowered President. Please share this letter with your friends, co-workers, fellow-congregants – and ask them to sign too.

We will deliver the Peace Petition to the White House when there are 1800 names, and again at 3600 names, and so on. (“18” is the mystical Jewish number that means “chai,” “life.”)

Your outreach will speed the moment of delivery!

Click here to sign the petition. office@shalomctr.org
With blessings of shalom, salaam, peace to you and the world ----
Arthur

END OF AFGHAN/PAKISTAN NEWSLETTER #9

--
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It's the War Department
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