OMNI NEWSLETTER ON AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN #11, July 13, 2011, Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace (#8 April 15, 2011; #9 June 10, 2011; #10 July 3, 2011)

Here is the link to all the newsletters archived in the OMNI web site.

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

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July 12, 2011 By Fr. John Dear
As we approach tenth anniversary of Sept.11, a call to action
In less than two months, the US military and its media machine will tell us to mark the tenth anniversary of the September 11th attacks by celebrating their warmaking efforts --and continuing to live in fear. That anniversary and the tenth anniversary of the US war on Afghanistan Oct. 6 offer an opportunity. As we head into the heat of summer, I invite everyone to ponder and plan some public action for peace during those anniversary days.
Read More  http://ncronline.org/blogs/we-approach-tenth-anniversary-sept11-call-action
or paste this link into your browser http://ncronline.org/node/25638
[Protest the “War on Terror” and all its errors, brutalities, and waste by transforming the warriors’ 9-11 “Patriot Day” into Peaceful Tomorrows Day on 9-11 and Interdependence Day on 9-12.]

U.S. Death Toll in Afghanistan Under Obama Now Tops 1000
http://www.justforeignpolicy.org/obamavsbush

[Dick: What is the Afghan toll?!]

U.S. Deaths in Afghanistan: Obama vs Bush

Click here for an explanation of the figures.

Last Update: July 7, 2011

On July 7, 2011, U.S. troop deaths from the war in Afghanistan since President Obama took office reached 1,000. That means that nearly two-thirds of the U.S. fatalities in the war in Afghanistan have occurred during the Obama administration, which has managed the war for a mere quarter of its duration.

These numbers should give us pause. While the Administration has publicly conceded that there is no military solution in Afghanistan, and claimed that it supports 'Afghan-led reconciliation', its policy on the ground is marked by a refusal to establish a timetable for full military withdrawal. The Administration has even backed away from the 'substantial drawdown' of troops that was promised to begin this July, instead opting for a token drawdown that will leave about twice as many troops in the country as were there when he assumed office, with no plan for their removal. See Just Foreign Policy's press release marking this grim milestone here.

We must ask ourselves how many more lives will be sacrificed before the Obama administration sets a clear end date for America's longest war.

http://www.justforeignpolicy.org/obamavsbush

AFGHANS KILLED

[Dick: Google: Civilians Killed in Afghanistan War]

Latest annual figures from Data Blog

Afghanistan civilian casualties: year by year, month by month
Afghanistan civilian casualties are increasing - up 15% on last year. How many people have died?

• British dead and wounded in Afghanistan, month by month
• Get the Afghan civilian casualties data
Civilian casualties in Afghanistan have increased, according to the latest statistics from the United Nations creating the highest total since 2006 for civilian deaths - the continued annual rises has seen over 8,000 killed in the past four years.

The Taliban and other anti-government elements have been blamed for 2,080 civilians who were killed in Afghanistan last year - a sharp rise of 28% on 2009. This accounted for 75% of all deaths whereas pro-government forces totalled 440 civilian killings.

Suicide bombings and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) have killed the most Afghan civilians according to the UN, with 1141 losing their life as a result. In what the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan name the most 'alarming trend' is the 462 civilians that were assassinated by anti-government elements - up a huge 105% from 2009. Southern Afghanistan witnessed half of these with Helmand province and Kandahar province proving the most dangerous.

Aerial attacks by pro-government forces continued to cost lives in 2010 also and were attributed to 39% of all civilian deaths by pro-government forces.

While we are pretty good at providing detailed statistical breakdowns of coalition military casualties (and by we, I mean the media as a whole), we've not so good at providing any kind of breakdown of Afghan civilian casualties. There has been some work done. Human Rights Watch has published breakdowns of civilian casualties, and academics such as Mark Herold at the University of New Hampshire have done detailed reporting on very specific periods of the operation.

Obviously, collecting accurate statistics in one of the most dangerous countries in the world is difficult. But the paucity of reliable data on this means that one of the key measures of the war has been missing from almost all reporting.

You've noticed it too - asking us why we publish military deaths but not civilian casualties. The United Nations Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) publishes statistics on civilian casualties, splitting them into deaths caused by government/military forces, anti-government forces and so on. True, they're not very visible on the UNAMA site and are not updated regularly in a visible way - but they do seem to be the best we can get. They published a report this month which has provided these details.

We've summarised the numbers below using the latest report from UNAMA and you can get the full data going back to 2006 from UNAMA and Human Rights Watch on the google spreadsheet attached. Take a look and let us know what you think - and what you can do with it.
SPECIAL FORCES NIGHT RAIDS IN AFGHANISTAN

Just Foreign Policy naiman@justforeignpolicy.org to jbennet

Just Foreign Policy News July 11, 2011

US Special Operations forces have carried out an extraordinary number of night raids over the past year, stirring accusations of abuse, resentment among Afghans and divisions with the government, reports Carlotta Gall in the New York Times. The night raids now average 300 a month.

In one example, family members and an Afghan investigator said that two clerics were among eight civilians killed in a raid last November by American Special Operations forces in Mian. Muhammad Younus, 60, said in an interview that he was so badly beaten by American soldiers that he could not walk for 20 days. Villagers carried him out in a wheelbarrow and took him the next morning to see the bodies of his two brothers, the clerics: Maulavi Abdul Kabir, 72, and Maulavi Abdul Rauf, 65. They had been burned so badly, they were barely recognizable, and they bore bullet wounds, he said.

"Before they asked me a question, they started kicking and beating me," Younus said, adding that Americans did the beating and interrogation. Younus, a diabetic who walks with a cane, said he was beaten on and off through the night and fainted four times. "Don't tell us about your sickness, we are going to kill you and your brothers and destroy your houses," he recalls being told through a translator.

Time to Get Out of Aghanistan, America's Longest War

President Obama is about to make a major decision regarding US troops in Afghanistan. Progressives must push him to pull out of the quagmire and reinvest at home.

Time to Get Out of Aghanistan, America's Longest War The Editors June 15, 2011 | This article appeared in the July 4-11, 2011 edition of The Nation.

This is a key moment. President Obama is about to make a hugely consequential decision regarding US troop commitments in Afghanistan, America’s longest war. The response of the progressive community should be a big factor in his consideration, since he will need the antiwar vote in next year’s election.

Obama should campaign on a platform of getting out of two quagmires, Iraq and Afghanistan, and investing the billions in savings here at home. If he doesn't, he will sink deeper into those quagmires, worsening the recession that already imperils his presidency. By 2012, 100,000
troops could be returning, saving $200 billion. Here’s how: If Obama withdraws just half of the 100,000 troops in Afghanistan between now and 2012, the savings will be $50 billion per year. If he keeps his pledge to pull the remaining 47,000 troops from the forgotten war in Iraq, that would amount to another $50 billion per year. Even GOP deficit hawks might have difficulty posing as war hawks in the face of these figures. And after the killing of Osama bin Laden, Obama is immune from charges of being “soft on terror.”

The White House and the Pentagon have been waging an intense behind-the-scenes fight over Afghanistan, according to Bob Woodward’s book *Obama’s Wars*. When the president announced his 30,000-strong troop surge in late 2009, few believed his vow that he would begin withdrawals this July. Some thought he was throwing a token concession to his progressive base. According to Woodward, the president did insist on an exit strategy with timelines—but they would have to come from Congress, because he had publicly opposed timelines.

Congressional antiwar strategists went to work. In February Representative Barbara Lee introduced a resolution before the Democratic National Committee supporting “significant and sizable” reductions in troops, with a transfer of funds to job creation. After initial objections by White House staffers, her proposal was green-lighted. The president himself said he wanted the cuts to be significant.

A bill by Representatives Jim McGovern and Walter Jones calling for an “accelerated” withdrawal, including a timeline, has increased its supporters from 162 last year to a whopping 204—including twenty-six Republicans—surprising the Beltway security establishment and mass media. The House action inspired twenty-one senators to sign a letter backing a “sizable and sustained” troop reduction.
Behind these developments was a souring public mood, partly shaped by thousands of grassroots peace activists. Already in January, a Gallup poll showed that 86 percent of Democrats, 72 percent of independents and 61 percent of Republicans favored a speeded-up withdrawal. Adding to the disquiet is a new Senate Foreign Relations Committee report exposing the corruption and lack of oversight that have wasted so much of our aid to Afghanistan.

Obama has at least four options: a token reduction of some 10,000 troops (the Pentagon’s preference); ending the surge by pulling out 30,000, leaving us where we were in 2009; more substantial cuts in the 40,000–70,000 range, as recommended by the Center for American Progress and the Afghanistan Study Group; and our preference, as well as that of the peace and justice movements: a rapid withdrawal of all troops and closure of bases by 2012.

Whatever option he chooses, Obama will have to woo back throngs of disaffected voters by 2012. When voices for peace become voters for peace, they matter.

The Editors

“Despite Troop Surge, Taliban Attacks and US Casualties Soared
Gareth Porter, Inter Press Service: "Data on attacks by armed opposition forces and U.S. combat casualties since the U.S. troop surge in Afghanistan was completed last summer provide clear evidence that the surge and the increase in targeted killings by Special Operations Forces have failed to break the momentum of the Taliban. The Taliban and allied insurgent organisations launched 54 percent more attacks and killed or wounded 56 percent more US troops over the nine months from last October through May than in the comparable period a year earlier, according to data collected by the US Department of Defence and by the highly-respected Afghanistan NGO Safety Office (ANSO)." Read the Article [http://www.truth-out.org/despite-troop-surge-taliban-attacks-and-us-casualties-soared/1309795645](http://www.truth-out.org/despite-troop-surge-taliban-attacks-and-us-casualties-soared/1309795645)

“Murder in Kandahar: What does the killing of Ahmed Wali Karzai mean?”
Stephen M. Walt, Foreign Policy, Tuesday, July 12, 2011
I don't know any more than you do about the assassination of Ahmed Wali Karzai, the well-connected and notoriously corrupt half-brother of Afghan President Hamid Karzai, who was also de facto governor of Kandahar province and reportedly on the CIA payroll. In fact, I probably know less than some of you. But I'll offer a few quick reactions to the news nonetheless.

First, unless the killing was some sort of personal vendetta, it seems likely that it was politically motivated and it strikes me as plausible that it was ordered by the Taliban. The killer, a family associate named Sardar Mohammed, was a regular visitor to Karzai's home, and he must have known that shooting Karzai in his own compound was a suicide mission.

Second, in the short run this has to be a propaganda boost for the Taliban, who have already claimed credit for the killing and called it one of the "great achievements" of the war. From the very beginning, the Taliban's main appeal was their ability to provide order (albeit of a very brutal sort) and their lack of personal corruption. Wali Karzai, needless to say, was a vivid symbol of the latter. More importantly, the Taliban will undoubtedly use the killing to cast doubt on the Afghan government's ability to protect even top officials. In a war of perceptions, this is not good news for our side.

Third, to me it merely underscores the continued futility of trying to win a counter-insurgency war in a country where we lack a competent, committed, or fully-legitimate local partner. We're likely to get a lot of upbeat reports of progress in the months to come, as the Obama administration tries to persuade us that the "surge" worked and that we can start going home. I hope this sleight of hand works, because the war is a running sore and a distraction from more important problems. But spin and PR won't change the basic reality: Afghanistan's fate will be determined by the Afghans and not by us.

Heck, our own political system can't even get a budget deal done without a lot of eleventh-hour hysterics, and yet we think we can reliably reshape the political order of a country of 32 million Muslims, many of them illiterate, and divided into at least five major tribes. Can you say "hubris?"

John Hanrahan | “The Afghanistan War and Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenal,”
*Nieman Watchdog*
John Hanrahan reports: "Long-held assumptions by US policymakers that the Afghanistan war's outcome will affect Pakistan's future stability and control of its nuclear weapons - a modern domino theory - are being strongly disputed by backers of a quick, substantial military withdrawal but defended by those arguing for maintaining a larger force for a longer period."

END OF AFGHAN/PAKISTAN NEWSLETTER #11