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How understand this catastrophic invasion and occupation? Instead of Defense Department, Say War Department. Instead of Taliban, Say Afghan Resistance.

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Dear Dick,
Tell your representatives to support peace talks to end the war in Afghanistan.

Take Action The Obama Administration has been working to initiate peace talks with the Afghan Taliban. Such talks could be critical to ending the war in Afghanistan, which is what the majority of Americans want. But Mitt Romney and some in Congress are trying to undermine the prospects of peace talks to end the war.

Will you join us in pressing Congress not to sabotage the peace talks?
http://www.justforeignpolicy.org/act/romnypeacetalks

A key element of the Administration's plans to initiate
peace talks is a proposal to transfer Afghan Taliban prisoners from Guantanamo to another country, probably Qatar. But Reuters recently reported that some in Congress have attacked the idea of transferring the prisoners out of Guantanamo, and threatened to try to block the transfer. [1] Meanwhile, Romney has attacked the Administration for talking to the Taliban, even though, as David Ignatius noted in the Washington Post, two of Romney's key foreign policy advisers have long advocated for exactly the policy of talks that the Obama Administration says it is pursuing. [2]

Romney's attack might be mostly campaign posturing, but because it is so prominent, it can still have an effect on Members of Congress, especially if they aren't hearing from anyone that they support peace talks to end the war. The longer peace talks are delayed, the more American soldiers and Afghan civilians will die needless deaths.

Join us in pressing Congress to back peace talks to end the war in Afghanistan by using the link below.

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

Thank you for all you do to help bring about a more just foreign policy,

Sarah Burns, Chelsea Mozen, Megan Iorio and Robert Naiman
Just Foreign Policy

References:

“McChrystal, Petraeus and Afghanistan, the Inside Story” by Michael Hastings, Rolling Stone, January 8, 2012, RSN
Intro: "In April 2010, Rolling Stone contributing editor Michael Hastings spent a month with Gen. Stanley McChrystal in Europe and Afghanistan, reporting on a profile of the supreme commander of all NATO forces in what had become America's longest-running war. To Hastings' astonishment, McChrystal and staff had plenty to say about the White House and its handling of the war - none of it complimentary, much of it contemptuous, and almost all of it on the record."

Noam Chomsky, “A Global Program of World Militarization”
Noam Chomsky, Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers, RSN, Dec. 16, 2011
Intro: "This is a transcript of a conversation between members of the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers and Noam Chomsky, which took place on September 21, 2011. Each question was asked in Dari and translated by Hakim."
READ MORE  http://www.readersupportednews.org/off-site-opinion-section/72-72/9264-a-global-program-of-world-militarization

Whatever Happened to Women and Children First? (guest post)  November 4, 2011 at 7:06 pm by Mickie Lynn
By Johnny Barber
http://warisacrime.org/content/what-ever-happened-women-and-children-first
“All wars, whether just or unjust, disastrous or victorious, are waged against the child.” Eglantyne Jebb, founder of Save the Children, 1919.
In Kabul, the children are everywhere. You see them scrounging through trash. You see them doing manual labor in the auto body shops, the butchers, and the construction sites. They carry teapots and glasses from shop to shop. You see them moving through the snarled traffic swirling small pots of pungent incense, warding off evil spirits and trying to collect small change. They can be found sleeping in doorways or in the rubble of destroyed buildings. It is estimated that 70,000 children live on the streets of Kabul.
The big news story on CNN this morning [October 16, 2011] is the excitement generated as hundreds of people line up to buy the newest iphone. I can’t stop thinking of the children sitting in the dirt of the refugee camp, or running down the path pushing old bicycle tires, or the young boy sitting next to his overflowing sacks of collected detritus. He has a deep infection on the corner of his mouth that looks terribly infected. These images contrast with an image of an old grandfather, dressed in a spotless all white shalwar kameez squatting on the sidewalk outside a huge iron gate, embracing his beautiful young grand daughter in a huge hug, each smiling broadly, one of the few moments of joy I have witnessed on the streets of Kabul.
In Afghanistan, one in five children die before their 5th birthday, (41% of the deaths occur in the first
month of life). For the children who make it past the first month, many perish due to preventable and highly treatable conditions including diarrhea and pneumonia. Malnourishment affects 39% of the children, compared to 25% at the start of the U.S. invasion. 52% don’t have access to clean water. 94% of births are not registered. The children are afforded very little legal protection, especially girls, who are still banned from schools in many regions, used as collateral to settle debts, and married through arranged marriages as young as 10 years old. Though not currently an issue, HIV/AIDS looms as a catastrophic possibility as drug addiction increases significantly, even among women and children. Only 16% of women use modern contraception, and children on the streets are vulnerable to sexual exploitation. This is why the “State of the World’s Mothers” report issued in May 2011 by Save the Children ranked Afghanistan last, with only Somalia providing worse outcomes for their children. Retired Army Col. John Agoglia said, “A key to America’s long-term national security and one of the best ways for our nation to make friends around the world is by promoting the health of women and children in fragile and emerging nations”—in Afghanistan, this strategy is failing. Not a single public hospital has been built since the invasion. It is not an impossibility; it is a matter of will. Emergency, an Italian NGO, runs 3 hospitals and 30 clinics throughout Afghanistan on a budget of 7 million dollars per year. This is ISAF’s (NATO’s International Security Assistance Force) monthly budget for air-conditioning.

Polls have consistently shown that over 90 percent of Americans believe saving children should be a national priority. Children comprise 65% of the Afghan population. Afghanistan was named the worst place on earth to be a child. In Afghanistan children have been sacrificed by the United States, collateral damage in our “war on terror”.

The mothers of these at risk children are not faring any better. Most are illiterate. Most are chronically malnourished. 1 woman in 11 dies in pregnancy or childbirth, this compares to 1 in 2,100 in the US (the highest of any industrialized nation). In Italy and Ireland, the risk of maternal death is less than 1 in 15,000 and in Greece it’s 1 in 31,800. Skilled health professionals attend only 14% of childbirths. A woman’s life expectancy is barely 45 years of age.

Women are still viewed as property. A law has been passed by the Karzai regime that legalizes marital rape, and requires a woman to get the permission of her husband to leave the house. Domestic violence is a chronic problem. A women who runs away from home (even if escaping violence) is imprisoned. Upon completion of her sentence she is returned to the husband. Self-immolation is still common as desperate women try to get out of impossible situations.

Shortly after the U.S. invasion, Laura Bush said, “The plight of women and children in Afghanistan is a matter of deliberate human cruelty, carried out by those who seek to intimidate and control.” President Bush said, “Our coalition has liberated Afghanistan and restored fundamental human rights and freedoms to Afghan women, and all the people of Afghanistan.” Actually, the former warlords responsible for the destruction, pillage, and rape of Afghanistan were ushered back into power by the United States. In 2007, these very same warlords, now Parliamentarians, passed a bill that granted amnesty for any killings during the civil war. A local journalist said, “The killers are the ones holding the pens, writing the law and continuing their crimes.”

When Malalai Joya addressed the Peace Loya Jirga convened in December, 2003, she boldly asked, “Why are we allowing criminals to be present here?” She was thrown out of the assembly. Undeterred, she ran for Parliament, winning in a landslide. She began her maiden speech in Parliament by saying, “My condolences to the people of Afghanistan…” As she continued speaking, the warlord sitting behind her threatened to rape and kill her. The MP’s voted her out of Parliament and Karzai upheld her ouster. In hiding, she continues to champion women’s rights. She has stated that the only people who can liberate Afghan women are the women themselves. When we spoke briefly to her by phone, she stated that she was surprised to still be alive, and needed to cancel our meeting, as it was too dangerous in the current security situation. The Red Cross states that the security situation is the worst it has been in 30 years.
In America, as our total defense budget balloons to 667 billion dollars per year, women and children are faring worse as well. In the “State of the World’s Mothers” report, America has dropped from 11th in 2003 to 31st of the developed countries today. We currently rank behind such luminaries as Estonia, Croatia, and Slovakia. We fall even farther in regards to our children, going from the 4th ranked country to the 34th. Poverty is on the increase with an estimated 1 child in 5 living in poverty. More than 20 million children rely on school lunch programs to keep from going hungry. The number of people living in poverty in America has grown by 2.6 million in just the last 12 months.

Dear reader, I hesitate to bother you with so many statistics, I eliminated the pie charts and graphs, and this report is still dull. After all, the new iphone has Siri, a personal assistant that understands you when you speak. You can verbally instruct it to send a text message, and it does! Now that’s excitement! CNN states there is no need to panic; the Atlanta store has plenty of phones to fill the demand. Looking only at numbers it is easy to avoid the truth of the enormous amount of human suffering they envelop. Drive through the streets of any American city and these statistics come alive in the swollen ranks of the homeless. Drive through the streets of Kabul and these statistics come alive in the forms of hungry children begging for change.

It is difficult to ascertain what benefit America is deriving from our continued military presence in Afghanistan, though exploitation of natural resources certainly plays a role. Hundreds of billions of dollars are being spent in a military strategy that is failing by all indicators. Yet the politicians in this country continue to back this strategy. Arms dealers and contractors, like G.E. and Boeing, all with lobbyists on Capitol Hill, continue to reap big financial rewards and in turn reward politicians with financial support. Our politicians claim to be “tough on terror” and profess we are “winning”. But by what measure do they ascertain this? The only Afghan people benefiting from our presence are the people supporting the occupation forces, the warlords, and the drug lords. As the poppy fields produce record yields “poppy palaces” are springing up all over Kabul, ostentatious signs that someone is benefiting from our interference.

One measure to judge the success of a nation is its ability to protect its most vulnerable populations. America is not succeeding. The plight of women and children in Afghanistan is still a matter of deliberate human cruelty, carried out by those who seek to intimidate and control. When will our politicians hear the desperate cry of the street children of Afghanistan, who, with all the incense in the world, simply can’t ward off the evil of our occupation?

To support the vital work of Voices for Creative Non-Violence please see http://www.vcnv.org

Posted in Afghan Peace negotiations, Afghan women, Afghanistan, Cost of war, Women's issues, children's issues, human rights, maternal health and reproductive rights | 3 Comments

AFGHAN/IRAQ WARS FILM
PBS broadcast of This is Where We Take Our Stand
Dwayne Knox via uark.edu 12-12-11 dwayne@ritternet.com
Dear Friends,

I have good news and bad news.

The good news is that This is Where We Take Our Stand, the film about the Iraq Veterans Against the War Winter Soldier/Iraq & Afghanistan Investigation, has now been distributed to every PBS station in the
country for broadcast in January and February. Funded by the Independent Television Service (ITVS) and distributed by the National Educational Television Association (NETA), the film finally has the chance to be seen by people all across the country.

The **bad news** is that every individual PBS station can choose whether or not they will air the film. And in today's political climate, we know that many, even most stations will not want to touch this compelling, vital film about the reality of America's wars in the Middle East. We need your help to convince them that they must show this film.

CONTACT PBS LOCAL STATION AND URGE THEM TO SHOW THE FILM,
Also, please forward this email to your list and to everyone you know.

As we wrote in a letter to PBS programmers,

These aren't political or theoretical arguments, but the eyewitness accounts of men and women who thought they were fighting for their country and learned that, as Jason Washburn, a Marine veteran with three tours in Iraq put it, "We were on the bully's team, and that's not what I signed up for." It is a wrenching, painful, and necessary story.

This film reminds us that nothing is over. And it asks us to question what has changed. Certainly not the war in Afghanistan, which has expanded in the past three years, and not the killing and misery in Iraq, unleashed by 8 years of military occupation.

This is Where We Take Our Stand is the story of hundreds of Iraq War veterans who risked everything to publicly tell their stories of killings of civilians, torture, and the widespread degradation and destruction of Iraq that was brought on by the policies of their government. And it is a story that needs to be told especially today. These brave soldiers and veterans are challenging a complacency that runs very deep underscoring a willingness to accept unspeakable horrors committed in our name—as long as we don't know about them.

Go to [http://www.thisiswherewetakeourstand.com](http://www.thisiswherewetakeourstand.com) to watch episodes of the web series that the film is based on, and [http://ivaw.org](http://ivaw.org) for information about Winter Soldier.

Thank you for your help. In the coming weeks we will send out announcements of where and when This is Where We Take Our Stand will be broadcast.

David Zeiger and Bestor Cram
AFGHANISTAN

Merkley Amendment Passes Senate by Voice Vote
In a stunning development, the Senate today approved the Merkley Amendment to the NDAA, calling for an expedited military withdrawal from Afghanistan, by voice vote. Previously, 27 was the high watermark of Senators urging a speedier withdrawal. JustForeignPolicy 11-30-11
On a voice vote. How did Pryor and Boozman vote?

PAKISTAN
Washington Frets Over Pakistan Response to Soldiers’ Deaths
Jim Lobe, News Report, NationofChange, Nov. 29, 2011: “As the Pentagon scrambled Monday to satisfy Pakistani demands for a full accounting of Saturday's lethal air attack on two border posts, official Washington expressed hope that Islamabad's retaliation will be limited in both time and scope. Whatever actually took place, however, the attack appears to have brought relations between Washington and Islamabad - already badly battered by a series of incidents earlier this year - to a new low.” READ | DISCUSS | SHARE http://www.nationofchange.org/washington-frets-over-pakistan-response-soldiers-deaths-1322582891


Ending Obama's War: Responsible Military Withdrawal from Afghanistan

From Paradigm Publishers (2011)

During his presidential campaign, Barack Obama repeatedly criticized the Bush administration’s policy of invading and occupying Iraq, but he was equally firm in declaring his support for the U.S. military mission in Afghanistan.

In his widely quoted speech at a Chicago antiwar rally, Obama declared, “I’m not opposed to all wars. I am opposed to dumb wars.” It was thus no surprise that President Obama expanded the U.S. military commitment in March and then again in December 2009. And now, smart or not, Afghanistan is Obama’s war.

When Obama announced his intention to begin military withdrawals from Afghanistan just 18 months after sending more troops to
the country, the reactions ranged from ridicule to disbelief. Why send tens of thousands of additional troops only to remove them soon afterward? To many critics, the announcement seemed to continue the folly of Obama’s withdrawal from Iraq.

In these pages, David Cortright offers a critical analysis of U.S./NATO military policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan and examines alternative strategies for preventing terrorist insurgency and advancing development and human rights. He critiques the strategic and political assumptions undergirding military surge policies and illuminates the worsening security situation and growing influence of the Taliban.

Cortright pays particular attention to the status of women and shows how responsible military withdrawal enhances their chances instead of risking them as often disingenuous critics contend.

Cortright’s goal is not only to hold Obama to his stated intention to withdraw from Afghanistan beginning in July of 2011, but to do so in a way that yields true human security—better political leaders, more aid workers, and many more educated Afghans, women as well as men. As a longtime peace activist and advocate of diplomatic alternatives, Cortright speaks with a moral authority unrivalled among the chorus of commentators castigating Obama’s policies.

Reviews:
"In his new book, David Cortright makes a compelling case for a comprehensive calibrated strategy of military disengagement that offers the U.S. and its partners the most realistic chance of achieving their objectives in Afghanistan and the region in a cost effective and timely manner.” — Lawrence Korb, former Assistant Secretary of Defense

"A balanced, well-documented critique of the war in Afghanistan combined with a thoughtful plan for reducing our military footprint responsibly. Essential reading for those seeking a new way forward in Afghanistan." — Lt. General (USA, Ret.)

Robert G. Gard, Jr., Ph.D.

Pakistan Stops Supplies After Deadly NATO Attack
Shams Momand, Reuters, Nov. 26, 2011, RSN
Momand reports: "NATO helicopters and fighter jets attacked two military outposts in northwest Pakistan on Saturday, killing as many as 28 troops and plunging US-Pakistan relations, already deeply frayed, further into crisis. Pakistan retaliated by shutting down vital NATO supply routes into Afghanistan, used for sending in almost half of the alliance's non-lethal material."

Not Thankful for the 2012 Defense Budget! Call Your Senators Today! 11-21-11 From Historians Against the
War
While the “Super” Committee works on the federal budget for FY 2013 and beyond, under the radar the Congress is moving forward with another huge Defense budget for FY 2012. When it returns from Thanksgiving break, the Senate will be voting on a $682.5 billion Defense Authorization bill. This continues the war in Afghanistan and wastes unconscionable amounts of money at a time when there are massive cutbacks in domestic programs at the federal, state and local levels.

Senator Jeff Merkley (OR) has just introduced Amendment No. 1174, requiring the President to present a plan “for an expedited withdrawal from Afghanistan prior to 2014.” Co-sponsors are Senators Brown, Durbin, Gillibrand, Harkin, Lee, and Udall. For complete text http://fcnl.org/issues/afghanistan/Afghanistan_Amendment_to_NDAA_DAV11E52.pdf

If your Senators are not on this list, please call them today and ask them to co-sponsor Amendment No. 1174 to the 2012 Defense Authorization bill. Remind them squandering billions of dollars on a failed war is against the best interest of American and Afghan people. Use the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) toll free number 1-877-429-0678 to call the congressional switchboard and ask to be connected to your Senators.

While on the phone, it would be great if you could also urge your member of Congress to co-sponsor Rep. Barbara Lee’s excellent bill: HR 780 Responsible End to the War in Afghanistan Act, which specifies that funding for US armed forces in Afghanistan shall be limited to the “safe and orderly withdrawal” of all US troops and Defense Department contractors. List of co-sponsors (65): http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d112:HR00780:@@P

Please send any helpful feedback to hiscze@aol.com.
Carolyn Eisenberg on behalf of Historians Against War Steering Committee

The Next Wars to End
Petitions for Diplomacy Now!

"This may definitely not be over, and it may not be over for a long time. Nine-and-a-half years later, it is most definitely not over. So, what we have to do is I think demonstrate the strategic patience that is necessary to win a long war."
~US Ambassador to Afghanistan Ryan Crocker on the Long War (September 5, 2011)

While monitoring possible deception during the Iraq pullout, it is
important for the peace movement to engage in the effort to end the wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Experience shows that a vibrant anti-war movement is a necessary element in ending these wars. Here are some steps:


2. Pakistan, where the immediate issue is to block a further US escalation of ground troops, as well as the rising number of drone attacks. Please sign and circulate this petition: No US Escalation in Pakistan. [http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/no-u-s-escalation-in-pakistan.html](http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/no-u-s-escalation-in-pakistan.html)

Continue reading... [http://tomhayden.com/home/the-next-wars-to-end.html](http://tomhayden.com/home/the-next-wars-to-end.html)

AFGHANS HUNGRY WINTER 2011-2012
“2 Million Afghans Face Hungry Winter.” ADG (11-19-11). The UN is trying to raise $142 million for them. The peace movement might reply with a statement and a question: End the war and convert the killing money to food money. The famine is mainly in Tajik north Afghanistan. What about the Pashtuns, the main ethnic group and source of the Taliban?

“The UN Torture Report
Stirring Pressure for Congressional Response”
Ten years after promising that human rights would be protected in Afghanistan, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has verified "systemic torture" by Afghan security forces trained and funded by the United States.

The UN report, described in a lead New York Times story on October 10, is triggering calls once again for enforcement of the so-called Leahy Law, passed in the 1990s, which prohibits any US funding, weapons or training to security force units in other countries committing gross human rights violations. A loophole in the Leahy Law, however, allows Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to waive the
Prevent Afghan Torture: Enforce the Leahy Law
A recent United Nations report suggests that the United States and NATO allies are outsourcing torture and human rights violations in Afghanistan. The report concludes that there is a continuing pattern and practice of "systematic" torture in spite of repeated efforts at reform. (UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, October 2011)


To Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Senator Patrick Leahy:
We, the undersigned, call on you to immediately invoke the Leahy Amendment to end funding or training for units of the Afghanistan National Security Directorate, armed forces, and police engaged in torture or gross violations of human rights until all necessary corrective steps have been taken, including steps to bring those responsible to justice.

Sign the petition against torture in Afghanistan...

“UN Finds 'Systematic' Torture in Afghanistan”

Alissa J. Rubin reports: "Detainees are hung by their hands and beaten with cables, and in some cases their genitals are twisted until the prisoners lose consciousness at sites run by the Afghan intelligence service and the Afghan National Police, according to a United Nations report released here on Monday."


IED Improvised Explosive Device Weapon of Iraq and Afghan RESISTANCE
Cockburn, Andrew.  “Search and Destroy: The Pentagon’s Losing Battle
Against IEDs.” Harper’s Magazine (Nov. 2011). The Pentagon by 2008 had spent “at least $60 billion to combat IEDs” and in 2012 it “plans to spend at least $10.1 billion” more—and the results have been “dismal.” By May 2007 “nearly 70,000” IEDs had been planted in Iraq by an enemy consisting of “‘multiple small independent groups” able to adapt rapidly to changed tactics. And many of these groups “were bitterly antagonistic—Shia, Sunni, Al Qaeda, and so forth”—yet they shared information about IED techniques within “days or even hours.” What does work technically is the skill of low-tech bomb specialists, Much of the article is about Master Sergeant Tano Chavez, a brilliant specialist in disarming IEDs. But the attacks continue, and Sergeant Chavez, who suffered several severe concussions and other wounds, returned home suffering from many maladies (traumatic brain injury TBI, PTSD, hearing loss), and now “non-deployable.” Assassinations of High Value Targets, “the ultimate objective of our entire counter-IED strategy,” also have not worked against IEDs, but have even increased them. After assassinations, “IED attacks did not go down” in the vicinity; rather, “They went up—by a lot.” This article damns indirectly the occupation and directly “the techno-war that keeps the money flowing.”

END OF NEWSLETTER #15 ON AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN