



The Peace Letter

Washington Peace Center

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Peace and Justice
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THE AFGHANISTAN ISSUE

Four Pillars of an Exit Strategy

by Erik Leaver

For years, the war in Afghanistan has been in crisis. But now, with a failed Afghan election, the resurgence of the Taliban as a political power, NATO allies withdrawing from the battlefield, and Pakistan's tribal areas under increasing influence from the Taliban and al-Qaeda, the situation looks worse than ever. Obama and his team are spinning their wheels trying to devise a policy to right the sinking ship, but the most sensible solution, for Afghans and U.S. citizens, is to start planning a way out.

As U.S. and NATO troops start the ninth year of war, there is little progress to be shown. This year has proven to be the most deadly for U.S. and coalition troops since the war began. Over 1,500 Afghan civilians have died this year, along with more than 450 Afghan security forces. **Sadly, the sacrifices these soldiers made have not resulted in better conditions for Afghans on the ground.** Agricultural production is at its lowest since the war began, only 23% of the population has access to clean drinking water, and 40% live below the poverty line. Life expectancy in Afghanistan is 44 years. Three million Afghans have fled their country. According to a UN threat assessment, 40% of Afghanistan is today either Taliban-controlled or a high-risk area for insurgent attacks.

Continued on page 4



Picture kindly provided by RAWA.org

The Voice of a Revolutionary Afghan Woman

Interview with Zoya from RAWA by Bette Hoover

After eight years of the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan, conditions for women are still abysmal. We talked to Zoya from the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) about what needs to be done to improve the situation.

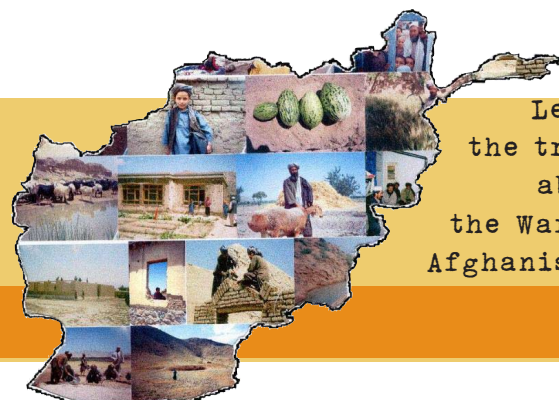
When the U.S. entered Afghanistan in 2001, were women hopeful that we would bring them civil liberties?

The U.S. was more clever than the Soviets when they invaded. Some of us were hopeful that the U.S. would bring some new freedoms. However, RAWA always thought of the U.S. as an invader.

Do most Afghan women believe the U.S. should leave or stay?

At first, Afghans welcomed the U.S. That is no longer the reality of the masses. Eight years is long enough to prove the wrong policies aren't working. The justifications for the U.S. have been: the liberation of women, which has failed, the establishment of democracy, which has failed, the need to win the "War on Terror", which has failed. We need you to recognize that the U.S. military (and NATO) actions have not - and cannot - liberate the people of Afghanistan. We do need help from the West and welcome real support.

Continued on page 5



Learn the truth about the War in Afghanistan

Debunking the Myths
All you need to know

Life Under Occupation
Personal story from an Afghan youth

USAID
The need for reform

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From the Coordinator:

Welcome to the Afghanistan Issue of the Washington Peace Letter. As we started planning out this issue, we were astonished - our ideas were also on the front page of the Washington Post and other mainstream papers! For the first time in years, the media, the government and the U.S. population were worrying about what was going on in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, this was sparked by the highest number of deaths of both U.S. military and Afghan civilians since the U.S. occupation started over eight years ago.

Seeing mainstream media cover Afghanistan has pushed us to provide an alternative education through the Peace Letter. Inside are the facts and tools we need to fight another unending occupation by the U.S. military. We need to know what the Afghans think; check out pages 1, 5 & 7 for the powerful voices of Afghans. We need to know how we can leave responsibly; check out Erik Leaver's great article on pages 1 & 4 that lays out possible exit plans and alternative solutions.

No one wants to abandon Afghanistan. No one wants the Taliban or another repressive regime to take over. But more troops are not the solution. We need to radically change the way we think about "helping" Afghanistan. As Malalai Joya, an Afghan Parliamentarian said: **"Democracy never comes by cluster bomb, by war, by gun."** We need to redirect the money spent on military to real development projects (not the ones that USAID has been doing - see pages 8-9) that are led by Afghans and have a real impact on the people of Afghanistan. We need to start supporting the needs of the men, women and children of Afghanistan - water, food, sanitation, shelter, security, dignity.

The majority of the U.S. is against the continued occupation of Afghanistan. We as a peace and justice movement need to leverage that power and stop it.

We hope that the Peace Letter will give you the facts you need to understand the situation, spark the rage you need to take action, and inspire the hope you need to believe that change can happen. Please take action today. Support the Peace Center in our efforts to make the world a more just and peaceful place. Please use the slip (pg 11) to donate today and ensure we can continue our important work.

Thank you for all of your support and for all you're doing for peace!

In solidarity, Coordinator Sonia Silbert

Thanks to an amazing Peace Letter team:
Allison Basile and Jasmin Off



The Washington Peace Center is a multi-issue anti-racist grassroots organization working for peace, justice and nonviolent social change in the metropolitan Washington D.C. area since 1963. Currently, we are D.C.'s only peace organization that focuses on and organizes around both local and national issues. Our project areas are:

- 1) EDUCATION: To produce educational events and materials, such as panels, trainings, film series and our quarterly newspaper: the Washington Peace Letter.
- 2) RESOURCES: To facilitate and encourage cooperation among local peace and social justice groups and provide them resources and structural support to work more effectively on their own campaigns and with others.
- 3) ACTION: To provide assistance, leadership and training for public demonstrations and nonviolent direct action.

The Washington Peace Letter is published to support local, national and international struggles against oppression. It seeks to present analysis of current events, covering information not available in the corporate media.

The Peace Letter welcomes submissions of articles, announcements, letters to the editor and artwork from the progressive community. Please contact us at peaceletter@washingtonpeacecenter.org for more information.

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Washington Peace Center
1525 Newton St NW
Washington, D.C. 20010
Phone: (202) 234-2000
info@washingtonpeacecenter.org
www.washingtonpeacecenter.org

Six ways you can take action!

1. Host a house party or campus event to screen Rethink Afghanistan

Watch and discuss this important new documentary. See <http://rethinkafghanistan.com/screenings/> for more information

2. Call and write your Representatives in support of Rep. Barbara Lee's bill (H.R. 3699) to prohibit escalation of the war in Afghanistan, and Rep. Jim McGovern's resolution (H.R. 2404) calling for an exit strategy.

- o Check out NoEscalation.org to see where your Representatives stand and for sample scripts
- o To get in touch with your Representative, call the switchboard at (202)225-3121. **Call today!**
- o Get on the Washington Peace Center's Activist Alert e-mail list (right column of our homepage), and read it every Wednesday for the latest action regarding Afghanistan

3. Write op-eds to your local newspaper (see 'Resources' tab on our website for ideas)

4. Call or come by our office to get more Peace Letters to pass out

5. Reform USAID (see pg 9)

6. Donate!

- o Direct aid to Afghans through Afghan Women's Mission
- o Build the peace movement through the Washington Peace Center (see pg 11)

Together, we can raise our voices for peace and justice!



WPC staff and interns at the White House, 10/5/09

1. The U.S. needs to prevent another 9/11.

Although the war in Afghanistan supposedly began as a response to al-Qaeda terrorism, there are reportedly fewer than 100 members of the group left in the country.¹ The Taliban, the primary insurgent group, is not a threat to the U.S.; it is a nationalist movement, and foreign presence is its biggest recruiter. A recent report by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee estimated the Taliban fighting strength at 15,000, of whom only 5% are religiously motivated, while 70% join for the \$10 a day earned in the Taliban.² According to General Petraeus' Counterinsurgency Field Manual, an effective operation would demand 250,000-600,000 troops.³ There are currently about 62,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan. Nobel Prize winning economist Joseph Stiglitz calculates one soldier for one year costs \$780,000. During an economic recession, is this where we should be spending our money? (pg 7)

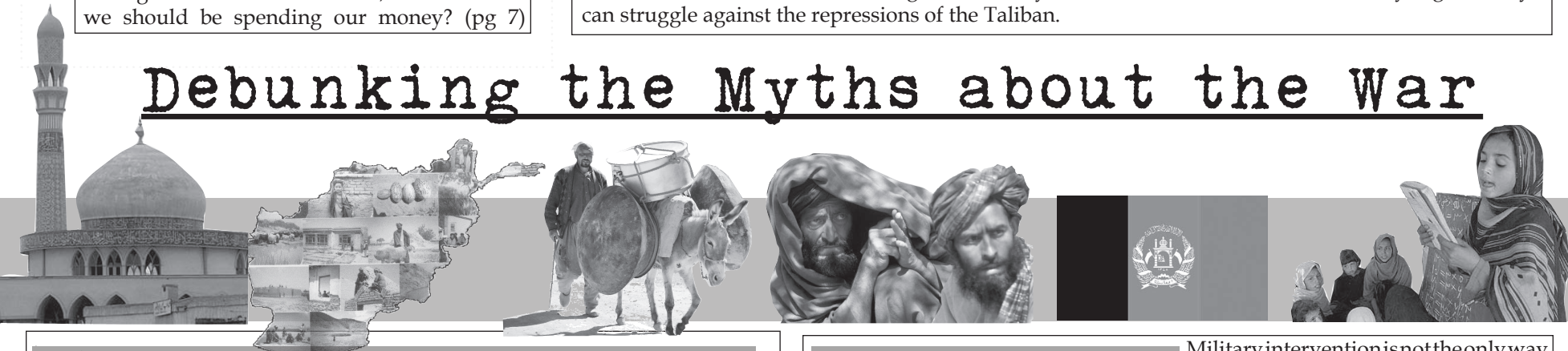
2. The Afghan people want us there.

Polls show that a majority of Afghans do not support the U.S. occupation of their country. A February 2009 poll, carried out by a consortium of ABC News, the BBC and ARD German TV, showed that the number of Afghans who say their country is headed in the right direction had dropped to 40 percent, from a high of 77 percent back in 2005. During the same period, Afghans expressing a favorable overall view of the United States dropped from 83 percent to less than half - down to 47 percent in 2009.⁴ See the graphs below for a possible explanation.

3. If we leave, the Taliban will take away women's rights

After 8 years of the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan, the situation for women in Afghanistan is as bad as ever. According to Malalai Joya, an Afghan parliamentarian (pg 7), "Most people in the West have been led to believe that the intolerance and brutality towards women in Afghanistan began with the Taliban regime - but this is a lie. Many of the worst atrocities were committed by the fundamentalist mujahedin during the civil war between 1992 and 1996. They introduced the laws oppressing women that are now followed by the Taliban - and now they have marched back to power, backed by the United States. They immediately went back to their old habit of using rape to punish their enemies and reward their fighters."⁵ Women disproportionately suffer the effects of war, and the majority of civilian casualties have been women.⁶ According to Malalai Joya, women want the U.S. military to leave because it's much easier to fight one enemy instead of two. Once the U.S. military is gone, they can struggle against the repressions of the Taliban.

Debunking the Myths about the War

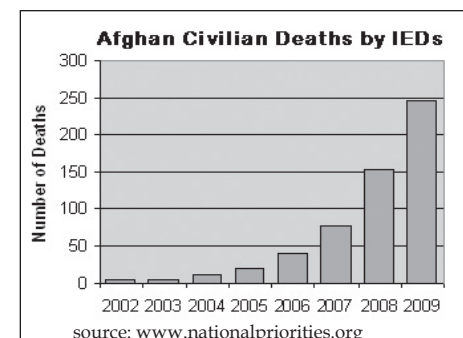
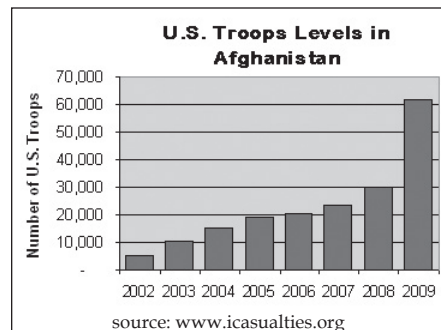


4. The troop surge worked in Iraq, so it will work in Afghanistan.⁷

Whether the troop surge worked in Iraq is up for debate. However, differences between Iraq and Afghanistan are considerable. Iraq's population is concentrated in cities, many of which are in and around Baghdad and important to the insurgency. Afghanistan is physically bigger; its population is larger, more rural, and more dispersed and its terrain is much more challenging. In addition, the basic "stabilization" problems are quite different: the challenge in Iraq is one of rebuilding, whereas in Afghanistan it is one of building from scratch. In Afghanistan, the Soviet war and occupation, the subsequent Afghan civil war, and warlord-led fragmentation destroyed all pre-existing political institutions. Consequently, Afghanistan has limited national infrastructure, no effective central government beyond Kabul, a largely illiterate and fiercely independent population, and a rudimentary "grey" economy. Lastly, the motivations of the two conflicts' contestants differ. Iraq's civil war centered on the division of the wealth of the state. The fight in Afghanistan is more about rejection of central authority than it is about the seizure and exercise of it. This makes the challenge of accommodation significantly more complex.

5. If we leave, we're giving up on the Afghan people.

Military intervention is not the only way the United States can use its resources in Afghanistan. Although General Petraeus' **Counter Insurgency Strategy (COIN)** calls for 80% of resources to support political and development initiatives and for 20% to go to military initiatives, more than 90% of U.S. resources currently support military initiatives.⁸ We can withdraw our troops while supporting *real* development projects, led by Afghans, to help reconstruct the country.



Four Pillars of an Exit Strategy continued from page 1

Beyond the human toll, the war is taking a severe financial hit on the United States. To date, the U.S. has spent more than \$220 billion in Afghanistan. Over 90% of that spending has been for the military. **Today, the U.S. is spending \$4 billion a month in Afghanistan and has eclipsed the costs of Iraq for the first time.**

But policymakers in Washington don't see Afghanistan being in crisis for these reasons. Instead, the focus is on the tension between the White House and the Department of Defense on two key questions: What is the proper mission for troops and should the United States send additional soldiers? Few players in Washington are asking the most important questions:

- Is there a role for troops at this point at all?
- What does an exit strategy look like, and when can we get there?

1. Create an Exit Strategy

The timetable that was set in Iraq indicates that such an approach can be useful in getting the United States out of a bad position. Most importantly, it begins to disarm the Taliban's argument that the "occupiers" will never leave. Calling for a timetable for withdrawal also recognizes that at some point **Afghanistan, like Iraq and almost all other wars, will end with a negotiated peace treaty.** Figuring out what that treaty should say and constructing a timetable to meet those conditions should be the next step in Afghanistan. Given the lack of legitimacy for the Karzai government and the relative political strength of the Taliban, negotiations must include a wide range of Afghans.

2. Deny al-Qaeda Safe Haven

Most analysts would argue that keeping Afghanistan free of al-Qaeda and terrorist networks should be a primary objective for global security. But the manner in which this can be achieved is under fierce debate. **Occupation and options for open invasion whenever deemed necessary should be off the table.** Instead, relying on the power in the United Nations Security Council and the provisions of Chapter VII provide nation states the opportunity to adequately protect themselves from imminent attack. Coupled

with an international effort to track and capture members of terrorist networks, this should provide the United States and the international community with the strongest response possible. One primary example of this was the capture of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who was not nabbed in a military raid but by combined police work.

3. Commit to Development

Afghanistan is one of the most underdeveloped nations in the world. Funding for development has been far below needed levels. The country urgently needs basic infrastructure. Without roads, access to markets, better agricultural inputs, or available credit, local businesses can't start up or thrive. Such levels of commerce are needed to help combat the lucrative drug trade and raise the population out of poverty. With few natural resources and a government highly dependent on international contributions, dedicated funding from the international community is needed. However, aid provided so far has not been successful. Too many projects are planned, designed, and implemented with far too little involvement from Afghans. Failure to learn from the successes of development projects that work hand-in-hand with the local population—such as the one described in Greg Mortenson's book, *Three Cups of Tea*—has doomed many of these projects. **Aid should go directly to Afghan-led organizations, coupled with strong auditing by international agencies.**

4. Withdraw all Combat Troops

Foreign troops on the ground (and drone attacks from the air) have been the most important tool for recruiting in terrorist networks. A commitment to withdrawing all combat troops will help deflate the recruitment for these groups. If the Afghan National Army is to replace them and contribute to the security of Afghanistan, it will require human rights training and a central government by which it can be held accountable. Further training must be refocused and fall under a common set of guidelines, including oversight under the Leahy Law that suspends training funding for any groups involved in human rights abuses.

Erik Leaver is a research fellow with Foreign Policy In Focus, a project of the Institute for Policy Studies (<http://www.fpipf.org/>)

Did you know? Afghanistan is known as the "Graveyard of Empires"

Afghanistan - a long history of occupation



The Graphics in this PeaceLetter issue can be found on:

- Page 1: www.rawa.org, <http://weblogs.sun-sentinel.com/news/politics/dcblog/Afghanistan.jpg>
- Page 3: <http://flagpedia.net/data/flags/ultra/af.png>, http://www.d.umn.edu/cia/faculty/troufs/anth1095/images/Afghan_home-school.jpg, <http://weblogs.sun-sentinel.com/news/politics/dcblog/Afghanistan.jpg>, <http://www.safeafghanistan.ie/Mirazar%20Catering%20Company%20June%20%20%2705.JPG>
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Want to host an event or mobilization? The Washington Peace Center lends out microphones, bullhorns, stages and more. We also provide cheap black/white and color copies. Visit www.washingtonpeacecenter.org/resources



Continued Interview with RAWA

(Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan)

Would you say that women are better off now than they were during the reign of the Taliban?

Even though women in some of the 34 provinces are not forced to wear burkas as under the Taliban, domestic violence is rampant. There are no laws against harming women and the warlords are serving in the Parliament. Suicide of women is increasing among young girls. In fact, self-immolation is becoming popular among them.

What are women in Afghanistan doing to help their cause?

We are turning our cries of pain to action. Of course, our lives are in danger when we speak up and we take precautions for our safety. What else can we do?

What can the average person in America do to help Afghan women?

Tell your government to withdraw now! And apologize for the past years of occupation of Afghanistan. Eight years of occupation and more than 30 years of war and struggle is more than enough. The local terrorist groups that harm the population need to be disarmed and prosecuted. When the U.S. (and its NATO allies) leave, the situation can't get any worse than it is now.

Change the current U.S. policies that befriend the fundamentalist groups. Remove the fundamentalists at their roots. The U.S. is targeting the young, poorly paid soldiers in the lower ranks of the Taliban. Poorly informed U.S. soldiers are giving their lives of wrong policies of the U.S. government.

Make connections with civil society (groups like RAWA) to support their struggles for freedom and justice. Afghans recognize the difference between the American people and the U.S. policies and are pleased by the support of many people in the U.S.

The interview with Zoya was conducted by Bette Hoover, a Washington Peace Center Board Member.

For more information about Zoya's work see www.rawa.org

My experience: Life Under the U.S. Occupation in Afghanistan

From: Rezai, 24 year old college student
Ghorband District, Parwan Province, Afghanistan

To : The United States of America

8 years ago, U.S. and NATO forces ended Al-Qaeda and the Taliban's grip on Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan were glad to be saved from 30 years of suffering and war, during which many had lost loved ones and friends. We hoped that it would herald a life of security and peace and that we would not witness further bloodshed, hunger and misfortune. We hoped that we could live in a secure and peaceful country, like others in the rest of the world. We hoped to build and develop our destroyed country.

But, in those early dreams, we were unaware that our future would bring greater misfortune and destruction. **There was to be no salvation from bloodshed at the hands of the U.S. and NATO forces, nor a relief from poverty.** In the past 8 years, we have witnessed new and incomparable insecurity, a rape of our culture, corruption of ethics and our society, an ineffective and corrupt government, bribery, crime, and an increase of extremists and ruffians of all sorts. Drug smuggling has increased. Some of our cultural artifacts and heritage have been taken away. Although much foreign aid has been given, we have not seen any significant development. No industries or factories have been established so that we can find work and make a living and raise our families well.

In our abject poverty, our people resort to theft, kidnappings and crime. They assist extremist groups to earn some money. Foreign countries who do not wish Afghanistan to be secure and independent offer their 'help' and bring much disruption and misfortune to our country. Most of us distrust our own government and foreign countries, especially America. Most of us feel hopeless. We ask the United States of America and the Afghan government, "Wouldn't it be beneficial if you were to use the \$106 billion-plus dollars approved by the Senate for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to develop and rebuild our country?"

Sincerely, Rezai in Afghanistan

Rezai is a member of Journey to Smile (www.ourjourneytosmile.com)



Ending the U.S. War in Afghanistan: A Primer

Excerpted from:

ENDING THE U.S. WAR IN AFGHANISTAN: A PRIMER by David Wildman & Phyllis Bennis, Interlink Publishing, forthcoming November 2009

The end of eight years of George Bush's unilateralism and militarism and the inauguration of Barack Obama has ushered in a new political period. Although the U.S. war in Afghanistan has actually gotten worse, with civilian deaths rising and U.S. and NATO military casualties escalating as well, **this is not the same war as Iraq. It cannot be opposed the same way.** We will need innovative ways of building and shaping a new kind of movement - which means not only new tactics to reflect the new period, but new strategic alliances between those focusing specifically on changing U.S. policy and ending the U.S. war in Afghanistan and those focusing on how to respond to the economic crisis.

Into the Streets

The work of showing - of demonstrating - the size and power of anti-war opinion across the country remains crucial. Street protests remain vitally important. But a street protest, a march, a rally can also "demonstrate" weakness instead of strength, so gauging when the time is right for public actions is always a necessity. National and nationally-coordinated regional and local protests and demonstrations will need to continue; often events held simultaneously in many diverse locations will result in more powerful impact than national marches and rallies that may involve far fewer participants than during the height of anti-Bush mobilization. Those street protests can also be strengthened by linking to petition drives and campaigns aimed at reaching local, municipal, state officials, and built on by following them with teach-ins, lobby days, and other related actions. To demonstrate strength, rather than showing weakness, big protests require not

only size, but breadth, diversity and centrality. We need to showcase the wide range of communities impacted by the war - and the resulting multiplicity of reasons people oppose the war.

Congress

Congress is an institution grounded in compromise. Despite courageous stands taken by some individual members, Congress will never lead the difficult campaigns such as ending funding for a failing war - but members will, when and if political pressure rises high enough, follow the lead of public opinion. Recognizing this new political period also means taking into account that Democrats, even (perhaps especially) progressive Democrats, remain reluctant to openly challenge President Obama. Those who are willing, tend to do so relatively quietly. Continuing public pressure on Congress will therefore be necessary as long as the war continues. The politically driven fear - not fear of what might actually happen to the troops but fear of being accused of abandoning the troops - that leads to Congressional refusal to stop funding the war, is certainly an on-going problem.

But the moment Congress perceives that the political cost of funding the war has risen above the cost of ending the war, they will do what has become politically expedient - and cutting war funding will become an urgent political necessity. The pressure will take many forms, and will involve combined "inside/outside" strategies, from phone-in and lobby days and letter-writing drives to constituent demands that congresspeople participate in open discussions and town hall meetings and debates on the costs of the war in Afghanistan, to working with congressional and committee staff on potential legislation and "dear colleague" letters, to mobilizing protests inside or outside members' headquarters in their home districts or in their Capitol offices in Washington DC.

Education

Building a powerful movement against the U.S. war in Afghanistan means providing the people on the ground with the tools they need to argue the case to those who don't already agree. It doesn't mean everyone must become an overnight expert on the history of U.S. intervention in Afghanistan, but it does mean that everyone needs to learn the basics about Afghanistan - as a place with real people, culture, history. It is even less known than Iraq to people in the U.S. So education must retain the pride of place for all those trying to end the war. Strong convictions and moral outrage alone will never be enough to convince those who disagree, or persuade those in power to act on anti-war opinions. Opponents of the war need strong arguments and irrefutable facts to move beyond their comfort zones and reach out to broader audiences (*see page 3*).

Afghan Victims, Afghan Voices

Far too often the opinions of the people whose lives are most affected by the war - Afghan civilians - are ignored. It is not because those opinions are unknown. A February 2009 poll showed that the number of Afghans who say their country is headed in the right direction had dropped to 40 percent from a high of 77 percent back in 2005. During the same period, Afghans expressing a favorable overall view of the United States dropped from 83 percent to less than half - down to 47 percent in 2009.¹ Certainly polls have their limitation. But the numbers show a powerful shift.

How does one decide what is important? At any given moment, a myriad of tasks will be jockeying for the "most important" position.

At any given moment, people will be needed to do them all.

It's a huge war. It requires a huge anti-war-movement.

There's room for all of it.

Phyllis Bennis is a fellow and the director of New Internationalism at the Institute for Policy Studies (<http://www.ips-dc.org/>)

WW II \$ 50,000

Iraq \$ 500,000

Afghanistan \$ 780,000

Cost per soldier²

1) ABC/BBC/ARD Poll, "Support for U.S. Efforts Plummets Amid Afghanistan's Ongoing Strife," 9 February 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/05_02_09afghan_poll_2009.pdf, 2) www.RethinkAfghanistan.com

Malalai Joya - The bravest woman in Afghanistan



In 2003, Malalai Joya was elected to the Loya Jirga to draw up a new Afghan constitution. In her speech at this convening, Joya denounced the fundamentalist mujahedin. This gained her not only international recognition, but also death threats from the men in power. Despite the threat to her safety, Joya ran for Parliament and won in a landslide, becoming Afghanistan's youngest MP. She called for the secularization of politics in Afghanistan and the removal of the warlords from parliament. Instead of addressing

her concerns, with the support of President Hamid Karzai, the MPs voted to kick her out of parliament. Despite this, Joya has used her international fame to call for an end to the U.S. and NATO occupation of Afghanistan. Joya continues to believe that her country can achieve equality for women and democracy.

If you'd like to learn more about the story of Malalai Joya, check out her new book: *A Woman Among Warlords - The extraordinary story of an Afghan who dared to raise her voice.*



"I don't fear death, I fear remaining silent in the face of injustice."

"The Afghan people want peace, and history teaches that we always reject occupation and foreign domination. We want a helping hand through international solidarity, but we know that values like human rights must be fought for and won by Afghans themselves."

"I say to Obama: change course, or otherwise tomorrow people will call you another Bush."

What if the money wasn't spent on the war in Afghanistan?

California

California taxpayers have paid \$28.9 billion for the war in Afghanistan since 2001. For that amount of money, the state could have provided 51,461,442 homes with renewable electricity for one year. California has the country's highest carbon monoxide emissions, releasing 7,710,111 tons of carbon monoxide every year.⁵

Arizona taxpayers have paid \$3.1 billion for the war in Afghanistan since 2001. For that amount of money, the state could have provided 23,898 affordable housing units. Arizona has one of the country's highest foreclosure rates, and one in every 30 homes across Arizona received at least one foreclosure filing during the first half of the 2009.⁴



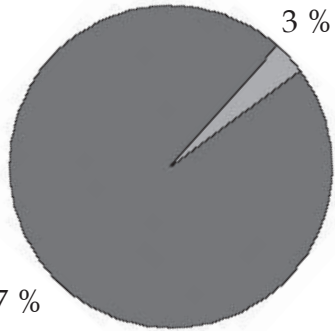
Virginia taxpayers have paid \$6.2 billion for the war in Afghanistan since 2001. For that amount of money, the state could have provided all 1,051,356 uninsured Virginians with healthcare for a year, 64% of the uninsured for a second year.²

District of Columbia taxpayers have paid \$978.9 million for the war in Afghanistan since 2001. For that amount of money, the state could have provided 16,663 elementary school teachers for one year. The D.C. public school system has only 3,800 teachers, and severe teacher layoffs were recently announced.³

Maryland taxpayers have paid \$4.4 billion for the war in Afghanistan since 2001. For that amount of money, the state could have provided 139,730 four-year scholarships for university students. In 2009, Maryland's governor, Martin J. O'Malley, cut \$37 million from spending on higher education.¹

¹ <http://chronicle.com/article/Further-State-Budget-Cuts-Loom/47448/>, ² http://covertheuninsured.org/uninsured_workers, ³ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/16/AR2009091602945.html>, ⁴ <http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/story/141758>, ⁵ <http://www.scorecard.org/>

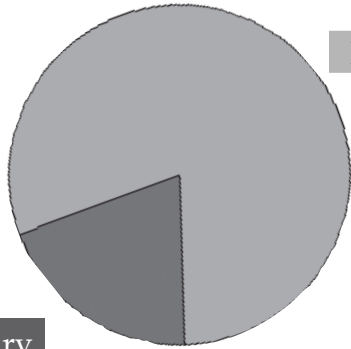
Where does our money go?¹



USAID
(Development)
\$ 7.9 Billion¹

Department of Defense
(Military)
\$ 228 Billion²

According to General Petraeus' counterinsurgency manual, where should our money go?²



Political
80%

Military
20%

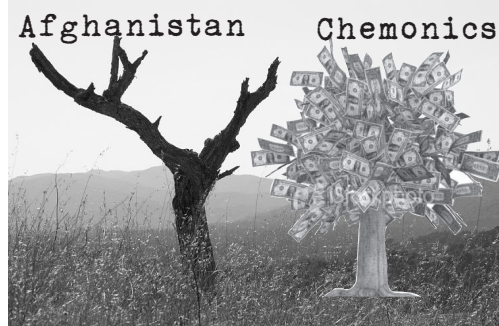
If you lived in poverty, which work would you choose?

\$10 a day in the Taliban \$3.66 a day in the Afghan police force



USAID in Afghanistan -

There has been much critique of the small percentage of



Chemonics International, a Washington, D.C. company, won the USAID bid for a \$145 million program called Rebuilding Agricultural Markets Program (RAMP), which ran from 2003 to 2006. Chemonics then subcontracted the training and construction work to other Americans, who in turn subcontracted to numerous Afghan companies who did the work. Only a small percentage of the original RAMP contract money actually reached farmers and other intended recipients, says Afzal Rashid, a former senior adviser for the Ministry of Finance. The exact percentage may never be known because neither Chemonics nor the U.S. government tracks such figures.¹

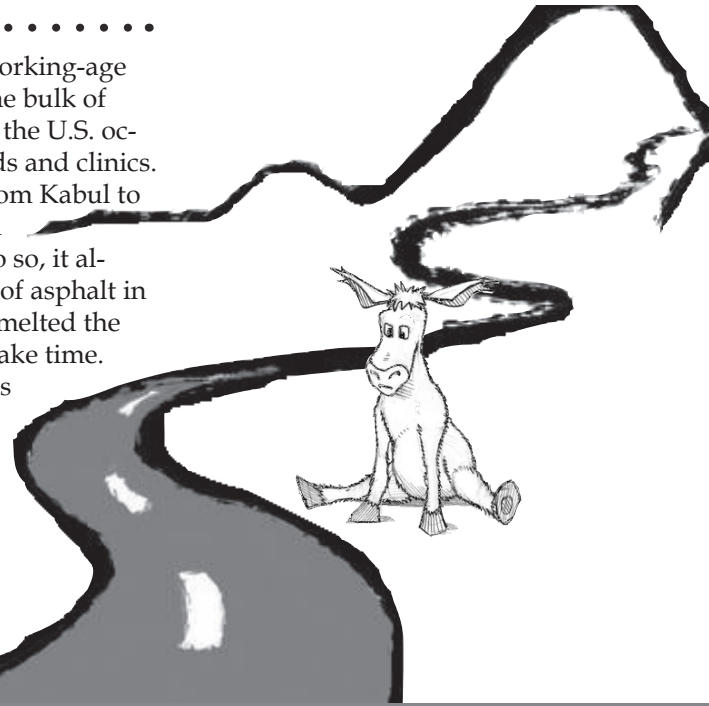
An Efficient Approach?

No Shortage of Poppy

From 2001 to 2004, USAID spent \$3 billion on programs to stop the cultivation of poppy crops (opium). It's clear those programs didn't work, because in 2007 poppy cultivation in the South reached an all time high! In the Helmand province alone, there was enough poppy produced to meet the world's demand for opium.²

Road to nowhere

Despite the fact that more than 80 percent of working-age males in the country are small-scale farmers, the bulk of reconstruction funding in the first few years of the U.S. occupation was devoted to building schools, roads and clinics. A particularly prized project was a highway from Kabul to Kandahar that Bush requested be completed in less than a year. USAID met the goal, but to do so, it allowed its contractors to place such a thin layer of asphalt in some places that it washed away when snows melted the following spring. "Investments in agriculture take time. They don't produce results overnight and that's what the administration wanted," said Mark Ward, a former USAID official.³



2001 George W. Bush 2002 2003 2004 Bush reelected

1) http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/18/AR2009061804135_2.html?sid=ST2009061804190, and <http://www.nationalpriorities.org/2009/09/02/quick-facts-US-military-operations-Afghanistan>
 2) "Counterinsurgency," Field Manual No. 3-24. Department of the Army, Washington, DC. 15 December 2006.
 3) Barack Obama ready to pay Afghan fighters to ditch the Taliban, Time Online, Christina Lamb in Washington DC, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/Afghanistan/article6869503.ece> and The Atlantic, Policing Afghanistan, September 3, 2009, Anup Kaphle

Sources: 1) Exclusive Investigative Report: American Corruption and Mismanagement Threaten Afghanistan's Future," September 11, 2009, 19, 2009, Rajiv Chandrasekaran. Washington Post 4) "US Pursues a New Way to Rebuild Afghanistan," June 19, 2009, Rajiv Chandrasekaran. TODAY, 7) "Exclusive Investigative Report: American Corruption and Mismanagement Threaten Afghanistan's Future," September 11, 2009,

The Need for Reform

money going to aid for Afghanistan. But is that money even improving Afghan lives?

Funding Corruption



In an interview with *The Chronicle*, Afghanistan's foreign minister, Rangeen Dadfar Spanta, sharply criticized how U.S. aid is spent in his country. **He estimates that only \$20 of every \$100 reaches its intended recipients.**⁵ Even though the United Nations has acknowledged that "widespread" fraud took place during Afghanistan's August 2009 elections, USAID continues to funnel more and more money through the Afghan government. Since 2002, about 10% of the \$8 billion spent on aid has gone through an illegitimate Afghan government. Richard Holbrooke, the U.S. envoy to the region, told a congressional panel this summer that he wants to raise that to "at least 40 or 50%, because we're trying to build up Afghan capacity."⁶



This is bananas!

In 2006, President George W. Bush urged the billionaire chairman of Dole Foods, David H. Murdock, to go to Afghanistan to "see what [he] could do." After a tour of the country, Murdock told U.S. officials he wanted to build a 25,000-acre plantation modeled after Dole's vast holdings in the Philippines. But a few months later, he concluded that transportation and security challenges made the project unsuitable for the company. That didn't stop USAID! Mindful of the president's interest in the project, USAID decided to allocate \$40 million to it. It was not until a year later, after several million dollars had been spent, that agency officials realized why Afghans had not cultivated the land themselves: **The water and soil were too salty to grow crops.**⁴

Shady Sales

In 2007, USAID awarded AEY Inc., based out of Miami, Florida, a \$300 million contract to supply Afghanistan with 52 types of ammunition, primarily 7.62 bullets for AK-47s. The contract did not include the need for safety inspections of the ammunition, a necessity for ammunition going to U.S. soldiers. The cheap ammunition was manufactured in China in the 1960's, much of was found to be substandard and dangerous.⁷

: Protecting : or Harming?

- The U.S. contracts with ArmorGroup North America
- to provide security for its Embassy in Kabul. In 2009, the Project on Government Oversight sent Secretary of State Hillary Clinton a letter detailing the abuses by over 10% of the employees of ArmorGroup. Allegations claimed that the security guards participated in hazing rituals involving alcohol and nudity, sexual abuse, failure to provide security for the embassy, as well as intimidation of Afghans.⁸

Take action to Reform USAID!

Call and write your Congresspeople in support of:

- Funding Afghan-led organizations and cooperative efforts for education, jobs, and healthcare
- Kerry and Lugar's bill (S.1524), which aims to strengthen the capacity, transparency, and accountability of U.S. foreign assistance programs



2005

2006

2007

2008

2009

Barack Obama

Pro-Soldier, Anti-War

My Experiences as a Conscientious Objector
by Perry O'Brien

I joined the Army on August 27th, 2001, just two weeks before the terrorist attacks of 9/11. As naive as its sounds, I wasn't thinking about going to war when I signed up. I was thinking about jumping out of planes, learning medical skills, and getting a tangible experience that would be somehow more "real" than the previous two years of college.

Enlisting was totally spontaneous, and I never took time to sit down and consider how I really felt about war. A year and a half later I found myself working in a field clinic in Kandahar, Afghanistan. As a company of medics, my unit saw the worst consequences of war: mutilated children, traumatized civilians, dead soldiers.

Even then, at least for the first few months of my deployment, I didn't take time to consider the implications of what I was doing; I was too busy doing my job. It was the Afghan children that finally got me thinking. No matter how many casualties I saw, there was always a sense of universal wrongness when a 5-year-old child came into our clinic with a ragged amputation. "How are all these kids getting hurt?", I wondered, "Why are people letting this happen? What's wrong with this country?"

Then we heard figures, that up to 3,000 innocent civilians had been killed by American bombs. How many had been injured? I thought to myself, 3,000 is about the number of people that were killed on 9/11. Were we getting even? I started to feel like an Army mechanic, fixing things that my comrades in the Air Force and Infantry had broken. But they weren't "things," of course, they were people, and after they left our clinic they

were going home to their families. How many would return to devastated craters, or get home only to learn that one of their sons, fathers, or brothers had been spirited away by American soldiers?

We used to see those prisoners, too, doing medical checkups to ensure that the Afghans didn't develop any new injuries during their stay with us. Of course, we never knew what happened to them before they got to Kandahar. During the examinations the prisoners were naked, shivering even if it was warm, with hands zip-tied and eyes covered. Sometimes they had sandbags over their heads. Sometimes they had been tortured by the Afghan militia and needed more extensive care. If these guys weren't terrorists before, I thought to myself, they sure might be leaning in that direction after we released them. What were we doing here? I used to accept the idea of a war on terrorism, but isn't war a form of terrorism? Are we just laying the groundwork for another attack, and another war, and on and on? Have wars ever solved more problems than they created?

I left Afghanistan with many troubling questions, and it took me over a year to find satisfactory answers. When I did, I filed to become a conscientious objector (CO). I was lucky. I had the education to present a clear, coherent case, and my unit was supportive, even if they didn't exactly agree with my philosophical perspective. I was given an honorable discharge in November of 2004. There are many, many soldiers in all branches who feel the same way I do about war. Most of these soldiers are not aware that the option of discharge or alternate service as a conscientious objector is available to them. Of those who come to the conclusion that war is unethical, many feel their only options are insubordination, deception, or desertion. Some of them face imprisonment without ever realizing that there is a perfectly legal mechanism within the Army to recognize their opposition to war.

I feel that it is particularly important for those of us in the peace movement to give aid and support to soldiers, regardless of how they feel about war. As much as we are antiwar, we must also be pro-soldier.

Perry O'Brien lives in Portland, Maine. He is a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War. For more information go to www.ivaw.org



Want to get more involved in activism in DC?

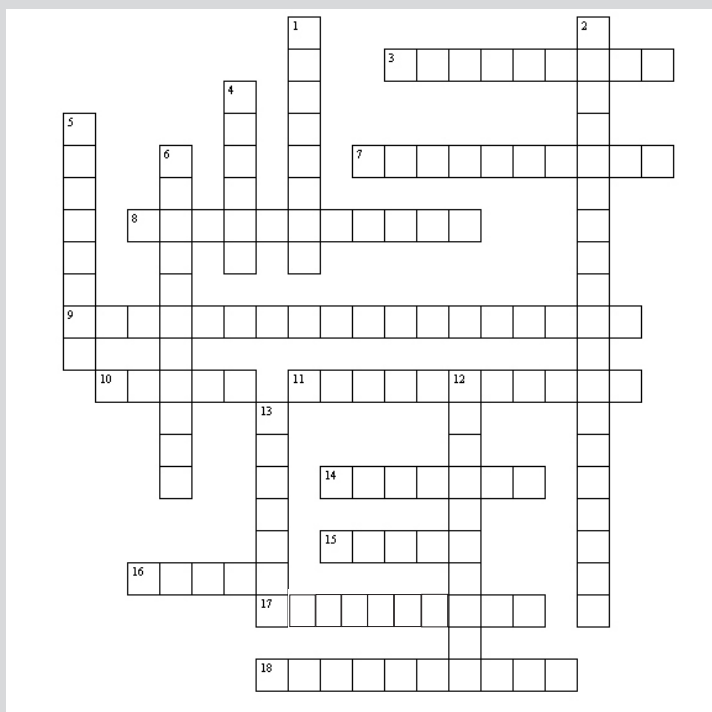
Get our weekly Activist Alert Email!

Sign up at www.washingtonpeacecenter.org

While you're there, check out our updated online calendar of DC progressive events. Planning an event? Shoot us an email - we'll be happy to post it:

info@washingtonpeacecenter.org

Did you read the Peace Letter closely enough?
Do the crossword and find out!

**ACROSS**

- 3) What is one project area of the Peace Center? hint: pg 2
 7) Identify: Top General in Afghanistan who recently asked Obama for a troop increase. hint: pg 6
 8) The war in Afghanistan has the highest ratio of ___ to military personnel recorded in any U.S. war. hint: ArmorGroup is one of them, pg 9
 9) When was the Washington Peace Center founded? hint: pg 2
 10) Where is the U.S. embassy in Afghanistan located? hint: pg 9
 11) Who is the current U.S. Secretary of Defense? (2 words)
 14) Afghanistan has been called the Graveyard of ___ hint: pg 4
 15) The U.S. has tried and failed to stop the cultivation of ___ in Afghanistan.
 16) What is the principal U.S. agency in charge of distributing aid dollars? hint: it has a "need for reform"
 17) Identify: The employees of

this group are accused of abusing Afghans as well as failing to provide security. hint: pg 9
 18) What state's taxpayers have paid \$28.9 billion since 2001 to fund the war in Afghanistan? Hint: pg 7

DOWN

- 1) USAID wasted time and money by laying a defective road from Kabul to where? hint: pg 8
 2) When did the Soviet Union begin its occupation of Afghanistan? hint: 2009 marks the 30th anniversary
 4) September 2009 marked the ___ year of the U.S. occupation in Afghanistan.
 5) Who were the first occupiers of Afghanistan in 500 BC? hint: pg 4
 6) Who was the President that declared the War on Terror in Afghanistan? (3 words)
 12) How many provinces are in Afghanistan? hint: pg 5
 13) Complete this myth: If we leave Afghanistan, ___ may stage another attack. hint: pg 3

Peace Center Update:

On October 7, 2009, the Washington Peace Center was in a unique position to help coordinate actions marking the 8th anniversary of the occupation of Afghanistan. We facilitated an Action Week that included education, art, street theater, a rally and direct action at the White House. Many different tactics with the same goal – ending the occupation of Afghanistan. We also hosted our own forum, "Not the 'Good' War: Rethinking Afghanistan Eight Years Later", which was a very powerful event. Over 70 people attended and we raised over \$200 for direct aid for Afghans. **You have enabled this important educational work and coalition building with your donations to the Peace Center in the past.** As a community, we stood up to say "NO" to unending occupation by the U.S. military.

We now need funds to continue and expand our important work. In 2010 we will be working on a DC Capacity Building Project, which seeks to improve the efficacy of the DC progressive community through resource development and coalition building. **Our prioritization of movement building is what makes our work so unique.**

We work to make everyone's action more efficient and effective.



Your continued contributions will allow us to provide these necessary resources while continuing to think strategically about how to stop the occupations of both Afghanistan and Iraq. We have a lot of work ahead of us to ensure that the official "withdrawal" from Iraq is in fact a true and complete withdrawal of U.S. military presence, and to start repairing the damage we've done in both countries. **Help us make it happen! Please support the movement for peace and justice through a donation to the Peace Center today.**

PLEASE SUPPORT THE WASHINGTON PEACE CENTER!

Sign me up for Activist Alert Emails!

Send me info about volunteering!

I work for peace!

Enclosed is my check for :

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

We rely heavily on individual contributions to do our important work, so please join today! The Washington Peace Center is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Your contributions are tax-deductable. Send your contributions to 1525 Newton St NW, Washington, D.C. 20010, or call (202) 234-2000. Donate online at www.washingtonpeacecenter.org!

Thank  you for your support!

The Peace Letter

Washington Peace Center

Winter 2009

Vol. 45, No. 3

Founded in 1963

THE AFGHANISTAN ISSUE



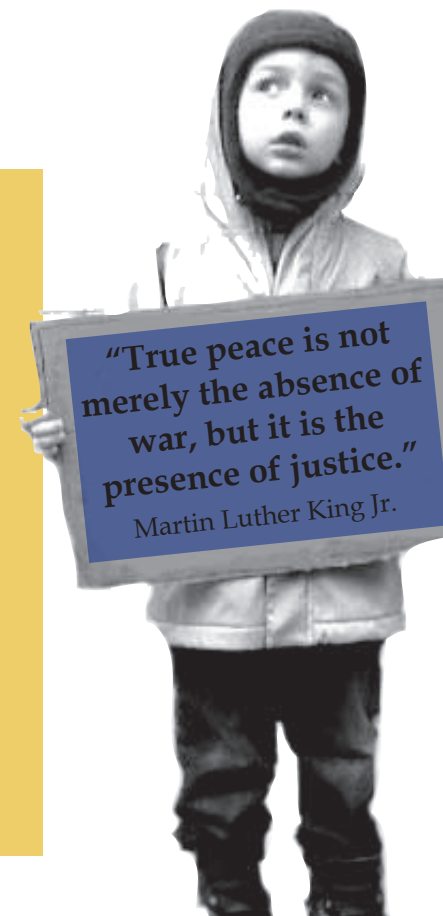
"War is too important to be left to the generals"

Georges Clemenceau, French Prime Minister during World War I

- . Four pillars of an exit strategy
- . Interview with a revolutionary Afghan Woman
- . Debunking the myths about the War
- . Life under occupation: personal story
- . What if the money wasn't spent on war?
- . USAID - the need for reform
- . A war resistor's story
- . AND MORE!



Inside!



"True peace is not merely the absence of war, but it is the presence of justice."
Martin Luther King Jr.