



SEBASTIAN RICH (UNICEF, AFGHANISTAN)

The Cost of War in Afghanistan

THE WAR IN CONTEXT

Seven years ago, the “global war on terror” began in Afghanistan as a military response to the September 11 attacks. In March 2003, the United States also invaded Iraq. Today, US forces are deeply mired in both countries with some 200,000 US troops in the region, of which 137,000 are in Iraq and about 40,000 in Afghanistan, with the Obama Administration requesting an additional 21,000 troops.

Until now, the war in Iraq has attracted far more money, resources, and troops as well as public attention and criticism. As the Obama Administration turns to Afghanistan, we need to ask ourselves: Is this a “good” “war”?

As a candidate, Barack Obama gained broad popular support for his campaign pledge to end the Iraq war. However, he linked this pledge to an increased military commitment in Afghanistan and the need to finish the fight against Al Qaeda and the Taliban.

With President Obama moving forward with his campaign promise to increase troop levels in Afghanistan, the US public faces two important questions: What will be the cost and impact of more troops, for both the US and Afghanistan? And what are the Obama Administration’s long-term goals?

Perhaps this is a good time to consider the advice of the last Soviet general to leave Afghanistan, when he spoke on the 20th anniversary of the Soviet withdrawal (2/14/09):

“Afghanistan taught us an invaluable lesson . . . It has been and always will be impossible to solve political problems using force. We should have helped the people of Afghanistan in improving their life, but it was a gross mistake to send troops into the country.”

– Retired Red Army General Boris Gromov.



AFGHANISTAN AT A GLANCE

Full name: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

President: Hamid Karzai
(elected in October 2004, next election Summer 2009)

Population: 29.8 million

Capital and largest city: Kabul

Area: 251,773 sq miles
(nearly the size of Texas)

Major languages: Pashto and Dari

Major religion: Islam

Life expectancy: 44 years

Infant mortality rate:
154.67 deaths/1,000 live births

Main exports: opium, fruit, nuts, carpets, wool

Bordering countries: Iran, Pakistan, China, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan

(Sources: UN and CIA)

For the past 30 years Afghanistan's history has been defined by a series of devastating civil wars, aggravated by massive military funding from outside powers.

The overthrow of the monarchy and subsequent military coups led to the 1979 invasion by the Soviet Union and a long destructive war. The bordering states of Pakistan, Iran, and China, as well as Saudi Arabia

Negotiations between Afghanistan and Pakistan preceding the Soviet withdrawal included a US pledge to stop military aid.

and the United States, armed the Afghan resistance (Mujahideen) in their fight against the Soviets.

Negotiations between Afghanistan and Pakistan preceding the Soviet withdrawal included a US pledge to stop military aid. The final agreement, however, did not provide for disarming or addressing the

demands of the Mujahideen. The Soviet withdrawal led to a bloody civil war as Mujahideen armies and warlords, many still backed by the US and Pakistan, fought for control of the country. This led to the emergence of the Taliban, which garnered increased popular support with its promise to end the fighting. Taliban rule quickly lost public support, however, after imposing the conservative social mores of rural areas on more liberal city-dwellers.

In 2001, in the wake of the attacks of 9/11, the Taliban's decision to shelter Al-Qaeda provoked US military action. The Taliban was quickly dislodged and a new national government under US sponsorship was established in Kabul.

AFGHAN PUBLIC OPINION

The biggest problems faced by Afghanistan as a whole are identified as:

SECURITY (36%)

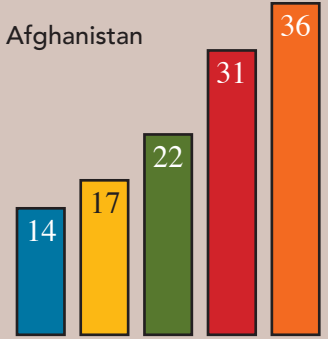
ECONOMIC ISSUES

INCLUDING UNEMPLOYMENT (31%)

HIGH PRICES (22%)

POOR ECONOMY (17%)

CORRUPTION (14%)



(Afghanistan in 2008, The Asia Foundation) Note: Bars do not sum to 100%

Today the Kabul government is losing support among the Afghan people. The Taliban and other insurgent groups are gaining recruits because there is neither basic security nor jobs. Corruption and an unwillingness to address human rights abuses have undermined support for the government. The behavior of foreign troops has often violated cultural norms and created fear and humiliation. Practices like night raids, use of drones and aerial bombardments tend to increase support for insurgents.

As the conflict widens, meager education and health services become even more limited. People in Afghanistan have consistently called for basic services, food, civilian rule of law and healthy institutions that can be trusted. As one of the poorest countries on earth, Afghanistan will continue to need aid and outside investment for years to come. Yet currently only a fraction of US assistance goes to meet basic human needs and help the economy develop. Much of the economic benefit of foreign development assistance is lost to Afghanistan because only 31% is spent on local goods and services and much of it leaves the country in the form of foreign contracts and salaries.

Ultimately what is needed is not more troops, but well directed aid along with diplomacy. Diplomatic talks will need to bring together all parties to the conflict in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the region, and yes, including the Taliban.

The new US administration came to power with a message of dialogue, diplomacy and adherence to international law. This approach should be taken in Afghanistan. As Ibrahim Khan, a cargo driver, told the Washington Post on February 22, 2009, "Bringing in another foreign army is not going to help. They always come here for their own interests, and they always lose. Better to let everyone sit down with the elders and find a way for peace."

MOVING FORWARD

Based on years of experience in the region and building peace in communities around the world, the American Friends Service Committee believes that:

- Military means cannot solve the ongoing crisis in Afghanistan
- The US must cease air strikes
- The needs, wishes, and well-being of the Afghan people must be at the center of rebuilding Afghanistan
- Negotiations must include all groups involved in the conflict, including the Afghan government, the Taliban, other groups within Afghanistan, and all of Afghanistan's neighbors

Please visit www.afsc.org for more information on AFSC's work on Afghanistan.

CLUSTER BOMBS

WHAT ARE CLUSTER BOMBS?

Cluster bombs – more technically called cluster munitions – open in mid-air and spew hundreds of small bomblets about the size of a soda can over a wide area. A typical cluster bomb, which contains between dozens and hundreds of bomblets, can kill or injure anyone in an area the size of one or two football fields. Cluster munitions are one of the most hazardous weapons to civilians used in wars today. Recent estimates suggest that 98 percent of cluster bomb casualties are civilians, many of them children. According to Human Rights Watch, the U.S used 1,228 cluster bombs, containing 295,000 submunitions, in Afghanistan in 2001-2002.

WHAT IS THE WORLD DOING ABOUT CLUSTER BOMBS?

On December 3, 2008, more than 90 world governments gathered in Oslo, Norway to sign a treaty banning the use, export, stockpiling and production of cluster munitions. The treaty, called the Convention on Cluster Munitions, was signed by most major US military allies, including Britain, France, Canada and Australia. The Bush administration did not sign the treaty, but the Obama administration has promised to review it.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Encourage your Senators to support restrictions on cluster bombs by cosponsoring the Cluster Munitions Civilian Protection Act. To find out if your Senator is already a cosponsor, go to www.banclusterbombs.org.

THE HUMAN COST

US CASUALTIES

As of March 2009, the Department of Defense reported that 675 US soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan since the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom in October 2001. More than 2,606 soldiers have been wounded in action. The US death toll has escalated each year – from 12 in 2001 to 99 in 2005, 117 in 2004, and 155 in 2008. (www.icasualties.org)

AFGHAN CASUALTIES

Because the Department of Defense does not do body counts, estimates of Afghan casualties are difficult to pinpoint. In 2002, *The Guardian* estimated that 20,000 Afghans have died as an indirect result of the initial US invasion in 2001. Reports from UN agencies show that after eight years of war the number of civilian deaths, kidnappings, car bombings and raids is at the highest point since 2001.

In 2008 the number of civilian deaths increased by 40% over 2007. Airstrikes are particularly lethal, causing two-thirds of casualties by pro-government forces.

Civilian deaths occur as a result of violence on all sides of the conflict. While the US and NATO are responsible for many Afghan deaths, the Taliban and other insurgents are responsible for as many or more civilian deaths.

REFUGEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE (IDP)

Some 3.7 million Afghan refugees who have fled the conflict in Afghanistan over the past two decades are currently living in neighboring countries - 1.5 million in Iran and more than 2 million in Pakistan. As of September 2008, all neighboring countries have closed their borders with Afghanistan, unable to support additional refugees. Since 2002, over 5 million people have returned to their homes – with more than half of the returns occurring within the first two years after the fall of the Taliban regime. In an effort to reduce the presence of Taliban fighters in their own nations, both Iran and Pakistan have begun deportation programs, forcing Afghans to leave refugee camps and return to Afghanistan. A major concern is that these camps have become successful recruiting centers for the Taliban. (*Refugee International*)

ECONOMIC COST OF WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

The war in Afghanistan has cost US tax-payers \$171.7 billion to date, with a pending spring supplemental request for an additional \$77.1 billion (of an \$83.4 billion request) to fund the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through 2009 (split \$24.4 billion for Afghanistan, \$52.7 billion for Iraq). An additional \$130 billion to fund both wars is anticipated for fiscal year 2010.¹ The breakdown of the \$130 billion is forthcoming as it requires more budgetary detail.

The \$171.7 billion figure reflects the current budgetary costs alone. Projected costs over the long term are likely to total more than half a trillion dollars when future occupation and veterans' benefits are taken into account. Interest payments could add another \$200 billion to that figure.² All told, this is more than the size of the recent bailout of Wall Street and rivals the historic economic stimulus bill just passed by Congress.

Countries outside the US have spent additional billions on the war in Afghanistan, with the UK contributing roughly £4.5 billion³ (approx. 6.6 billion current US dollars) and the cost to Canada totaling \$7.7 to \$10.5 billion (approx. 6.2 to 8.4 billion current US dollars).⁴

Consider that the US spends a mere \$100 million per year, or less than one percent of the yearly cost of the Afghanistan war, to assist refugees and returnees from Afghanistan through the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM).⁵

Also consider that the cost of building a new school with twelve classrooms and an office in Kabul, is roughly \$128,000 US dollars. The cost of equipment for one science lab is a mere \$1,500, and \$4,000 can purchase enough chairs and desks for one hundred students.⁶

LESSONS FROM IRAQ

- The Iraq War has cost \$656.1 billion in budgetary costs so far, with another \$52.7 billion pending as part of the FY 2009 war supplemental
- At least \$2 trillion in future budgetary costs (including Veterans' benefits) will be spent
- Over 4,200 US service members have died in Iraq
- Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians have been killed

Footnotes, www.nationalpriorities.org

- 1 The Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2010, Table S-7. http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/assets/fy2010_new_era/Summary_Tables2.pdf, CRS Report RL33110, July 2008
- 2 The three trillion dollar war: The true cost of the Iraq War J Stiglitz, L Bilmes - 2008 - New York: WW Norton. These figures do not include future interest payments or economic costs. They reflect budgetary costs alone.
- 3 "Cost of war in Afghanistan soars to £2.5bn" The Guardian Online. Richard Norton-Taylor, February 13, 2009. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/feb/13/afghanistan-iraq-bill-british-military>
- 4 Methodology for Estimating the Fiscal Impact of the Costs Incurred by the Government of Canada in Support of the Mission in Afghanistan. Ottawa, Canada October 9, 2008 www.parl.gc.ca/pbo-dpb
- 5 <http://www.state.gov/g/prm/>
- 6 Peter Lems, AFSC 1501 Cherry St, Philadelphia, PA 19102, phone 215-241-7000.



PHOTO CREDITS TO JAWAD JALALI/UNAMA, SEBASTIAN RICH/UNICEF, PETER LEMS/AFSC

BUDGETARY TRADEOFFS Each dollar spent on war in Afghanistan is a dollar not spent on human needs here at home. The chart below shows the cost of the war for each state and what that money could have bought in Head Start, Health Care, and Renewable Electricity programs.

	Cost of the War ¹	Head Start ²	Health Care ³	Renewable Electricity ⁴	US Soldiers Killed ⁵
United States	\$171,700,000,000	23,562,509	50,604,782	177,753,745	675* **
Alabama	\$1,573,057,542	244,226	655,635	1,161,140	7
Alaska	\$293,827,526	37,632	41,295	409,612	2
Arizona	\$2,363,950,110	304,241	534,116	2,025,232	15
Arkansas	\$1,608,171,455	271,559	1,063,437	1,343,763	4
California	\$21,750,546,875	2,601,740	8,952,242	38,754,077	64
Colorado	\$2,624,746,170	381,338	799,012	3,459,856	10
Connecticut	\$4,193,203,507	582,066	1,385,404	5,177,216	4
Delaware	\$1,076,162,467	170,252	291,715	959,005	1
D. C.	\$737,214,469	101,016	188,648	1,304,494	2
Florida	\$9,420,126,199	1,285,322	3,323,757	6,624,963	41
Georgia	\$4,953,095,784	698,603	1,260,028	3,863,796	14
Hawaii	\$555,176,048	74,781	185,285	924,278	2
Idaho	\$466,672,559	61,027	128,629	386,422	2
Illinois	\$9,297,356,385	1,376,163	3,883,754	12,363,904	24
Indiana	\$2,614,384,786	391,024	774,433	2,484,853	19
Iowa	\$1,300,029,058	196,587	389,068	1,462,783	5
Kansas	\$1,354,795,366	224,193	433,259	1,394,716	7
Kentucky	\$1,318,342,367	198,635	363,401	1,061,087	12
Louisiana	\$1,307,188,741	198,450	389,977	947,060	11
Maine	\$462,169,137	66,223	145,478	709,584	9
Maryland	\$3,327,682,936	446,130	653,493	3,089,312	14
Massachusetts	\$4,851,632,946	580,339	1,454,104	7,564,366	20
Michigan	\$4,562,444,255	689,712	1,715,450	6,412,287	16
Minnesota	\$4,123,431,643	598,206	1,186,172	4,733,090	4
Mississippi	\$668,109,129	111,370	150,270	494,584	7

	Cost of the War ¹	Head Start ²	Health Care ³	Renewable Electricity ⁴	US Soldiers Killed ⁵
Missouri	\$2,618,291,920	388,240	983,126	2,285,859	16
Montana	\$262,947,055	37,171	47,279	286,126	3
Nebraska	\$1,234,554,830	175,837	339,876	1,161,348	5
Nevada	\$1,538,115,985	176,389	352,564	1,396,743	11
New Hampshire	\$702,041,981	86,533	185,368	979,558	5
New Jersey	\$7,842,860,639	896,225	720,187	10,978,310	11
New Mexico	\$522,645,212	75,277	139,625	817,497	4
New York	\$15,402,849,038	1,754,910	2,840,502	28,837,340	35
North Carolina	\$4,647,593,635	630,695	995,351	3,687,104	22
North Dakota	\$207,183,700	28,696	63,668	179,631	4
Ohio	\$6,022,360,542	937,624	2,134,575	6,744,694	16
Oklahoma	\$2,608,009,480	438,321	1,293,380	2,170,369	11
Oregon	\$1,382,706,331	206,961	281,308	1,299,753	13
Pennsylvania	\$6,547,145,091	1,026,198	1,616,994	7,873,893	27
Rhode Island	\$687,457,410	98,972	234,328	1,170,591	-
South Carolina	\$1,258,399,230	188,864	674,521	913,172	14
South Dakota	\$261,131,358	39,643	102,841	253,327	3
Tennessee	\$2,647,325,510	367,735	552,559	1,960,115	10
Texas	\$14,043,687,346	2,013,143	3,206,995	10,694,873	36
Utah	\$921,131,377	136,081	314,745	1,126,736	8
Vermont	\$249,654,373	28,892	81,886	373,345	1
Virginia	\$4,650,445,849	648,598	1,302,179	3,838,481	15
Washington	\$3,898,967,499	439,518	618,520	3,473,305	17
West Virginia	\$468,888,732	71,238	147,387	412,148	11
Wisconsin	\$2,738,363,894	412,404	1,765,547	3,339,848	8
Wyoming	\$294,711,494	43,162	80,240	311,972	3

* www.icasualties.org

** Total number of soldiers killed as part of Operation Enduring Freedom from March 19, 2001, through March 29, 2009. <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/castop.htm> accessed April 9, 2009. Total includes 16 soldiers from US Territories. Note: State breakdown of casualties does not sum to total due to reporting lag time of home state. CRS Report RL33110, July 2008

1 Cost of the war in Afghanistan through 1st part of FY 2009

2 Number of Head Start places for children that could have been provided for one year

3 Number of people who could have been provided with health care for one year

4 Number of homes that could have been provided with renewable electricity for one year

5 Number of US soldiers killed as of February 7, 2009.

Brochure completed April 14, 2009



www.afsc.org



www.nationalpriorities.org