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## The Impact of the US War on Afghanistan

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The best way to continue a war that's not supported by the public is to announce the deployment of additional troops in an incremental way, quietly and ambiguously, camouflaging it as a necessary and patriotic mission of "advising an assisting," a sort of cover as a heroic diplomat, masking the truth of war and the natural form of violence that comes with any form of occupation.

This is what the US government has been doing with the war in Afghanistan, "It's part of the increasingly complicated way in which the US reports, or rather, doesn't report, on troop levels and details in its ongoing wars," Antiwar.com notes.

Earlier this year, CentCom commander, Army Gen. Joseph Votel said that he expected more US forces to be deployed to Afghanistan.

*"We are developing a strategy, and we are in discussions with the secretary and the department right now,"* Gen. Joseph Votel told the Senate Armed Services Committee. *"I do believe it will involve additional forces to ensure that we can make the advise-and-assist mission more effective."*

The top US general in Kabul, Gen. John Nicholson backed up his claim, saying he wanted another 500 US and NATO troops.

Their predictions came true when in April the Army announced it would deploy 1,500 soldiers to Afghanistan this summer. In addition, 300 marines also confirmed deployment. Then on September 6<sup>th</sup> US officials confirmed they would send an additional 3,500 US troops to Afghanistan. Shortly after officials began reporting that another 6000 plus ground troops from Fort Carson were also expected to be deployed.

Furthermore, just last week Secretary of Defense James Mattis reported that more than 3,000 US troops will be on ‘combat duty’ in Afghanistan. All this would bring the total number of US troops to about 14,500, yet over 1 million US soldiers have been deployed since 2001, with over 30,000 estimated civilian death as a result.

America’s war in Afghanistan is the longest foreign war in US history. Ever since the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and the support of NATO in 2003, the US military continues to insist it needs more troops deployed.

The US invasion has exacerbated conflicts inside the region, deploying additional forces has only prolonged the war, contributing to the death of tens of thousands civilians with an increase in the poverty rate. Despite all this, those in power continue to overlook the consequences of war.

### **Thousands of civilians killed; families left without justice**

In 2014 Amnesty International released a report detailing the frequency and magnitude of civilian casualties caused by international forces in Afghanistan that occurred during a five year period. Between 2009 and 2013 there were an estimated 1,800 civilians killed in war. The majority of these civilians were killed during airstrikes and night raids. The United Nations Assistance in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has totaled roughly 1,000 civilian deaths due to air strikes, with more than half of these caused by international forces. Air strikes have regularly induced the largest incident of civilian causalities, the 2009 attack on Granai village, Farah province, in which at least 86 were killed is one of many examples. Unmanned aerial vehicles or drones have also contributed to civilian deaths, in 2013, UNAMA documented 45 civilian deaths, an increase from 2012.

Despite countless of civilian deaths over the years, the victims of the families are left without justice. The U.S. government keeps its record of civilian deaths under wraps in order to avoid any type of public backlash; *“The US military justice system almost always fails to hold its soldiers accountable for unlawful killings and other abuses,”* said Richard Bennett, Amnesty International’s Asia Pacific Director.

### **Drug Use Increases**

The US occupation in Afghanistan also contributed to an increase of poppy production, (the plant from which heroin is made), forcing local farmers to grow heroin instead of food, adding to the devastating problem of drug addiction all across the world. Opium production skyrocketed after the US invasion, from 185 tons in 2001 to 3,400 tons by the spring of 2002. When the US invaded in 2001, the Taliban was forced to flee or go into hiding, as a result, the farmers lost their financial support to grow food, leading them to grow heroin instead. Moreover, US soldiers

were frequently reported guarding poppy fields as part of their deal with Afghan forces, yet evidently this contributes to the problem of opium addiction, helping sustain production.

The production continues to increase today, flooding markets at a very cheap price. The increase in Afghanistan showed a direct correlation with the hike of overdoses in the US, between 2002 and 2013, heroin-related overdose deaths quadrupled. Afghanistan also experienced drug addiction, hurting the country's overall health. According to reports from the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, one in every nine Afghans—including women and children—use illegal drugs, with the numbers increasing from 920,000 in 2005 to over 1.6 million in recent years. A study conducted by the US State Department found a surprisingly high level of opium in Afghan babies; due to a lack of education, mothers regularly give their children opium to stop crying, creating a cycle of drug addiction and contributing to the high unemployment rate throughout the country.

The disasters of the US war in Afghanistan are well evident, yet many continue to overlook the ramifications, deploying additional forces will only result in a greater number civilian deaths, with the cost of war burdening the US economy. The new CRS report says the war in Afghanistan ended up costing \$685.6 billion.

While most fail to cover the atrocities of war, Dr. Ron Paul never fails to miss a beat, always being the first to call out US interventionism for what it really is, "We've dropped more bombs this month on Afghanistan than we have since 2010, 751 bombing attacks, that has to be terror," he said during his show.