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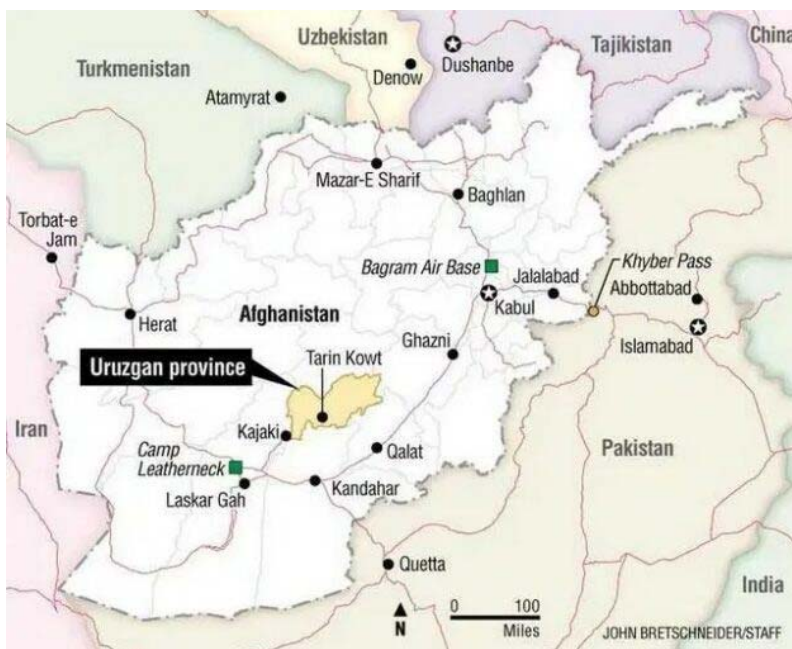
زبانهای اروپایی

By Sara Flounders

09.04.2021

## ***NO STALLING! The only solution — U.S. out of Afghanistan***

On Feb. 29, 2020, after rounds of negotiations in Doha, Qatar, with the Taliban — the insurgency they have fought for 20 years — the U.S. signed an agreement to withdraw from Afghanistan all U.S. and NATO forces within 14 months — by this May 1.



In return the Taliban agreed to hold back on direct attacks on U.S. forces and give time for withdrawal. A swap of 5,000 Taliban prisoners and 1,000 Afghan government captives was included in the agreement. It was also agreed to end more than 20 years of sanctions

that had put every shipment and transaction, even of humanitarian supplies, under U.S. occupation control.

In accordance with the Doha agreement, by June 2020 the U.S. initially reduced its military presence from 12,000 to about 8,600 troops, closed several bases and then further reduced to 2,500 troops before the Biden administration took office. Under U.S. command 10,000 NATO troops from 36 countries remain. At least 1,000 other U.S. troops were simply reclassified and shifted around in the country. ([tinyurl.com/udfmt3v](https://tinyurl.com/udfmt3v))

### **Will the U.S. withdraw troops?**

Like every agreement or treaty the U.S. government has ever signed with any tribe, country or group of nations, this withdrawal agreement with the Taliban is now being reconsidered. The excuses are endless — *There is not enough time. It is too hasty.*

The corrupt government the U.S. put in place won't be able to survive without massive U.S. firepower. Several new rounds of negotiations are suddenly proposed. Are there any real plans for the U.S. troops and mercenaries to actually leave Afghanistan or for the U.S. and U.N. sanctions to end?

More than 1.25 million U.S. and U.S.-commanded NATO troops have cycled through Afghanistan in the past 20 years in an undeclared war of terror on the 40 million people living in this Texas-sized country. According to figures from U.S. Central Command, the Pentagon employs more than seven mercenary contractors for every service member in Afghanistan. Their number currently remains at 18,000.

For 40 years the U.S. has been involved, through the CIA, in arming mercenary forces — twice the number of its troops. This imperialist occupation and the arming of mercenary forces has never brought democracy, progress, development, national reconciliation or peace to Afghanistan. Nor was it ever intended to bring any of these lauded excuses for U.S. involvement.

Afghanistan is potentially one of the richest countries in mineral wealth, with reserves including gold, copper, lithium, uranium, iron ore, cobalt, zinc, semiprecious stones and gemstones, natural gas and oil. How to maintain control of this enormous potential wealth

and strategic location in Central Asia is often cited as motivation to stay, by corporate think tank strategists and military planners.

### **Afghanistan poorer today**

Outrage at the brutality of U.S. occupation is the greatest recruiting advantage of the Taliban insurgency.

Afghanistan, after two decades of massive U.S. military occupation, is poorer, less developed. Life expectancy is one of lowest in the world and has steadily deteriorated under the years of occupation. There is no accurate estimate of the number of deaths from decades of war. Deaths in rural areas, where four out of five people live, are largely uncounted.

Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world. According to the Afghan government's own calculations, 42% to 55% of the population live below the poverty line, defined as less than \$1 a day.

The country has among the highest illiteracy and infant mortality rates in the world. Nearly 55% of children under the age of 12 years suffer from physical and mental incapacity — stunting due to poor diet.

The U.S. war in Afghanistan was publicized as a war for the “rights and dignity of women.” Yet women have no rights that are enforced; violence against women, including domestic abuse, is not considered a crime. The majority of women are married before the age of 18. And the average age of widows, the very poorest of the population, is 35 years.

U.S. occupation operates by consciously playing off and further inflaming the antagonisms between the many different nationalities and languages of Afghanistan.

Warlords and corrupt military commanders seize property and land at will.

### **Promises to withdraw**

Every president for 20 years has committed to withdrawing U.S. forces from Afghanistan and from the endless wars and troop rotations of the so-called “War on Terror.”

Washington's decision to invade and occupy Afghanistan began Oct. 7, 2001, under President George W. Bush. The decision had British support, based on the claim that the Taliban was responsible for harboring terrorists. Afghanistan was blamed for the Sept. 11, 2001, attack on the World Trade Center, even though the act was carried out by teams from Saudi Arabia.

The Taliban, still fighting a civil war and lacking any kind of air force, were easily defeated within two months and driven back into rural areas by overwhelming U.S. bombing. The U.S. built a series of military bases around every city, thousands of checkpoints and set up an Afghan government. They appointed Hamid Karzi, a U.S. citizen, as president. Most of the government cabinet appointments and ministers were Afghans with U.S. or British citizenship.

President Barack Obama was reelected in 2012 with promises to withdraw all U.S. troops from Afghanistan within 16 months. Instead, he vastly increased troops to over 100,000, with far more mercenary contractors. But this surge failed.

The Trump administration had little choice but to agree to talks and schedule a withdrawal. The U.S. was forced into the talks by the complete deterioration of the U.S. military position. A lengthy Feb. 2 NY Times article confirms how dire the situation is and what led to negotiations. ([tinyurl.com/4dxjvy9y](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/02/us/politics/taliban-us-negotiations.html))

It is worth reviewing a few points of the NY Times evaluation which cites the Taliban's capture of military bases and police outposts and their installing highway checkpoints near capital cities in provinces such as Helmand and Uruzgan in the south and Kunduz and Baghlan in the north.

By December 2020, almost 200 checkpoints were abandoned by the Afghan army providing additional military equipment and ammunition to Taliban forces. Their efforts to surround and push into districts in key cities including Kunduz in the north, Kandahar in the south and even the capital Kabul have been met with little resistance by Afghan police.

"The deteriorating situation in Kandahar is a broader reflection of security around the country. . . . The populace have more faith in the Taliban than in the government."

The article ends with a dire prediction: “These sentiments are common in more rural areas of Afghanistan. But the Afghan government’s incompetence and widespread corruption have brought that attitude to the doorstep of one of the country’s most populated cities. The government . . . has failed.”

The admission is stunning.

### **Improvised weaponized drones**

Part of the Taliban’s success rests on their new use of low-cost, improvised bomblets made out of plastic bottles filled with explosives and attached to over-the-counter drones to further demoralize Afghan government forces.

The Taliban’s use of small weaponized drones and night vision scopes to target commanders, groups of soldiers, vehicles and ammunition depots is a threat, because Afghan security forces are spread out across the country with more than 10,000 small checkpoints, many of which are in rural areas. “The mere sound of a commercial drone caused fighters to flee and abandon their position out of fear to be targeted by dropped ammunition — so the sound of the drone itself could be used as a weapon.” ([tinyurl.com/37xmvk6y](http://tinyurl.com/37xmvk6y))

Of course, an over-the-counter \$700 drone dropping a grenade on an outpost is no match for the U.S. military’s large remotely piloted Predator and Reaper drones armed with powerful Hellfire missiles. U.S. drones each cost more than \$4 million, can fly up to 740 kilometers and linger overhead for up to 14 hours.

But the Pentagon’s controversial drone program has been blamed for killing civilians — firing on wedding parties, religious gatherings, farmers working in their fields, civilian buses and cars. The rage following each attack on civilians recruits more fighters than were killed in the attack.

In any effort to prevent a total U.S. withdrawal, the Biden Administration is promoting “inclusive, international conferences,” and a larger U.N. Conference to decide Afghanistan’s fate, a political transition and a power-sharing agreement between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

These are all desperate efforts to preserve U.S. presence. The only solution is U.S. out!

The Black Alliance for Peace has developed a packet of information including a petition, social media graphics, a fact sheet and a press release to help to focus attention on the May 1 demand for U.S. Out! ([tinyurl.com/ttknewm2](https://tinyurl.com/ttknewm2))

Workers World 06.04.2021