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## *US workers respond to American imperialism's debacle in Afghanistan*

The collapse of the US puppet regime in Afghanistan has prompted disgust and anger among workers over American imperialism's widely unpopular 20-year war in the Central Asian country.

A common refrain from workers who spoke with the *World Socialist Web Site* is the scale of the resources squandered on the criminal war, while social conditions continued to deteriorate in the United States. A **Mack Trucks worker from Macungie, Pennsylvania** said: "The US government could have built every homeless person in the US a \$100,000 home and it would have cost taxpayers \$55.3 billion dollars, and no one would have been murdered in the process. Instead, the US military killed 140,000-plus Afghans, scarred countless more for life, and it cost US taxpayers over 2 trillion dollars."



US marines deployed in the invasion of Afghanistan, November 25, 2001 (Photo: Sergeant Joseph R. Chenelly, United States Marine Corps)

**Jinsbek, a young health care worker in southern California**, described his experience growing up under the shadow of perpetual war. “I’m 26, and US capitalism has spent longer than the entirety of my living existence destroying the civilization of Afghanistan, starting with its very creation of the Taliban [through the CIA support for the Mujahideen against the Soviet invasion in the 1980s]. What we see in Afghanistan mirrors the US’s own domestic policy: a desperate attempt to prop up a fictitious economy, pumping trillions of dollars into Wall Street, leaving untold millions impoverished and victimized by social inequality.

“Imagine the trillions, instead, going to health care and public health measures. Instead, we see the rotten fruits of capitalist policy—the violent failure of imperialism to resolve its internal contradictions. In the midst of a deadly pandemic, the media cheerleaders of the bourgeoisie are only banging the drums for war and brow-beating workers to expose themselves to a resurgent plague. Workers have to venture on their own campaign, they will find no recourse in Washington or the rest of the capitalist powers.”

**An autoworker at a Stellantis transmission plant in Indiana** told the WSWS: “US leaders, beginning with Bush and Cheney to Biden and Harris, with several other cabinet, military and intelligence officials, are guilty of several various war crimes and atrocities, and have cost American taxpayers over \$2 trillion.”

The US government, he said, “didn’t care about Afghan citizens before 9/11, during the last 20 years of wars, bombs and the droning of mostly innocent women and children, so the disgusting act that the mainstream media spews forth across the news channels [about the concern for women] is also criminal.”

“A few of our wealthiest profit obscenely from war, and they will do anything to keep the US at war,” he said. At the same time, the US “military spends more than the rest of the world combined, is inept, and the military and leaders on both sides of the aisle [i.e., both the Democrats and Republicans] are corrupt, dysfunctional and true sociopaths.”

The worker raised concerns over the possibility that the Biden administration might launch a re-invasion of Afghanistan, pointing to the military bases the US is leaving behind, which are strategically positioned for attacks against China. “Not one of the reasons,” for a re-invasion, he continued, would be “because of the Taliban or the people of Afghanistan.”

Speaking about the current US president, he said, “Besides being a two-time war criminal, Biden has not kept one promise he made when on the campaign trail. Well, actually, Biden has kept one. He did tell his donors that ‘nothing would fundamentally change.’ He has held the status quo quite well thus far, and the mainstream media has praised him daily. Even the so-called progressive ‘squad’ has capitulated to Pelosi and the neoliberals, and fallen in line by praising Biden.”

**Ron, an operating engineer in the Kansas City area**, told the WWSW, “I’m grateful that we are pulling out of Afghanistan because I have granddaughters who are coming of age in the next four years, so to have one less military conflict around the globe is a blessing to me. I don’t want them to be part of that.

“But then I understand, on the other side, Afghanistan is going through basically what Latin America has been going through for the last hundred years. Somehow, Americans think they can do it the best and want to enforce our rule on other people.

“We’ve spent two trillion, and I guess it comes to six trillion when you figure in all the interest. I think that term gets thrown around, and nobody really has a concept of what a trillion dollars is.

“People at my shop are mostly asking, ‘What do you know about what is going on there? What have you heard today?’ There hasn’t been anything like, ‘Thank God we’re out of there,’ or ‘Those poor people there.’

“Initially a large portion of the population bought into the lie, but over the last 20 years people have grown to feel disdain for the war. Biden, even though he’s trying to reach what I think is a majority of the people who oppose the war, he’s doing it with half-truths and lies. The news media is propaganda, and I wish more Americans would see that for what it is instead of taking it as the truth.

“I believe that a lot of the police force is made up of veterans. So the atrocities they either witnessed or participated in, they have brought back and are basically inflicting on the American people.

“One of the biggest, glaring truths would be not to trust your government. Basically, they’ve acknowledged that they’ve been lying to the American public for the last 20 years, as when Bush announced it was a war to help starving people and promote democracy. Biden admitted that was a lie.

“The standard of living in the US has gone down over those 20 years. It wasn’t until I got this current position that I’m working now that I made the money I made in the late 1990s. So all through the 2000s I made less than I made in the ’90s.

“I do believe that there should be another option, because as the last 20 years have shown, the current options aren’t working for the working class.”

**A Stellantis worker from Toledo** said: “The intelligence agencies had warnings of 9/11 and they turned a blind eye to it.

“There were no reasons for the US to be in Afghanistan. Did the Taliban attack us? They had no proof that bin Laden was behind it. The hijackers were Saudi nationals. They wanted to keep relations with the Saudi king so they could keep making money.

“They were just blowing smoke about Afghanistan. Consider that chromium, copper and gold are their chief exports. It’s about resources and bases in the Middle East.

“There were no WMDs [in Iraq, either]. Everyone knows that was a joke. It was to change the power vacuum in the Middle East and get control of the oil. Once we had control of the oil, we were able to maintain control of the oil.

“There were contractors that had a track record where they had no right to be doing business with the US government. They were getting billions of dollars in kickbacks. This has all been an operation to get their pockets fatter. War is profitable.

“The people in charge of these war machines are our government officials. They are making the decisions to go to war and they are also the people profiting off that. They

knew ahead of time what was going on and pushed the issue. But it was all for them to get rich.

“The war in Afghanistan had nothing to do with women’s rights, with the suffering of women. I love the hypocrisy. We complain about ‘interference’ with our elections and we go and overthrow governments. We have overthrown governments this past decade, Iraq and Afghanistan being some of them. We are the biggest hypocrites on the planet.”

“I think it’s tragic that our government has caused so much suffering to the people of this poor country,” a **registered nurse from southern California** said. “We have destroyed a country and maimed and murdered hundreds of thousands Afghans. For what? Not to mention American soldiers who have been injured or died for an imperialist war.

“Meanwhile the military weapons industry is profiting, but social safety nets, education and health care are being cut. We’re seeing homelessness explode, a health care system that is willfully unprepared for any major emergency or catastrophe, an incompetent public health system and a runaway climate crisis that is basically being ignored by both parties and their mainstream media talking heads.

“California is running out of water and is on fire. Children across the nation are dying from a preventable virus. ... I believe the only way forward is through a working class movement in the US and internationally. As we have all witnessed, the ruling class cannot and will not solve the mounting issues that are affecting the working class and poor. We must unite and oppose their deadly policies through a socialist program that will address the needs of the working class and poor.”

**Chad, a chef from New Jersey**, said: “In September [when unemployment benefits expire], those who are without work will be left to fend for themselves, just like the Afghans on the runway. The only difference is some of the politicians might ride by them on their way to work. Since 2020, I have seen more homeless people in the streets than ever before. In my life I have never seen food pantry lines stretching blocks. With the price of two Humvees, you can feed a few hundred families.

“Even mainstream news outlets should have seen this coming. The images of Taliban fighters roaming the streets with American arms just makes me shake my head. Twenty

years, trillions of dollars, all for what? The United States' puppet government could not stand even two weeks. They couldn't even watch [the Americans'] flank while [they retreated].

"I hear different US government officials say, 'We were surprised at the speed at which this happened.' But even though it was before my time, this is reminiscent of the videos I watched in school of the fall of Saigon, which was another civil war that the United States just had to stick its nose in.

"This warmongering, bomb and build game this government plays is not going to work in this century. If America does not fix its domestic problems, we have too many examples of what can happen when a regime is too oppressive against its own people."

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