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Press TV

## Afghan war paved way for Iraq invasion

**Interview with Conn Hallinan, a columnist with the Foreign Policy in Focus**

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**An American columnist says the US-led invasion of Afghanistan under the pretext of the so-called war on terror was intended to pave the ground for the occupation of Iraq in March 2003.**

The US-led invasion of Afghanistan took place in 2001. The offensive removed the Taliban from power, but insecurity continues to rise across Afghanistan, despite the presence of thousands of US-led troops there.

Press TV has conducted an interview with Conn Hallinan, a columnist with the Foreign Policy in Focus, to share his opinion on this issue.

Following is a transcript of the interview:

**Press TV:** Now many are predicting that there will be a disgraced US pull out from Afghanistan with absolutely no clear results. Do you agree with that assessment considering the security situation at the moment?

**Hallinan:** I pretty much so, the regional invasion never had a clear purpose. We found ourselves in fight with Taliban when in fact at that point the enemy was supposed to be al-Qaeda.

We now locked ourselves into an ongoing war in Afghanistan and I do not see anything

particularly coming out of it, whatsoever although I am hopeful that the opening of the office by the Taliban in Qatar will lead to some kinds of negotiations.

I think we need to move to cease-fire first, unfortunately I do not see the Obama administration moving in that direction at this time.

**Press TV:** But then that brings us back to the question of what was this war for if the purpose of it was not to remove the Taliban from power and destroy the organization itself?

**Hallinan:** The purpose of the war never had anything to do either with the Taliban even al-Qaeda in for that matter in Afghanistan. The purpose of the war was that the Bush administration decided that after 9/11, they did not have enough evidence of that point or they did not have the basis to invade Iraq, which was the regional idea behind the Afghan war.

So they thought what would they do is that they would invade Afghanistan and that would eventually prepare the groundwork for an invasion of Iraq.

The whole purpose of the Afghan war was to essentially lay the groundwork for the invasion of Iraq and so for that reason it could not possibly accomplish anything because its purpose was not to accomplish anything but the invasion of Iraq and that turned out to be a tactical and a strategic disaster.

**Press TV:** Right, so then also was this war then worthwhile considering last year was with at least 566 NATO troops being killed in Afghanistan. It was the second deadliest year for the alliance since the start of the US war in 2001. It begs the question as to what was the point of it? Was it worthwhile and was it worth the deaths of so many Afghan civilians as well as NATO troops?

**Hallinan:** No, this is one of those wars that was completely avoidable. It should have been avoided, even the poll show that the vast majority of Americans and Europeans, more so on the European side are opposed to this war.

I mean this was one of the wars that did not have to happen. It happened because the Bush administration was attempting to inject themselves in a major way into the Middle East by invading Iraq.

And so Afghanistan was merely a stepping stone but the problem is that many conquerors have thought of Afghanistan as a stepping stone and it is really not, it is a quagmire and the United States got caught in the quagmire.