

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.commondreams.org/view/2012/03/23-0?print>

## Afghanistan and the Roman Empire

by Renee Parsons

3/23/2012

As Defense Secretary Leon Panetta stepped off the plane in Afghanistan recently, he accurately summed up the evils of war. Arriving to calm Afghani reaction to the [massacre of sixteen civilians](#) in their homes by a U.S. soldier, Panetta said that "war is hell." The Secretary went on to predict that these "incidents are going to take place. This is not the first and probably won't be the last."

In other words, as U.S. military tentacles wrap themselves around the world just as the Roman Empire spread its military dominance from Baghdad to Britain, Panetta was serving notice on the American public that the violence and pattern of disturbing behavior on the part of American troops is less than an aberration but represents an endless war culture that may be expected to continue.

Senator John McCain (R-AZ) [told Meet the Press](#) host David Gregory last week that the "Taliban are basically decimated to a larger degree" and that "we are winning." Unfortunately, there was no followup that if the Taliban are decimated and there are virtually no al Qaeda in Afghanistan, what are we fighting for?

Afghani President Hamid Karzai [rejected](#) the latest in a series of U.S. apologies that promised a "full investigation," to hold the perpetrator "fully accountable" and all the usual mea culpas explaining that he was 'at the end of the rope.' The latest setback for the U.S. in Afghanistan came after weeks of drone strikes on civilians and Afghani border guards, the burning of the Koran, urinating on corpses and other 'inadvertent' attacks.

Karzai's response went further this time insisting that U.S. forces, currently at 90,000, be removed from all rural areas and limited to established military bases [adding that](#), "This behavior cannot be tolerated. It is past, past, past the time." More importantly, in a meeting with Panetta, we are told that Karzai insisted that 'both sides complete the transition process by 2013.' The U.S. response, according to multiple anonymous sources who refused to be identified, pointed to the 'inability of the Afghani forces to take control of the country' as the No. 1 rationale to keep American troops in Afghanistan for two more years.

Meanwhile, a bipartisan group of 24 U.S. Senators who [sent a letter](#) to the president a week ago endorsing a quicker timetable for withdrawal are many of the same Senators who sent the president [a similar letter](#) in 2011. Yet President Obama, who added 30,000 American troops in 2009 to what has now become America's longest war, continues to [reject suggestions](#) that it is time to disengage instead vowing to 'complete the mission responsibly.' One might reasonably wonder exactly what 'mission' the president is referring to and what is meant by 'responsibly.'

For instance, is it the 'mission' of the U.S. military to conduct 'nation building' just as the U.S. taxpayer [spent \\$5 billion](#) to build schools, a hospital, a water purification plant, improved roads and paved sidewalks in Iraq -- that is; after destroying whatever existed of that country's infrastructure in the search for non-existent WMD's -- or to train those same Afghani forces at a cost of \$6 billion annually which successfully repelled Russian invaders in the 1980's wearing flip flops and carrying U.S. supplied Stinger missiles. There were no doubts then about the Afghani ability to 'complete the mission.' Nevertheless, the president's pre-election proposal for an Afghanistan drawdown may be viewed with skepticism as the withdrawal from Iraq would not have occurred if the Iraqi parliament had not refused to provide U.S. troops with immunity from prosecution.

To speak of withdrawing 'responsibly' is to imply that the U.S. has some honor-bound obligation -- but to whom? To the Afghani people who are living in fear of their liberators or to the trillion dollar [global weapons industry](#) or the global economic system, both of which profit from war?

In view of the deployment stress on essentially the same 500,000 member volunteer Army which has carried the burden of perpetual war for the last ten years including [more than 1,800](#) Operation Enduring Freedom American troop deaths, 192,000 brain injuries, 8,000 combat veterans suffering from PTSD and more than 800 suicides between 2008 and 2010, when will the president explain to the American people what he means by 'responsibly?'" Perhaps it is responsible for the Staff Sergeant who apparently committed the last atrocity, distraught at being ordered into a fourth deployment and with massive financial and legal problems at home, to be prosecuted 'to the fullest extent of the law.'

Despite the [latest USA Today/Gallup poll](#) of March 13, taken just prior to the most recent attack, 60 percent of Americans believe things are 'going badly' in Afghanistan and more than half favor speeding up the 2014 withdrawal timetable, yet there is no real political pressure on the president to reconsider [his 2008 commitment](#) to Afghanistan as "not a war of choice. This is a war of necessity." With the election of a Democratic president expected to be a liberal, whatever existed as a peace movement in the U.S. collapsed, the president offers no response to those few

members of Congress who dare raise their voice in opposition and Democratic activists around the country remain silent.

While the presumptive Republican candidate Mitt Romney offers no real alternative even as he moves to the political center, preferring to rely on the Pentagon's advice and as the Republicans and its base coalesce after Labor Day behind the facade of a moderate, 'job-creating' businessman, the provocation of inflammatory social/cultural issues will continue to skew the debate.

The 2012 campaign can be expected to avoid a vigorous public debate on vital policies like the cost of perpetual war, indefinite detention, government assault on civil liberties and the constitutionality of drone attacks as it provides no real clarity on the difference between two compatible sets of political beliefs.