

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد 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

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://rare.us/story/our-government-has-been-lying-about-schools-in-afghanistan-for-years/>

Our government has been lying about schools in Afghanistan for years

Bonnie Kristian

7/29/2015

Afghanistan has long been known as the “graveyard of empires,” a wild, nigh-unconquerable region in which even the mightiest armies flounder.

Nevertheless, when then-president George W. Bush launched the invasion of Afghanistan nearly a decade and a half ago, we were enthusiastically told America would not only win, but also win Afghans’ hearts and minds. Education was to play a major role in this endeavor—in fact, the Bush Institute website still posts about the importance of education in Afghanistan.

Now, there’s no doubt that education is vital to improving quality of life, promoting liberty, and defusing terrorists’ attempts at radicalization. As Thomas Jefferson wrote, “if a nation expects to be ignorant & free, in a state of civilisation, it expects what never was & never will be...where the press is free and every man able to read, all is safe.”

But thanks to a comprehensive investigation from BuzzFeed News, we now know that our government has been consistently deceptive about the success of its educational projects in Afghanistan:

The American effort to educate Afghanistan's children was hollowed out by corruption and by short-term political and military goals that, time and again, took precedence over building a viable school system. And the U.S. government has known for years that it has been peddling hype. ...

USAID claimed for years that it had built or refurbished more than 680, a figure Hillary Clinton cited to Congress in 2010 when she was secretary of state. By 2014, that number had dropped to "more than 605." After months of pressing for an exact figure, the agency told BuzzFeed News the number was 563, a drop of at least 117 schools from what it had long claimed.

The schools which our government actually did build were of low-quality construction and soon became dangerous for any children using them:

USAID's inspector general published a review based on site visits to 30 schools. More than three quarters suffered from physical problems, poor hardware, or other deficiencies that might expose students to "unhealthy and even dangerous conditions." ... This year, BuzzFeed News found that the overwhelming majority of the more than 50 U.S.-funded schools it visited resemble abandoned buildings — marred by collapsing roofs, shattered glass, boarded-up windows, protruding electrical wires, decaying doors, or other structural defects.

An oft-cited goal of the school construction was more education for girls. So, of course, there are lots of lies about this too:

At the schools that were still running, BuzzFeed News found far fewer students than were officially recorded as enrolled. Girls, whom the U.S. particularly wanted to draw into formal schooling, were overcounted in official records by about 40%.

USAID program reports obtained by BuzzFeed News indicate the agency knew as far back as 2006 that enrollment figures were inflated, but American officials continued to cite them to Congress and the American public.

And obviously all of this cost American taxpayers a lot of money—money that in some cases got funneled directly to the Taliban, making the United States even less popular with the much-abused Afghan people:

By obtaining internal records from the Afghan Ministry of Education, never before made public, BuzzFeed News also learned that more than 1,100 schools that the ministry publicly reported as active in 2011 were in fact not operating at all. Provincial documents show that teacher salaries — largely paid for with U.S. funds — continued to pour into ghost schools.

Some local officials even allege that those salaries sometimes end up in the hands of the Taliban. Certainly, U.S.-funded school projects have often lined the pockets of brutal warlords and reviled strongmen, which sometimes soured the local population on the U.S. and the Afghan government.

So, there you have it: fewer schools were built than we were told. The ones that were built are dangerous. The numbers of students (especially girls) reported to us are massively inflated. And our government has figured out yet another way to accidentally donate to terrorists while giving Middle Easterners a (very understandable) reason to be angry at us!

Anyone ready for a new foreign policy yet?