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## Finally “Winning” the Viet Nam War—in Afghanistan

Bill Distler  
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Some military thinkers in the United States believe we could have won the American war in Viet Nam if we had just stayed a little longer. After years of bombing and wounding and killing, they thought they had finally stumbled onto the winning formula.

The new plan had several interlocking parts. First, eliminate the draft. That gets a few million pesky demonstrators off the streets. Second, minimize the deaths of US soldiers by increasing the use of airpower and mercenaries. Third, restrict media access to America’s wars. Pictures of crying mothers and burned children don’t help sell a war. Fourth, replace mass bombing and search and destroy operations with “precision-guided bombing” and selective murder through the secret Phoenix Program.

Although these tactics didn’t have time to “win” the Viet Nam War, they were used and studied in what the Pentagon called our “low-intensity conflicts” in Central America, Angola, and Afghanistan in the 1980s. (They are not low-intensity for the people in the affected countries.) But as the last fifteen years have shown, our military is only winning the freedom to keep us in a constant state of war.

The tactics used in Viet Nam and refined in the 1980s are being used again today in Afghanistan. Afghan president Ashraf Ghani said that when we had 150,000 US and NATO troops in Afghanistan we also had about 400,000 contractors. Since contractors do many of the jobs that were done by soldiers they should be counted as soldiers. So at the height of President

Obama's surge in Afghanistan we had more soldiers there than the 535,000 we said we had at the height of the Viet Nam War.

Now that there are only 8,500 US soldiers (and about 40,000 contractors) in Afghanistan, the media, instead of asking questions, repeats whatever the Pentagon tells them. Using special operations and drones has given the military the freedom they have sought since Viet Nam—the freedom to wreak havoc quietly.

In “The Secret History of SEAL Team 6”, *The New York Times* tells us “the Omega Program” that guides special operations activities in Afghanistan is “modeled after the Vietnam-era Phoenix Program, when CIA officers and Special Operations troops conducted interrogations and assassinations.” Buried deep in a three page story, we learn that these US death squads break into people's homes at 3 am and, with silencers on their rifles, kidnap or kill Afghan “suspects.” Some of the SEALs, not satisfied with knives, use custom-made hatchets during their home invasions. We know that the lunatics of ISIS behead people in public. But we don't know how many people have been beheaded in the middle of the night by our “heroes.”

We see pictures of Syrian children wounded by the Russian and Syrian Air Forces. But we don't see pictures of Afghan children killed and maimed by the 1,200 cluster bombs that the Pentagon says it dropped on Afghanistan between October 2001 and April 2002. We don't see pictures of children being dug out of the rubble caused by US bombs in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, or Libya.

The most successful propaganda tells a small part of the truth while ignoring the larger picture. Our bombs and missiles are presented as clean —almost antiseptic. But our weapons scientists have worked hard to make our bombs more deadly. Napalm wasn't deadly enough for them so they came up with the thermobaric bomb (or thermo-barbaric, as a friend of mine calls them.) These bombs create a cloud of flammable aluminum dust, then ignite it, killing every living thing within the cloud in a flash of fire. *The New York Times* story about the SEALs says they “were equipped with a new generation of grenade—a thermobaric model that is particularly effective in making buildings collapse.” One type of Hellfire missile has a fragmentation sleeve to produce more shrapnel.

Only one question is asked about our precise weapons: do they hit the aiming point? But that is the wrong question. When we think about the atomic bombings in Japan we ask what happened to the people on the ground. But the professional misleaders in our military have switched our attention from the effects of the bomb to an irrelevant question—did it hit the target. This is knowingly dishonest on their part.

The US government and, by their silence, the American people, have given themselves permission to execute “suspects.” How does someone become a suspect, eligible for murder without a hearing? What “intelligence” is required? Rumors? Anonymous tips from political enemies?

Our media accurately describe the Russian and Syrian bombings of Aleppo, Syria as barbaric, but they downplay the barbaric behavior of our military as they bomb, shoot, and hack their way across country after country, creating more enemies and hatred as they go.

*The New York Times* reporter Michael Gordon repeated all the lies about Iraq that Dick Cheney fed to him. He is now the chief military correspondent for *The New York Times* and writes most of their stories about Syria. He is facilitating war against the list of target countries that Senator John McCain identified in numerous radio and TV interviews on September 11, 2001.

Americans , were we misled into the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan? If your answer is yes then you can probably see that it's happening again!