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Al-Qaeda Using US to Accomplish Goals – and US Is Playing Along

By William Pfaff

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It is not widely understood that the policy objective of al-Qaeda is not to attack the Western countries, which in itself accomplishes nothing. Bringing down a Western airliner or blowing up a building in the United States or Britain is of no interest in itself, since the Islamic radical does no good by simply killing unbelievers. The ultimate purpose of al-Qaeda is to bring about an upheaval in the Islamic world in which Islam can be rescued from corrupted governments and degenerate practices.

When Gordon Brown or Barack Obama say that Western soldiers have to fight terrorists abroad so that they will not have to fight them in their own hometowns, they're being silly, as such sophisticated men ought to know.

Why should al-Qaeda or the Taliban wish to fight in Peoria, Ill., or a garden suburb of London? There are no recruits to be made there, and nothing to be gained in the real battle that the Muslim extremists are waging: to radicalize the Muslim world, and to rescue their co-religionists from heretical beliefs and Western practices.

The real reason for attacking Westerners in the West, or in airplanes on the way there, is to provoke the Western governments to send more Western soldiers to Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and elsewhere in the Muslim world to attack Muslim jihadists on the Islamists' own ground, where the latter have tactical and human advantages that Western soldiers can never overcome.

Instead, attack by Western soldiers and the building of Western military bases on the soil of Muslim countries radicalizes and scandalizes ordinary people, and undermines the governments of those countries that choose to align themselves with the invaders – thereby, in the eyes of Islamic true believers, revealing themselves as traitors to orthodox Muslim belief.

The United States and the NATO countries are playing al-Qaeda's game with every planeload of troops they dispatch to the Arab world and to Central Asia.

A headline in the Paris press says: "The CIA and U.S. Special Forces lend a powerful hand to the government of Yemen." The front-page headline in Tuesday's *International Herald Tribune* says: "Yemen corruption blunts Qaeda fight." This report explains that the Yemeni president's government "is filled with members of his family and ... wants to ensure that his son, Ahmed, 38, succeeds him." The story goes on to say that "the economy has collapsed, with oil revenues down and oil and water running out." This is the American-allied regime.

At the end of last year, we read about allegations of corruption in Afghan President Hamid Karzai's own family, and the results of a national election were challenged as falsified. The president of Afghanistan has just ordered the nation's parliament back from vacation in order to vote on his new cabinet nominees. These are to take the place of 17 of his 24 previous cabinet appointments, all rejected by parliament. Mr. Karzai is, of course, the man the United States put in place in Kabul to bring democracy to Afghanistan, so as to save it from the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

No American who witnessed the waltz of U.S. senators with the health industry's lobbyists during the ongoing effort to legislate health reform in the U.S. is in a position to be condescending about foreign corruption. If the United States has an occupying army that put in place, or sustains, the Afghan, Pakistani, or Yemeni government, then the ordinary citizen in those countries will see Americans and NATO as sources of their nation's corruption, and perhaps the main one.

Moreover, the Taliban and al-Qaeda are not fighting against corrupt governments in order to reform them. They want to destabilize and eventually destroy all of them so as to clear a political space in which 40 million Pashtuns and their fellow Sunni Arabs can create a new political dispensation of true believers, while the West declines.

That is fantasy, but it is a fantasy in which the United States and NATO are unwittingly playing leading roles.