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Annals of Liberation: Obama Surge Driving Thousands From Their Homes

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2/6/2010

Barack Obama's Bush-like "surge" in Afghanistan has not even reached its full strength yet, but it is already [driving tens of thousands of Afghan civilians](#) from their homes, as they flee an upcoming massive attack in Helmand province.

The attack -- which the Americans have been trumpeting far in advance -- is designed, we're told, to "protect" the people of the key town of Marjah from the twin scourges of Taliban nogoodniks and drug traffickers. Yet the primary effect of the much-publicized preparations has been to send the residents of the town running for their lives to escape becoming part of the "collateral damage" that always attends these protective, humanitarian endeavors.

Indeed, the real aim of the advance publicity for the attack seems to be forcing mass numbers of civilians to hit the road -- which will then allow the American and British attackers to claim that anyone left behind is an enemy. This in turn will free up the attackers to use heavy weaponry in a "free-fire" zone to clear out the "diehards."

This is, of course, the same strategy used in the savage destruction of Fallujah in Iraq. The city was marked for death after an angry mob mutilated four American mercenaries -- following a series of civilian killings by occupation forces in the preceding weeks: provocations that have been conveniently airbrushed from history (just like the U.S. massacre of Somalis that preceded

the infamous "Black Hawk Down" incident). An initial attack on Fallujah failed in the spring of 2004, largely due to political heat from the vast civilian suffering that was being reported from the city, chiefly from its medical centers.

But in the following months, the noose was tightened around Fallujah's neck. Tens of thousands fled the city to escape the coming second attack, which was well-publicized in advance. Story after story -- or rather, puff piece after puff piece -- about the preparations streamed from the embedded mainstream media reporters. The ostensible aim of the attack was to "eliminate" groups of "diehard terrorists" using Fallujah as a base. But of course, the months of PR about the looming operation meant that the putative targets had plenty of time to slip away. And they did.

Even so, as soon as George W. Bush's re-election was in the bag, the attack was launched. This time, the US brass were careful to eliminate the main source of bad press in the first attack: hospitals were a prime target. [As I noted at the time](#):

One of the first moves in this magnificent feat was the destruction and capture of medical centers. Twenty doctors -- and their patients, including women and children -- were killed in an airstrike on one major clinic, the UN Information Service reports, while the city's main hospital was seized in the early hours of the ground assault. Why? Because these places of healing could be used as "propaganda centers," the Pentagon's "information warfare" specialists told the NY Times. Unlike the first attack on Fallujah last spring, there was to be no unseemly footage of gutted children bleeding to death on hospital beds. This time -- except for NBC's brief, heavily-edited, quickly-buried clip of the usual lone "bad apple" shooting a wounded Iraqi prisoner -- the visuals were rigorously scrubbed.

So while Americans saw stories of rugged "Marlboro Men" winning the day against Satan, they were spared shots of engineers cutting off water and electricity to the city -- a flagrant war crime under the Geneva Conventions, as CounterPunch notes, but standard practice throughout the occupation. Nor did pictures of attack helicopters gunning down civilians trying to escape across the Euphrates River -- including a family of five -- make the TV news, despite the eyewitness account of an AP journalist. Nor were tender American sensibilities subjected to the sight of phosphorous shells bathing enemy fighters -- and nearby civilians -- with unquenchable chemical fire, literally melting their skin, as the Washington Post reports. Nor did they see the fetus being blown out of the body of Artica Salim when her home was bombed during the "softening-up attacks" that raged relentlessly -- and unnoticed -- in the closing days of George W. Bush's presidential campaign, the Scotland Sunday Herald reports.

And now Marjah is being readied for the Fallujah option. (For as we all know, your real tough hombres never take any option off the table.) As the Guardian reports:

Ten of thousands of Afghan civilians are abandoning an area of central Helmland where UK and US forces are set to launch one of the biggest operations of the year. The evacuation of most civilians from the town of Marjah and surrounding areas will give commanders greater leeway to use mortars-and-air-to ground missiles which have enraged Afghans in the past when responsible for civilian deaths. ...

US generals have unusually made no secret of their plan for a major onslaught against the town close to Helmand's besieged provincial capital, Lashkar Gah. Larry Nicholson, commander of the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force which will spearhead the fight, has said he is "not looking for a fair fight." ...

A spokesman for the International Security Assistance Force, as the Nato troops are known, said that the main reason for publicity for the operation was to encourage insurgents to leave, but if civilians were also encouraged to evacuate that would be "helpful".

Yes, it's always helpful to do some pre-winnowing of a densely populated area before you destroy it with mortars and air-to-ground missiles. But of course, while thousands of civilians flee, thousands more have "remained because they could not afford to leave," the Guardian reports. How many of these will be re-classified as "enemy fighters" when their corpses are found in the ruins?

The Afghans themselves know the score:

A Marjah resident, an elder reached by phone, who was not prepared to give his name, said he had evacuated his family a week ago because he feared "the worst attack ever".

"Always when they storm a village the foreign troops never care about civilian casualties at all. And at the end of the day they report the deaths of women and children as the deaths of Taliban," he said.

Slaughter, ruin, fear and exile: yeah, it's the Good War, all right! "The war we should be fighting," as our tough-guy libs kept telling us when putting their always serious, always "nuanced" objections to the Iraq "fiasco" in proper context. Well, they have it now, the war they always wanted. And who knows? Maybe soon they can have their own Fallujah! Won't that be a great apotheosis of Progressivism?