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Afghanistan: If the Enemy Vanishes -- Kill Civilians

by Robin Beste
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The civilian deaths in Kandahar and Marjah are a brutal reminder of the heavy price many Afghans will pay in the months and years to come to save the face of those responsible for prosecuting a futile and unjustifiable war.

NATO's current offensive in the Afghan town of Marjah is being portrayed as a low casualty mission in the "good war" to get rid of the Taliban.

If you were to believe the news broadcasts, it's already a success.

Since the assault was always intended to be as much a publicity stunt as serving any military objective, Barack Obama and Gordon Brown will certainly be pleased at how the media has snapped into line and acted as stenographers for Nato press releases.

The truth is, most of the few hundred Taliban fighters in Marjah vanished well before the much touted offensive began, not being stupid enough to face up to 15,000 of the most heavily armed troops on the planet.

Much of what we've seen on the TV screens looks like random firing into empty space to give the cameras footage for the evening news bulletins.

But, with very few enemy to engage, it wasn't long -- two days in fact-- before tragedy struck when a missile attack looking for Taliban to kill managed to slaughter 12 civilians, five of them children -- the very people this war was supposedly tailored to keep out of harm's way.

The attack on Marjah is no different from the numerous other Nato "clear, hold and build" missions -- except in the number of troops and the amount of media ballyhoo.

And there's no reason why this should be different in the outcome, with the Taliban withdrawing tactically and biding its time, before infiltrating back into the town once the overblown Operation Moshtarak and its accompanying media circus, has moved on to some other flashpoint of resistance to foreign occupation.

The only reason the invading armies continue fighting a war that cannot be won is in the hope that some escape route can be found from Obama and Brown's "war of necessity" that restores Western powers' credibility for invading other countries with impunity.

While the media concentrated all its resources on reporting the instant "success" in Marjah, yet another act of mass murder took place in the Kandahar province, with five civilians killed by a Nato air strike when they were assumed to be "persons planting an IED explosive device", recalling another "regretable incident" last August in the same region, when a group of farmers were killed loading cucumbers onto a lorry, which were mistaken to be munitions.

The civilian deaths in Kandahar and Marjah are a brutal reminder of the heavy price many Afghans will pay in the months and years to come to save the face of those responsible for prosecuting a futile and unjustifiable war.