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Afghanistan: Losing the war

by Rizwan Asghar
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A series of events over the past few months have further reinforced the view that the war in Afghanistan has taken an unwelcome course and Obama's Afghan strategy is in tatters. In a show of desperation, General Petraeus appears to have adopted the "counter-Afghan strategy" after the complete failure of his so-called counter-insurgency strategy.

A recent ITV documentary shows US troops in Afghanistan forcing Afghan people from their homes and then destroying them, simply to provide access for vehicles or lines of sight. Inside reports also suggest that US troops in Afghanistan are so frustrated that children are being picked up one by one and killed ruthlessly.

On March 1, nine Afghan children were killed by Nato helicopters while they were gathering firewood which was no 'heat of the battle blunder'. A few days earlier, on February 17, Nato ground and air strikes had killed 64 civilians including 29 children in the Kunar province. The situation has worsened to the extent that President Karzai has openly turned against the Americans because of the latter's total disregard for the Afghan people's dignity.

Excessive reliance on aerial bombardments by Nato forces while the Taliban continue to use ordinary people as human shields have resulted in civilian deaths and subsequent rage among the Afghans.

Nowadays analysts hired by the CIA are writing in various international newspapers that the US surge is turning the tide against anti-occupation fighters in Afghanistan. At a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, General Petraeus has claimed that "the momentum achieved by the

Taliban since 2005 has been arrested in much of the country and reversed in a number of important areas.” But in reality any gains secured so far are very fragile and problems continue to mount for the imperialist forces. More than 200 Nato troops have been killed in the first five months of 2011.

The Taliban in the south have shown resilience and exercise considerable influence over the bulk of the population, particularly outside urban areas. There has been no apparent diminution in their capacity to fight. In the coming days, the scale of insurgent activity is likely to rise again while the security situation across Afghanistan is fast deteriorating. Attempts to sign up ex-Taliban fighters to a peace and reconciliation programme have resulted in a very small number of recruits coming over to the side of foreign troops.

Special Forces operations, responsible for assassinations and night-time raids on homes, are a cause of alienation among Afghans. Yama Torabi of Integrity Watch has lately stated, “Villagers don’t forgive the US army for killing their sons just because it has built a road or a bridge”.

According to a recent poll, over 90 percent of the population wants the Nato countries to begin withdrawing their forces as soon as possible. Attacks by the anti-occupation forces have increased by 66 percent since last year and anti-occupation fighters have opened new fronts in the north and west of the country.

Although President Obama promised to begin repatriating US troops this July, it is already being said by some US officials that there will be no significant withdrawal. The Pentagon’s proposal is to keep 98,000 US troops on Afghan soil along with 50,000 from other countries for the next year.

The pretext that Nato troops are training local forces to take over the security of the country is quite ridiculous. A report by the US Special Inspector-General for Afghan Reconstruction found that around 27,000 Afghan soldiers – a third of the total – were not present on duty at any given time. This policy has failed in Vietnam and Iraq and is doomed to fail in Afghanistan.

It is said that every time history repeats itself, the price goes up. The case of US madness in Afghanistan is no exception and failure in this war is inevitable.