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No Alternative in Afghanistan?

By Ron Jacobs

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"There is no alternative to continuing the military operations." So said the chief of NATO in a meeting with the press before a NATO summit in Lisbon, Portugal on November 15, 2010. This was a day after Washington's warden in Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, complained loudly about the increase in night raids and air attacks in the US-led battle against Afghans. Karzai's complaints were met with an uproar from some quarters of the US establishment, especially the military and some of the most hawkish members of congress. One of the latter, Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, stated that if the night raids were decreased or ended, "it would be a disaster for the Petraeus strategy." This is important for a couple reasons. First, because it proves that there is no new strategy in Afghanistan--just the same old strategy of killing inhabitants who are in the invader's way. The second reason is more important because of who said it. Graham, who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee, will be part of a new Congress where the hawks will have a greater say. One should expect to see an even greater escalation of the wars and occupations in the next few years because of the hawks' new prominence and the continuing retreat of any opposition to the escalation in Congress and the White House.

An indication of this retreat is the recent acknowledgement that there is no 2011 drawdown date for US troops in Afghanistan. Instead, it is suggested that that date will be sometime in 2014. Given the record of the past nine years, it seems safe to suggest that that date is just another fantasy. There is no plan to end that war. The warmakers will not stop on their own. Like a junkie who has found a good source for his drug of choice, the

Pentagon and its subsidiary industries have found the occupation of Afghanistan to be an excellent source for its addiction--war and profits. To continue the metaphor, it is time for an intervention before the addiction brings us all down. However, as long as the residents of the United States and those countries helping Washington fail to protest, there will be no end to this destructive addiction and the cost to us all will escalate along with the ongoing destruction to Afghanistan and its people.

We intentionally ignore the facts: the wars are a primary cause of the economic depression and the corporations profiting from them are doing so with our money. Every weapon, every piece of ammo, every helicopter and every soldier constitutes the theft of hard-earned dollars from our pockets. Since the invasion of Afghanistan elements of the war industry and those who finance them show levels of profit far beyond those of other industries, with the exception of the energy sector. Of course, the wars and occupations are connected to the control of energy sources. Another indication of the link between neverending war and war industry profits can be found in a brief article from the National Defense Industry Association's journal. Dated November 1, 2010 (just before the US elections), the article assumed a GOP victory and suggested that investors look carefully at the next couple years. It also assumed that the occupations and combat in Iraq and Afghanistan would wind down within the next two years and stated "Weapons manufacturers could be in for a downturn... because the Pentagon will be winding down operations in Iraq and Afghanistan." Given the recent announcement that essentially negates that supposition with the new drawdown date of 2014, this concern no longer exists for those investors.

Indeed, it strengthens the argument that a primary reason for the continuation of this war has nothing to do with anything more than a cynically murderous way to ensure that General Dynamics and the rest of the masters of war stay profitable. It also legitimizes the concern that the 2014 date is no more real than those that have preceded it.

We are the Alternative

Speaking of acting to end the wars and occupations, there are a couple of endeavors underway. The first, led by veterans of these and other US imperial adventures, is called Take A Stand For Peace. This action will take place on December 16th, 2010 at the White House in Washington, DC. Using the example of the bonus marchers of the early 1930s who descended on DC en masse, these veterans are urging people to join them in "nonviolently refusing to leave the White House, willing to be dragged away and arrested if necessary." Quoting Mario Savio's words "There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part; you can't even passively take part, and you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop," the organizers of this protest hope to re-ignite an antiwar movement that mistakenly gave its momentum to the Democrats in 2008 and has yet to reclaim it.

The other actions currently being organized are scheduled for April 9th, 2011 in New York City and San Francisco. The call is being put out by the United National Antiwar Committee (UNAC). This group recently held a meeting in Manhattan where the initial groundwork was laid for these two demonstrations. Responding to the recent FBI raids on antiwar activists in the Midwest and North Carolina, the UNAC added the demands of the Committee to Stop FBI Repression to its agenda and is now working on the initial phases of organizing for two mass demonstrations on April 9, 2011 in the aforementioned cities. As recent mass protests and strikes in France and Britain have shown us, the time for party politics is over. The mainstream parties have failed us. They've attacked education and social services and refused to end the wars, when the wars are a primary, if not the primary, cause of our current economic malaise.

Ron Jacobs is the author of *The Way the Wind Blew: A History of the Weather Underground*. Jacobs' essay on Big Bill Broonzy is featured in CounterPunch's collection on music, art and sex, *Serpents in the Garden*. His first novel, *Short Order Frame Up*, is published by Mainstay Press. His most recent book, titled *Tripping Through the American Night* is published as an ebook. He can be reached at: rjacobs3625@charter.net