

The New Face of Terror in Afghanistan

By Richard Sanders, coordinator, Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade, and editor of *Press for Conversion!*

Afghanistan is once again being ruled by a government dominated by warlords and drug barons. In fact, many of the most powerful religious fundamentalists in the current regime are the self-same warlords who stalked Afghanistan's halls of power during the horrendous reign of terror that devastated the country between 1992 and 1996. These warlords have been returned to power thanks in very large part to financial, logistical, diplomatic and "moral support" provided by the governments of Western Europe and North America.

Military backing from NATO and individual warfighting nations, including—most significantly—the U.S., Canada and Britain, has been essential in securing this regime change and in helping to ensure that the new government can retain and increase its control over the entire country.

Perhaps the biggest difference between this current collection of ruling warlords and previous ones, is the phoney aura of respectability given to them by western governments and the corporate media. The trappings of western-style democracy are now being used to cloak Afghanistan's most nefarious warlords.

The goal of this *Press for Conversion!* is to expose the Big Lie about Afghan "democracy" spouted by our governments and repeated ad nauseum under the slick guise of objective news.

Before providing details about how *real* progressive change has been thwarted at every stage of the supposed "democratic process" that has been imposed on Afghanistan since the U.S. began bombing the country five years ago, it would be useful to present some historical background.

A Fledgling Socialist Regime

In 1973, Afghan's monarch—King Zahir Shah, who had ruled the country for forty years—was finally overthrown. The new government, led by Mohammad Daoud—one of the king's cousins—was supported by leftist organizations and political parties, such as the People's Democratic Party (PDP).

The U.S. government quickly pressured Daoud to sever all ties with the Soviet Union, offered \$2 billion in aid and urged Afghanistan to become an American client state, like Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. The Daoud regime began moving into the U.S. orbit by killing a PDP leader, arresting many others and purging hundreds of PDP sympathizers from government positions. In April 1978, the PDP, with military support, deposed Daoud. The stated goal of this "April revolu-

tion" was to drag Afghanistan out of its feudal existence.

In his classic book on CIA wars, *Killing Hope* (2001), former U.S. State Department official, William Blum, outlined some of the actions of this fledgling, socialist government:

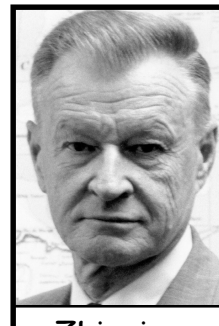
"[It] declared a commitment to Islam within a secular state, and to non-alignment in foreign affairs.... They pushed radical reforms, they talked about class struggle, they used anti-imperialist rhetoric, they supported Cuba, they signed a friendship treaty and other cooperative agreements with the Soviets and they increased the number of Soviet civilian and military advisers in Afghanistan.... In May 1979, British political scientist Fred Halliday said 'probably more has changed in the countryside over the last year than in the two centuries since the state was established.'"

Some of their more significant initiatives were to:

- ✓ cancel the debts of peasants to their landlords,
- ✓ build hundreds of schools and medical clinics,
- ✓ outlaw child marriage,
- ✓ outlaw the exchange of women for money/commodities,
- ✓ legalize the formation and work of trade unions, and
- ✓ promote women's literacy and education.



By early 1979, the U.S. was aiding various bands of fundamentalist, Afghan terrorists in a deliberate effort to draw the Soviets into the war to help their besieged allies.



Zbigniew Brzezinski

The CIA's Biggest Covert War Ever

The U.S. was determined to crush this socialist experiment, and allied itself with large landowners, tribal chiefs, businessmen and royalty. Within two months, the new government was under violent attack by various ultraconservative groups of Islamist guerillas, called the mujahideen.

William Blum cites a classified, U.S. State Department report (August 1979) which said that America's


"larger interests would be served by the demise of the regime, despite whatever setbacks this might mean for future social and economic reforms in Afghanistan."

In 1998, Jimmy Carter's National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, revealed in a *Le Nouvel Observateur* interview (Jan. 15) that the president had signed an agreement to arm the mujahideen at least six months *before* the Soviet invasion in late 1979. In fact, since at least early 1979, the U.S. had been meeting with mujahideen warlords, assisting their terrorist efforts and using them as cold-war pawns.

According to Brzezinski, the purpose of covertly aiding these contras (as their drug-smuggling, counter-revolutionary equivalents in Nicaragua were called) was to provoke the Soviets into sending troops to support their besieged, Afghan-government allies. Brzezinski proudly defended this strategy saying:

"What is most important to the history of the world? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some stirred-

Background



"From 1992 to 1996, the Northern Alliance was a symbol of massacre, systematic rape and pillage. Which is why...the U.S. State Department welcomed the Taliban when they arrived in Kabul. The Northern Alliance left the city in 1996 with 50,000 dead behind it. Now its members are our foot soldiers. What-in God's name-are they going to do in our name?"
Robert Fisk,
The Independent, Nov. 14, 2001.



Kabul photo: Didier Lefevre, Panos Pictures

up Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the cold war?"

Supplying these "stirred up Moslems" became the largest CIA covert war in history. The U.S. spent untold billions arming, training and supplying various ethnically-diverse bands of fundamentalist fighters who hated each other almost as much as they hated the schools, health clinics, co-ops and other government facilities that they attacked.

Just as the CIA, during its covert operations in south-east Asia and Latin America, had helped fund their dirty wars with hidden profits from the multibillion-dollar drug trade, America's mujahideen footsoldiers were on the frontline of opium production for export. Opium poppies provide the raw material for the manufacture of heroin, of which 90% of the world's supply now comes from the Afghanistan.

Soviet Occupation and Mujahideen War

Carter's administration was finally successful in drawing Soviet troops into the Afghan theatre. They entered the fray in late-December 1979, and a Vietnam-like quagmire ensued. A U.S.-led media campaign quickly turned world opinion against this Soviet intervention. But, in a typical example of double standards, the U.S. escaped criticism for its role in building up the other side in that war; the various factions of right-wing, mujahideen terrorists, like Osama bin Laden.

The war was also successful, from the U.S. standpoint, in depleting Soviet finances (bled almost dry by the decades-long U.S. arms race and, before that, by their costly war against fascism). The Soviet's Afghan war also created strong internal dissent, thus further aiding America's goal.

After Soviet forces withdrew in 1989, the Afghan regime of President Mohammad Najibullah held on for three more years, fighting the foreign-backed, terrorists on their own.

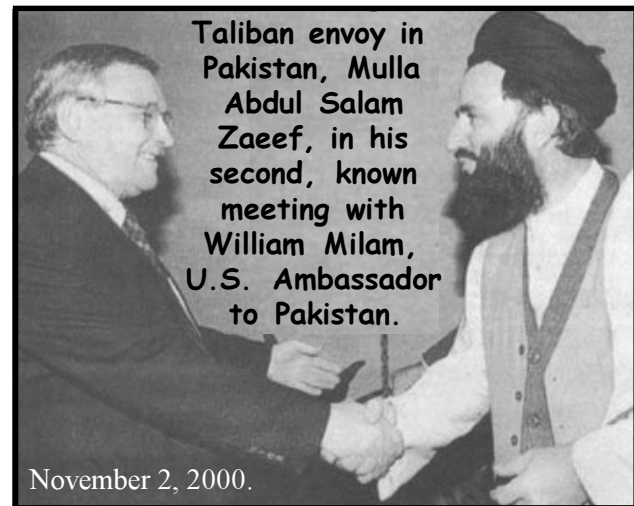
Fundamentalist Infighting and the ISA

After the fall of Najibullah's government, the various fundamentalist militias and their leaders, or warlords, became locked in a brutal war against each other. As they vied to see who would control Afghanistan, its people and resources, much of Kabul was reduced to rubble and some 50,000 innocent civilians were massacred in the indiscriminate crossfire.

The fundamentalist regime that these mujahideen fighters finally established in 1992, was called the Islamic State of Afghanistan (ISA). Many of the warlords now sit-

ting in the Afghan parliament, and holding top cabinet posts, are battle-hardened mujahideen fighters once tied to the ISA.

It was during this horrendous, four-year reign of terror, that the ISA's president, Burhanuddin Rabbani, welcomed Osama bin Laden and his network of jihadists into Afghanistan. They were given safe refuge for their military/terrorist training camps, which had begun under U.S. tutelage.



Taliban, the Ultra-Fundamentalists

In response to the ISA's much-despised, warlord-based regime, the Taliban movement spread like wildfire across Afghanistan. To defend themselves from the Taliban, the besieged ISA government relied on a network of militias called the National Islamic United Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, now simply called the Northern Alliance. Based largely in Afghanistan's north, these warring fundamentalist groups were unsuccessful in protecting Rabbani's ISA.

In 1996, when the Taliban seized control, many—including the U.S. government—welcomed their victory. One of their first acts was to overrun the UN compound and hang former-president Najibullah, who had taken refuge there.

The Taliban were then quick to establish a strong, central government and military, to rule the country under their own strict, Islamist interpretation of sharia law. Being open to U.S. business, they made a much-coveted deal with America's Unocal to build a trans-Afghan oil/gas pipeline, to help connect Caspian Sea reserves to the Arabian Gulf.

America's top man in Afghanistan, president Hamid

Karzai, is a former, oil-industry consultant and was the Taliban's foreign minister in 1996. And, a Unocal consultant, Zalmay Khalilzad, who was America's ambassador to Afghanistan (2003-2005), is now the U.S. ambassador in Iraq. He was an unabashed apologist for the Taliban until the U.S. tide finally turned against them after September 11, 2001.

However, despite their closeness to U.S. power brokers, the Taliban soon became a liability to American interests. In the eyes of global public opinion, the Taliban were pariahs. Their misogynist treatment of women was especially offensive and was the target of many international campaigns. In what was perhaps a futile effort to clean up their image, the U.S. funded a Taliban effort in 2000 which virtually eradicated the country's opium crop. But it was too little, too late. With the so many people around the world rejecting the Taliban, and with the international PR onslaught against them gaining momentum, the U.S. turned course in midstream and rejected their new allies in Afghanistan. A newly minted batch of Afghan warlords was then needed, and they needed international "legitimacy."

The 9/11 attacks of 2001, conveniently supplied the U.S. administration with a pretext to falsely justify their invasion of Afghanistan. Catching bin Laden, stopping the Taliban's flagrant violations of human rights (especially their abuse of women) and building democracy in Afghanistan, never were—and still aren't—the real reasons for this war.

U.S. warplanes started bombing Afghanistan on October 6, 2001, and by March 2002, their relentless attacks had killed 3,000-3,400 innocent civilians. By mid-November 2001, America's proxy warriors—the terrorist Northern Alliance—with much support from the U.S. military had taken Kabul and were the defacto rulers of Afghanistan, again.

All that remained was to make their reign seem democratic. That was done over the next five years, in a multi-stage process outlined in this *Press for Conversion!*

Name Index

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Abdullah | 1,9,13,16,19,37 | 1,7,9,13,16,29 |
| Afghan National Liberation Front | 18,28 | Khalilzad, Zalmay |
| Ahmad, Qazi Nazir | 40 | 5,10,12,13,15,18,21,25,27,28,32,33 |
| Ahmadi, Shukria Paikin | 40 | Khan, Ismail |
| Ahmadzai, Ahmad Shah | 1,26 | 1,10,13,15,29,32,42 |
| Al-Mas, Haji | 1,33,36 | Massoud, Ahmad Shah |
| Arsala, Hedayat | 1,2,9 | 6,7,9,16,17,29 |
| Barakzai, Shukria | 36,40 | Massoud, Ahmad Zia |
| Brahimi, Lakhdar | 8,10,12,18 | 1,29 |
| Dostum, Abdul Rahim | 1,7,9,10,11,24,28,31,32,42 | Mohaqq, Haji Muhammad |
| Durrana, Parwin | 40 | 1,7,9,28,32,34 |
| Fahim, Mohammad Qasim | 1,9,12,13,14,16,36 | Mojaddedi, Segbatullah |
| Hekmatyar, Gulbaddin | 1,12,13,15,42 | 1,18,20 |
| <i>Hizb-i Wahdat-i Islami-yi Afghanistan</i> | 6,7,9,11 | Muhsini, Muhammad Asif |
| Ishaqzai, Malali | 40 | 1,7 |
| <i>Ittihad-i Islami Bara-yi Azadi Afghanistani</i> | 6,7 | Najibullah, Mohammad |
| Jalal, Masooda | 25 | 4,6,7 |
| <i>Jamiat-i Islami-yi Afghanistan</i> | 6,7,11,15,27,40 | Niazai, Saifoor |
| Joya, Malalai | 20,21,38,39,40 | 40 |
| <i>Jumbish-i Milli-yi Islami-yi Afghanistan</i> | 6,7,11 | Pedram, Abdul Latif |
| Karzai, Hamid | 1,5,8,9,11,12,13,14,16,18,19,21,22,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,36,39,41,42,43,45 | 25,30 |
| Khaksar, Mohammed | 32 | Qadir, Haji Abdul |
| Khalili, Abdul Karim | | 1,9,10,13,16 |
| | | Qanooni, Younis |
| | | 1,9,12,13,15,16,28,29,32,33,34,40 |
| | | Rabbani, Burhanuddin |
| | | 1,4,6,7,8,9,12,14,15,17,18,19,25,27,33,34,39,40 |
| | | Rocketi, Mullah Abdul Salam |
| | | 1,33,36 |
| | | Samar, Sima |
| | | 13 |
| | | Sayyaf, Abdul Rasul |
| | | 1,6,7,13,27,32,33,34,36,40 |
| | | Shah, King Zahir |
| | | 8,9,10,11,12,14,15,17,25,33 |
| | | Sherzai, Gul Agha |
| | | 1,10 |
| | | Shinwari, Mulavi Fazal Hadi |
| | | 1,9,11,13,15 |
| | | Sirat, Abdul Satar |
| | | 25 |

Note: Page numbers in bold indicate photos.



Google ranks us #3 for
"Peace and Activism" in Canada

Visit
COAT
on the
WEB



Please link to our site:

<http://coat.ncf.ca>



Diane Holmes

City Councillor/
Conseillère municipale
Quartier Somerset Ward
110, av Laurier Ave. O.W.,
Ottawa ON K1R 1J1
tel: 580-2484 fax: 580-2524
Diane.Holmes@ottawa.ca



Would you
be willing to
serve in the
military and
possibly go into
zones of conflict
and war?

If not, why are you
willing to pay for it?

Canada supports the rights of conscientious objectors (COs) to not serve in the military.

In the modern world, it is our money that goes to war and military through taxation. COs think of this as "fiscal conscription."

If you would like more information about the movement to allow Canadians to redirect their military taxes to peaceful purposes, please contact us.

Conscience Canada Inc.
901-70 Mill St.,
Toronto ON M5A 4R1
consciencecanada@shaw.ca