

Afghanistan War Is Raging Out of Control

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

If the international military operation in Afghanistan has been such a smashing success, why do the British need to send in yet more reinforcements? The decision to do so was announced on July 11. Defence Secretary Des Browne told members of Parliament that the U.K. forces would be beefed up in southern Afghanistan, from 3,600 to 4,500 by autumn. To give the reason for the build-up, Browne cited military officials: The Taliban was putting up resistance “in some places more virulent than expected,” and “had drawn [the British] in sooner than we might have liked.”

This is typical British understatement. In fact, the situation in Afghanistan, and especially in the southern Helmand province, where Britain is to take over leadership from the United States, is utterly out of control. Neither the “central government,” of President Hamid Karzai, nor the U.S. Operation “Enduring Freedom” with its 23,000 troops, nor the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) with its 15,000 to 20,000 troops, nor the Afghan security forces of 70,000, is in control. Insurgents arriving from Iraq, where the resistance has established itself as a self-subsisting organism, have carried with them new, sophisticated methods and new weapons, like the Improvised Explosive Devices, which are used so frequently in Iraq.

Not only have the numbers of casualties been steadily on the rise, but virtually the entire Afghan population has turned against all foreign troops and foreign personnel, in response to indiscriminate killings of civilians by the occupying forces. The riots which broke out in Kabul at the end of May, in response to an American army truck ramming civilian vehicles and killing several Afghans, were just the foretaste of what is to come, if no dramatic changes are made.

From Resistance to War

Gen. Mirza Aslam Beg (ret.), former Chief of Staff of the Pakistani Army, told *EIR* in a telephone interview July 11, that what has occurred in Afghanistan since the 2001 war, is exactly what he had predicted: “I told [Pakistani President] Musharraf,” he recalled, “be-

fore the 2001 war, and I wrote in September 2001, that the Taliban would not be able to withstand sustained aerial attacks by the United States. I said they would go to Kandahar, and establish a base support line from Quetta to Peshawar, as in 1980-89, during the Soviet occupation. That is what has been revived now,” he said. The areas from Kandahar and Jalalabad to Waziristan, in the northwest province of Pakistan, to Baluchistan, he said, were now under Taliban-led control—despite the deployment of 80,000 Pakistani troops on the border. He estimates that the Taliban controls 19 of 30 provinces.

The arrival of the British troops in Helmand province, General Beg said, was tantamount to “waving a red flag before the Afghans,” for historical reasons. The Afghans “have always fought the British, and it has always been a total disaster for the British.” This new conflict would be “the fourth war,” he said. (The first three Afghan-British wars were in 1838, 1841, and 1919). Regarding news of reinforcements, Beg said, “Let them send in more troops; they will only suffer more.” He said, “The dream of holding onto Afghanistan with 11 strong bases, won’t work.” Beg stressed that the Afghans, a people “who have rejected occupation,” would resist. “They are not tired of fighting,” he said, noting that the Pushtun majority, from which the resistance is drawn, constitutes 55-60% of the population.





U.S. Army/SPC Christopher S. Barnhart

Members of the 314th Psychological Operations Battalion, on patrol in Ghazni, Afghanistan. The only solution, LaRouche said, lies in, first, acknowledging that the United States cannot sustain the occupation of Afghanistan, any more than it can sustain the occupation of Iraq.

Helmand province, where the British have settled in, is the center of the intensified conflict, but although it is the location of the most advanced stage of warfare, the rest of the country is not stable. According to a report just released by Human Rights Watch, large parts of the country have witnessed armed attacks by the Taliban and other groups, against teachers, students, and schools, considered “soft targets.”¹ The idea is to terrorize the population, so that it will reject the government, as unable to protect them.

These attacks, mounted by the Taliban, as well as local warlords and criminal gangs, have increased dramatically: There were more such attacks in the first half of this year than in all of 2005. As a result, panicked parents are not sending their children to school, especially girls.

The Human Rights Watch report identifies the armed opposition as including three groups: the Taliban, its allies, and Pushtun warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar; “regional warlords and militia commanders, ostensibly loyal to the central government, now entrenched as power brokers after the flawed parliamentary elections of October 2005”; and criminal gangs involved in the opium trade, which provides the financing.

What Is To Be Done?

For the British, the solution to this appears to be, to accept the state of war, and increase troop strength in order to fight it. This is in spite of the fact that the official mission of the British is to establish order and prosperity.

U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who

1. “Lessons in Terror: Attacks on Education in Afghanistan,” Human Rights Watch (London, July 2006).

dropped into Kabul on July 11, responded to the situation by merely voicing concern about stopping the narcotics trade. (Unmentioned, of course, was that the United States works closely with the drug warlords against the Taliban!) Speaking to press while in flight, and in Dushanbe en route to Kabul, Rumsfeld admitted that the level of Taliban-inspired violence in Afghanistan is “higher than it has been,” and he said he was “concerned about the role that narcotics are playing” because the drug money “could conceivably end up adversely affecting the democratic process.”

Rumsfeld’s absurd “solution,” was to prevail on the Europeans and Russians to take the initiative, because they are the countries which have the demand for Afghan drugs! After a meeting with Tajik President Rakmanov, Rumsfeld told the press: “The question was posed, ‘What went wrong?’ There are too many people demanding drugs and supplying large amounts of money to get them. That’s what’s going wrong,” he said. A day later in Kabul, Rumsfeld said that there were no plans for more U.S. troops, and he again called on other countries to help establish security in Afghanistan.

In contrast, there is the proposal of Lyndon LaRouche: The only solution, LaRouche said, lies in, first, acknowledging that the United States cannot sustain the occupation of Afghanistan, any more than it can sustain the occupation of Iraq. This move out of Afghanistan must take place, according to LaRouche, in parallel with preparations to withdraw from Iraq, in the context of a U.S.-backed regional security arrangement, involving all of Iraq’s neighbors, plus Egypt. These are the nations whose Foreign Ministers met in Tehran on July 8-9, and drafted a workable document calling for foreign troop withdrawal, and precisely such a regional security agreement.

An integral part of this security arrangement for South-west Asia, according to the “LaRouche Doctrine” issued two years ago (reprinted below), is a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which the Cheney neo-conservative forces in the United States have just dangerously escalated.

The precondition for Afghanistan’s security, is that the United States must leave. General Beg expressed his agreement that there must be an exit strategy, and a clear schedule for withdrawal of foreign troops. He said negotiations must begin, among the Afghan government, the resistance groups, and the occupying forces. Beg recalled that Taliban leader Mullah Omar had said two years ago that first a withdrawal plan had to be presented, after which they could sit down and talk about how to return to peace. In General Beg’s view, the United Nations should be brought into such talks, and would be acceptable as a peacekeeping force as well as an institution involved in reconstruction—“but not U.S. or NATO forces,” he stressed.

Asked whether he thought such a development were possible, given the contrary policy intent of the neo-cons, Beg simply said, “The only other option is disaster; necessity demands the right decision.”