
Afghan Fiasco:

Does President Obama Need a Hearing Aid?

by Ramtanu Maitra

June 25—On June 23, President Obama summarily dismissed Gen. Stanley McChrystal as the U.S. military chief in Afghanistan following the publication of an article based on an extended interview with him in the counterculture magazine *Rolling Stone*. The article featured disparaging remarks by the general and his fiercely loyal staff about some of Obama's senior civilian advisors and Vice President Joe Biden. McChrystal was replaced by Gen. David Petraeus, the present Centcom chief, as U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan.

Upon his appointment of Petraeus, Obama, totally oblivious of the ground situation in Afghanistan, issued a statement, in which he said that the change in command of U.S. troops in Afghanistan would not change the Administration's policy in the war, which will enter a transition phase in 2011. Obama said Petraeus "understands the strategy because he helped shape it," adding, "Right now we're losing the tactical-level fight in the chase for a strategic victory. How long can that be sustained?"

No Change in Policy

The appointment of Petraeus made it evident that the counterinsurgency (COIN) policy being employed in the Afghan War, adopted by the Obama Administration last Fall, which has become as destructive as the failed Vietnam War policy of the last century, will be continued. As one unnamed civilian advisor to the U.S. military in Afghanistan told the *Washington Post* on June 23, "the strategy McChrystal put together is a counterinsurgency strategy, and Petraeus is the godfather of counterinsurgency. It's putting Yoda in charge of running the war," he said, referring to the fictional Jedi master in the "Star Wars" universe.

Simply put, the grinding war will continue leading to further destruction of the U.S. military, yielding nothing

but more opium from the fields of Afghanistan; creating more heroin addicts around the world; weakening nations; and fattening the wallets of City of London and Wall Street bankers.

There is a reason why this author wonders whether President Obama needs a hearing aid: One obvious reason, is that McChrystal made these "disparaging remarks," about a policy which has no purpose and is not achievable. In addition, McChrystal was left to fight al-Qaeda, the Taliban, Washington's Af-Pak envoy Richard Holbrooke, Vice President Joe Biden, and U.S. Ambassador to Kabul Karl Eikenberry. The general wanted direct access to the President, but was thwarted by a White House, where, as one Washington source pointed out, duplicity is not just acceptable, it is a necessity. If Obama had cared to listen to, or read, what eyewitnesses have been reporting from the ground, he would have realized that there is nothing to win in this war: Instead, Afghanistan, and the entire region, would lose a lot if it is pursued any longer.

Anyone can see that the COIN policy has failed. That, however, does not mean that the counterterrorism effort, which is being pushed by an other powerful lobby in Washington, has any meaning whatsoever. This was what McChrystal pointed out in the *Rolling Stone* piece, when he said: "The Russians killed 1 million Afghans, and that didn't work." The Russians pursued counterterrorism in Afghanistan for almost ten years, before showing their weary and wounded backs to the Afghans, and trudging back home through the Salang tunnel.

The failure of the COIN program can be seen at Marjah. On Feb. 13, under McChrystal's leadership, the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF)—a mish-mash of U.S. and NATO troops, with the Afghan National Army (ANA)—began a military campaign, Operation Moshtarak, ostensibly the largest in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban, in the southern province of Helmand. The main target of the offensive was widely considered to be Marjah, a small town in the central part of the province, which had been under control of Taliban militants, as well as drug traffickers, for years. With a lot of trumpeting, the campaign to win the "hearts and minds" of the southern Afghan Pushtuns residing there was launched. Afghan troops were given a lead role in the ground forces, comprising about 60% of those troops. Around 8,000 ground forces and 7,000 support troops are involved, when Coalition troops are included.



White House/Pete Souza

Gen. Stanley McChrystal (shown here with President Obama May 19) opened up to Rolling Stone, because he was worried about the “Vietnam Syndrome”—that the military would be blamed for the failure of U.S. policy in Afghanistan, LaRouche explained. Under Obama, U.S. and NATO forces are there only to protect Britain’s poppy fields.

Weakening the U.S. Military

Four months later, the situation in Marjah has deteriorated to the point that the ISAF troops have been confined to a virtual stockade, harassed by a couple hundred of insurgents, shooting at them from all angles. The objective to capture, hold, and administer—the magic words of COIN—has long been given a go-by. U.S. and NATO troops are out there trying to stay alive.

Why has it come to such a sorry pass? That becomes evident from eyewitness reports. For example, C.J. Chivers, writing from Marjah for the *New York Times*, described on June 23, the shattered morale of the troops engaged in this impossible mission. “Young officers and enlisted soldiers and Marines, typically speaking on the condition of anonymity to protect their jobs, speak of ‘being ‘handcuffed,’ of not being trusted by their bosses and of being asked to battle a canny and vicious insurgency ‘in a fair fight.’”

Some rules meant to enshrine counterinsurgency principles into daily practices, they say, do not merely transfer risks away from civilians. They transfer risks away from the Taliban. Before the rules were tightened, one Army major who had commanded an infantry company, told the *Times*, “firefights in Afghanistan had a half-life.” By this, he meant that skirmishes often

were brief, lasting roughly half an hour. The Taliban would ambush patrols, typically break contact, and slip away as patrol leaders organized and escalated Western firepower in response.

Now, with fire support often restricted, or even idled, Taliban fighters seem noticeably less worried about an American response, many soldiers and Marines say. Firefights often drag on, sometimes lasting hours, and costing lives. The United States’ material advantages are not robustly applied; troops are engaged in rifle-on-rifle fights on the enemy’s turf. One Marine infantry lieutenant, during fighting in Marjah this year, told Chivers he had all but stopped seeking air support while engaged in firefights. He spent too much time on the radio trying to justify its need, he said, and the aircraft never arrived,

they arrived too late, or the pilots were reluctant to drop their ordnance.

“I’m better off just trying to fight my fight, and maneuver the squads, and not waste the time or focus trying to get air,” he said. Several infantrymen have also said that the rules are so restrictive that pilots are often not allowed to attack fixed targets—say, a building or tree line, from which troops are taking fire—unless they can personally see the insurgents doing the firing. This has led to situations that many soldiers describe as absurd, including decisions by patrol leaders to have fellow soldiers move briefly out into the open to draw fire once aircraft arrive, so the pilots might be cleared to participate in the fight.

Financing the Killers

In addition, what has been known to the outside world for years, has now been presented to the American people by a Report of the Majority Staff, prepared under the chairmanship of Rep. John F. Tierney (D-Mass.), Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, in June 2010. The report pointed out that the task of feeding, fueling, and arming American troops at over 200 forward operating bases and combat outposts sprinkled across a difficult and hostile terrain with only minimal road infrastructure, is handled by

what is called Host Nation Trucking (HNT), a \$2.16 billion contract split among eight Afghan, American, and Middle Eastern companies. Most of the prime contractors and their trucking subcontractors hire local Afghan security providers for armed protection of the trucking convoys.

Transporting valuable and sensitive supplies in highly remote and insecure locations requires extraordinary levels of security. A typical convoy of 300 supply trucks going from Kabul to Kandahar, for example, will travel with 400 to 500 guards, in dozens of trucks armed with heavy machine-guns and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs). The “security” to these convoys is provided by the insurgents, who are paid with American taxpayers’ money, for, later, killing American soldiers or those Afghans who allow the insurgents to take a piece of the pie along the way, also for the purpose of killing American soldiers. This has been allowed to continue because, according to Washington, there is no better way of doing this.

The Afghan War cannot be won, because there is nothing to win. The only legitimate objective that President Obama has, as the Commander-in-Chief, is to wipe out the Afghan opium, which has shown phenomenal growth in recent years, under the British occupation of Helmand, the most prolific opium-growing region in Afghanistan. To infest Afghanistan with poppy, is the policy run top-down from Britain, the old colonial handlers of opium. What the U.S. troops have begun to realize, and speak out bitterly about, is they are being asked to lay down their lives to protect drug warlords and traffickers.

In essence, all that the Obama Administration has done, is to go along with this British imperial policy, by using the U.S. military to protect the drug traffickers, who generate oodles of cash for the bankrupt bankers of City of London and Wall Street. This was pointed out, at least a year ago, by the United Nations Office of Drug and Crimes (UNODC) chief, Antonio Maria Costa.

Obama’s “benign neglect” of the Afghan opium explosion is not only destroying the U.S. military, but is further pushing Afghanistan to the edge of the abyss. Already a depleted nation, fighting for the last 30 years—first, in the war launched by Soviets that lasted for ten years; then the civil war launched by the druglords and warlords, that lasted for another ten years; and, after a respite of two years, the ongoing oc-

cupation by the U.S. and NATO troops since 2001—Afghanistan has no institutions, no infrastructure, devastated agriculture, and hundreds of thousands of opium addicts. The addiction has now become a part of the society, and, as Dr. Bruce Goldberg of the University of Florida pointed out in his recent report, Afghan infants are becoming addicted. The homes of Afghans are now smeared with opium and heroin. In other words, what the Obama Administration is allowing to occur in Afghanistan is sheer criminality.

The elimination of drugs, however, will be the first, and most important step in allowing the Afghans to set up institutions. Without a total eradication of opium, Afghanistan has no hope, and dangers will continue to mount in the region. A recent report by the U.S. Geological Survey shows that Afghanistan has huge stores of iron, copper, cobalt, gold, and critical industrial metals like lithium. These reserves are so big, and include so many minerals that are essential to modern industry, that Afghanistan could eventually be transformed into one of the most important mining centers in the world, U.S. officials believe.

In 2004, American geologists, sent to Afghanistan as part of a broader reconstruction effort, stumbled across an intriguing series of old charts and data at the library of the Afghan Geological Survey in Kabul, that hinted at major mineral deposits in the country. They soon learned that the data had been collected by Soviet mining experts during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s, but cast aside when the Soviets withdrew in 1989. “This will become the backbone of the Afghan economy,” said Jalil Jumriany, an advisor to the Afghan minister of mines.

Ferghana Valley—The Next Target

However, in order to make it the “backbone of the Afghan economy,” the war has to end, and the British-run opium industry must cease to exist. If it is allowed to continue further, it is going to engulf the Central Asian nations touching the borders of Russia and China, two powerful nations. With the riot in southern Kyrgyzstan this month, the drug mafia, and its usual collaborators, have sounded the clarion call. Their target is to unleash a long war in the Ferghana Valley, drawing in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, in particular, and cause an Afghan-style opium explosion there. Already, the Ferghana Valley is producing hundreds of tons of opium, besides being one of the

important transit points to get the Afghan heroin to Russia.

The Ferghana Valley was cut up into three pieces following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Such fragmentation gave rise to dissensions among the countries that each got a piece of it. Furthermore, the Valley is the most fertile land where water is plentiful in the water-starved Central Asia. This dissension among the nations over who should own the Ferghana Valley has allowed the foreign NGOs to move in. Drug-legalization promoter George Soros's Ferghana Valley project is at least a decade old.

The Soros Foundation is involved in "supporting and developing the socio-economic infrastructure" of the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions, where, incidentally, riots took place this June. There were reports that the Soros-funded Open Society Foundation had been active financially, in pushing through the now-defunct Tulip Revolution. Soros's Foundation, which promotes the legalization of opium production, "to help ease financial problems of the farmers," has apparently lost out to

the drug mafia. One may also ask: Was the Tulip Revolution organized to hand over southern Kyrgyzstan to the drug mafia? If that was the intent, it has mostly succeeded.

In addition, an alliance between the drug mafia, headed by the younger son of the ousted Kyrgyzstan President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, Maksim Bakiyev, and the British forces has been established. Maksim has ownership in a British soccer club, the Blackpool Football Club, which like most British sports clubs, depends on drug money to pay its players. Maksim Bakiyev fled to Britain seeking asylum, and he is now under protection of the British Border Forces.

Under the circumstances, all insidious forces continue to grow stronger. The massive amounts of opium and heroin flowing in from Afghanistan have not only strengthened the drug mafia, the bankers, and others associated with those cash-generating criminals, it has also strengthened the hands of the Islamic fundamentalists, represented by Hizb ut-Tahrir, who are headquartered in Britain.

LaRouche: Wipe Out the Afghan Opium Trade

June 26—Lyndon LaRouche emphasized in discussions with colleagues last week that the military revolt, represented by Gen. Stanley McChrystal's ouster as commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, following his highly publicized break in *Rolling Stone* magazine, with U.S.-NATO policy there, is yet another indication that the Obama Presidency is on the ropes. The mass strike that began last August in town hall meetings across the country, has now "trickled up" to the top military brass.

LaRouche said that McChrystal, like many other American military commanders, was worried about the "Vietnam War Syndrome"—the idea that the military will be blamed for the failure. "There is a dynamic within the military command, that extends far beyond General McChrystal. They see Afghanistan, increasingly, as a hopeless case. They want to get out."

LaRouche provided his own assessment: "We should go in and do what has to be done: Wipe out the opium trade, at every level. The problem is that Obama is unwilling to do that—because it is not British policy to wipe out the Afghan opium business. Russia would work with the U.S. to accomplish this, India would help, for their own reasons. And even Pakistan would see such an action as an opportunity to free themselves from the London/Saudi problems."

LaRouche warned that it would be crucial to "watch out for the Israeli screw-up factor. Israel, under Netanyahu, is totally run by the British. Israel hates to hear it said, but they are a puppet of London, and they would be used, potentially, to sabotage any serious effort to do the one thing that would change the Afghan situation for the better: Wipe out the dope trade."

LaRouche observed that, while he totally disagreed with the Petraeus/McChrystal Afghan counterinsurgency strategy, he viewed the McChrystal affair as an indication of the military institutions' frustration with Obama. "And that is totally understandable."