

# **“Worse than a Crime”: Pentagon Inspector finds Kabul Drone Strike Killing 10 not a Violation of Law (!)**

*by Juan Cole, published on Informed Comment, November 6, 2021*

Ann Arbor (Informed Comment) – Paul Handley of AFP reports that the US Air Force Inspector General, Lieutenant General Sami Said, found that a drone strike that mistakenly killed 10 civilian non-combatants, including 7 children, in Afghanistan on August 29 violated no laws, including the law of war.

When Napoleon had the royalist Duc d'Enghien assassinated in 1804, Talleyrand is said to have observed, *“It was worse than a crime, it was a mistake.”*

The same sentiment, whether originally expressed by Talleyrand or someone else, seems to apply here.

One of the reasons that the United States refuses to join the International Criminal Court at the Hague is that Washington does not want such assessments to be double-checked in an impartial tribunal.

Gen. Said's reasoning is that no one involved thought civilians would be killed. The target was a white Toyota of a sort US intelligence believed the ISIS-K terrorist group intended to use as a car bomb, but field agents trailed the wrong white Toyota. This one belonged to an aid worker. The Toyota was targeted while sitting outside a house. Gen. Said says that the drone



targeting personnel believed the house was empty. A child came out of the house toward the Toyota to greet his father 2 minutes before the launch, and while this event was caught on video, no one noticed it and they still fired the drone.

US intelligence indicated that a bomb would be brought to the driver of the white Toyota in a computer bag, and American field agents witnessed him receiving a computer bag. In reality, it was just a computer bag.

In the law of war you are not allowed to take a shot if you think it will kill or injure a lot of civilian non-combatants. Here, the Inspector General concluded that intentions were pure, since the targeting team believed the people in the car were militants and that the house was empty. In fact, they blew up a car full of innocent civilians and also the family members in the house, including children.

At least in civilian law, I would say we have here a case of criminal negligence.

I mean, really, this tragedy resulted from a series of monumental screw-ups and I hope somebody's career suffers for it, at least. They *trailed the wrong car*! They couldn't tell the difference between a laptop and a bomb. They declared a building empty that had a whole family in it. They killed an

aid worker while trying to target terrorists. They seem to have had some (bad) human intelligence, but I suspect that some of the mistakes were from relying too much on signals intelligence.

But if you started charging military personnel with criminal negligence for what they call “*collateral damage*,” you’d empty out the Pentagon and make war impossible. In many ways the entire Iraq War was criminal negligence on the part of the Bush administration.

The August 29 mistake cost the United States enormously in public opinion in the region. Even the mainstream Turkish paper Haberturk ran a column speaking of how cruel the Americans had been to dismember their own aid worker in this way, which also expressed skepticism that the US would take in very many Afghan refugees (what with us being such cruel people). This, according to BBC Monitoring.

The Iranian press maintained that the Pentagon would never even have admitted that the Kabul strike was an error if it had not been for a detailed *New York Times* investigation. They are deeply skeptical of US military intentions in the Middle East to begin with, but this strike made us look sinister and incompetent all at once.

Since the US government has started relying so much on drone strikes, as it has reduced its military footprint in the Greater Middle East, we need to know that the drones are hitting legitimate targets. If the drone operators can’t do better than this, we should cease using the things.

**\*Featured Image:** *Relatives and neighbors of the Ahmadi family gathered around the incinerated husk of a vehicle hit by a U.S. drone strike in Kabul, Afghanistan on August 30, 2021. (Photo: Marcus Yam/Los Angeles Times)*

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# **NEI's Reaction to the Pentagon's Admission of Error in US Drone Strike in Kabul on 8/29/2021**

**Statement by Nutrition and Education International** (Employer of Zemari Ahmadi in Kabul)

In the Pentagon's 9/17 briefing, General McKenzie admitted the 8/29 US drone strike in Kabul that killed Zemari Ahmadi and nine family members was a "*tragic mistake*." We are grateful for their recognition of the mistake. General McKenzie also confirmed that the recent DoD investigation into this strike was unable to establish any connection between ISIS-K and Zemari, his relatives, his Nutrition & Education International (NEI) colleagues, and NEI's Kabul compound. We appreciate that these false accusations have finally been cleared.

The General's statement confirms what was previously reported in the media and what NEI has known all along. We are grateful that the media coverage has been proven accurate and that Zemari's honorable name can be restored. NEI thanks the in-

depth investigative reporting by the Los Angeles Times, New York Times, Washington Post, CNN, ABC, CBS, NPR, Associated Press, as well as many other regional news outlets for bringing these facts to light.

We are pleased that the Department of Defense is exploring ex gratia payments to Zemari's remaining relatives and others involved in this unfortunate incident. General McKenzie says this will be difficult as the DoD has no presence on the ground. NEI is offering to be the DoD's main point of contact with Zemari's family and NEI's Afghan colleagues through its Kabul office. However, we are still waiting to be contacted by the DoD to help facilitate this process.



Source: Nutrition and Education International

At this point, NEI's primary concern is for the safety and welfare of Zemari's remaining relatives in Kabul. Although General McKenzie delivered a general apology for this drone strike, NEI hopes the DoD will also apologize directly to Zemari's remaining relatives. We hope that lifetime financial support will be provided to Zemari's wife and daughter as it will be impossible for them to survive without Zemari and his brothers in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. We also hope the

DoD will expedite processing of P2/SIV visas for Zemari's relatives, as well as provide resettlement support.

NEI is also concerned for the safety of its remaining Afghan colleagues who are now branded as ISIS terrorists. We are hoping the DOD will directly apologize to these colleagues, expedite the processing of their P2/SIV visas, and provide resettlement support.

*\* This is what they say, whether it is fully in alignment with our stance is not the point. They are standing by the Ahmadi family to the best of their ability.*

### **In Honor of Zemari Ahmadi, NEI will Continue on in its Vision and Humanitarian Efforts**

Due to unsettling recent events, many of our soy farmers, especially in the Northern provinces, have fled their homes to seek refuge in Kabul. These internally displaced refugees, primarily women and children, are suffering from a lack of food, water, and other necessities. To honor Zemari, NEI will continue to work towards eradicating protein-energy malnutrition in Afghanistan. (*Zemari Ahmadi distributing soy-based meals in Kabul, Afghanistan, August 2021.*)

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# **ICC Prosecutor Now Targets Taliban, Daesh, Not US, in Afghan War Crimes Probe**

*by Saini, published on NNN (NAM News Network), September 28, 2021*

THE HAGUE, Sept 28 (NNN-AGENCIES) – The International Criminal Court prosecutor said he was seeking approval to resume a war crimes investigation of Afghanistan, focusing on the actions of the Taliban and the Islamic State Khorasan (ISIS-K) militia.

A statement said the request was being made to the court's judges in light of developments since the Taliban militants seized control of Afghanistan in a lightning advance last month.

Prosecutors had previously also looked into suspected crimes by US forces and Afghan government troops. But Karim Khan, six months into his nine-year tenure, said they would now *"deprioritise"* that element due to lack of resources, and instead focus on *"the scale and nature of crimes within the jurisdiction of the court"*.

Afghan human rights activist Horia Mosadiq, who has been helping victims to support the ICC probe for many years, called the announcement *"an insult to thousands of other victims of crimes by Afghan government forces and US and NATO forces"*.

The ICC had already spent 15 years looking into war crimes allegations in Afghanistan before opening a full investigation last year.

But that probe was put on hold by the Afghan government, which said it was investigating the crimes itself. The Hague-based ICC is a court of last resort, intervening only when a member country is unable or unwilling to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide.

Khan said the fall of the internationally recognised Afghan government and its replacement by the Taliban represented a *"significant change of circumstances"*.

*"After reviewing matters carefully, I have reached the*

*conclusion that, at this time, there is no longer the prospect of genuine and effective domestic investigations ... within Afghanistan," his statement said.*

The court had found there was a reasonable basis to believe war crimes had been committed between 2003 and 2014, among them suspected mass killings of civilians by the Taliban, as well as suspected torture of prisoners by Afghan authorities and, to a lesser extent, by US forces and the US CIA.

But the United States is not a party to the ICC, and imposed sanctions against the office of the prosecutor for investigating the role of US forces. Shifting the focus of the probe could help mend the court's relationship with Washington.

*"We're pleased to see that the ICC prioritises resources to focus on the greatest of allegations and atrocity crimes,"*

State Department spokesperson Jalina Porter told reporters in response to the prosecutor's statement.

A lawyer who represents Afghan victims of suspected US torture in the ICC investigation said the narrowing of its focus was "deeply flawed".

*"Allowing powerful states to get away (with) multi-year, multi-continent torture against so many, feeds impunity for all," she said on Twitter.*

Judges will now review the request.

If approved, the investigation will face an uphill battle to gather evidence, as the Taliban rulers appear unlikely to cooperate in the same way as the governments in place since the Taliban's last period in power ended in 2001.

The Taliban administration in Kabul could not immediately be



reached for comment.

*“Early indications suggest that their policies on matters related to criminal justice and other material considerations are unlikely to conform to those adopted since 2002,” Khan said in his submission to the court. – NNN-AGENCIES*

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NAM refers to the Non Aligned Movement, a group of developing nations which chose not to be affiliated with the US or Russia. The NAM developed during the first Cold War and provided a creative space for developing nations that chose to bond with one another rather than become chattel to one side of the other.

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## **Demand for ‘Moratorium on Drone Warfare’ Follows Latest US Killing of Afghan Civilians**

*by Jake Johnson, published on Common Dreams, August 30, 2021*

The largest Muslim civil rights organization in the United States demanded Monday that the Biden administration immediately put in place a “*moratorium on drone warfare*” after the U.S. killed at least 10 Afghan civilians—including half a dozen children—with an airstrike in Kabul over the weekend.

*“Enough is enough,”* Edward Ahmed Mitchell, national deputy director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR),

said in a statement.

*“For more than ten years, our government’s drone strikes have killed thousands of innocent people in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, and elsewhere in the Muslim world—destroying family homes, wedding parties, and even funeral processions. The civilian casualties in Kabul are simply the latest victims of this misused technology.”*

Mitchell said the Biden administration should impose a temporary moratorium on the U.S. drone program—which is largely shrouded in secrecy—*“until the government establishes strict oversight rules that would prevent these tragedies by severely limiting and transparently accounting for our military’s use of drone warfare.”*

According to press reports and accounts from relatives and witnesses, the 10 people reportedly killed by the U.S. airstrike in Kabul on Sunday were all members of a single extended family—and at least three of the child victims were girls just two years old or younger.

*“This is the latest in 20 years of innocent lives taken and children orphaned in Afghanistan and covert drone warfare around the world,”*

Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) said Monday.

*“Impunity for these attacks continues to create a never-ending cycle of violence and retribution. Where should these victims go to seek justice?”*

The Biden administration has yet to take responsibility for killing the civilians with its drone strike, which purportedly

targeted an explosive-laden vehicle that the U.S. military claims ISIS-K was planning to use in another attack on Kabul's international airport.

*"The U.S. went into Afghanistan seeking revenge and bombing civilians,"*

Medea Benjamin, co-founder of the anti-war group CodePink, tweeted Monday.

*"Twenty years later, the U.S. is leaving Afghanistan seeking revenge and bombing civilians."*

Maj. Gen. Hank Taylor, deputy director of the U.S. Joint Staff for Regional Operations, said during a press briefing on Monday that the Pentagon is "aware" of reports of civilian deaths in Kabul and that an investigation is underway.

In a statement, Amnesty International USA executive director Paul O'Brien said that the Biden administration "has a responsibility to the families of those killed to name the dead, acknowledge its actions, investigate, and provide reparations."

The Pentagon is notorious for dramatically undercounting the number of civilians killed in U.S. military operations overseas. And when the U.S. government does admit to killing civilians, it often refuses to provide any compensation to the victims' families.

*"The United States has been killing civilians in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, and Somalia for years, under the guise of the so-called 'war on terror,' with impunity,"*

said O'Brien.

*"For two decades, the United States has carried out strikes with no accountability to the public for how many civilians*

were killed.”

The latest airstrike in Kabul, O’Brien argued, could be

*“a glimpse into the future U.S. involvement in Afghanistan if the Biden administration pushes ahead with an ‘over the horizon’ counter-terrorism program that does not prioritize civilian protection.”*

Earlier this year, the Biden administration quietly implemented temporary restrictions on drone strikes outside of “conventional battlefield zones” such as Afghanistan. But such limits did not stop U.S. military’s Africa Command (AFRICOM) from launching a lethal drone strike in Somalia in July, the first attack on that country of Joe Biden’s presidency.

As the withdrawal of U.S. troops continues apace ahead of the August 31 exit deadline, it appears that Biden is prepared to keep carrying out drone strikes in Afghanistan in the future. In a statement Friday after the U.S. launched a drone strike targeting two “planners and facilitators” of the deadly attack on Kabul’s airport, Biden declared, “This strike was not the last.”

**\*Featured Image:** *Relatives and neighbors of the Ahmadi family gathered around the incinerated husk of a vehicle hit by a U.S. drone strike in Kabul, Afghanistan on August 30, 2021. (Photo: Marcus Yam/Los Angeles Times)*

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# Biden Acknowledges 'Over the Horizon' Air Attacks Planned Against Taliban

by *Nick Mottern*, published on *Common Dreams*, July 5, 2021

On July 2, fleeing questions from reporters about U.S. plans in Afghanistan, President Joe Biden sought refuge behind the July 4<sup>th</sup> Independence Day holiday, yet obliquely acknowledged that the U.S. will use some level of “over the horizon” air attacks to prevent the Taliban from taking power, attacks that will include drones and manned aircraft, possibly even B-52s.

Here is a portion of President Biden’s remarkable exchange with the press, which occurred at the close of his comments on the June, 2021 jobs report:

*Q Are you worried that the Afghan government might fall? I mean, we are hearing about how the Taliban is taking more and more districts.*

*-THE PRESIDENT: Look, we were in that war for 20 years. Twenty years. And I think – I met with the Afghan government here in the White House, in the Oval. I think they have the capacity to be able to sustain the government. There are going to have to be, down the road, more negotiations, I suspect. But I am – I am concerned that they deal with the internal issues that they have to be able to generate the kind of support they need nationwide to maintain the government.*

*Q A follow on that thought on Afghanistan*

*-THE PRESIDENT: I want to talk about happy things, man.*

*Q If there is evidence that Kabul is threatened, which*

*some of the intelligence reports have suggested it could be in six months or thereabout, do you think you've got the capability to help provide any kind of air support, military support to them to keep the capital safe, even if the U.S. troops are obviously fully out by that time?*

**-THE PRESIDENT:** *We have worked out an over-the-horizon capacity that we can be value added, but the Afghans are going to have to be able to do it themselves with the Air Force they have, which we're helping them maintain.*

**Q** *Sir, on Afghanistan*

**-THE PRESIDENT:** *I'm not going to answer any more quick question on Afghanistan.*

**Q** *Are you concerned*

**-THE PRESIDENT:** *Look, it's Fourth of July.*

When the president refers to "over-the-horizon capacity that we can be value added" he is referring to a plan, that appears might cost \$10 billion, to fly drones and manned attack aircraft from bases as far away as Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait to assist the current Afghan central government in defending itself against the Taliban.

His statement is the first acknowledgement that the "over-the-horizon" air operations, that reportedly may rely very heavily on drone assassination and drone targeting for manned aircraft, will be directed at the Taliban. In Congressional testimony in June, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said that "over-the-horizon" operations would focus on "elements that can possibly conduct attacks against our homeland", suggesting Al Qaeda and ISIS as targets but not foreclosing attacks against the Taliban.

The president's remarks about "over the horizon" as "value added" flowing into "but the Afghans are going to have to be

*able to do it themselves with the Air Force they have" is reminiscent of former President Richard Nixon's attempt to argue that the puppet government of Viet Nam was developing the power to defend itself, attempting to cover U.S. tracks out of the horribly disastrous U.S. colonization project in Viet Nam.*

*"Our air strikes have been essential in protecting our own remaining forces and in assisting the South Vietnamese in their efforts to protect their homes and their country from a Communist takeover,"*

Nixon said in a 1972 speech to the nation.

The apparent U.S. decision to continue to assist the Afghan central government from the air comes in company with a *New York Times* report saying that President Biden has placed *"temporary limits on counterterrorism drone strikes and commando raids outside conventional battlefield zones like Afghanistan and Syria, and it has begun a broad review of whether to tighten Trump-era rules for such operations, according to officials."*

A similar report in *Foreign Affairs* says that there has been an apparent reduction in U.S. drone attacks, and details elements of a *"bigger rethink"* process that the Biden administration is said to be going through to limit civilian deaths and reevaluate how the U.S. should respond to *"the overseas terrorist threat."* A goal of the administration, the report says, is to end the U.S. *"forever"* wars.

It must also be said, however, that these reports indicate that President Biden fully intends to continue the U.S. drone assassination/pre-emptive killing policy of Bush, Obama and Trump, possibly with more care for civilian casualties but in defiance of international principles of war, as outlined on [BanKillerDrones.org](http://BanKillerDrones.org), that would rule out the use of weaponized drones and military drone surveillance altogether whether

inside or outside a recognized combat zone.

It appears that the reformist talk from Biden officials, much of it unattributed and therefore having no accountability, is intended to divert and placate those of us citizens who are revulsed by continuing drone atrocities, such as those leading 113 peace, justice and humanitarian organizations who signed a letter demanding *"an end to the unlawful program of lethal strikes outside any recognized battlefield, including through the use of drones."* Apart from the view, noted above, that drone attacks and surveillance are illegal anywhere, we have the question of the U.S. having turned the entire world into a potential *"recognized battlefield"* .

Even though U.S. ground forces have largely left Afghanistan, it is clear that the Biden administration considers Afghanistan a legitimate battlefield for U.S. air forces.

In President Biden's *"value added"* remark, one can see a clear message: regardless of talk of a more humanitarian policy of drone killing and ending *"forever"* wars, the president has decided that prolonged civil war in Afghanistan is in the interest of the U.S. Possibly this is because continued turmoil in Afghanistan will be unsettling and preoccupying to her neighbors, Iran, Pakistan, Russia and China. Possibly it is because a civil war will make it easier for corporations and banks to exploit Afghanistan's mineral, fossil fuel and opium wealth.

Certainly, continued U.S. air assaults in Afghanistan will generate money for U.S. military contractors.

With continuing U.S. air and commando attacks, Afghanistan can turn into a Libya, a divided, stalemated, suffering, bleeding country, where Turkey, Russia and China test their weapons and seek advantage.

Indeed, the U.S. is negotiating with Turkey, over the objection of the Taliban, to maintain *"security"* at the Kabul



International Airport. Undoubtedly, the Turkish political/military/ corporate elite, who have their own expansionary ambitions, will use its drones, among them the semi-autonomous Kargu 2, to try to hold the airport and surrounding territory.

The Black Alliance for Peace released a statement on June 25, opposing *“any effort to prolong the U.S. war on the Afghan people, including efforts to keep the United States engaged in any form in Afghanistan.”* The statement expressed concern for *“the continued operation of U.S. special forces and mercenaries (or contractors) in Afghanistan, as well as U.S.-pledged support for Turkish military defense of Kabul International Airport, a site that has continued to be a major U.S. military stronghold to support its imperial presence.”*

President Biden would do well to heed this statement, along with a petition to him, circulated by BanKillerDrones.org, urging no further U.S. air attacks against the Afghan people.

Now that Independence Day has passed, perhaps the president will be more willing to answer questions about the real goals of *“over the horizon.”*

**\*Featured Image:** *U.S. Army 3rd Infantry Task Force 3-7 soldiers ride atop an armored vehicle during a training exercise near the Iraqi border March 13, 2003 in northern Kuwait. U.S and British forces within the region continue to poise for a possible strike on Iraq. (Photo: Scott Nelson/Getty Images)*

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# Pakistan is Reluctant to Host U.S. Military Bases

*by Abdus Sattar Ghazali, published on Countercurrents, June 13, 2021*

Pakistani officials have privately begun confirming a secret visit to Islamabad of CIA Director William Burns and are suggesting that he was firmly told that Pakistan would not host the spy agency's drone bases on its territory, according to the daily Dawn.

This comes after New York Times in an article published on June 6 claimed that Mr Burns had travelled to Pakistan for meetings with Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa and ISI Director General Lt Gen Faiz Hamid to explore the possibility of counterterrorism cooperation between the two sides.

The Central Intelligence Agency is said to be looking for bases around Afghanistan from where it could gather intelligence on Afghanistan and execute counterterrorism strikes after the completion of troop withdrawal from there, the Dawn said.

The purpose of quietly sharing of information by the Pakistani officials with select journalists at this stage apparently looked to dispel the impression that the two sides were engaged in negotiations on hosting of US drone bases by Pakistan.

New York Times article had at one point said that American officials believed that Pakistan wanted to allow the US to access a base. But, it indicated that Pakistani officials were setting very stringent conditions.

*“In discussions between American and Pakistani officials, the Pakistanis have demanded a variety of restrictions in exchange for the use of a base in the country, and they have effectively required that they sign off on any targets that either the CIA or the military would want to hit inside Afghanistan, according to three Americans familiar with the discussions,”*

as per the NYT article.

Dawn quoted officials as saying that the CIA chief wanted to meet Prime Minister Imran Khan, but was plainly told that only counterpart meeting between heads of government of the two countries was possible.

The officials further said the CIA chief was categorically conveyed that no US operation would be allowed from Pakistani territory. They rather suggested to have asked the Americans to hand over the drones to them for carrying out the strikes against terrorist targets.

### **Three factors**

There are three factors that will account for Pakistan's perseverance and inflexibility on extending basing rights to the United States, according to Dr. Syed Ali Zia Jaffery of the Diplomat.

First, the consistency with which Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan has vociferously opposed his country's past dealings with Washington has left little room for his government to acquiesce to U.S. requests. Before coming into power, Khan was a staunch critic of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan, even launching a campaign against them.

Second, Pakistan aiding the United States in its efforts to keep an eye on the Taliban would likely vitiate the country's ties with the powerful Afghan group. Pakistan can ill-afford

to attenuate its relationship with the Taliban because it is becoming abundantly clear that they are the most dominant player in the Afghan political landscape.

Having already warned Afghanistan's neighbors against making the historic mistake of allowing the U.S. to operate military bases, the Taliban would certainly not welcome Pakistan taking such a step. They could accuse Pakistan of wilting under U.S. pressure.

Third, Pakistan allowing the U.S. to use military bases for carrying out combat missions will likely be a cause of concern for two of Pakistan's neighbors: China and Iran. That both countries are adversaries of the United States is all the more troubling. Washington has termed Beijing the biggest threat to U.S. national security.

Coupled with the U.S. aversion to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), this means that should Pakistan allow U.S. forces to operate out of its territory, Washington would almost certainly use that advantage to keep tabs on CPEC, which is expected to expand and gain momentum. Both Pakistan and China would not like to see the U.S. physically lurking around CPEC hotspots, including the critical Gwadar port.

Other than China, Iran will also be directly affected if Pakistan were to let the U.S. ensconce itself in close proximity to that country, Dr. Syed Ali Zia Jaffery, a strategic affairs and foreign policy analyst, concluded.

### **Airspace access**

Pakistan has allowed the US military to use its airspace and given ground access so that it can support its presence in Afghanistan, a Pentagon official said last month.

David F. Helvey, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Affairs, told the US Senate Armed Services Committee last month that the United States would continue its

conversation with Pakistan because it had a critical role in restoring peace to Afghanistan.

The official was replying to a question from Senator Joe Manchin, a West Virginia Democrat, who asked him to *“outline your assessment of Pakistan, and particularly of Pakistani intelligence agencies, and the role you expect them to play in our future”*.

*“Pakistan has played an important role in Afghanistan. They supported the Afghan peace process. Pakistan also has allowed us to have over-flight and access to be able to support our military presence in Afghanistan,”*

Mr Helvey said.

*“We will continue our conversations with Pakistan because their support and contribution to the future of Afghanistan, to future peace in Afghanistan, is going to be critical,”*

he added.

Diplomatic sources in Washington told Dawn that Pakistan had always allowed over-flights and ground access to the US to facilitate its military presence in Afghanistan and would continue to do so.

**\*Featured Image:** *Predator unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), carrying a Hellfire air-to-surface missile lands at a secret air base in the Persian Gulf region on January 7, 2016. The U.S. military and coalition forces use the base, located in an undisclosed location, to launch airstrikes against ISIL in Iraq and Syria. (Photo by John Moore/Getty Images)*

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# **We are Killing Terrorists and Attack We Will**

*Those who slaughter innocent people will find no glory in this life or the next. They are nothing but thugs and criminals and predators, and that's right losers.*  
~President Donald Trump

## **We are Killing Terrorists and Attack We Will, Trump's Most Vicious Racist Rants**

***by Brian Terrell, Originally Published in "The Sower", Dec. 17, 2017***

On Monday, August 21, President Donald Trump delivered a prime-time speech almost shocking in its ordinariness. It was such an address as either of his immediate predecessors, George W. Bush or Barack Obama, could easily have given over the previous decade and a half. While hinting at nebulous new strategies and ill-defined new metrics to measure success, President Trump announced that the sixteen year old war in Afghanistan will go on pretty much as it has. And the establishment breathed a sigh of relief.

Reviews were glowing. While acknowledging how low the bar had been set, on August 25, the Washington journal, The Hill, opined that even the most hardened members of the anti-Trump camp must admit that Monday's speech communicated a remarkable amount of humility and self-awareness, particularly for this

president. The timing of the president's crowd pleasing speech was duly noted: Unfortunately, his very presidential announcement of the Afghanistan decision was bookended by Charlottesville and the president's rally in Phoenix on Tuesday night.

Ten days before, in Charlottesville, Virginia, torch bearing white supremacists had marched in a "*Unite the Right*" rally to protest the planned removal of a statue of the Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Replete with flags of both the Confederacy and the Nazi Third Reich and traditional fascist chants of blood and soil, the rally met with resistance from anti-racist activists, one of whom was murdered and others injured when one of the united right used his car as a weapon of terror, driving it into the crowd. There was outrage when Trump responded by condemning the violence on all sides and declaring that there are very fine people on both sides of the issue.



Afghan Peace Volunteers work for peace at their Border Free School in Kabul

In the next days, thousands marched in cities nationwide and the denunciations of racism and white supremacy resounded from many surprising quarters. Trump's tolerance of the use and celebration of overt symbols and slogans associated with hatred, slavery, anti-Semitism and genocide offended all but his most fanatical base. Members of his own party, many who had stood by Trump through other scandals, took steps to distance themselves from his statements, if not from Trump himself.

Five of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, representing the Navy, Marines, Army, Air Force and National Guard, came extraordinarily close to rebuking their commander in chief. While they did not address Trump by name, they posted messages on social media condemning neo-Nazis and hatred, citing the



events at Charlottesville.

*"@USNavy for ever stands against intolerance and hatred."*

*"No place for racial hatred or extremism in @USMC."*

*"The Army does not tolerate racism, extremism or hatred in its ranks."*

*"We're always stronger together-it's who we are as #Airmen."*

*"I stand with my fellow Joint Chiefs in condemning racism, extremism & hatred. Our diversity is our strength #NationalGuard."*

In his prime time address on the war, Trump called for the national unity that he had seemed in the days before and after to disdain- *"Loyalty to our nation demands loyalty to one another."* Saying that *"the young men and women we send to fight our wars abroad deserve to return to a country that is not at war with itself at home,"* Trump seemed even to shame his detractors for letting down those he calls the "special class of heroes whose selflessness, courage, and resolve is unmatched in human history." *"Let us make a simple promise to the men and women we ask to fight in our name: that when they return home from battle, they will find a country that has renewed the sacred bonds of love and loyalty that unite us together as one."*

The healing balm that should bring Americans together, Trump said to general applause, will be a continuing commitment to a seventeen year old war. When that war began in October of 2001, Vice-President Richard Cheney suggested that the US would eventually take it to forty to fifty other nations, an expanding war that he predicted "may never end" but would "become a permanent part of the way we live." Like Cheney before him, Trump urges Americans to set aside the issues that divide us and unite behind an endless war of aggression

against a people who never met us any harm.

It should be self evident that the war against Afghanistan and the broader war on terror, like every war that the US has engaged in since the end of World War II, is as much a war about race and white supremacy as was the Civil War. The fact that the war on terror was presided over for eight years by our first African American president (who in his last year in office dropped 26,171 bombs exclusively over populations of people of color) does not alter the fact that it is a racist war. If the war on terror does not divide our nation's people as severely as did our war against the people of Southeast Asia fifty years ago, it is only because fewer Americans are paying attention to it.

In 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. noted *"Now, it should be incandescently clear that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war."* He said that for those working against racism in the US, silence on the war against Vietnam was nothing less than betrayal. Many questioned whether peace and civil rights mix and if by trying, King was hurting the cause of his people. *"Indeed,"* he said of these critics, *"their questions suggest that they do not know the world in which they live."* About that same time, Eldridge Cleaver said *"The black man's (sic) interest lies in seeing a free and independent Vietnam, a strong Vietnam which is not the puppet of international white supremacy. If the nations of Asia, Latin America and Africa are strong and free, the black man in America will be safe and secure and free to live in dignity and self respect."*

Last year, the Movement for Black Lives excited great controversy publishing its platform that draws these connections in the present context:

*"...we know that patriarchy, exploitative capitalism, militarism, and white supremacy know no borders. We stand in solidarity with our international family against the ravages*

*of global capitalism and anti-Black racism, human-made climate change, war, and exploitation. We also stand with descendants of African people all over the world in an ongoing call and struggle for reparations for the historic and continuing harms of colonialism and slavery. We also recognize and honor the rights and struggle of our Indigenous family for land and self-determination."*

The violence that we see in American streets is a direct and inevitable result of the violence of our country's wars. Since the war on terror began, police departments from large cities to rural counties have been plied by the Defense Department with an array of offensive weaponry from tanks to assault rifles, accompanied with training in counterinsurgency. Police department hiring preferences favor veterans who often bring with them skills honed in night raids of Iraqi and Afghanistan and the Afghan homes. Full scale Special Weapons and Assault Tactics (SWAT) teams then terrorize American families, disproportionately in communities of color and most often to serve simple warrants and summonses for nonviolent offenses.

The Obama administration's determinations that any male 14 years or older found dead in a drone strike zone is a "combatant" unless explicit intelligence posthumously proves him innocent and that "the condition that an operational leader present an 'imminent' threat of violent attack against the United States does not require the United States to have clear evidence that *"a specific attack on US persons and interests will take place in the immediate future"*, have poisoned the culture of policing at home. The consequence of these policies is the summary killings of innocent young men because of who they are and where they live, in American cities as well as in places far away. The racial profiling that results in the killings of unarmed black citizens by American police is the domestic expression of surveillance by drones of the *"patterns of behavior"* that trigger the *"signature strike"* executions of countless people of color in

our wars abroad.

*"A nation which continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death,"* Dr. King noted in 1967. There is no serious discussion of racism in the United States today, or of providing health care and education and basic human services that does not address the ever expanding cost of the present war.

Some of the outrage over Trump's responses to the events in Charlottesville and for his shameless affinity for hate and misogyny in general from his campaign until today may well actually be for his violation of a tacit *"gentlemen's"* agreement not to say such things aloud. None the less, it is a sign of social progress that language and symbols celebrating hate raise so much public indignation. The discredited institutions of slavery and Nazism need to stay discredited and those who forget that are rightly and necessarily called out. There are, however, manifestations of hatred and racism that continue to be tolerated and celebrated even in the most polite, progressive and politically correct venues and these need to be called out as well.

As grating and offensive as Trump's off-script train wreck persona is, it is when he is most *"very presidential,"* when he acts and speaks from the same teleprompter as those who preceded him, that he is at his most malicious and hateful. When he declares as he did on August 21 that *"we are killing terrorists"* and threatens *"attack we will"* and when he praises the civilian catastrophe that he called the *"liberation of Mosul in Iraq"* as a model for the future of the war in Afghanistan, Trump is on a racist rant. His speech on August 21 calling for more war is hate speech, pure and simple.

The generals of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who bravely spoke out against neo-Nazis, where are they now? Some of them apparently huddled with Trump to devise his hateful and racist

assault on the Afghan people and all of them, along with Defense Secretary General Mattis (whose advice to the troops is *"You just hold the line until our country gets back to understanding and respecting each other and showing it."*) and White House Chief of Staff General Kelly are busily working to implement it. If generals Lee and Jackson of the 19th century who served under Confederate President Jefferson Davis in the cause of slavery and white supremacy deserve the censure of history and the scorn of every person of good will, so much more these generals who serve the hateful and vile agenda of Trump and his predecessors. To give Trump his due, one truth that he told in his celebrated speech is that those *"who slaughter innocent people will find no glory in this life or the next. They are nothing but thugs and criminals and predators, and that's right -losers."*

Those thousands of good people who took to the streets to denounce the celebration of racism and hate in its archaic and discredited forms need to seek the courage get back out and demand an end to racism and hate in its present, most virulent form. Together we need to demand a US withdrawal from Afghanistan and reparations for all the nations that have suffered US aggression in the so-called war on terror.