

Kids Die Last as Biden Plays Tough Guy

by **Dave Lindorff**, published on **Counterpunch**, October 3, 2021

First there was a catastrophic but predictable attack on US and Taliban troops as well as desperate civilians trying to escape the ruins and chaos of the country the US occupier was leaving behind to the victorious Taliban. One or more IS-K terrorists wearing exploding vests filled with shrapnel, possibly backed by other IS fighters firing automatic weapons, were reportedly joined by panicked US Marines confused about who the attacking enemy was. The explosion and ensuing fire-fight ended up slaughtering 170 or more Afghans (civilians and Taliban fighters) and 13 US servicemen and women (12 Marines and one Navy medic) and badly wounding many more people.

That terrorist attack was followed by a drone rocket revenge attack ordered by President and Commander in Chief Joe Biden. It was an attack which by all accounts went spectacularly and horrifically awry, killing not an IS-K terror plotter as initially claimed by the Pentagon, but a family of 10 including a US interpreter, all of whom – both three adults and seven children including a child of only 2 – had been given papers allowing them to get on one of the US evacuation flights at the Kabul Airport, but they had been unable to get through all the various checkpoints to accomplish that.

There were fabricated reports from the US of secondary explosions intended to suggest that the van that was struck had been carrying terrorists wearing explosive belts – stories which were completely untrue according to US and other foreign reporters who went to the scene. There were also reports of secondary explosions in an adjacent building, which were also false and self-serving from those in Washington trying to deny the disastrous error.

The two incidents provided a graphic illustration of why the US lost its longest war.

First of all, terrorism has never been diminished in Afghanistan because of the US invasion and occupation of that country. Not only did the Taliban adopt some of the strategies of resistance fighters against US occupation, such as in Iraq, turning to IED explosions and car bombs, but new terror groups like the Islamic State moved into the chaotic scene, attacking both US and Taliban forces. The latest attack at the airport was one of the largest of the war in terms of the number of victims.

Meanwhile, the errant drone missile slaughter of an entire family of pro-American would-be immigrants by a US drone missile was proof positive of what critics of US drone warfare have been saying for years: Drones, often operated by pilots halfway around the world in Nevada and Pennsylvania (near me) are a grotesquely deadly form of warfare that kills vastly more innocent people than the actual targets that it seeks to kill. Often the reason is mistaken coordinates or even flight-controller errors, but just as often it is a problem of bad intelligence, frequently caused by US “assets” in-country providing deliberately wrong targeting information either to sabotage US efforts and increase opposition to the US occupiers, or simply to settle scores with an asset’s own rival.

A lack of transparency and honesty by the Pentagon and the White House through four presidencies has made things worse. Information about civilian deaths since the beginning of this war in 2001 has been withheld, and when some atrocity is impossible to deny – for example, when as has happened all too many times in this war, a wedding procession is blown up when it is confused with a group of enemy forces on the move, or when a hospital is attacked – the number of innocents murdered is low-balled.

Biden did what George Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump couldn't do: he has finally ended the war on Afghanistan by the US. He made a mess of it though by dragging out the process by seven months when he could have negotiated an armistice and brought the troops home immediately upon taking the office – US troops, other Americans, and even Afghans who helped the US occupiers. The Taliban would likely have been happy to accept a peaceful return to power and probably would have seen letting people leave as a good trade for that. Instead, Biden ended up being a fourth president at war in Afghanistan, with blood on his own hands, and the US ended up losing a fighting war – badly.

Meanwhile, the war may be over for US troops, but it isn't over for Afghanistan. The US violence and destruction of that long-suffering country has left it confronting a bloody civil war now as factions and tribal regions vie for power. As well, Biden has said that the US will still feel free – despite the blatant illegality of such actions under international law – to bomb and send in armed drones to attack targets by air in Afghanistan, just as the US did in the last days of the US military's retreat. US soldiers will still be fighting, but instead of facing bullets and IEDs in Afghanistan, they'll be sitting in air-conditioned pods on US military bases using video-game-like air-conditioned pods to control death-bringing, rocket-armed drones.

America itself will also still be in a state of war, as Congress continues to leave in place the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF). That war authorization (approved by Congress on September 18, 2001 after no hearings or debate), to launch the illegal war on Afghanistan, was also used to launch the so-called War on Terror. The latter has been an amorphous, borderless “war” that legal shills working for the government like former US Assistant Attorney General John Yoo have successfully claimed includes, until rescinded, the entire territory of the United States within its

Constitution and Bill of Rights-shredding “battlefield.” It has given presidents, in the view of the Supreme Court, dictatorial powers undreamt of by the Constitution’s authors, permitted indefinite incarceration without charge or trial, warrantless government eavesdropping, extra-judicial government murder and kidnapping, and the jailing of whistleblowers and journalists in violation of US laws designed to defend such people and their actions.

Biden has done nothing to put an end to the continuing air war against Afghanistan or to the War on Terror.

There will be no ticker-tape parade for veterans of the Afghanistan War or the War on Terror. It will likely be erased from US history to the extent that the US government and the duopoly War Party and their complicit mass media can do it. Just as vastly bloodier Vietnam and Korean Wars have been white-washed into family-friendly noble if unsuccessful efforts to “defend freedom,” the Afghanistan War will be remembered, if it is remembered at all, as an attempt to punish the attackers of 9/11 (never mind that no Afghani or Taliban fighter ever attacked the US, on 9/11 or anytime during the last two decades of US war on Afghanistan). The rest of those sordid two decades will be whitewashed away.

We shouldn’t let that happen.

Instead, we should remember the slaughtered family of Zemari Ahmadi, who paid with their lives so that President Biden could “look tough” in the face of critics at home blasting his botched decision to pull US forces out of Afghanistan without any armistice or truce agreement.

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